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**BTC speaker condemns secretariat vandalism**



**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Speaker Tridip Daimary on Sunday strongly condemned the vandalism at the BTC Assembly Secretariat, calling the attack "intentional" and demanding strict action against those involved.  
 The incident occurred during a protest by tribal students opposing the Assam Cabinet's approval of a Group of Ministers (GoM) report recommending Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for six major communities in the state.  
 The violent protest took place on November 29 when students from various (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**Eviction drive takes place in Nagaon for 2<sup>nd</sup> day**  
**'More than 75 pc of encroachers have left'**

**NAGAON, Nov 30:** An eviction drive was underway in Assam's Nagaon district on the second consecutive day on Sunday to clear encroachments from 5,962 bighas (nearly 798 hectares) of forest land, officials said.  
 Around 1,700 families have been affected in the drive.  
 The second and final day of the massive eviction drive started at Lutumari Reserve Forest in the morning after completion of around 70 per cent of the demolition work on Saturday, a senior official said.  
 Nagaon District Commissioner Devashish Sharma and Senior Superintendent of Police Swapnil Deka are supervising the eviction drive in the presence of Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Suhas Kadam.



"More than 75 per cent of the encroachers have left. Yesterday, we carried out eviction in around 70 per cent of the land where 1,700 families were residing," the official said.  
 The evicted people are taking shelter at rented accommodations and relatives' houses, and also themselves establishing relief camps in the nearby revenue villages, he added.  
 Although the government has claimed that the area was encroached, but senior officials stated that there were houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), water connection under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), Anganwadi centres (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**Excessive supplementary grants questioned**  
**CAG terms Assam budget 2023-24 'unrealistic'**

**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has termed the Assam government budgetary assumptions for 2023-24 "unrealistic and over-estimated," pointing out that in several cases supplementary grants were approved where expenditure of the original allotted funds was not even done.  
 It also highlighted non-submission of Utilisation Certificates (UCs) and annual accounts of sev-



eral autonomous councils and other bodies. The CAG report on state finances (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**ST report satisfied all sections of people, claims CM**

**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday asserted that the report on demand for ST status by six major communities of the state has been able to satisfy all sections of people.  
 He dismissed opposition to the report, emphasising that all issues will have support as well as disapproval at some levels.  
 A Group of Ministers (GoM) had submitted its report in the state Assembly on Saturday on the demand for ST status by six communities – Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Matak, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes (adivasis). If these communities are granted ST status, they will come under reservation for education and jobs.  
 "The report is out now, and it is there for everyone to see. I think, the report has been able to satisfy all sections of people," Sarma told (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

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 Theme of the year - **Overcoming disruption, transforming the AIDS response**

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

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 Minister, Health & Family Welfare, etc., Assam

Time: 10:30 AM  
 Venue: Srimanta Sankaradeva International Auditorium, Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra, Panjabari, Guwahati

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# RBI may cut interest rate by 25 bps on Friday

**MUMBAI, Nov 30:** The RBI may trim the benchmark lending rate by 25 bps in its forthcoming monetary policy meeting, as inflationary pressures are subdued, though some experts believe the central bank is likely to keep the rate unchanged in the backdrop of better-than-expected GDP growth of 8.2 per cent in the second quarter.

The consumer price index (CPI) based headline retail inflation is ruling below the 2 per cent lower band mandated by the government for the last two months.

Some experts, however, believe that the RBI may continue with the pause on interest rates as economic growth has picked up, sustained by fiscal consolidation, targeted public investment, and various reforms, such as the GST rate cut.

The Monetary Policy Committee meeting is scheduled from December 3-5, 2025.

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra is scheduled to announce the decision of rate-setting panel on December 5.

The central bank started its rate-easing cycle in February last year. It has cumulatively reduced the repo rate by 100 basis points in successive policy announcements to 5.5 per cent, before hitting the pause button in August.

According to some experts, the RBI may trim the benchmark lending rate by 25 bps in its forthcoming monetary policy meeting, as inflationary pressures are subdued. The consumer price index (CPI)-based headline retail inflation has been ruling below the 2 per cent lower band mandated by the government for the last two months.

Some experts, however, believe that the RBI may continue with



the pause on interest rates as economic growth has picked up, sustained by fiscal consolidation, targeted public investment, and various reforms, such as the GST rate cut.

This year, the story has been about growth overshooting and inflation undershooting, said a HDFC Bank report.

"Therefore, the upcoming RBI rate decision remains a close call. But given the lingering risks on growth (in H2) and inflation expected to remain well below 4 per cent until Q3 FY27, we see that there may still be a chance of another 25bps rate cut at the upcoming policy," it said.

A research report from the State Bank of India's economic research department said that with a strong GDP growth and minimal inflation, it is now for the RBI to communicate to the broader markets the rate trajectory in the MPC meeting this week, as well as continuing with the neutral stance.

On what the RBI's MPC may decide in the forthcoming policy,

Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda said "it would be a close call on the repo rate. Given that monetary policy is forward-looking and inflation in Q4-FY26 and FY27 is likely to be in the 4 per cent plus region, yielding a real repo rate of 1-1.5 per cent, the policy rate appears to be at a fair level.

"Under these conditions, we do not think that there should be any change in the policy rate," he said. Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, Crisil said the primary driver behind the headline inflation falling below the lower end of the RBI's target range of 2-6 per cent has been food inflation, although fuel inflation has also remained subdued.

Excluding gold, core inflation stood at 2.6 per cent in October, supported by GST cuts, he said.

"We anticipate a 25-basis point cut in the repo rate in December. While growth remains robust, a significant decline in retail inflation in October has created additional room for this adjustment,"

Joshi said.

Experts believe the guidance is expected to be neutral to dovish, providing an assurance of adequate liquidity and a hint at further scope for rate reduction with evolving growth dynamics.

On expectations from the meeting of the 58th rate-setting panel, Mandar Pitale, Head-Financial Markets, SBM Bank (India), expects the MPC to maintain the status quo in the December policy review.

"This is in light of the need to attract interest rate-sensitive flows to support the BoP and to avoid aggravating the immediate issue on resource mobilisation for banks, as a rate reduction could move retail resources away from the banking sector," he said.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA opined that with the Q2 FY2026 GDP growth exceeding 8 per cent, a rate cut in the December 2025 MPC review now appears unlikely, notwithstanding the series-low CPI inflation print for October 2025.

The government has mandated the RBI to ensure that retail inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

Ashok Kapur, Chairman, Krishna Group and Krisumi Corporation, believed that with inflation hovering at record lows, the RBI unquestionably has the policy space to consider a 25-bps rate cut.

The housing and allied sectors, as well as the broader economy, are already benefiting from the GST rationalisation and the RBI's cumulative 100-bps rate cuts earlier this year, he said.

A further reduction at this juncture would undoubtedly strengthen the ongoing growth momentum, Kapur said. (PTI)

## Indian airlines complete software upgrades for 323 operational A320 family planes



**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** Aviation regulator DGCA on Sunday said Indian carriers have completed the software upgrades on 323 operational A320 family planes to address a potential issue related to flight controls.

On Friday, Airbus said intense solar radiation might corrupt data critical to flight controls in a significant number of A320 family aircraft and that the software changes required to fix the issue would lead to operational disruptions.

A total of 338 A320 family

aircraft with the three Indian airlines -- IndiGo, Air India and Air India Express -- were initially identified for the software upgrades to address the issue.

Among them, 323 were operational, 6 were under base maintenance and later it was found that the upgrades were not needed for 9 such planes in the fleet of Air India, according to a senior DGCA official. IndiGo has completed the upgrades on all the 200 of its operational A320 family planes.

Air India had 113 affected

aircraft and out of them, the upgrades have been done for the operational 100 planes while 4 are under base maintenance and 9 aircraft did not require the modifications, as per the official.

In the case of Air India Express, upgrades have been carried out for 23 A320 family planes and 2 such aircraft are under maintenance for re-delivery.

On Saturday, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued an Airworthiness Directive to airlines asking Indian operators to carry out the requisite software upgrades immediately.

This followed Airbus issuing an alert to operators globally and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) coming out with an Emergency Airworthiness Directive regarding the potential issue.

On Friday, EASA said Airbus asked airline operators to install a serviceable Elevator Aileron Computer (ELAC) in the impacted aircraft. ELAC is for flight controls. (PTI)

## Telecom dept sets up 24x7 control room to safeguard network connectivity during cyclone Ditwah threat

**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** The Department of Telecom has set up a round-the-clock control room and taken extensive measures to ensure resilience of communication networks in view of cyclone Ditwah, an official statement said on Sunday.

Cyclone Ditwah has triggered rain in several parts of Tamil Nadu as it is expected to move parallel to the coastline of the northern parts of the state and neighbouring Puducherry in the next 24 hours.

"The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has taken extensive preparedness measures to ensure telecom network resilience in view of Cyclone Ditwah over the Bay of Bengal, likely to impact coastal Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu," the statement said.

As per the Standard Operating Procedure, DoT said that it has ensured completion of Intra Circle Roaming (ICR) and Cell Broadcast (CB) testing across all networks to maintain communication continuity and early warning during exigencies.

"DoT has set up a 24x7 control room to safeguard telecom connectivity amid cyclone Ditwah threat, coordinate with service providers, and facilitate prompt response through district administrations and the State Disaster Management Authority," the statement said.

The department has also instructed all telecom operators to ensure uninterrupted network operations, adequate fuel reserves, readiness of emergency power backups, and deployment of field response teams in vulnerable districts, the statement said. (PTI)

## KVIC hosts 'Navyug Khadi' Fashion Show at Pragati Maidan

The true strength of Khadi lies in its artisans: Manoj Kumar, Chairman, KVIC

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) organised the Navyug Khadi Fashion Show at the National Crafts Museum & Hastkala Academy, Pragati Maidan, on November 29, presenting contemporary interpretations of Khadi under the theme of "New Khadi of New India."

The exhibition accompanying the event, inaugurated on November 28, also marked the launch of the second volume of the Khadi Knowledge Portal.

KVIC Chairman Manoj Kumar, who attended as the chief guest, praised the garments displayed on the ramp and commended the commitment and craftsmanship of Khadi artisans.

In his address, he credited the resurgence of Khadi to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, noting that the Prime Minister had elevated Khadi from being just a fabric to becoming a symbol of patriotism, modern Indian lifestyle and global fashion identity.

He reiterated the Prime Minister's mantra — "Khadi for Nation, Khadi for Fashion, and Khadi for Transformation" — which he said had given Khadi a renewed relevance in contemporary India.

Kumar said today's Khadi not only carries the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi but is also rapidly making



its mark on fashion ramps and in international markets.

He highlighted that the new-era Khadi represents a blend of design, technology and tradition, and has become increasingly popular among the youth.

He added that Khadi continues to drive employment generation, environmental sustainability and the vision of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

The event was jointly organised by KVIC, the Centre of Excellence for Khadi (CoEK), the National Institute of Fashion Technology

(NIIFT) and the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI).

A wide range of Khadi apparel and products were showcased, drawing appreciation from visitors.

A notable moment during the event came when Khadi institution representatives and artisans from across the country walked the ramp alongside the KVIC Chairman, symbolising the idea that Khadi's true strength lies in its weavers and creators and celebrating its journey "from village to glamour."

Senior officials, including the

chief executive officer of KVIC, joint secretary (A&RE) of the Ministry of MSME, economic adviser of the Ministry of MSME, financial adviser to KVIC and the Director of CoEK, were present on the occasion.

The Navyug Khadi showcase brought together sarees, garments, accessories, yardages and home décor produced by Khadi institutions nationwide under one roof, reflecting the rich textile diversity of India.

Crafts such as Ikat from Odisha, Eri silk from Assam, Tangaliya from Gujarat, silk from Karnataka, cotton from Bengal and traditional weaves from Telangana and Bihar were displayed.

The exhibition embodies the Prime Minister's vision of presenting Khadi as a modern, inclusive and globally relevant textile tradition for a new India.

During the inauguration, the KVIC Chairman interacted with Khadi institutions to understand their challenges and assured them of continued support.

The event will remain open until December 3, from 11 a.m. to 5:30 pm, featuring exhibitions, sales counters and live workshops on hand spinning, natural dyeing and sari draping, offering visitors a firsthand experience of India's evolving Khadi landscape.

## Finance Ministry's chief adviser cost office concludes three-day Chintan Shivir

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** The Office of the Chief Adviser Cost, Department of Expenditure (DoE), Ministry of Finance, concluded a three-day Chintan Shivir held from November 28 to 30 at Manesar, Haryana.

The programme brought together officers of the Chief Adviser Cost office along with participants from the Haryana State Government and the Swarna Jayanti Haryana Institute for Fiscal Management, adding diverse perspectives from the state public finance ecosystem.

The Shivir began with an address by chief adviser cost Pawan Kumar, who emphasised the need for continuous learning, innovation and adaptability in modern public administration.

This was followed by a session on "Heartfulness Communication" by Dr Gauri Rangra of the Heartfulness Foundation, intended to strengthen empathetic leadership and improve stakeholder engagement.

The first day of deliberations centred on the development of an International Knowledge Body and on the need for standardised costing systems for municipal services.

Later, key observations and recommendations were presented to secretary, DoE, V Vualnam.

The suggestions included establishing a nodal cell under the Department of Expenditure to create internationally benchmarked costing frameworks and practices, including those applicable to municipal bodies, through collaboration with both domestic and global institutions.

Vualnam offered strategic direction and outlined time-bound steps to address existing challenges in public financial management.

He also reiterated the Prime Minister's vision that young officers with fresh ideas should remain central to future Chintan Shivirs.

The second day began with a yoga session and continued with knowledge-sharing discussions held in association with academic institutions.

Speakers presented insights on the use of emerging technologies such as AI and machine learning to improve administrative efficiency, on applying corporate governance principles to strengthen accountability, on the importance of forensic accounting and early detection mechanisms to prevent financial irregularities, and on recognising public data and AI as public goods critical for inclusive development along with the design of equitable user-charge frameworks.

Round-table discussions further examined user-charge systems, corporate governance issues and the potential role of the Indian Cost Accounts Service (ICoAS) in developing transparent and inclusive pricing models.

The final day on November 30 concluded with a workshop on "Professional Evolution and New Growth Avenues," which explored emerging sectors and functional domains where ICoAS officers can drive impactful change in light of evolving technological and economic trends.

In his concluding remarks, the chief adviser cost commended the officers for their analytical depth and dedication to strengthening fiscal governance.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by additional chief adviser cost Manmohan Sachdeva, who encouraged officers to remain future-ready in an increasingly dynamic and interconnected world.

Contd. from Page 1...

## 'More than 75 pc

and government schools under Sarba Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), sub-health centre under National Health Mission (NHM) and electricity connections to almost every household, besides markets and mosques.

About 426 pucca and 985 kuccha units out of 1,548 houses of 1,700 families were demolished on Saturday, while the remaining will be evicted on Sunday, the official said.

The district administration engaged several hundred security personnel and used dozens of excavators along with scores of tractors during the eviction exercise.

Another officer claimed that notices were served on the alleged encroachers three months ago, asking them to vacate the lands within two months. They had requested an additional month to vacate, and the district administration agreed to it. The eviction drive is being carried out at Bedetipar, Sankhula, Juripar and Kendapara villages in the greater Lutumari Reserve Forest.

Some residents claimed that they had been living in the area for over 40 years and were unaware that it was forest land. Since the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led government came to power in 2021, it has carried out a series of evictions to clear land from alleged encroachments, mostly affecting the Bengali-speaking Muslim population.

