

6 NATION Shah says BJP will win 110 seats in first phase Bengal polls: Matua first family split deepens battle in Bagda, Gaighata 7 NE Manipur: Protesters clash with police during march to CM's residence Arunachal CM calls for collective push to eliminate malaria by 2030

Vol .No. XXVII Issue No. 101 RNI-ASSENG/2000/12862 DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2026 PAGES 8 PRICE ₹ 8

Central government reconstitutes Niti Aayog PM wishes productive and impactful tenure of new team Ashok Kumar Lahiri appointed as vice chairman

NEW DELHI, April 25: The government has reconstituted the Niti Aayog, appointing former chief economic advisor Ashok Kumar Lahiri as vice chairman and five full-time members...

Karandikar Ji and Dr M. Srinivas Ji on becoming Full Time Members of NITI Aayog. Wishing all of them a productive and impactful tenure ahead...



Raju is a member of the Economic Advisory Council to the prime minister. He also serves as the economic advisor to the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh.

DST in October 2023, he served as the Director of IIT-Kanpur. Das is the director of the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhopal...

Amritpal Singh back in Dibrugarh jail

Ajnala police station attack case

DIBRUGARH, April 25: 'Waris Punjab De' chief and Punjab MP Amritpal Singh was on Saturday sent back to judicial custody in the Ajnala police station attack case...



Amritpal Singh was on Saturday sent back to judicial custody in the Ajnala police station attack case...

Bihu dancer killed, 11 others hurt in road mishap



GUWAHATI, April 25: A popular Bihu dancer was killed and 11 members of her troupe were injured in a head-on collision between a mini bus and a trailer truck in Assam's Tamulpur district...

other artists. The troupe had members from different parts of the state. "The seriously injured have been sent to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital...

Two held in robbery at Nagaon doctor's house

NAGAON, April 25: Two persons were arrested on Saturday in connection with the armed robbery at a doctor's residence in Assam's Nagaon district, police said.

of the investigation." SSP Partha P Das said. Doctor Ranjit Saikia and his wife Ruprekha were allegedly attacked with iron rods during the robbery at their residence in the early hours of Friday...

Sanjwal visited the crime scene on Friday night, while a forensic team collected evidence earlier in the day. The family claimed a theft had taken place at the same house a few months ago...

Death of poll official: CBI probe sought

DIPHU, April 25: A joint memorandum by the leaders of various social organisations comprising of the All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam (AASAA), All Dimas Students' Union (ADSU), Kuki Students' Organisation (KSO), All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), All Assam Gorkha Students Union (AAGSU), Karbi Anglong Gorkha Students' Association (KAGSU) and Gorkha Sammilan was submitted to the District Commissioner Diphu, Karbi Anglong, Aranyak Saikia seeking an immediate CBI inquiry, administrative accountability, and compensation regarding the tragic death of a polling officer Cornelius Kindo, here on Friday last.

fell ill and was permitted to rest, but subsequently went missing from the premises under mysterious circumstances. After ten days of agonising uncertainty, his body was recovered on April 18, 2026, at approximately 1:30 pm in a remote hilly area of Rongmongve, roughly 15 km from his assigned polling station...

mediate suspension of the concerned Zonal Officer, Sector Officer, and Presiding Officer of the Sarpo Kathar LP School polling station for their failure to ensure the safety of a fellow officer who fell ill under their supervision.

Two UTPs found dead in 2 different Nagaon jails

NAGAON, April 25: Two undertrial prisoners lodged in two different jails in Assam's Nagaon district were found dead in their beds on Saturday morning. The incidents were reported from Nagaon Central Jail and Nagaon Special Jail, both located in the same premises but run by separate administrations.

AAP seeks action against its MPs who switched sides to BJP

NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH, April 25: Stung by the multiple defections of its Rajya Sabha members, the Aam Aadmi Party on Saturday announced that it will seek their disqualification from the Upper House while the rebel group hit back, alleging corruption and ideological decline in their former party.

along with party MLAs, to present his party's stand about the "recall" of the Rajya Sabha members who quit on Friday. Six of the seven Rajya Sabha members who quit the AAP came from Punjab.