On November 3, the Chief Minister asserted that eviction drives to clear encroachments will continue.

On July 21 this year, the CM said that 1.29 lakh bighas (over 42,500 acres) have been cleared of encroachment in the last four years, and around 29 lakh bighas (more than 9.5 lakh acres) of land are still under encroachment in the state.

Sarma had claimed that these huge amounts of land were under encroachment of "illegal Bangladeshis and doubtful citizens" in the state.

With the Assam government vowing to carry out a series of evictions to clear encroachments, political and social experts had earlier criticised such a move, saying that it was aimed at creating a 'narrative' ahead of the assembly elections next year. (PTI)

## BTC speaker condemns

colleges and universities marched in a large rally and later stormed the BTC Secretariat complex ahead of the BTC budget session. Protesters vandalised property inside the assembly hall, alleging that the BTC administration had issued a No Objection Certificate (NOC) endorsing the proposal to grant ST status to Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Matak, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes (Adivasis).

After inspecting the damaged hall, Daimary said the agitators arrived "armed with sticks" and claimed the attack appeared aimed at endangering BTC staff or elected representatives. "Damaging government property cannot be allowed. The attack was intentional. We condemn this incident and urge the police to arrest those involved," he said.

While expressing support for the concerns raised by the protesters, Daimary stressed that no agitation can justify violence. "We support their issue. But protests must be democratic and peaceful. Violence in the name of agitation cannot be accepted," he said. He added that the authority to grant ST status rests with the Union Government, and any dialogue should be held with both state and central leadership.

Following the unrest, the Kokrajhar district administration imposed strict prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, in and around the BTC Secretariat. Authorities have urged citizens to maintain peace as investigations are underway to identify those involved in the vandalism.

The broader issue continues to spark intense debate across Assam. The GoM report—approved by the state cabinet on November 26 and tabled in the Assembly during the winter session—proposes a three-tier ST classification to accommodate the six communities without affecting existing tribal quotas. It recommends a new 'ST (Valley)' category for Ahom, Chutia, Tea Tribes and Koch-Rajbongshi (excluding undivided Goalpara), while suggesting Moran, Matak and Koch-Rajbongshi (Goalpara) be included under 'ST (Plains)'.

The report highlights the need for continued dialogue with all stakeholders, noting that any final decision must be enacted by Parliament through a constitutional amendment.

As the debate intensifies, leaders across the political spectrum have urged restraint, warning that violent confrontations threaten public safety and risk deepening divisions within Assam's tribal and non-tribal communities. (With inputs from PTI)

## ST report satisfied all

reporters on the sidelines of a programme in Sonitpur district. Asked about opposition to the report by some groups, Sarma said, "Every issue will have some people in favour and some against. This is democracy. All people will not accept something just because I have said it."

Students from the Bodoland University here on Saturday stormed the assembly hall of the BTC secretariat, and vandalised property during the protest against the Assam cabinet's approval of the report. Bodos are one of the largest ST communities in Assam.

The GoM report has recommended three-tier classification of STs in the state so that the demand can be met without affecting reservation of the existing tribal groups.

It has further proposed the formation of a new category of 'ST (Valley)', and inclusion of Ahom, Chutia, Tea Tribes, and Koch-Rajbongshi (excluding undivided Goalpara) in it.

For Moran, Matak and Koch-Rajbongshi (Goalpara), it said they can be included in 'ST (Plains)', and the existing communities in this category 'do not have much opposition'.

The report said that dialogue has to continue with all stakeholders for a 'conclusive solution', and the final nod has to be given by the Parliament through Constitutional amendment. (PTI)

## CAG terms Assam

for 2023-24, laid in the Assembly on Saturday, said the budgetary assumptions of the state government "continued to be unrealistic and overestimated" during the fiscal year, as it incurred an expenditure of ₹ 1,39,449.66 crore against grants and appropriations of ₹ 1,69,966.13 crore, resulting in overall savings of ₹ 30,516.47 crore.

These savings stood at 17.95 per cent of total grants and appropriations made for the year.

The report said that "the savings were notional, as the funds were not actually available for expenditure", since the actual receipts were ₹ 1,38,830.79 crore against the estimated ₹ 1,65,215.70 crore.

Out of the total savings, only 0.35 per cent (amounting to ₹ 107.08 crore) was surrendered, which deprived the other departments from utilising the amount, indicating "poor" financial management.

In its recommendations, the CAG said the state government "may formulate a realistic budget based on reliable assumptions of likely resource mobilisation, the assessed needs of the departments and their capacity to utilise the allocated resources so as to avoid inflated budgeting without corresponding to the available resources". It also said that the Finance department "may review the departments having persistent savings for realistic budget allocation and monitoring of expenditure".

The report further pointed out that supplementary grants of a total of ₹ 30,210.86 crore were approved by the legislature for 2023-24, whereas audit analysis of utilisation of these grants showed that only 74.19 per cent of it was required.

"Seeking supplementary grants without a requirement is indicative of poor budgetary management by the state government. Further, it is also clear that there is an absence of allocative efficiency and utilisation efficiency by departments, which led to excess expenditure in some grants and savings in others", it noted.

The CAG report further said that 6,335 UCs aggregating to ₹ 18,669.55 crore during the period 2005-06 to 2022-23 had not been submitted.

In the absence of the UCs, it could not be ascertained whether the funds were utilised for the purposes for which those were given.

Till March 31, 2024, there were 485 annual accounts of 75 autonomous councils, development councils and government bodies, and 245 annual accounts of 39 PSUs (due up to 2023-24) pending for submission to the CAG for audit.

It impacted effective budgetary management and diluted accountability of these bodies, the CAG report added. (PTI)

## BJP contends 'first step' towards resolution

# Oppn claims report on ST demand 'vague'

**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** Opposition parties in Assam on Sunday criticised the government for allegedly failing to take a definitive position in the Group of Ministers' (GoM) report on the demand for the scheduled tribe status by six major communities in the state.

The ruling BJP and its ally, however, contended that the first step has been taken to meet the longstanding demand of these communities with the laying of the report in the Assembly on the last day of the Winter Session on Saturday.

Six communities — Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Matak, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes (adivasis) — have been seeking ST status, and the governments of various parties assured them of being sympathetic to their demand but there had not been any concrete step to fulfill it. If these communities are granted ST status, they will come under reservation for education and jobs.

A GoM of the incumbent Himanta Biswa Sarma-led administration has recommended a three-tier classification of STs in the state so that the demand can be met without affecting the reservation of the existing tribal groups.

The report said that dialogue has to continue with all stakeholders for a 'conclusive solution', and the final nod has to be given by Parliament through Constitutional amendment.

"The government is not interested in solving the problem. That is why it laid a very vague report and left the matter on the Central government," Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly Debabrata Saikia of the Congress claimed.

The BJP always criticises the Congress for not meeting the demand, but the saffron party too has done nothing concrete in this regard de-



spite being in power for a decade, said Saikia. "People of these communities have been struggling for reservation. Their aspirations remain unfulfilled. I have my doubts that this government will ever grant them ST status," added Saikia, who himself belongs to the Ahom community and is the son of former two-time Congress CM of the state Hiteswar Saikia.

AIUDF leader Rafiqul Islam alleged that the BJP-led government has no intention of granting ST status to the six communities.

"The BJP government has been in place here for last 10 years, but they have not taken any resolution in the matter. The report was silently placed and no discussion or resolution was allowed. This is a betrayal of the people," he said.

"The government still has a few months left. They should fulfil this demand if they are serious about it," Islam adding lending support for the ST status demand. The assembly elections in the state are due next year.

The BJP's ally, United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), which is based in the Bodo heartland,

which witnessed violent protests against the report on ST status demand, has been cautious in its approach.

"It is not a bill or an Assembly resolution. Just the report of the group of ministers has been laid," UPPL legislator Lawrence Isly said. "Our stand is clear that the existing ST communities should not face problems. That has been our demand before the state government," he said. Isly pointed out that it is a long-drawn process to get the final nod for the six communities to be included in the ST list.

"We appeal to the Central government to deal with the matter seriously and come out with a good solution," the UPPL leader added.

The BJP has welcomed the report, terming it a historic moment for the state.

"The decades-old issue is heading towards a resolution. This is a move towards protecting the rights of the indigenous people," the party's state spokesperson Pranjal Kalita said.

He exuded confidence that the Centre will formulate a way to meet the recommendations of the report in the near future. "The BJP will return to power in the state next year, and then a permanent resolution will be arrived at through discussions with all stakeholders," Kalita added.

The GoM report has recommended the formation of a new category of 'ST (Valley)', and inclusion of Ahom, Chutia, Tea Tribes, and Koch-Rajbongshi (excluding undivided Goalpara) in it. For Moran, Matak and Koch-Rajbongshi (Goalpara), it said they can be included in 'ST (Plains)', and the existing communities in this category 'do not have much opposition'. (PTI)

## CCTOA burns report as Bhimbor Deori Anniversary observed

### Organisation denounces GoM move on ST status

**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, Nov 30:** The Co-ordination Committee of Tribal Organizations of Assam (CCTOA) and the All Assam Tribal Sangha (AATS) have strongly opposed the Assam Cabinet's approval of granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six heterogeneous communities, calling the move a direct threat to the rights of existing tribal groups.

The Group of Ministers (GoM), led by cabinet minister Ranaj Pegu, submitted its report recommending ST status for the six communities during the winter session of the Assam Assembly on Saturday.

Reacting sharply, CCTOA Convenor and AATS General Secretary Aditya Kakhari said the decision was "totally unacceptable" and would never be accepted by tribal communities.

He warned that the move endangers the identity, constitutional safeguards and political rights of indigenous ST groups, terming it "dangerous for tribal Assam."

Meanwhile, the All Assam Tribal Sangha, in association with CCTOA, observed the 78th Death Anniversary of Jana Neta Bhimbor



Deori at the Tribal Rest House in Paltan Bazar, Guwahati, on Sunday. A shradhanjali programme was held to honour Deori, a pivotal leader of the tribal movement who played a key role in protecting Assam from annexation to East Pakistan and championed issues such as land rights, the line system, tribal belts and blocks, and political reservation.

Bhimbor Deori was also among the founders of the historic Tribal League, along with Rupnath

Brahma, Karko Chandra Doley and Jadav Chandra Khakhary, which fought against suppression and secured rights for tribal communities.

As part of the day's protest, CCTOA members burned a copy of the GoM's recommendation report, reiterating their demand for its immediate withdrawal.

Member organisations across the state also joined the agitation, signalling intensified opposition in the days ahead.

## CM 'stoking conflict' between 6 communities and existing STs: Gaurav on GoM report

**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi on Sunday accused Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of stoking conflict between the six communities demanding scheduled tribe status and the existing ST groups of the state.

He claimed that the report submitted by the government in the state Assembly on Saturday on the scheduled tribe demand was unable to convince that the rights of the existing ST communities will remain intact.

A Group of Ministers (GoM) had submitted its report in the state Assembly on Saturday on the demand for ST status by six communities — Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Matak, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes (adivasis). If these communities are granted ST status, they will come under reservation for education and jobs.

Gogoi, the party's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, said in a post on X that the "Congress has supported the claim that six indigenous communities of the state must be declared as ST without affecting the rights and privileges of the existing ST groups".

An assembly resolution to this end was passed during the last Congress government, he said, referring to a motion adopted under his father and Assam's three-time and longest serving CM Tarun Gogoi's administration.

On the GoM's report laid in the Assembly, Gogoi said, "Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma while bringing a report to grant category wise ST status has been unable to show that the rights of the existing ST communities remain intact."

Students from the Bodoland University here on Saturday stormed the assembly hall of the

BTC secretariat, and vandalised property during the protest against the Assam cabinet's approval of the report. Bodos are one of the largest ST communities in Assam.

"As an indigenous community, we want the best for our tribal brothers and sisters. But it seems that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is stoking another conflict between 6 indigenous communities and the scheduled tribes of Assam," the Congress leader claimed.

He alleged that this is typical divide and rule politics as practised by the British during the colonial era.

"People of Assam are fed up with this politics and will not wait for too long. We want to live in harmony as a strong united Bor Axom (greater Assam)," Gogoi asserted. Six major communities of Assam — Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Matak, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes (adivasis) — have been demanding ST status.

The GoM report has recommended three-tier classification of STs in the state so that the demand can be met without affecting reservation of the existing tribal groups.

It has further proposed the formation of a new category of 'ST (Valley)', and inclusion of Ahom, Chutia, Tea Tribes, and Koch-Rajbongshi (excluding undivided Goalpara) in it.

For Moran, Matak and Koch-Rajbongshi (Goalpara), it said they can be included in 'ST (Plains)', and the existing communities in this category 'do not have much opposition'.

The report said that dialogue has to continue with all stakeholders for a 'conclusive solution', and the final nod has to be given by the Parliament through Constitutional amendment. (PTI)

## AASAA rallies in Tinsukia, demands crackdown on child marriage and liquor menace

### HT Correspondent

**DIBRUGARH, Nov 30:** Members of the All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam (AASAA) on Sunday staged a bike rally and public demonstration in Makum, Tinsukia district, calling for urgent government intervention to tackle child marriage, bootlegging and the widespread consumption of locally brewed liquor, commonly known as sulai, in tea garden areas.

Led by AASAA Tinsukia district president Albert Orey, activists began the protest with a motorcycle rally across Makum before assembling for a demonstration in the town centre.

They raised slogans condemning the unchecked availability of illicit liquor, which they said has contributed to domestic violence, deteriorating health conditions and financial distress among tea garden workers.

The association also highlighted the high rate of school dropouts in tea garden communities. AASAA urged the Education Department to introduce targeted welfare schemes, incentives and improved school infrastructure to prevent students from leaving school.

"Child marriage and the curse of illegal liquor are destroying the future of our youth and our families," Orey said, "we are losing a generation to these twin scourges. We demand strict, visible action against the bootleggers and those who facilitate child marriages."

## TAYPA welcomes state push for ST status

### HT Correspondent

**SIVASAGAR, Nov 30:** The Tai Ahom Yuva Parishad Asom (TAYPA) has welcomed the state government's decision to support granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six agitating communities, expressing confidence that the move will gain momentum once the Union Government considers and tables a Bill in Parliament.

TAYPA president Diganta Tamuli thanked chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Cabinet colleagues for advancing the long-pending demand of the Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Koch Rajbongshi, Motak and Tea Tribes communities. He praised the chief minister for steering the issue through a politically sensitive period and expressed hope that he would exert sufficient pressure on the Centre to ensure the Bill is introduced during the Winter Session of Parliament.

Meanwhile, Partha Pratim Gogoi, president of the ATASU Sivasagar District Committee, told this correspondent over phone that the Tai Ahom students' wing was also pleased with the state government's decision.

## Nat'l seminar calls for restoring Piyoli Phukan, Jewram to India's freedom narrative

### HT Correspondent

**SIVASAGAR, Nov 30:** A national seminar on "The Anti-British Colonial Movement and Piyoli Phukan," organised by the Piyoli Phukan Smritirakha Samity in association with Sukapha Adhyan Kendra and Sibisagar Girls' College, was held on Sunday at the Yuva-dal Auditorium.

The seminar aimed to revive national attention on the contributions of Swahid Piyoli Phukan and Jewram Dulia Baruah, who laid down their lives in the struggle against British rule as early as 1830.

A large gathering of academics, intellectuals and researchers attended the event, making the deliberations both rich and impactful.

Speakers at the seminar argued that Piyoli Phukan — not Mangal Pandey — should be recognised as the first martyr of India's independence movement.

They stressed that mainstream historiography has long overlooked the sacrifices of the Northeast, and called for correcting this imbalance by placing regional heroes in their rightful place within the national narrative.

A compilation of research articles on Swahid Piyoli Phukan, edited by Aashrawika Bora and Diganta Borgohain, was released by Union Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita.

The minister said he had learned from organising committee secretary Bhairav Munda that the efforts to secure global recognition for Assam's early martyrs require substantial financial support, and as-



sure that he would try his best to contribute.

The organisers announced that subsequent discussions on the subject would be held in New Delhi and Shillong.

Addressing the gathering, Sahitya Akademi Award-winning author Rita Chowdhury said she felt a personal connection with Piyoli Phukan's story, having once performed in a drama based on his life. She said the world still knows far too little about Assam's rich but neglected heritage.

The sessions featured presentations by

scholars including Dr Pushpa Gogoi, Dr Nirod Barua, Dr Thungsen Beni Kithan of Nagaland University, Dr Amarendra Thakur of NEHU, Dr Hemajit Deodhai Phukan, the 8th Singphow King Bisa Mungdung Gam, and Dr Dayananda Borgohain. Dr Arindam Borkotoky moderated the discussions.

The seminar was attended by numerous teachers and distinguished guests, including Prof Sonaram Baruah, Prof Prabin Sharma, Dr Saumerjyoti Mahanta, Dr Sabyasachi Mahanta, Laksmikanta Mahanta and Diganta Borgohain.

## DSU slams Cabinet move on ST status, calls recommendation a threat to indigenous safeguards

### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** The Dimasa Students' Union (DSU) has sharply criticised the Assam Cabinet's recommendation to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six communities—Tai-Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Matak, Koch-Rajbongshi, and Tea & Ex-Tea Garden Tribes—terming the move undemocratic and dangerous for existing tribal groups.

In a press release issued on Sunday, the DSU accused the Cabinet of initiating a "deliberate act of dispossession," warning that extending ST status to large and socially advanced communities would severely undermine limited reservation quotas meant for historically marginalised tribes.

The decision was approved by the Cabinet during its meeting on November 26.

The organisation said the rights and safeguards secured by tribes such as the Dimasa, Karbi, Bodo, Mising, Rabha, Garo, Tiwa and others—many of whom live in remote and hilly

regions—cannot be diluted.

These protections, it said, were won through decades of struggle and must not be compromised by including groups that already possess substantial social, political and economic advantages across the plains of Assam.

The DSU reiterated that the existing Scheduled Tribes of Assam "will never relinquish the hard-won safeguards secured through struggle, sacrifice, and resistance."

As part of its formal response, the organisation put forward a single, unequivocal demand: the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Cabinet's recommendation to grant ST status to the six communities.

The DSU urged the people of Assam and policymakers at the national level to recognise the far-reaching implications of the proposal, warning that the move could permanently alter the socio-political balance and weaken constitutional protections for the state's most vulnerable tribal groups.

## 11 infiltrators sent back from Assam: CM

**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said that 11 illegal immigrants have been pushed back from the state.

The infiltrators were sent back from Sribhumi district, which shares boundary with Bangladesh.

"A midnight operation by @sribhumpolice so clean even Singham would pause the background music," Sarma said in a post on X, referring to Bollywood action thriller 'Singham'. "11 illegal entrants sent back by 00:30 hrs, no villain entry, no 12-minute monologue, not even a flying jeep," he said.

@assampolice — Karan Arjun + Rohit Shetty Universe. Hence proved!" the chief minister added, lauding the state police force by drawing comparison with the Hindi blockbuster movie and a top action movie director. (PTI)

## NFR uses underwater robotic vehicles to strengthen bridge safety

### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has undertaken extensive underwater and structural inspections of major railway bridges using advanced Remotely Operated Robotic Vehicle (RORV) technology.

The inspections covered key structures such as the iconic Saraighat Bridge over the Brahmaputra and several important bridges under the Alipurduar (APDJ) Division, where substructures remain submerged throughout the year.

The Saraighat Bridge — India's first rail-cum-road bridge over the Brahmaputra — spans 1.45 km between Pandu and Amingaon and remains one of the most critical transport links for the Northeast.

NFR carried out a comprehensive assessment using RORV surveys, LiDAR, thermal imaging,



Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) and Ultrasonic Pulse Velocity (UPV) tests.

The inspection covered pier caps, well foundations, scour zones, superstructure stress points

and deck components.

In the APDJ Division, 18 major bridges were thoroughly inspected, with the robotic system capturing high-resolution visuals of submerged piers, riverbeds and struc-

tural anomalies.

No major underwater defects were detected in any of the inspected bridges.

NFR completed underwater inspection of 13 bridges using RORV in 2024-25, and 34 additional bridges have already been inspected during 2025-26.

The data gathered has strengthened structural health monitoring and aided the planning of preventive maintenance.

NFR said it remains committed to adopting modern inspection technologies to ensure the safety and longevity of major bridges across the region.

The use of RORV, combined with advanced digital tools, represents a significant advancement in scientific bridge assessment and will continue to support the safeguarding of critical connectivity routes in the Northeast.

## Tasa hails 'historic' Bill granting land pattas to tea garden workers

### HT Correspondent

**JORHAT, Nov 30:** BJP Kaziranga MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa recently praised Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for enacting a landmark law that grants land pattas to tea garden workers residing in labour lines since the establishment of the estates.

Speaking to reporters at the Jorhat Press Club, Tasa—himself from the tea tribes community—said the passage of the Bill in the State Legislative Assembly on Friday marked a "historic and unprecedented" step, not just for Assam but for the entire country, noting that such legislation has never before been enacted in India.

Tasa said the law would give legal ownership rights to families who have lived in tea estates for nearly two centuries since the days of British planters. The move, he said, aims to restore dignity and uplift the community, which has long assimilated into Assamese society and made significant contributions to the state's language, literature and culture.

He described the decision as "significant and complex," as the government will allot one bigha of land to each eligible family from land leased to tea planters.

He added that there was widespread jubilation in tea estates across the state as the community's long-standing demand had finally been met.

Listing several initiatives undertaken for the comprehensive development of tea garden workers, Tasa highlighted improvements in healthcare, education, drinking water supply, road construction, installation of individual electricity meters, periodic financial assistance and job reservations.

He added that the government is also planning to provide houses to workers under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).

## 'Balukat Biyali Bela' steals the spotlight at All Assam One-Act Drama Contest

### HT Correspondent

**MORIGAON, Nov 30:** The 32nd Karmapran Khirod Barua Memorial All Assam One-Act Drama Competition concluded at the Morigaon School Field on November 29, bringing down the curtain on three days of spirited performances. The festival, held from November 27, saw participation from 35 teams across the state.

Balukat Biyali Bela by Jyoti Silpa Group, Nagaon, emerged as the Best Drama of the competition. Sandhani Group, Guwahati, secured second place for their play Bibhu, while Tirtha Natya Dal, Guwahati, was adjudged third for A Beautiful Melody.

Luhit Bora won the Best Director award for Balukat Biyali Bela. In the acting categories, Ranjan

Talukdar bagged Best Actor for his portrayal of Mahidhar in Bagh, while Rajib Luchan Bora received the Second Best Actor award for his role in Head Sir.

Among women performers, Banalata Devi clinched the Best Actress award for her role as Guhani in Angar, and Priyanka Bora won Second Best Actress for portraying Jeuti in Balukat Biyali Bela.

Netra Kamal Bora was declared Best Comedy Actor for his role as Satya in Kun Pathar Pathik, Nagaon.

Playwright Jyoti Prasad Bhuyan received the Best Script award for Gundhi, staged by Nibedan Drama Group, Nagaon. In the child category, Dhiti Kakati won Best Child Actress for her performance in Saku, presented by Sisti Kala Krishti Kendra, Guwahati.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

Do what you can, with what you have, where you are. -Theodore Roosevelt

## Bid to end Russia-Ukraine war

Everyone must hope that the present talks to end the war between Russia and Ukraine succeed. It is a conflict that has cost perhaps half a million lives with many more injured, driven millions more into exile and wreaked havoc with the economy and infrastructure in Ukraine and, to a lesser extent, Russia. International relations have been destabilized and the conflict has become a proxy for a larger confrontation between the US-dominated NATO powers and Russia, with behind it China, the most comprehensive challenger to the Washington-dominated world order. Peace plans are now circulating, with a 28-point proposal seen as too "pro-Moscow" apparently superseded by a 19-point plan drawn up with input from Kiev and the European powers. The sticking points are what they largely were nearly four years ago, before the Russian invasion - territorial demarcation, the expansion of NATO, the rights of Russian-speaking people, the sovereignty of Ukraine and the deployment of foreign troops into its territory. The left and the anti-war movement should avoid any temptation to conduct a running commentary on the details. It should rather champion some broad principles and, above all, confront the conduct of the British and US governments.

US President Donald Trump appears to be motivated by two main factors in pushing for peace. The first is that he is intent on looting Ukraine's economy, a priority fully reflected in his original proposals. To make the most of Ukraine's resources, a cessation of hostilities is required. This banditry exposes the fiction that Ukraine enjoys full sovereignty today. It is entirely beholden to Washington, and has to swallow any amount of humiliations and asset-stripping to keep its mercurial president inside. Secondly, it is clear that Ukraine is losing ground militarily, albeit slowly. Russia has made no strategic breakthrough, but the military momentum is all one way. Ukraine is buffeted by an all-enveloping corruption scandal - far from its first - and is having great difficulty in replenishing the ranks of its armed forces. If one army is to collapse, it is far more likely to be the Ukrainian.

That would open the way to far more sweeping Russian annexations in the east, centre and south of the country, to the detriment of US interests. Yet that does not stop Keir Starmer manoeuvring for a prolongation of the war. He is in the van of those advancing demands which are obstructions to any viable peace plan. So, NATO forces would be deployed with NATO back-up, armed with NATO munitions and buttressed with NATO-style guarantees. Yet the expansion of NATO was one of the main, and the most cogent, of Vladimir Putin's justifications for his 2022 invasion, wrong as that illegal action remains. Starmer prefers to expend millions on prolonging a war which he hopes will leave NATO ascendant, Russia weakened and China's influence diminished. And he is handing over billions every year to that end, domestic budget stringency notwithstanding.

## Rajanikanta Bordoloi: Father of the Assamese Novel

Rajanikanta Bordoloi (1867-1940) stands as one of the tallest pillars of modern Assamese literature. Widely regarded as the Father of the Assamese Novel and often crowned the Emperor of Novels, he gave the nascent Assamese prose narrative its full stature, dignity, and artistic maturity during the luminous Jonaki era. His works not only entertained but also awakened a sense of pride in Assam's glorious past, instilled patriotic fervor, and painted vivid pictures of the land's social realities. Bordoloi was more than a novelist; he was a poet, playwright, essayist, humorist, historian, and cultural chronicler whose multifaceted genius enriched almost every branch of Assamese letters.

He was born on 24 November 1867 in Hedayetpur, a locality near Kukurmara in Guwahati. His father, Narakanth Bordoloi, and mother, Swarnamoyee Devi, belonged to an old family originally known as Dihingia Bordolois because their ancestors had lived near the Dihing river in Upper Assam. During the turbulent period of Burmese invasions, his grandfather Tuwaram Bordoloi fled to Nadiya-Shantipur in present-day Bangladesh and later settled in Bajali when peace returned. Narakanth was born in Bajali, but the family subsequently moved to Hajo, North Guwahati, and finally to Guwahati. His migratory background perhaps instilled in young Rajanikanta a deep curiosity about Assam's history and geography.

His early education began at his maternal uncle's house in North Guwahati. In 1885 he passed the Entrance examination from Guwahati Government High School, securing a scholarship of twenty rupees per month, a considerable sum in those days. He pursued higher studies in Kolkata, first at Metropolitan College, where he cleared the F.A. examination in 1887, and then completed his B.A. in 1889. It was in Kolkata that he came into close contact with the Assamiya Bhasha Unnati Sadhini Sabha and the history Jonaki magazine. Even as a college student he contributed a

series of scientific essays titled "Sharira Tattva" to Jonaki, revealing his early interest in rational thought and popular science. The romantic historical novels of Sir Walter Scott and the patriotic fervor of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay left an indelible mark on the young scholar. He resolved to craft similar grand narratives rooted in Assam's own soil and history.

After returning to Assam, Bordoloi joined government service in 1890 as a clerk in the Guwahati Deputy Commissioner's office. An incident often recounted in his biographies occurred when the British Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Gait, asked him some basic questions about Assam's geography and history. Unable to answer satisfactorily, Bordoloi felt deeply ashamed. That moment became a turning point; he vowed never again to remain ignorant about his motherland. Ironically, the same Mr. Gait later became a close admirer of Bordoloi's scholarship and helped him rise to the post of Sub-Deputy Collector in 1891. Bordoloi supplied valuable historical material for Gait's famous book A History of Assam. He served in various districts including North Lakhimpur, Barpeta, and Nagaon, rising to the rank of Deputy Commissioner of Nagaon in 1909 and Extra Assistant Commissioner before retiring in 1918. Yet administrative duties never overshadowed his literary passion; he wrote steadily throughout his career, often late into the night after finishing official work.

Bordoloi's first novel Miri Jiyori, published in 1894, is universally acknowledged as the first full-fledged social novel in Assamese. Set against the life of the Mising community, it portrayed the joys and sorrows of tribal society with rare sympathy and realism. This was followed in 1900 by Manomati, a magnificent historical romance set in the golden age of the Ahom kingdom. The novel brought to life the reign of Gadadhar Singha and the tragic love story of princess Joymoti with such power that it instantly estab-



DEGREE OF THOUGHT  
By: Satyabrata Borah

lished Bordoloi as a master storyteller. In 1909 appeared Danduwa Droh, a stirring narrative of the great Danduwa rebellion against Ahom authority. Over the next two decades he produced a series of masterpieces: Rangili (1925), Tamreshwari Mandir (1926), Nirmal Bhakat (1926), Rahdoi Ligiri (1930), and Radha-Rukminir Ran. He also drew from folk traditions in Khamba-Thoibir Sadhu, a retelling of a beloved Manipuri legend. Each novel was meticulously researched; Bordoloi consulted old copper-plate inscriptions, buranjis (Ahom chronicles), folk songs, archaeological remains, and oral narratives to recreate the past with astonishing authenticity.

What distinguished Bordoloi from mere chroniclers was his ability to breathe life into history. Like Walter Scott, he wove romance, adventure, and human

drama around historical events. Like Bankim Chandra, he infused his stories with patriotic zeal and linguistic beauty. His prose was rich yet lucid, rhythmic yet restrained, capable of evoking both the grandeur of royal courts and the quiet sorrow of ordinary lives. For these reasons contemporaries affectionately called him the Scott of Assam and the Bankim Chandra of Assam.

Beyond novels, Bordoloi's contribution to other genres was immense. His two early books Jnan-Sapon (1897) and Manobigyan introduced scientific temper and psychological insight to Assamese readers. His short-story collections Ga-Dhan (1931), Premor Upasak (1932), and Saundaryar Upasak (1932) displayed delicate sensibility and keen observation of human nature. As a poet he wrote stirring verses such as "Manar Prati Akramanar Geet" during the Burmese invasions theme. Under the pen-name Bhoilai Sharma he produced hilarious

satirical sketches including Moi Swadhin Ne?, Atmabinodak Thiyetar Hol, and Nagar Sankirtan that poked gentle fun at contemporary society and bureaucracy and social pretensions.