The seven MPs who have joined the BJP are completely "unconstitutional" and "illegal," he said. Raghav Chadha, who led the AAP rebellion, said those quitting the party have not done so out of fear but due to a growing sense of "disappointment, disengagement and disgust" with the existing leadership.

Missing Guwahati woman found in Shillong

SHILLONG, April 25: A 27-year-old woman who was reported missing from Assam's Guwahati a day ago was rescued from the Polo area here, police said on Saturday. Bhabana Sarma, who worked as a teacher at Miles Bronson Residential School in Assam until the end of March, was reported missing under circumstances that are yet to be fully ascertained, officials said.



Based on specific inputs, she was located in the Polo area and immediately taken for medical examination...

Divyang child reunited with family with help of Aadhaar data An emotional reunion after almost a year

GUWAHATI, April 25: A divyang child in Assam was reunited with her family after nearly a year on Saturday with the help of biometrics data stored during the Aadhaar enrolment process. An official statement said that the child was found wandering alone by local residents at Dilli Ghat, Namrup, in Dibrugarh district on May 29, 2025.

the superintendent of the children's home approached the UIDAI Regional Office, Guwahati, for assistance in identifying the child. Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) authorities advised that her fingerprint biometrics be submitted for Aadhaar enrolment to enable possible matching with existing Aadhaar records.



the authorities were able to locate her family and complete the process of reuniting her with them at Borhat tea estate. (PTI)

RSS on global outreach to clear misconceptions about it: Hosabale

WASHINGTON, April 25: The RSS is on a mission to remove the misconceptions about it in the western world with senior leader Dattatreya Hosabale reaching out to intellectuals and academics in the US and the UK to convey the aims and objectives of the organisation in its centenary year. Hosabale, the RSS General Secretary, has been touring different cities across the US, addressing conferences at the Stanford University in San Francisco and Hudson Institute here and meeting a cross-section of the Indian diaspora.

supremacist organisation. This mispropaganda has continued for decades. They have portrayed RSS as a Hindu supremacist organisation, as anti-minority, anti-women, all such misconceptions have been there, he said, adding that the visit to the US is an effort to remove such misgivings about the RSS.

In its centenary year, a key task before the RSS is to address the misconceptions about India and Hindu culture and set a clear narrative of what it stands for. "The narrative about India and Hindu culture has been distorted for decades within India and outside. Such narratives have to be corrected. "Many people who are not from the RSS background are involved in setting the proper narrative of India, of Hindu culture. Those things in the society should be spread. That's one area where RSS wants to focus more," he said. Hosabale arrived in the US last week after a tour of the UK, where he interacted with academic circles, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Amid Mythos concerns, FM asks financial sector to be 'exceptionally vigilant' on cybersecurity

MUMBAI, April 25: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday urged all entities in the financial sector to be 'exceptionally vigilant' on cybersecurity.

Without naming Mythos, the newly minted platform from leading AI company Anthropic, Sitharaman said artificial intelligence tools are making cyberattacks faster and more adaptive.

Such tools can also evade detection by deploying tactics like automated discovery of system vulnerabilities and malicious source-code interference, she added.

"...not just Sebi but all regulated entities will have to remain exceptionally vigilant. The tools of attack are evolving at high speed, and the tools of defence must evolve even faster," Sitharaman said, speaking at the 28th foundation day event of the capital markets regulator.

The comments come amid heightened fears over the capabilities of Mythos, which has sent regulators and policymakers scrambling around the world to understand the platform and ways to safeguard their systems.

The government had called a meeting of top bankers with ministers, including Sitharaman and IT minister Ashwini Vaishnav, in New Delhi on Thursday, where it announced the formation of a dedicated panel under SBI chairman C S Setty for the purpose.

On Saturday, Sitharaman



warned that a single successful cyberattack on a major exchange, depository, or a large broker can disrupt markets on a national scale, erase wealth, and shake public confidence and urged Sebi to meet the emerging challenge of cybersecurity.

Sitharaman urged Sebi to institutionalise a system of periodic consultation with its peers across the world, making it clear that Indian regulations must not imitate other countries.

In comments made amid unease over foreign flows, Sitharaman said that such dialogue between regulators can give confidence to global capital.