His essays remain treasure troves of knowledge. Pieces such as "Asamat Upanyasar Sanjuli", "Mor Jiban Dharanar Abhigayata", "Mor Sahityik Jibanar Atit Kahini", "Mahapurush Sri Sri Sankaradev", "Manipur Jati", and "Sadiyar Purani Tattva" combine scholarship with literary grace. Published in journals like Banhi, Awahan, Usha, and Jonaki, these essays laid the foundation for serious research in Assamese. In 1925 he edited the magazine Assam Pradipika and presided over the eighth session of the Assam Sahitya Sabha held at Nagaon, delivering a memorable presidential address.

On 25 March 1940 Rajanikanta Bordoloi passed away in Guwahati, leaving behind a legacy that continues to illuminate Assamese literature. His novels are not merely stories; they are living monuments of Assam's past. Through Manomati generations have felt the pulse of Ahom glory; through Danduwa Droh they have heard the cry for justice; through Miri Jiyori they have understood the dignity of tribal life. He taught an entire people to look upon their history not with inferiority but with pride, not as a forgotten chapter but as a vibrant heritage worthy of celebration.

More than eight decades after his death, Bordoloi's language still enchants, his characters still move hearts, and his vision of a culturally confident Assam still inspires. In an age when Assamese prose was struggling to find its feet, he gave it wings. He proved that a regional language could produce literature of the highest order, comparable to the best in the world. That is why, whenever the history of Assamese literature is written, the brightest chapter will always belong to the man who turned the dim lamp of Jonaki into a radiant sun: Rajanikanta Bordoloi, the undisputed Emperor of the Assamese novel.

## Markets are soaring, but why not your mutual funds?

By: Dipak Kurmi

India's stock markets have entered a curious phase where headline indices gleam with optimism while the average investor remains puzzled, even disappointed. The Sensex and Nifty are now hovering near peaks last seen almost fourteen months ago, yet many mutual fund holders find their portfolio values stagnating rather than rising in sync with this surge. This disconnect is not a mystery but a reflection of a distinctly narrow rally, one powered by a handful of index heavyweights rather than a broad-based market upswing. This divergence between headline strength and portfolio underperformance reveals both structural dynamics in the market and global forces that are shaping investor sentiment.

The present rally has been fuelled largely by a select cluster of stocks that command disproportionate weight in the benchmark indices. Banking behemoths such as HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank, along with Reliance Industries, have been central to this uptrend. Their rise has been sufficient to propel the Sensex and Nifty to new highs, but this veneer of prosperity hides the fact that nearly half of the Nifty 50's constituents remain far below their all-time highs. This explains why many investors whose mutual fund allocations include diversified holdings across sectors see little reflection of the index's exuberance. The dominance of a few stocks means that the indices are rising without the broader market participating in any substantive way.

A striking example of this disparity lies in sectors such as IT and pharmaceuticals. Pressured by US President Donald Trump's tariff decisions and ongoing uncertainty surrounding H-1B regulations, these sectors remain well below their September 2024 peaks. The drag from these underperforming segments has weighed down diversified funds, even as frontline indices have risen over ten percent since January. More telling is the performance of broader market indices: the BSE small-cap index is down more than five percent, while the mid-cap index has risen only marginally above one percent. The contrast illustrates how narrow the rally is and how heavily the index gains rely on select large-cap momentum rather than a cyclical revival across industries. The breadth of the rally is, in fact, historically thin. Less than one-fourth of the stocks in the benchmark indices are responsible for the current uptrend, leaving the majority languishing without recovery. The possibility of a catch-up now appears constrained, largely because valuations in mid- and small-cap segments remain stretched. During the build-up to the October 2024 rally, these segments absorbed substantial capital flows, pushing prices far ahead of fundamentals. Even with the recent correction, analysts argue that mid-caps and small-caps remain expensive relative to earnings expectations. Conversely, large caps, after a long phase of consolidation, have only now started to look attractive once again, drawing higher institutional interest and participating more aggressively in this narrow bull phase.

Another reason many investors do not see significant improvement in their mutual fund values is that the Sensex has essentially only reclaimed levels last seen in September 2024. The index's 17 percent rise since April 2025 represents a recovery more than renewed wealth creation. Investors who deployed lump-sum amounts during market highs last year have merely seen their notional losses narrow rather than witnessing fresh gains. Those investing through systematic investment plans appear better positioned, yet even their returns have averaged out over a period of volatility, falling short of the headline index gains recorded over the past seven months. A quieter but influential factor shaping recent market behaviour is the cooling of the IPO rush. The first half of the year saw an unusually strong pipeline of initial public offerings, many of which were structured as

offers for sale rather than fresh capital issuance. This meant that investor funds were redirected from the secondary market toward providing exit opportunities for institutional holders, founders, and promoters rather than supporting corporate expansion. With this pipeline now slowing, there is a chance that liquidity will flow back into the secondary markets, strengthening both retail participation and domestic mutual fund inflows, which have remained remarkably consistent despite global turbulence.

India has also moved somewhat out of sync with global equity markets through most of the year. The US, Europe, China, and Japan benefited from an extraordinary artificial intelligence-driven rally that did not find an Indian equivalent. As a result, India lost significant foreign portfolio investment during earlier months. However, as concerns regarding a possible AI bubble gain traction and with global investors increasingly seeking markets that offer a counter-narrative to tech-driven exuberance, India stands to re-enter global allocation strategies. Expectations of a US Federal Reserve rate cut next month further heighten this possibility, as lower American yields tend to push global capital toward emerging markets, providing India with a fresh source of liquidity at a crucial juncture.

The question that naturally arises now is whether this bull rally can sustain itself and broaden into a healthier, more inclusive upswing. Several important variables will determine the answer. The first is crude oil. The recent decline in Brent crude prices has been central to the market's current optimism. Cheaper crude reduces India's current account deficit, helps contain inflation, and stabilises the rupee—three macroeconomic pillars that strongly influence equity sentiment. If crude continues to soften over the coming months, it could provide a durable foundation for sustained equity gains, especially for sectors sensitive to input costs and currency fluctuations.

The second decisive factor is the anticipated rate cut by the US Federal Reserve. A cut would not only indicate easing financial conditions globally but could also trigger parallel adjustments by central banks in other economies, including India. Lower interest rates tend to support corporate earnings, reduce borrowing costs, and encourage equity inflows from global funds seeking higher returns. Historically, India has responded favourably to periods of global monetary easing, especially when accompanied by strong domestic consumption and relative political stability.

While these conditions appear favourable, the market must also contend with risks. A global slowdown, especially in the US or China, could dampen export-oriented sectors. A resurgence in crude prices due to geopolitical events could immediately reverse the recent inflation gains. Domestically, if the rally continues to remain concentrated in a handful of stocks, the structural fragility of the market might deepen rather than resolve. Broader participation from sectors such as manufacturing, consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, and IT will be essential to establishing a genuinely sustainable bull market. The paradox of India's current market moment is that exuberant index numbers conceal more than they reveal. The rally's narrowness explains why mutual fund investors are yet to enjoy the benefits of new highs and why the sense of optimism remains uneven across investor categories. Yet, within these contradictions lies potential. A stable macroeconomic backdrop, resurgent foreign inflows, moderating crude prices, and the possibility of global monetary easing could, if aligned, convert today's selective upswing into a more balanced and inclusive market rise. Until then, investors will need to navigate this rally with tempered expectations and a clear understanding that headline numbers often tell only a fraction of the market's true story. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

## India at the crossroads navigating Global trade headwinds in tariff war

By: T.N Ashok

The World Trade Organization's latest assessments paint an increasingly sombre picture of global commerce. After an unexpectedly robust first half of 2025—when merchandise trade volumes surged 4.9% year-on-year—the momentum has decisively shifted. The WTO's November Goods Trade Barometer dropped to 101.8 from 102.2 in June, signalling a clear deceleration even as it remains marginally above the long-term trend of 100.

Behind these numbers lies a more troubling reality: the early-2025 surge was largely artificial, driven by front-loading of imports ahead of anticipated tariff increases and exceptional demand for AI-related goods like semiconductors and telecommunications equipment. Once these temporary factors fade, the underlying weakness becomes apparent. The WTO now projects merchandise trade growth of just 2.4% for 2025, plummeting to a mere 0.5% in 2026—a dramatic downgrade from earlier forecasts and a stark warning that the post-pandemic trade recovery is exhausting itself. The culprit is clear: rising protectionism centred primarily on the United States, coupled with trade policy uncertainty that has metastasized across the global economy. Air freight and container shipping indices—traditionally early warning indicators—have weakened significantly, while agricultural raw materials already sit below trend at 98.0. As WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala noted, the world faces a potential structural unwinding of globalization, with trade flows permanently rerouting toward countries with preferential agreements.

While the global trade system contracts, two Asian giants find themselves navigating parallel challenges that could reshape the world economy. China's slowdown—GDP growth declining to 4.8% in the third quarter of 2025—stems from a debt-laden real estate sector, aging demographics, and reduced industrial activity. For an economy that has served as the world's manufacturing hub and largest consumer of commodities, this deceleration reverberates globally.

India, despite posting robust 8.2% GDP growth in the July-September quarter, faces its own export crisis. The irony is sharp: while India's domestic consumption-driven model has insulated it from some global shocks, its export sector—particularly to the United States—has been devastated by tariff escalation. This creates a paradox where India grows rapidly domestically while haemorrhaging export market share internationally. The China-India dynamic matters profoundly because together these economies account for a substantial portion of global growth among emerging markets. China's weakening demand affects commodity prices worldwide, while its manufacturers flooding global markets with discounted goods intensify competition for Indian exporters. India's trade deficit with China reached a record \$99.2 billion in

FY2025, reflecting structural dependencies in electronics, machinery, and chemicals that make New Delhi simultaneously a competitor and a customer of Beijing.

The severity of India's predicament crystallizes around a single number: \$530 billion, the bilateral trade target that India and the United States set for 2030. That goal now appears increasingly fantastical. Between May and September 2025, Indian exports to the U.S. collapsed by 37.5%—from \$8.8 billion to \$5.5 billion—following Trump administration tariff escalations that began at 10% in April, doubled to 25% in early August, then surged to 50% by month's end.

The ostensible trigger: India's continued purchase of Russian oil. More than one-third of India's crude imports come from Russia, a trade relationship that bilateral commerce reached \$68.7 billion in the year ending March 2025—nearly six times pre-pandemic levels. The Trump administration framed the tariffs as punishment for "fueling the war machine," though India has consistently argued it was encouraged by Western powers to stabilize energy markets through these purchases. Labour-intensive sectors bore the brunt: textiles, apparel, gems and jewellery, marine products, leather goods, and engineering goods—historically the backbone of India's employment-heavy export basket. The Global Trade Research Initiative estimates that if these tariffs persist, Indian merchandise exports to the U.S. could slide from \$86.5 billion in 2024-25 to roughly \$60.6 billion in 2025-26, a nearly 30% contraction that threatens to unravel a decade of export gains. India finds itself caught in a geopolitical vise. It cannot easily abandon Russian oil without alternative supply arrangements that maintain energy affordability—critical for an economy where household consumption drives growth. New Delhi's October 2025 imports of U.S. crude reached their highest level since March 2021, and major refiners like Reliance Industries have reduced orders from sanctioned Russian companies Rosneft and Lukoil while increasing imports from Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Yet this pivot comes at significant cost. Sanctions imposed by the U.S. on Russian oil majors (effective November 21, 2025) precipitated an 8% increase in global Brent crude prices, projected to increase India's annual oil import expenditure by \$6-7 billion. Indian refineries' operational costs are expected to spike by roughly 2%. The elimination of discounted Russian crude—which once provided a competitive advantage for Indian refiners—now becomes a fiscal burden.

The diplomatic calculus is equally fraught. Reducing Russian oil purchases risks antagonizing Moscow, a strategic partner since the 1970s that provides significant defense equipment. But maintaining current import levels keeps the 50% U.S. tariff regime in place, devastating export competitiveness. Recent signals sug-

gest India may be negotiating a compromise—gradually winding down Russian oil imports in exchange for U.S. tariff reductions to 15-16%—but even this remains uncertain.

The WTO's prescription for the global trade slowdown emphasizes multilateral cooperation and rules-based frameworks. The organization advocates for maintaining open and predictable trade policies, noting that the number of quantitative restrictions on AI-related goods has climbed from 130 in 2012 to nearly 500 in 2024. The report stresses that 87% of global merchandise trade occurs outside the United States, suggesting diversification away from bilateral dependencies.

For trade policy uncertainty, the WTO recommends that countries resist retaliatory measures and utilize existing dispute settlement mechanisms. The organization warns that spreading tariffs and uncertainty could turn 2025's modest 2.4% growth into a 1.5% contraction if reciprocal tariffs multiply. Enhanced transparency in trade measures, adherence to WTO commitments, and investment in trade-enabling infrastructure form the core of its recommendations.

Critically, the WTO highlights opportunities in services trade and emerging technologies. AI could boost cross-border flows by nearly 40% by 2040 if policies bridge the digital divide and maintain open markets. This suggests that countries like India—with strong IT sectors and services capabilities—could partially offset merchandise trade losses through services expansion. India has already begun implementing what the WTO prescribes. In the first half of FY 2025-26, exports to 24 countries spanning Africa, Latin America, Middle East, and parts of Europe and Asia registered positive growth, together accounting for \$129.3 billion—roughly 59% of India's exports. This diversification blunted some damage: despite the U.S. collapse, overall exports during April-September 2025 rose 3.0% year-on-year to \$220.12 billion.

But diversification alone cannot solve India's structural challenges. The country must accelerate domestic manufacturing through Production-Linked Incentive schemes, reduce dependency on Chinese inputs (particularly in electronics where components remain overwhelmingly Chinese-sourced), and upgrade export quality and innovation. Infrastructure investments—from industrial corridors to port facilities—are showing results, with manufacturing PMI reaching 59.2 in October 2025, indicating sharp expansion.

The trade deficit remains problematic. October 2025 saw a record \$41.68 billion deficit as merchandise exports fell 11.8% while imports soared 16.6%. With foreign exchange reserves at \$687 billion providing 11-month import cover, India has buffer capacity, but sustained deficits could pressure the rupee and stoke inflation, especially with energy imports remaining large. (IPA Service)

# The Terror of AIDS as a Social Malady

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuvan

In this twenty-first century, an age of unparalleled advancement in science and technology, humankind has conquered space, transformed the pace of the world through artificial intelligence, and become capable of defeating hitherto incurable diseases through ever-new breakthroughs in medical science. Yet, even on this journey of civilisation, certain dark aspects still prevail that can, in a single moment, dim the pride of human achievement. One such dark aspect, a black stain upon the mirror of human civilisation, is the infection known as AIDS or HIV. Though medical science regards it as a viral disease that destroys the body's immune system, its nature within the social order is extraordinarily complex and terrifying. To call it merely a physical illness would be a mistake; in truth, it is a social malady that devours a person's social existence, dignity, and mental stability far more swiftly than it consumes the body. The dreadfulness of this disease cannot be measured by mortality statistics alone; its real agony lies in society's attitude toward the affected person, in the cruel neglect shown to him or her, and in the profound social discrimination that arises from it.

When we discuss AIDS or HIV infection, we must first delve deep into its social and psychological impact. The moment the presence of this virus is detected in a person's body, that individual's first battle does not begin against the virus itself but against the society that surrounds him or her. The virus inside the body slowly weakens

the immune system, yet the behaviour of people in society destroys the affected person's will to live even more rapidly. The notions prevalent in our society regarding AIDS are so narrow and steeped in superstition that the affected individual is effectively expelled from society or subjected to an undeclared exile. He or she is not seen merely as a patient but is branded as a sinner or a person of loose character. In this court of moral judgment, people forget that the disease can arise from any cause and is not a measure of a person's character. Because of this narrow-mindedness, AIDS has ceased to be solely a problem of medical science today; it has become a burning issue of human rights and social justice.

The unnecessary fear and ignorance that have taken root in society around the spread of AIDS constitute one of the primary causes of this problem. Even now, a widespread belief persists among the general public that the disease will spread simply by coming into contact with an affected person, by speaking with him or her, or by sharing a meal. Although science has repeatedly proved these notions completely false, the fear lodged in people's minds is so deep that they find it difficult to trust science. Taking advantage of this ignorance, an invisible wall rises in society that creates a division between affected individuals and the healthy majority. This division does not merely cripple the affected person mentally; it also isolates the members of his or her family. As a result, many people hide their illness out of shame and fear of ostracism. This effort to maintain secrecy indirectly fuels the fur-



ther spread of the disease. When patients, out of fear, avoid treatment and continue normal social interaction while concealing the truth, they unknowingly become a danger to others. Thus it is evident that society's hatred and fear weaken the very struggle against this disease.

In the present time, another crucial aspect of the terror of AIDS is the increasing use of deadly addictive substances among the younger generation. A large section of the youth, whom society regards as the future of the nation, has today gone astray and fallen into the grip of drugs. There exists a direct link between this addiction and AIDS. When drug-dependent young men and women inject substances into their bodies using needles, they often share

the same syringe within a group. Through this process, the HIV virus passes extremely easily and rapidly from one person's blood to another's. This process occurs so silently and fatally that the victim starts moving toward death even before realising what has happened. Not only is an individual life destroyed, but the nation also suffers an irreparable loss. At the very age when these young people should be contributing their intellect and energy to society, they become a burden instead. Watching their child waste away before their eyes while facing society's scorn, families fall apart.

In the context of AIDS, the situation of women and children is the most painful and sensitive of all. In our male-dominated society, women often have to bear the consequences of men's behaviour or mistakes. A homemaker may remain faithfully within the four walls of her home fulfilling her domestic duties, yet because of her husband's reckless lifestyle she may fall victim to this deadly disease. In such cases the woman is entirely blameless, yet society almost always looks upon her with suspicion or brands her as bringing disgrace upon the family. Consequently, along with physical suffering she also becomes a victim of mental torture. On the other hand, if a pregnant mother is infected, there is a possibility that the disease will pass to the child in her womb. An innocent infant who has not yet seen the light of day and knows nothing of sin or virtue is born carrying this virus. That child's future becomes shrouded in darkness.

Whether trying to enrol in school or simply to play with friends, the child faces repeated rejection. Such behaviour from society creates a permanent wound in the tender mind of the child that may turn him or her into a hater of humanity.

AIDS is not merely a health issue; it is also a major cause of poverty and economic collapse. The economy of any country or state depends upon the productive capacity of its human resources. When people of working age fall weak because of this disease, national productivity declines. At the individual level, treatment for the disease is extremely expensive. Although the government provides medicines, the long-term costs of treatment, nutritious food, and associated tests become impossible for poor families to bear. Many families sell their land, jewellery, and everything they own and are reduced to nothing. Especially when the sole breadwinner of a family is affected or dies, the economic backbone of that family breaks. Children's education remains incomplete, they are forced into child labour, and they enter a cycle of poverty. In this way AIDS increases poverty in society, and poverty in turn aids the spread of AIDS through lack of treatment and awareness—creating a vicious circle that grips the entire society.

The constricted attitude in our society toward reproductive health and sex education is another principal reason for the spread of diseases such as AIDS. In our socio-cultural tradition, matters related to sexuality are still considered taboo or unfit for

discussion. Parents hesitate to speak about these things with their children, and educational institutions also face numerous obstacles in providing proper instruction on the subject. Because of this silence and reticence, curiosity arises among the rising generation, but in the absence of correct information they gather incomplete and distorted knowledge from friends or the internet. This erroneous understanding makes them careless and prevents them from grasping the importance of protected relationships. When, swayed by emotion, they take wrong decisions, the consequences become terrible. Society's sense of "shame" or "hesitation" is in fact akin to a social crime, because this very shame is pushing our children toward the abyss of death. Spreading sex education with a healthy and scientific outlook has become a demand of the times so that our generation can protect itself.

In the prevention of AIDS, the question of human rights and medical ethics is also of utmost importance. Like every other citizen, persons living with HIV have the fundamental right to live with dignity. Denying anyone education or employment solely because of AIDS in any educational institution, government, or private office is unconstitutional and inhumane. Yet in reality one sees that in workplaces the attitude of colleagues toward affected persons becomes intolerant. Sometimes even in the sacred precincts of hospitals, a section of doctors or nurses shows reluctance or neglect in treating such patients. Discriminatory behaviour from those associated with medical service is never desirable; it is an insult to the oath they have taken. Medical science is not only for the healing of the body; it must also be a medium for bringing hope and courage to the patient's mind. Laws alone are not enough; everyone must accept the humane philosophy that lies behind those laws.

A blow to the mind is often more fatal than one to the body. When a person learns that he or she is HIV-positive, intense despair and panic set in at first. Uncertainty about the future, fear of death, and dread of society's taunts break the person mentally. In many cases one finds that patients choose suicide out of depression long before the disease itself claims their life. During this mental struggle, even a little affection and encouragement from family and society can give them the inspiration to keep liv-

ing. Unfortunately, awareness about mental health remains very low in our society. We see the wounds on the body but remain blind to the storm raging within the mind. Counselling must be regarded as an indispensable part of treatment so that patients understand that life does not end here and that with proper treatment and precaution they too can lead a normal life.

To stop the terror of AIDS, governmental efforts must be accompanied by widespread social awakening. Advertisements, posters, and official schemes alone cannot solve this problem. What is needed is a mental revolution at the grassroots level. Religious leaders, teachers, social workers, writers, and artists of our society must take the lead in this field. If open discussion on this subject takes place during religious gatherings or social meetings, blind beliefs will disappear from people's minds. Sensitivity must be awakened through literature and art. When people realise that the affected person could be someone's own brother, sister, or child, compassion will replace hatred. The youth must be drawn toward sports and culture so that they are saved from the clutches of drugs. Healthy recreation and constructive thinking can protect young people from going astray.

In conclusion, it may be said that AIDS represents an enormous challenge before human civilisation at the present time. It points to the limitations of our science while simultaneously exposing the moral bankruptcy of our society. Yet even in this darkness we must keep the lamp of hope burning. The ceaseless research of science will surely one day discover a cure. But until that day arrives we cannot sit with folded hands. The greatest weapon we possess is awareness and empathy. We must reshape our society so that the disease is hated, not the patient; so that the darkness of ignorance is removed and the light of science spread; so that the right to life remains equal for all. AIDS is a malady, but inhumane behaviour toward fellow human beings is an even greater malady. Standing together we must defeat both maladies. Let us build a society where no individual has to wipe away tears in neglect and loneliness. With love, trust, and awareness we can create an AIDS-free and discrimination-free world. Only when our conscience awakens will society become healthy, and only a healthy society can build a strong nation.

*AIDS is not merely a health issue; it is also a major cause of poverty and economic collapse. The economy of any country or state depends upon the productive capacity of its human resources. When people of working age fall weak because of this disease, national productivity declines. At the individual level, treatment for the disease is extremely expensive. Although the government provides medicines, the long-term costs of treatment, nutritious food, and associated tests become impossible for poor families to bear. Many families sell their land, jewellery, and everything they own and are reduced to nothing. Especially when the sole breadwinner of a family is affected or dies, the economic backbone of that family breaks. Children's education remains incomplete, they are forced into child labour, and they enter a cycle of poverty. In this way AIDS increases poverty in society, and poverty in turn aids the spread of AIDS through lack of treatment and awareness—creating a vicious circle that grips the entire society*

## World AIDS Day: From Silence to Solidarity

By: Satvbrat Borah

World AIDS Day, observed every year on December 1, stands as one of the most recognized global health days, a moment when millions of people pause to remember those lost to HIV-related illnesses, celebrate the extraordinary progress made in treatment and prevention, and renew their commitment to ending the epidemic that has shadowed humanity for more than four decades. The day began in 1988, when ministers of health from around the globe gathered in London and agreed on the world needed a unified occasion to raise awareness, fight stigma, and mobilize resources against a virus that had already begun to reveal its devastating potential. Since then, each December 1 has carried a specific theme, yet the underlying message remains constant: solidarity, science, and human rights are the only paths toward an AIDS-free future.

The story of HIV and AIDS is inseparable from stories of fear, loss, courage, and redemption. When the first cases of what would later be called AIDS were reported in 1981 among gay men in Los Angeles and New York, few could have imagined the scale of the crisis to come. Pneumocystis pneumonia and Kaposi's sarcoma, rare conditions until then, suddenly appeared in young, previously healthy individuals whose immune systems seemed to have collapsed overnight. Newspapers spoke of a "gay cancer" or "gay plague," and panic spread faster than understanding. By the time scientists identified the human immunodeficiency virus as the cause in 1983 and 1984, the epidemic had already taken root on every continent.

In those early years, an AIDS diagnosis was a death sentence delivered with chilling certainty. Combination antiretroviral therapy did not exist, and the few drugs available, such as AZT introduced in 1987, offered only modest benefit at the cost of severe side effects. Funerals became a grim routine in affected communities. Artists, activists, writers, and ordinary citizens watched friends and lovers waste away, often abandoned by hospitals afraid to touch them and ostracized by families

ashamed or terrified of contagion. The stigma was so profound that some bodies went unclaimed, and many death certificates falsely listed other causes to spare surviving relatives embarrassment.

Yet even in the darkest moments, something remarkable happened. People refused to accept silence as an answer. In San Francisco, New York, London, Paris, and cities across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, affected communities organized. Gay men, hemophiliacs, sex workers, and people who injected drugs formed the first advocacy groups, demanding research funding, compassionate care, and an end to discrimination. The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, better known as ACT UP, pioneered a new style of confrontational activism with slogans like "Silence = Death" and daring protests that disrupted stock exchanges, pharmaceutical company headquarters, and even St. Patrick's Cathedral. Their work forced governments and drug companies to accelerate clinical trials, lower prices, and involve patients in decision-making processes that had previously excluded them.

Women, too, reshaped the narrative. Initially portrayed as mere vectors of transmission to men and babies, women living with HIV insisted on being seen as people deserving treatment and dignity. Mothers in Uganda and Thailand marched for access to medicines that could prevent transmission to their children. In South Africa, the Treatment Action Campaign, led by figures like Zackie Achmat, took the government to court and won the right to provide antiretroviral drugs in public health facilities, saving countless lives and setting legal precedents for health as a human right.

Science, pushed by activism and pulled by human desperation, delivered miracles no one dared hope for in the 1980s. The development of highly active antiretroviral therapy in 1996 transformed HIV from a fatal illness into a manageable chronic condition for those with access to medication. A person diagnosed today who starts treatment promptly and adheres to it can expect a near-normal lifespan. Drugs became simpler: from dozens of pills taken multiple times a day to, in

many cases, a single daily tablet. Long-acting injectables and future possibilities like monthly or even annual dosing are already in late-stage trials. Perhaps most revolutionary has been the discovery that effective treatment reduces viral load to undetectable levels, making sexual transmission essentially impossible, a principle captured in the message "U=U" or Undetectable equals Untransmittable, now endorsed by every major health authority on earth.

Prevention has been revolutionized as well. Male and latex condoms remain indispensable, but the toolbox has grown. Medical male circumcision reduces risk for heterosexual men by about sixty percent. Pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, a daily pill or bi-monthly injection, cuts HIV acquisition by more than ninety-nine percent when taken as prescribed. Post-exposure prophylaxis can prevent infection if started within seventy-two hours of exposure. And the dapivirine vaginal ring and forthcoming lenacapavir injections promise discreet, user-controlled options especially valuable for women in settings where negotiating condom use is difficult.

Mother-to-child transmission, once the most heartbreaking face of the epidemic, has become rare where services reach women. In 2000, fewer than fifty children in high-income countries acquired HIV from their mothers. By 2023, the number of new infections among children globally had fallen by seventy percent from its peak, and several countries, including Cuba, Thailand, and Belarus, have been certified as having eliminated mother-to-child transmission entirely. These victories did not happen by chance. They are the result of decades of investment in antenatal care, universal HIV testing for pregnant women, and provision of lifelong treatment to mothers and short-course prophylaxis to newborns.

Still, the epidemic is far from over. At the end of 2024, approximately thirty-nine million people were living with HIV, and roughly ten million of them, one in four, did not know their status or were not receiving treatment. Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Latin America have seen rising new infections in

recent years, often driven by punitive laws and inadequate harm-reduction services for people who use drugs. In sub-Saharan Africa, adolescent girls and young women remain disproportionately affected, facing intersecting vulnerabilities of gender inequality, poverty, and violence. Stigma, though lessened, persists: people living with HIV still face discrimination in employment, healthcare, travel, and even within their own families.

Funding, after years of growth, has plateaued or declined in real terms. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, PEPFAR, have saved an estimated twenty-five million lives since their creation, yet both face political headwinds and budget constraints. The search for a vaccine, the holy grail of HIV research, has yielded repeated disappointments, though recent trials using mRNA technology and broadly neutralizing antibodies have sparked cautious optimism. A cure remains elusive, but breakthroughs in gene editing and immune-based therapies suggest it may one day be possible to clear the virus from the body entirely or achieve sustained remission without daily medication.

World AIDS Day 2025 arrives at a moment of both triumph and urgency. The United Nations' 95-95-95 targets, that ninety-five percent of people living with HIV know their status, ninety-five percent of those diagnosed receive treatment, and ninety-five percent of those treated achieve viral suppression, are within reach globally by 2030 if current efforts are sustained and expanded. Several countries, including the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Botswana, have already met or exceeded these goals. Yet the final stretch is always the hardest. The people still unreached often live in the most marginalized circumstances: remote rural areas, criminalized communities, conflict zones, or societies where homosexuality or drug use can lead to imprisonment or death.

This year's theme, chosen by UNAIDS, emphasizes collective responsibility under the banner "Take the Rights Path." It calls on governments to repeal laws that criminalize HIV

transmission, exposure, or non-disclosure, as well as those that punish same-sex relationships, sex work, or drug possession. Evidence shows that such laws drive people away from testing and treatment, fueling underground epidemics. The theme also urges investment in community-led responses, because peers and local organizations consistently outperform top-down programs in reaching hidden populations with compassion and cultural understanding.

On December 1, cities will glow red: the Sydney Opera House, Niagara Falls, the Empire State Building, Table Mountain, and countless other landmarks bathed in crimson light as a reminder that HIV still touches every corner of the planet. Memorial quilts will be unfurled, candles lit, and names read aloud. Concerts, marches, free testing events, and school programs will bring generations together to learn from the past and commit to the future. In churches, mosques, temples, and community centers, faith leaders will preach love over fear. Scientists will present the latest data, activists will demand more, and young people, many born after the worst years of the crisis, will discover a history they must never repeat.

The red ribbon, simple loop of scarlet fabric introduced in 1991 by the Visual AIDS Artists Caucus, remains the most universal symbol of solidarity. Worn on lapels, tied around trees, printed on T-shirts, and projected onto screens, it whispers a promise: we will not look away. We will not forget the more than forty million lives already lost. We will not abandon the millions still living with the virus. And we will not rest until every person, everywhere, can live free from the threat of HIV.

That vision, once dismissed as utopian, now lies within reach. The tools exist. The knowledge exists. What remains needed is the political will, the funding, and the moral clarity to finish what earlier generations began in the face of unimaginable grief. World AIDS Day is not only a day of mourning or celebration. It is a day of reckoning and renewal, a day to measure how far we have come and how far we still must go, together, until the red ribbon can finally be retired and the story of AIDS becomes a chapter of history rather than a daily reality for millions. Until that day arrives, December 1 will keep calling us back, hearts open, fists raised, determined to turn solidarity into action and action into the end of an epidemic.



## All-party meeting: Oppn demands debate on SIR, national security in Parliament

**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** The Opposition on Sunday demanded that a discussion be held in Parliament over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and indicated that functioning of both the Houses would be hampered if such a debate is not allowed.

During an all-party meeting convened by the government a day before the Winter session of Parliament, the opposition parties also strongly pressed for a discussion on national security in the wake of the Delhi blast incident. They also alleged that the government wants to "finish off" democracy and "bury" parliamentary traditions.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the all-party meeting to discuss the agenda for the Winter session of Parliament starting Monday is a mere formality.

Ramesh, who attended the meeting, said the Modi government has made its intentions clear by listing a subject for a short duration discussion without any consultation with the Opposition.

"This session of 15 days will be the shortest in Parliamentary history. The Modi government has listed 13 Bills for passage. Of these one replaces an ordinance and two have gone through a committee of the Lok Sabha. So ten Bills have not been examined by the Standing Committee concerned," he said on X.

It is possible that a bill not listed at present will suddenly get introduced towards the later part of the short session, Ramesh said.

"The Modi government has made its intentions clear by listing a subject for a short duration discussion WITHOUT any consultation with the Opposition," he said.

Earlier, briefing reporters on the all-party meeting, Congress'



deputy leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi alleged that the ruling party under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to "finish off" democracy, "derail" Parliament and "bury" parliamentary traditions.

He said that at the all-party meeting, the Congress demanded a discussion on national security, air pollution, ensuring purity of voter list, farmers' issues and foreign policy.

"It seems the government, under the leadership of the prime minister and the home minister, is looking to finish off India's democracy and parliamentary traditions," he told reporters.

Gogoi said his party demanded that there be a discussion on security in the country, including national security in the wake of the Delhi blast.

It seems the government does not want short duration discussion on national security, he claimed.

"The second is the security of democracy. The EC before, during and after elections is acting in a biased manner. There should be a discussion on the purity of the voter list," he said.

Gogoi said the Congress also de-

manded a discussion on the issue of air pollution.

"Fourth is economic security. Farmers are not getting the right prices...also security against natural disasters is an issue," he said.

"We also raised the issue of foreign policy. India is formulating its foreign policy on the basis of other countries. Someone does not like us buying oil from Russia. Another country is investing in its defence and we are not ready," Gogoi said.

He said the Opposition is united, and does not want the temple of democracy to be used only to sing "paens of just one person".

It seems the government wants to "derail" Parliament and "bury" parliamentary traditions, he alleged.

The Samajwadi Party said it would not allow Parliament to function if a discussion on the SIR is not held during the Winter session.

After the all-party meeting, SP leader Ram Gopal Yadav asserted that the government cannot shy away from discussing SIR saying it is being conducted by the Election Commission.

"We will not allow the House to function if discussion is not held

on SIR," he said.

Speaking with reporters, TMC's Kalyan Banerjee said, "The TMC had earlier raised issues such as SIR, MGNREGA, but these were not allowed to be discussed. Why were they not allowed? The honourable speaker had said the government was not willing. If Parliament functions only with the government's consent, then what value does the Opposition hold?"

"We have called for allocating more time for Opposition as 70 per cent time is taken by the treasury benches," Banerjee, accompanied by party MP Derek O'Brien, claimed.

"Allow issues raised by Opposition such as SIR... 40 persons (booth level officers) have expired. The process of SIR should not be aimed at deleting names," he said.

Banerjee said there should be an elaborate discussion on national security.

"The all-party meeting has just become a ritual...PM is saying ghusphethiyas have to be thrown out, how many were there in Bihar-zero...this is all drama," he said, hitting out at the government over SIR.

Asked if the TMC would stall Parliament if discussion is not held on SIR, Banerjee said, "We think good sense will prevail and they will discuss SIR...We are not saying we will stall Parliament," Banerjee said.

After the all-party meeting, DMK's Tiruchi Siva said, "The government has listed 14 bills; the common issue for the Opposition is SIR."

CPI MP P Sandosh Kumar also raised the issues of national security in the wake of the Delhi blast, alleged irregularities in SIR and air pollution, calling for a debate on them in Parliament. (PTI)

## Delhi Police files FIR against Sonia, Rahul in National Herald case on ED complaint

**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** Delhi Police has filed an FIR against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi and other accused in the National Herald case on a complaint by the ED as part of the agency's money laundering probe into the high-profile case that alleges that the first family of the party "abused" their position for personal gains.

Official sources and documents said the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police filed a complaint against the Gandhis and seven others on October 3.

The police has pressed charges under sections 120B (criminal conspiracy), 403 (dishonest misappropriation of property), 406 (punishment for criminal breach of trust) and 420 (cheating) of the IPC in the FIR that names the Gandhis, Congress leaders Suman Dubey and Sam Pitroda, entities like the Young Indian (YI) and Dotex Merchandise Ltd, Dotex promoter Sunil Bhandari, Associated Journals Ltd. (AJL) and unknown others.

These entities are also named as an accused (except unknown others) in the ED chargesheet filed before a Delhi court in April. The court is yet to take its cognisance with the next date of hearing scheduled for December 16.

Slamming the move to file the FIR, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh charged on X, "The Modi-Shah duo is continuing with its mischievous politics of harassment, intimidation, and vendetta against the top leadership of the INC. Those who threaten are themselves insecure and afraid." "The National Herald matter is a completely bogus case. Justice will ultimately triumph. Satyameva Jayate," he said.

Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi said in a post on X that the FIR was "neither wine new nor bottle new nor glasses new".

"One trick wonder of a case where no money moved, where no immovable property transferred yet money laundering invented..." Singhvi posted.

The ED, according to the sources, used powers available to it under section 66(2) of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to get the police FIR registered. This section allows the federal agency to share evidence for registration of a criminal predicate offence by a law enforcement agency so that it can subsequently book a money laundering case to take forward the investigation.

The FIR will work to strengthen the ED case and the chargesheet which stems from a court order -- Metropolitan Magistrate of Delhi -- that took cognisance of a private complaint by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy on June 26, 2014 against alleged



irregularities in the National Herald's affairs, the sources said. The ED told the police that its complaint furnishes "additional facts" that disclose cognisable offence which are "beyond" the scope of the complaint of Swamy and the cognisance order of the Metropolitan Magistrate Court in 2014.

The FIR has taken cognisance of the allegations stated by the ED in a letter sent to the EOW on September 4. The contents of the ED communication are similar to what the central agency is understood to have stated in its chargesheet.

The ED had alleged in its chargesheet that a "criminal conspiracy" was orchestrated by several prominent political figures, including the first family of the Congress party led by Sonia Gandhi, her MP son Rahul Gandhi apart from late Congress leaders Motilal Vora and Oscar Fernandes and also Dubey, Pitroda and a private company Young Indian for alleged involvement in a money laundering scheme related to the fraudulent takeover of properties valued over Rs 2,000 crore belonging to the AJL.

It alleged the accused collected "bogus" rents from AJL's assets generated "fake" revenue through "sham" advertisements.

AJL is the publisher of the National Herald news platform (newspaper and web portal) and it is owned by Young Indian Private Limited.

Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi are majority shareholders of Young Indian with 38 per cent shares held by each one of them. They were questioned for hours by the ED in this case few years back.

The ED claimed its investigation has "conclusively" found that Young Indian, a private company "beneficially owned" by Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi "acquired" AJL properties worth ₹ 2,000 crore for a mere ₹ 50 lakh, significantly undervaluing its worth. (PTI)

## Parliament should not be stalled: Rijju

**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** Ahead of the Winter session of Parliament, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju on Sunday said the House should be allowed to function smoothly and that the government will keep on holding discussions with all parties to ensure smooth proceedings.

Asked whether the demand by the opposition for a discussion on Special Intensive Revision (SIR) has been accepted, Rijju said the agenda of the session will be decided by the Business Advisory Committee (BAC), which will meet this evening.

"The matter will be discussed at the Business Advisory Committee meeting this evening," he said.

After an all-party meeting convened ahead of the Winter session of Parliament, Rijju also said that at the meeting, which was also attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Union Health Minister and BJP president J P Nadra and several opposition leaders, all parties have given good suggestions and the government has taken them positively.

"Parliament should not be stalled and it should function smoothly. Government will keep discussing with all parties to ensure smooth functioning of the House," he told reporters after the two-hour long meeting.

Trinamool Congress leader Kalyan Banerjee said his party was ready to cooperate in running the House provided treasury benches also cooperate with the opposition.

"Government should allow discussion on issues such as SIR. Forty parties have lost their life conducting SIR exercise," Banerjee said.

Tiruchi Siva of the DMK said all opposition parties are unanimous in demanding discussion on SIR in the Winter session. (PTI)

## Modi-Shah continuing with 'mischievous politics of vendetta': Cong

**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** With Delhi Police filing an FIR against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in the National Herald case, the Congress on Sunday alleged that the "Modi-Shah duo" is continuing with its mischievous politics of harassment, intimidation, and vendetta against the party's top leadership. Condemning the action, the opposition party also said the National Herald matter is a "completely bogus case" and justice will ultimately triumph.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh charged, "The Modi-Shah duo is continuing with its mischievous politics of harassment, intimidation, and vendetta against the top leadership of the INC. Those who threaten are themselves insecure and afraid." "The National Herald matter is a completely bogus case. Justice will ultimately triumph. Satyameva Jayate," he said. Congress spokesperson and senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi said in a post on X that the FIR was "neither wine new nor bottle new nor glasses new". "One trick wonder of a case where no money moved, where no immovable property transferred yet money laundering invented upon creation of Young Indian as a not for profit co to merely hold shares of AJL which in turn runs and holds brand NH and continues to hold all property as before & as always. Condition precedent of ML (money laundering) movement of money and conversion of unaccounted to white money always absent, yet we have politically malicious proceedings continuing," he said on X.

"Ironically, Gandhis and other Congress functionaries as directors of YI cannot get dividends, cannot distribute profits, get not one perk, yet accused of ML!! Current FIR created by adding few lines re infusion of money by private company to enable payment of assignment money by YI to make AJL debt free," Singhvi said. Senior Congress leader Pramod Tiwari slammed the government over the development, alleging that it is working like the British rulers who took away people's democratic rights.

"This is politics of vendetta and we condemn it. We never bowed down earlier, neither will we bow down now nor in the future. Gandhi family has always fought for the independence of the country and we will keep fighting for the freedom of democracy," he said. (PTI)

## EC extends SIR schedule by one week; final roll now on Feb 14

**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** The Election Commission on Sunday extended by one week the entire schedule of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in nine states and three Union Territories amid allegations by opposition parties that the "tight timelines" were creating problems for people and ground-level poll officials.

In a statement, the poll authority said the enumeration form distribution will now continue till December 11 instead of December 4.

The draft electoral rolls will now be published on December 16 in place of December 9, while the final voters' list will be out on February 14, 2026 in place of February

7. Officials said the commission took the decision to extend the timeline for all phases of the SIR based on internal discussions with chief electoral officers of states and UTs where the exercise is underway.

Alleging at least 40 deaths of booth-level officers (BLOs) during the SIR, largely by suicides due to "stress of meeting tight deadlines", the opposition parties have questioned the timing of the voters' list revision.

The EC has junked these charges, saying the exercise is going on smoothly.

Reacting to the EC's decision to revise the SIR schedule, Congress leader Pramod Tiwari said it was an indication that the poll

panel knew the timelines were not "practical". The decision to tweak the SIR schedule comes on the eve of the Winter Session of Parliament beginning Monday.

The last session was a virtual washout over demands by the opposition for a debate on the SIR, then being held in Bihar.

Opposition leaders, while emerging from an all-party meeting, on smooth functioning of the session, said they will press for a debate on SIR. The EC had announced SIR in these states and UTs on October 27. Nearly 51 crore electors will be covered in the massive voters' list cleanup exercise.

The states and Union Territories are: the

Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Among these, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, and West Bengal will go to the polls in 2026. In Assam, where also polls are due in 2026, the revision of electoral rolls was announced separately. It is being called 'Special Revision'.

Most states had the last SIR of the voter list between 2002 and 2004, and they have nearly completed the mapping of current electors according to the last SIR held in their respective states. (PTI)

## With evidence-based monitoring, children with 1 Kidney can thrive: Experts

**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** Paediatric health experts, nephrologists, and surgeons across India are sharing a unified message of reassurance: children born with a single kidney, a condition known as unilateral renal agenesis (URA), can live healthy and active lives when provided with proper medical oversight, nutritional guidance, and supportive home and school environments.

According to global epidemiological data, approximately 1 in 1,000 to 2,000 babies are born with a solitary kidney.

A 2023 meta-analysis covering more than 15.6 million individuals found that renal agenesis occurs in 0.03 per cent of births, with unilateral cases accounting for the majority.

In many children, the function-

ing kidney naturally enlarges, a process called compensatory hypertrophy, allowing it to perform the work of two kidneys effectively.

"Parents often feel anxious when they learn their child has one kidney, but most of these children grow up without complications," said Dr Shandip Kumar Sinha, Director of Paediatric Surgery and Paediatric Urology at Medanta Hospital, Gurugram.

"With routine monitoring and simple lifestyle precautions, they can enjoy a completely normal childhood, he said.

Studies show that the long-term outlook for children with a solitary functioning kidney is overwhelmingly positive. A comprehensive systematic review analysing 2,684 patients found that while some

may develop proteinuria or elevated blood pressure, the vast majority maintain normal kidney function into adulthood.

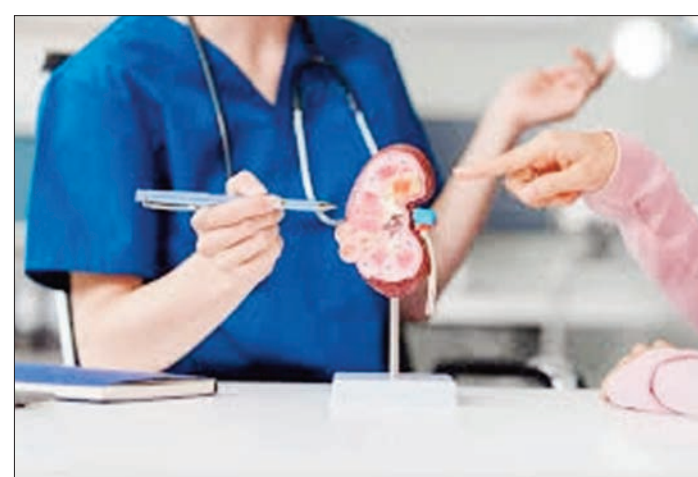
"Early awareness and regular check-ups make all the difference," said Dr Amit Agarwal, Paediatric Nephrologist at Rainbow Children's Hospital.

"A child with one kidney is not defined by limitations, but by resilience and the confidence we help them build," he said.

Experts emphasised that children with a single kidney do not require restrictive diets or overly cautious lifestyles.

Most sports, including football, running, cycling, and swimming, are safe. Contact sports may require protective gear or individualised medical advice.

"Psychological and emotional



support is equally important," said Dr Ankit Prasad, Senior Consultant and Unit Head at Fortis Hospital, Noida.

"Counselling and educating peers can reduce stigma and prevent unnecessary bullying. Hydration, adequate sleep, low-sodium

diets, routine physical activity, and regular blood pressure checks are essential," he said.

Dr Ashish Gupta, Senior Consultant Paediatrician at Apollo Hospital, added that unilateral kidney agenesis often goes unnoticed for years and is discovered incidentally.

"Parents should not panic, routine urine protein checks, BP monitoring, and occasional ultrasounds are usually all that's needed. What we must avoid are dangerous contact sports, excess salt, and kidney-toxic medications," Gupta said.

Due to advancements in prenatal imaging, many cases of URA are now detected before birth, enabling timely planning and counselling.

Paediatric societies such as the Indian Society of Paediatric

Nephrology (ISPN) are calling for broader awareness campaigns to increase understanding of long-term monitoring in families.

Global health organisations also stress that solitary kidneys typically function normally and support a high quality of life, provided blood pressure and proteinuria are monitored over time.

"Parents need reassurance, not fear," Sinha said. "With regular care, especially annual BP checks and urine tests, these children can absolutely lead normal, healthy, and fulfilling lives," he added.

As India continues to strengthen paediatric kidney care awareness and monitoring, experts agree on one message: a single kidney is not a limitation, but a manageable medical condition, and with the right support, children can thrive. (PTI)

# Hornbill Festival to open today with six country partners

**KOHIMA, Nov 30:** Nagaland is fully prepared to host the 10-day Hornbill Festival, in which six country partners will participate, Tourism minister Temjen Imna Along said on Sunday.

Briefing media on preparations for the 26th edition of the Hornbill festival at a press conference here, the minister said the celebration will open on December 1, coinciding with Nagaland Statehood Day.

Celebrated since 2000, the Hornbill festival is an annual tourism promotional event of the state government and has grown into Nagaland's largest cultural event, envisioned to promote the traditions of all Naga tribes while boosting tourism.

It is the coming together of all the tribes of the state under one roof in Kisama, some 12 km south of the state capital on the NH-29, Kohima-Imphal road. Over the years, it has evolved into

an international platform, attracting visitors from across India and abroad and expanding to multiple venues across the state.

This year, six country partners—France, Ireland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Malta, and Austria—and one state partner, Arunachal Pradesh, will participate, besides the 18 major tribes of the state showcasing their richly colourful culture and tradition.

The festival will be officially hosted by Governor of Nagaland, alongside delegations from the partner countries and the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, he said. Along said the 2025 edition will place greater emphasis on culture, tradition, and collaboration with country partners to amplify Nagaland's global visibility.

Multiple festival extensions will be held across the state, including Mon (Dec 8-10), Dimapur (Hornbill Carnival from Dec 6), Wokha (Doyang Festival), Zün-

heboto, and other locations, he said.

The minister acknowledged delays in preparatory works due to persistent rains and road damage, but said all line departments, including Tourism, Power, PHED, Police, and district administrations, have worked round-the-clock to ensure readiness. The minister said that the Protected Area Permit (PAP) procedures have been relaxed to ease entry for foreign tourists during the festival.

While the permit remains mandatory, on-arrival facilitation counters have been established at airports to speed up approvals, which take around 15 minutes if connectivity is stable, he said.

Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio has written twice to the Union Home Minister in November, requesting a relaxation of the PAP for the festival.

The relaxation applies to all foreign tourists, except those from restricted countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh,

and China, said Along.

On expectations from partner nations, Along said Nagaland continues to benefit from global collaborations in education, culture, research and skill development.

He highlighted Japan's ongoing engagement through JICA, including the newly inaugurated Kohima Eco Park and biodiversity initiatives.

Responding to queries on economic impact, the minister said official statistics from last year indicated revenue generation of around ₹ 189 crore from the largely unorganised sector, but he believes actual figures are higher, with significant earnings for homestays, artists, transporters and local businesses. He added that thousands of temporary jobs are created during the 10-day event, alongside indirect year-round opportunities in tourism.

The minister said the government aims to eventually keep the Hornbill venue



open throughout the year to support sustainable tourism activity.

He appealed to citizens, visitors, and all stakeholders to participate fully in the festival and showcase Nagaland's unity,

culture, traditions, contemporary arts, and hospitality. Director Tourism Viyelo Duolo said that the entry ticket for all categories of visitors to the main venue in Kisama has been fixed at ₹ 150 per head. (PTI)

## Tripura signs two skill development MoUs with IIT Delhi, Tata IIS

**AGARTALA, Nov 30:** To enhance skill development of youth with emerging industry demands, the Tripura government has signed two MoUs with IIT Delhi and Tata IIS, an official said on Sunday.

These partnerships aim to train a total of 1,000 candidates in cutting-edge job roles aligned with emerging industry demands, thereby boosting local employment and reducing outmigration.

"The first MoU, signed with IIT Delhi, will train 500 candidates in five futuristic job roles—Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Internet of Things (IoT), Blockchain, and 5G technologies. These programmes will be implemented in collaboration with NIELIT Agartala, Tripura Institute of Technology (TIT), and other government institutions in the state," Director of Skill Development, Pradeep K told PTI.

He said funding will be jointly provided through PMKVY 4.0 (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana) and the state-supported MMDUP (Mukhya Mantri Daky-



atha Unnyanan Prakalpa) scheme.

Ashutosh Dutt Sharma, CEO of IHFC (I-Hub Foundation for Cobotics), IIT Delhi's Technology Innovation Hub, was present during the signing of the MoU and expressed interest in establishing a regional centre in the northeastern state in the future.

He said the proposed centre will

focus on supporting startups in these new-age technology domains, empowering local innovators and generating IT-linked employment within the state.

"Under the second MoU, Tata IIS will train another 500 candidates in high-demand technical sectors such as industrial automation safety engineering, industrial

robotic system integration, electric vehicle maintenance technician, CNC programming, and 3D printing operations," he said, adding the training will be conducted in collaboration with the state's Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs).

The Skill Development Director said that these programmes will be strictly placement-linked.

CFO of Tata IIS, Mayank Palan, said the trainees will be connected to Tata's vehicle manufacturing units and its wide network of industrial clients across mainland India. This initiative is expected to significantly enhance employability and open new livelihood avenues for the youth of the state in advanced manufacturing and automotive technologies.

The director emphasised that digital skills will play a crucial role in enabling youth to secure employment within the state itself.

He said by promoting IT, ITeS, and startup-oriented training, the department aims to reduce the need for youth to migrate to other states in search of jobs. (PTI)

## National Seminar on Archaeology in Arunachal Pradesh concludes



**HT Correspondent**  
**PASIGHAT, Nov 30:** The two-day National Seminar on 'Archaeology in Arunachal Pradesh,' organised by the Department of History, Jawaharlal Nehru College (JNC) and sponsored by the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), concluded on Saturday.

The final day's proceedings on November 28 began with a welcome address by Co-coordinator Dr Nuyum Mize.

The main academic session featured Chairperson-cum-Resource Person Dr Tilok Thakuria of the Department of History and Archaeology, NEHU.

Dr Thakuria described archaeological material culture as "fossilised human behaviour," emphasising that the discipline seeks to decode meaning from past material remains and understand

the cognitive development of human behaviour — the "what, why and how" behind an object's symbolic association with its past.

He said archaeology is vital for constructing identity and highlighted that research in Northeast India remains largely descriptive.

He called for a methodological shift towards multi-disciplinary approaches and urged the JNC administration to introduce archaeology into various academic syllabi.

The session then moved to presentations by delegates on topics including ancient settlement patterns and analyses of newly discovered material culture.

An open discussion saw active participation from scholars and community representatives, reinforcing the need to integrate tribal historical knowledge into formal

archaeological research.

Dr Thakuria, in his concluding observations, commended the quality of the papers and suggested avenues for collaborative work.

Participants agreed that the future of archaeology in Arunachal Pradesh lies in deeper local engagement, interdisciplinary cooperation and a scientific yet culturally sensitive approach.

Seminar Coordinator Dr Leki Sitang delivered the vote of thanks. Following the academic sessions, delegates undertook field visits to connect discussions with ground realities.

They visited the Hump World War II Museum in Pasighat, Siluk village — the cleanest village in East Siang — and Aohali village, the state's first zero-hunting village, noted for its indigenous conservation practices.

## Manipur's violence-hit people hold demonstration near Raj Bhavan

**IMPHAL, Nov 30:** Hundreds of displaced people on Sunday staged a protest near the Raj Bhavan here, demanding they be allowed to return to their homes, police said.

The displaced people from Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Imphal West, and Imphal East districts, who have been staying at different relief camps here after ethnic violence broke out in May 2023, raised slogans for boycotting the ongoing Sangai tourism festival and demanded that they be allowed to return to their homes.

The protesters held placards that read, "Displaced lives matter", "people boycott Sangai festival", "rights first tourism later", "ensure our fundamental rights".

The protesters who came from various relief camps were stopped by security forces near the Kangla Gate, about 200 metres from the Raj Bhavan, the police said.

The demonstrators were stopped by security forces from advancing further towards the Raj Bhavan and later took a rally towards Uripok area in Imphal West district.

From Abung Meitei, a displaced person from Churachandpur district, told reporters, "The displaced people gathered here today to stage a protest due to mounting frustration towards the government. The Sangai festival is being held by claiming normalcy while ignoring the plights of the displaced persons."

From said, "... we will take our protests further in the coming days by not returning to relief camps."

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) have clashed with security forces multiple times since the Sangai Festival began on November 21, seeking to return to their homes. The displaced persons and civil society organisations maintained that as the government has asserted, by holding the Sangai festival, that normalcy has been restored, the IDPs be allowed to return to their homes.(PTI)

## Proposal for new design of border fencing under consideration of Centre: BSF IG

**AGARTALA, Nov 30:** BSF Tripura Frontier Inspector General (IG) Alok Kumar Chakraborty on Sunday said the proposal for a new design of barbed wire fencing along the India-Bangladesh border is under the consideration of the Centre.

India shares a 4,096 km international border with Bangladesh, out of which Tripura has 856 km border with the neighbouring country.

"Barbed wire fencing in most of the places along the India-Bangladesh Border (IBB) has outlived its life. In Tripura, weather conditions (heavy rainfall) have also affected the fencing along the international border. We are in the process of replacing the old fencing," he told PTI.

Chakraborty said the proposal for the erection of new and improved fencing is under active consideration of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). "We are hopeful that the erection of a new design of fencing will start very shortly to enhance the border management," he said.

He claimed that the situation along the India-

Bangladesh border is "normal".

The BSF IG said the relationship between the Indian border guards and the Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) is very cordial and cooperative.

"Being the first line of the defence, the BSF is always alert to thwart any attempt of peace along the international border," he said, adding there has been no change in the relationship between the border guards of the two sides.

"Scheduled joint patrolling is being conducted at regular intervals. Special patrolling, border contact and casualty contact are being done between the two sides even as a higher-level meeting is awaited," he said.

On the cattle smuggling, the IG said the BSF has been dominating the zero line and border haats to address the problem.

"We normally hand over the recovered cattle heads to Dhyani Foundation, but when it runs out of space, the BSF gives them to the local police authority for disposal," he said. (PTI)

## ANYA serves 15-Day ultimatum to Govt over Lada-Sarli Highway compensation issue

**HT Correspondent**  
**ITANAGAR, Nov 30:** The All Nyishi Youth Association (ANYA) on Saturday issued a 15-day ultimatum to the state government, seeking immediate resolution of land compensation matters related to Packages I-V of the Lada-Sarli Frontier Highway project.

Addressing the media at the APC, ANYA president Jamru Ruja said that despite sustained efforts by the East Kameng district unit, the government's response has been "unsatisfactory," prompting the apex body to intervene on behalf of affected families.

Ruja said the central committee formally took up the issue on November 24, with the objective of ensuring justice for deprived beneficiaries and enabling time-bound, corruption-free execution of the project.

He said the issue could have been resolved at the district level, but alleged negligence by authorities has escalated the matter to the state capital.

Ruja cautioned that the association may call a bandh in the capital



complex if required to press for its demands.

ANYA urged the fact-finding committee to submit its report to the state government without delay so that corrective action can follow. Its key demands include immediate re-verification of Packages I-V; recovery of misused funds linked to false billing; handing over the project to the user or construction agency to ensure timely com-

mencement of work; proper identification of muck dumping zones to safeguard the environment; strict legal action against those involved in fund misappropriation; and fair, urgent compensation to all affected beneficiaries.

The association also insisted that one ANYA representative be included in the re-verification committee to ensure transparency and an unhindered verification process.

## Manipur's Sangai Festival records abysmal turnout amid protests by displaced people

**IMPHAL, Nov 30:** Manipur's annual state-organised tourism event, Sangai Festival, which has been held after a three-year gap due to the ethnic conflict, recorded an abysmally low turnout amid protests by internally displaced persons (IDPs), officials said on Sunday.

In contrast to the 2.19 lakh people who attended the 10-day festival in 2022, when it was last organised before ethnic conflict erupted in May 2023, this year, only around 1,000 people have visited the stalls every day between November 21, when it started, and November 29, amounting to a total footfall of only around 8,000-9,000 so far, they said.

Tight security was in place during the

festival, which would conclude during the day, amid fears of disruptions by protesters.

IDPs clashed with the police multiple times, seeking to return to their homes. The displaced persons and civil society organisations maintained that as the government has asserted, by holding the festival, that normalcy has been restored, the IDPs be allowed to return to their homes.

Empty seats and deserted stalls were witnessed at the festival's main venue at Hapta Kangeibung in Imphal East district.

Thai Gangmei, who had opened a food stall at the venue, said, "Many stalls remained closed while the ones functioning hardly had any customers. The few buyers



included the personnel and officials deployed at the venue. Staff owners, including those who came from outside the state, struggled to earn profits during the festival."

On November 21, Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, while inaugurating the fes-

tival, highlighted its role as a unifying platform that showcases the state's cultural richness, entrepreneurial energy, and tourism potential.

Bhalla had also appealed to the people of the state to reaffirm the festival's spirit of oneness and urged all to participate wholeheartedly in the annual event.

The only face-saving programme of the event was a musical concert on Saturday evening where British band 'Blue' performed to a sizeable crowd at Khuman Lampak, an official said.

Displaced persons from Churachandpur district and those from the periphery areas of Imphal East district, as well as students and civil society organisations had staged

numerous protests against holding the festival.

Displaced persons attempting to return to their native homes clashed with security forces at Yaingangkopi and Pukhao Terapur in Imphal East district and at Phougakchao Ikhai in Bishnupur district over the last 10 days.

More than 10 displaced persons sustained minor injuries after security forces fired tear gas shells to disperse the agitators on multiple occasions.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kukis in Manipur since May 2023. (PTI)

## Gangtok-Bagdogra helicopter fare dips

**GANGTOK, Nov 30:** The fare for helicopter services between Sikkim's capital Gangtok and Bagdogra near Siliguri in West Bengal has been reduced to ₹ 3,100 per person, from the earlier rate of ₹ 4,500, an official notification said.

According to the notification recently issued by the Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. (STDC), which runs the helicopter services, passengers will be allowed to carry 7 kg of baggage for free, while excess luggage of 8-15 kg will be charged at ₹ 50 per kg and for those exceeding 15 kg, ₹ 500 per kg will be charged for additional weight, subject to cargo space availability. (PTI)

# Kohli serves master class, India send Proteas on leather hunt, make 349/8

**RANCHI, Nov 30:** At a stage of his career where every ODI innings carries scrutiny, star batter Virat Kohli delivered a statement hundred — his 52nd in the format, to propel India to a formidable 349 for 8 against South Africa in the series-opener here Sunday.

Kohli reasserted his relevance and authority in the only international format he plays with a fluent 135-run knock that formed the spine of India's innings.

His commanding knock came off 120 balls with seven sixes and 11 fours. His 136-run stand with Rohit Sharma (57 off 51) for the second wicket, set up India's big total on a largely flat JSCA Stadium track.

With Kohli no longer part of T20s, and only six ODIs scheduled for India in the next eight months or so, every outing in the format now comes with significance.

The 36-year-old responded with trademark authority, reminding the selectors and team management that he remains India's most bankable batter in the format.

Rohit too had a great platform to assert himself after being dropped at 1 but he could make only 57 before being trapped by Jansen.

Still, their 136-run partnership -- during a much-anticipated RoKo show -- would give confidence not to the two stalwarts but also the team management that they still belong to big stage and can serve India a bit more.

It was a flat deck but the Proteas bowlers were also guilty of not bowling a probing line and length.

Kohli walked in early after Yashasvi



Jaiswal's 18 ended via a faint edge off Nandre Burger, and the Ranchi crowd immediately anticipated a reunion worth waiting for.

## The RoKo show

Rohit survived a sitter on one, spilled by Tony de Zorzi at mid-wicket, and used the reprieve to settle before opening up with a string of boundaries against Jansen and

Corbin Bosch.

He hit Marco Jansen for two boundaries in a space of five balls and Bosch was also taken to task: his incoming deliveries were flicked with ease and the short ones were pulled with authority.

Kohli, meanwhile, was in vintage touch -- a six over mid-off off Burger showing the full bat face signalled his intent as well as

touch. It was followed by a silken cover drive.

With South Africa's pacers erring in both line and length, the pair motored along, forcing stand-in captain Aiden Markram to introduce off-spinner Praneel Subrayen, but the runs kept flowing.

Kohli raised his half-century with a six off Bosch, while Rohit reached his fifty with a single as India crossed the 100-run mark in quick time.

Jansen finally struck back by trapping Rohit leg before. The dismissal briefly stalled India's scoring as Kohli went through a phase of limited strike.

Ruturaj Gaikwad (8) and Washington Sundar, promoted to No. 5, fell in quick succession to Otneil Baartman, arresting the early charge. But Kohli held firm. Rotating strike smartly and putting away the loose balls, he ensured India did not drift. Soon after he completed his hundred, a manic fan breached security, knelt before his 'King', touched his feet before being whisked by security officers.

What was remarkable was Kohli's ability to change the gears even when the ball had gone soft. Now only one ball of the two can be used after 34 overs, making the stroke-making challenging.

When skipper KL Rahul (60) was struggling to go hard at spinner Subrayen, Kohli creamed him off for 21 runs with consummate ease with two sixes and a four.

The 2027 World Cup is still some time away but Kohli reminded one and all that his touch is intact and hunger insatiable as ever. (PTI)

## Andre Russell announces retirement from IPL, joins KKR support staff as power coach



**KOLKATA, Nov 30:** Swash-buckling all-rounder Andre Russell on Sunday announced his retirement from the Indian Premier League ahead of the mini auction scheduled for December 16, and will join three-time winners Kolkata Knight Riders' coaching staff.

The 37-year-old Russell, who has been an integral part of the KKR side since IPL 2014, will join their coaching staff as a "power coach" ahead of the 2026 edition for which an auction will be held in Abu Dhabi.

"Hanging up my IPL boots... but not the swagger. What a ride it's been in the IPL — 12 seasons of memories, and a whole lot of love from the @KKRiders family," Russell wrote on X.

"I'll still be smashing sixes and taking wickets in every other league around the world. And the best part? I'm not leaving home... you'll see me in a new role, in KKR's Support Staff, as the POWER COACH of 2026. New chapter. Same energy. Forever a Knight," he added.

By joining the support staff, Russell has followed the footsteps of another venerable T20 cricketer from the Caribbean, Kieron Pollard, who serves as the batting coach of Mumbai Indians, even though he represents the franchise in other leagues.

"I've made a decision to retire from the IPL. I will still be active playing in various leagues around the world and for all the other KKR franchises. I had some amazing times and great memories (in the IPL), hitting sixes, winning games, getting MVPs..." he said in a statement issued to the media.

"When I made this decision, I felt like it was the best decision at this point. I don't want to fade out, I want to leave a legacy behind. It's best to retire when fans ask 'why?' You still have some

more in you. You still could go for a bit longer". instead of 'yeah, you should have done it years back'."

"When you are going through social media, you keep seeing yourself photoshopped in different jerseys (of other teams). I felt weird to see myself in any colour other than purple & gold and those thoughts kept going through my head, leading me to a few sleepless nights."

Russell said he has had discussions with the KKR management over his role in the franchise.

"There have been a lot of conversations between me and Mr. Venky Mysore and also Mr. Shah Rukh Khan, about another chapter in my IPL journey. They have shown me love and respect and have appreciate whatever I've been doing on the field. To be in a setup that's familiar, matters to me a lot," he said.

"When I heard that name 'Power Coach', I felt that describes Andre Russell the best, because the power that I possess when I bat, the energy that I show in the field with ball in hand, I can help in any department," Russell added.

Russell, who has not missed a season of the IPL since 2012, represented erstwhile Delhi Daredevils in his first two editions.

An all-rounder known for his brute force with the bat and a knack of taking wickets at key junctures, Russell played a total of 140 matches in the IPL and scored 2,651 runs at a strike rate of 174.18 with 112 fifties.

He also took 123 wickets at an economy rate of 9.51 with one five-wicket haul in his name.

Russell called time on his IPL playing career a day after Faf du Plessis, 41, announced that he would not take part in this year's edition as he will play in another league. (PTI)

## Rohit Sharma breaks Shahid Afridi's record for most ODI sixes in history

**RANCHI, Nov 30:** India opener Rohit Sharma on Sunday surpassed Pakistan's Shahid Afridi to hit maximum number of sixes (352) by any batter in the history of One-Day Internationals cricket, during the first ODI against South Africa here.

Rohit came into this series with 349 sixes in his account and two behind Afridi, who hit 351 in 398 matches in ODI cricket between 1996 to 2015. Rohit hit two consecutive sixes over deep midwicket off South African spinner Preenelan Subrayen in the 15th over of the innings to equal with Afridi, and pulled Marco Hansen over deep square leg to set the world record for most ODI sixes in least number of innings.

The 38-year-old right-hander brought up the record shortly after completing his 60th half-century in ODI cricket.

Rohit eventually fell for 57 off 50 balls with five fours and three sixes.

The former India skipper, who earlier this year led his side to title win in the Champions Trophy and remains active only in ODI cricket, achieved the feat in only his 270th innings in his 278th ODI for India, having made his debut in 2007. (PTI)

## Harmanpreet Kaur flags off Pink City Half Marathon

**JAIPUR, Nov 30:** World Cup winning Indian women's team captain Harmanpreet Kaur flagged off the 10th edition of the Pink City Half Marathon here as part of the 'Run For Zero Hunger' cause.

The marathon featured three categories: the 21 km Half Marathon for professional athletes, 10 km Cool Run for intermediate athletes, and 5 km Dream Run for beginners and families.

Close to 15,000 runners participated in support of #RunForZeroHunger movement, raising 1 lakh Poshan Packs for children at Nand Ghars. (PTI)

## Treesa-Gayatri win Syed Modi International

**LUCKNOW, Nov 30:** Defending champions Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand registered a fighting three-game win over Japan's Kaho Osawa and Mai Tanabe to retain the women's doubles title at the Syed Modi International Super 300 here on Sunday.

The top-seeded Indian duo produced an attacking masterclass to rally from a game down and outwit the world No. 35 Japanese pair 17-21 21-13 21-15 in a pulsating one hour and 16-minute final.

The Indians were playing only their second event since Gayatri's return from a five-month shoulder injury layoff.

The final began with a breathtaking 49-shot rally, setting the tone for a high-intensity contest as both pairs fought tooth and nail before Osawa and Tanabe edged ahead 6-3. A couple of sharp smashes from Treesa pulled the Indians level, and an Osawa forehand error helped them move to 8-6.

The Japanese, however, regrouped to take a slender lead at the



interval and maintained their hold to stretch it to 18-15. A backhand cross-court return from Tanabe caught Gayatri off guard, and another Indian error handed the Japanese five game points.

Treesa and Gayatri saved two, but Tanabe closed out the opener with a smash.

Switching sides brought a momentum shift as the Indians found their rhythm and showed excellent anticipation to surge to 9-2.

Though a few shots drifted into the net, they held an 11-5 advantage at the break, bolstered by another booming Treesa smash from the backcourt.

## Siddi community's Shalina a shining example of Khelo India's commitment to inclusivity

**BHARATPUR, Nov 30:** Wrestler Shalina Sayer Siddhi from the Siddi community bagged a bronze medal in the women's 57kg freestyle event at Khelo India University Games (KIUG), underscoring the Khelo India programme's commitment to inclusivity.

Representing Karnatak University, Dharwad, Shalina defeated Bhanu of Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya, Haryana, 2-1 in her final group bout to secure the podium finish here on Friday.

The Siddis have African origins and came to India by sea several centuries ago. They have been living here since, and now they are as Indian as any, totally acculturated.

The Siddis are considered a backward class and in many states come under the "scheduled tribes" category. Shalina's achievement is commendable for rising above the mundane. But she couldn't have done so without the Khelo India platform that provided opportunities to athletes like her to excel.

"I have participated in the Khelo India Youth Games. But this is my first Khelo India University Games. I had

come with a lot of hope. I knew I would win a medal, though I was not sure what colour it would be. I am very happy to win the medal," she was quoted as saying in a media release.

Like several other athletes in the country, her journey to the Games was anything but easy.

"We came here by train which took us three days. So, the journey was really arduous. But now that I have won, all that doesn't matter. I would say it was worth all the effort," said Shalina, who picked up wrestling 10 years ago.

While discrimination on the basis of skin colour persists in many parts of the country, Shalina said she has never faced such experiences.

"I live in Dharwad and I have grown up with local kids. I will be very honest, I have not had any such experiences," Shalina, who also won a bronze at an All-India University event in Punjab earlier this year, said.

"In fact, I get respected a lot because of my sporting background. People see me as an achiever. My sister is also a police woman in Bangalore," she added. (PTI)

## Khelo India platform has been instrumental in journey to global success: Aditi Swami

**JAIPUR, Nov 30:** World Championship gold medalist archer Aditi Gopichand Swami believes that events like the Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG) and the Khelo India University Games (KIUG) play a crucial role in strengthening an athlete's professional growth and financial stability.

Aditi is the first Indian and the world's youngest compound archer to win an individual gold medal at the World Archery Championships.

She credited the Khelo India initiative for her rise as an archer, saying it was the platform that got her recognised and gave her the opportunity to understand and get used to top level competition.

"Before being selected for TOPS, things were not easy. Diet, gym and training expenses were quite high.

My father made immense sacrifices to support my sporting journey. The scholarship provided under the Khelo India scheme helped us significantly.

"It allowed us to focus solely on performance," said the 19-year-old from Satara district in Maharashtra.

Aditi, who created history by winning the individual gold medal at the World Archery Championships held in Berlin in 2023, has won three consecutive gold medals in the Khelo India Youth Games.

Representing Shivaji University here, she continued that legacy by winning the gold medal in her first-ever appearance at the Khelo India University Games Rajasthan 2025 by beating Taniparthi Chikitha of Lovely Professional University.

Despite being a champion archer,

Aditi did think about shifting to recurve as she wanted to compete in the Olympics. She is now focused on improving her performance in compound archery after the discipline was included in the Olympic program for the 2028 Los Angeles Games as a mixed team event.

"I did think about trying recurve once, but I knew I would have to start from zero and it could take seven to eight years to gain mastery. So I stepped back from that decision. Once compound was included in the Olympics, I found a clear objective.

"My dream is to win an Olympic gold medal for India. Earlier, compound archery was not part of the Olympics, and that felt like a missing piece. But now that it has been included as a mixed team event, it is a golden opportunity for me." (PTI)

## 'Operational cost of Ahmedabad CWG could be between ₹ 3000 crore to ₹ 5000 crore'

**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** The soon-to-be-constituted Organising Committee of the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad will be aiming to conduct the event at an operational cost of ₹ 3,000 to ₹ 5,000 crore.

According to a reliable source closely involved in the planning of the Games, estimates for ongoing infrastructure upgrade, including for both sports and public utility facilities, are still being worked out to finalise the overall cost of the mega-event.

The source said Gujarat has taken the "requisite lessons" from the handling of the 2010 Games in Delhi which ended up mired in several controversies, including infrastructure delay, corruption charges, and cost that ballooned way past the initial estimates.

"The operational cost for the Ahmedabad CWG would come to ₹ 3,000 to ₹ 5,000 crore. This does not include funds (capital ex-

penditure) that will go into building other infrastructure, some of it being handled by the urban development department," the source said.

"Obviously, the cost incurred for building public infrastructure will not be counted towards the Games as the utility of that is going to be beyond the Games. It's a slightly long-drawn process and we will need some time to come to a definitive estimate," he added.

The operational cost of the 2010 Games was a little over ₹ 2,600 crore which was way higher than the ₹ 635 crore estimate. The Games, which ended up being the

costliest of all time, cost the exchequer over ₹ 70,000 crore overall.



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Gujarat's Principal Secretary

(Sports), Ashwani Kumar, who was part of the Indian delegation

that was in Glasgow earlier this week when Ahmedabad was awarded the 2030 Games, refused to speak on the budget.

But he confirmed to PTI that the plan to have an Organising Committee that is registered as a not-for-profit company to be dissolved after the Games is under consideration.

The OC, which will face greater financial scrutiny owing to its status of being a company, is expected to be constituted by the end of December or beginning of January 2026.

"It (not of profit company) is under serious consideration. It's a model that was adopted by the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games and was recommended by CAG after the 2010 CWG in Delhi. I don't want to dwell on what happened in the Delhi Games but I think lessons have been learnt," he said.

The Melbourne edition is often

described as one of the best CWG of all time, earning praise for its execution and public participation. Kumar said the Ahmedabad OC would strive for professionalism in every aspect and start operations by January first week.

"The OC will have 12 to 15 members. It will have a chairman, vice chairman, a CEO, representatives from Commonwealth Sport (the governing body of the Games), IOA, the Paralympic Committee of India, some athletes and domain experts as well," he said.

Headed by then IOA chief Suresh Kalmadi, the OC for Delhi CWG was registered as a society and drew heavy criticism for its handling of the Games and the corruption allegations against it.

The Ahmedabad CWG is expected to be held in the October of 2030 with an expected roster of 15 to 17 disciplines. (PTI)