"The more SEBI's frameworks are understood abroad, the greater the confidence of global capital in Indian markets, and the greater the weight SEBI carries in global rule-making," she said.

Sitharaman also exhorted the fi-

ancial system to progress towards the goal of common know your customer (KYC) across all functions.

"It is the shared responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure that no citizen has to repeat the same verification journey across multiple financial products and platforms," she said, urging Sebi to help drive the prescription of common KYC norms.

On the regulations front, the FM pitched for a soft-touch, public consultation-based approach to form principles-based rules rather than "overly detailed rulebooks".

There is a need for regulations to not be restrictive, and be more sophisticated and anticipatory rather than merely reactive, the FM said.

Sitharaman said Sebi's recent actions against unregistered 'finfluencers' should be seen as the regulator's seriousness to crack down against unlicensed financial advice, and underlined the need for

more efforts on financial education.

"... we should not tolerate the monetisation of uninformed retail investor trust for personal enrichment," she added.

With progress in technology, there is an explosion of fake investment videos and apps circulating on social media, many of them using deepfake AI to impersonate leaders, she noted.

The minister asked Sebi to "invest very substantially" in public awareness, through campaigns on every major platform in regional languages, and through rapid-response takedown mechanisms for fraudulent content impersonating public officials.

There is a need for investor protection to evolve from a "defensive function into a developmental function".

A "serious push" is required to make municipal bonds a more effective platform for raising money, she said, adding that urban infrastructure cannot be financed by budgetary support alone.

On the corporate bond market front, she pushed for more to build a more effective credit enhancement architecture so that access to bond markets is not confined only to the highest-rated issuers.

"... we want better markets, not merely bigger markets. Size without integrity is fragility. Volume without investor protection is exploitation. Growth without governance is unsustainable," Sitharaman said. (PTI)

Haryana wheat procurement smooth, record arrivals at mandis: CM Saini

CHANDIGARH, April 25: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Saturday said wheat procurement was going on smoothly in the 'mandis' which saw record arrivals. Saini took on the opposition parties who alleged that the BJP government has put in place new conditions including biometric verification which have caused hardship to farmers.

The chief minister, while addressing a news conference here, said the farmers are satisfied with the transparent system of crop procurement and it is the opposition which has a problem.

He said many opposition leaders are visiting mandis these days and asked them to remember the time when their parties ruled the state and the kind of problems the farmers faced then.

"The kind of falsehood they are trying to spread...they should remember their time. People have understood that they speak only lies," Saini said.

He said that during the Rabi marketing season 2026-27 bumper arrivals of crop have been recorded which has broken the record of past four years.

"For this, I congratulate the farmers. This is the result of sweat of our hardworking farmers," he said.

Saini said arrival of over 81 lakh tonne wheat has been recorded in the mandis so far and over 70 lakh

tonne has been procured. On April 11, in a single day, over 7 lakh tonne wheat arrived in the mandis, Saini said. He said 5.80 lakh farmers have brought their crop to the mandis so far.

"Our farmers are adopting modern techniques and they are expressing confidence in transparent system of crop procurement," he said.

Saini said before 2024 Haryana Assembly polls Congress used to say that if they come to power they will shut down the portals which the government started to facilitate farmers and other sectors.

"There was no system in place during their time, the problems farmers faced during their time everyone knows. Farmers have not forgotten that time. We created a system and change has come. There was no digital system during their time and things were not transparent. Farmers had to wait for payments of their crops for months.

"Now, the opposition leaders are touring mandis, but they should tell farmers what was the condition when they ruled. When farmers were actually facing problems, then these opposition leaders did not visit mandis and neither found solution to their problems. Long queues were seen in mandis when farmers came to sell their crops," he said. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Ashok Kumar Lahiri appointed

the journey towards becoming a Viksit Bharat. "I am confident his efforts will further energise policymaking in our nation. My best wishes for a fruitful tenure," Modi said.

The prime minister also congratulated Gobardhan Das on his appointment as a member of the government think tank. "Your journey, filled with tireless hard work and humility, is truly inspiring for everyone. The invaluable contributions you have made in the fields of public health, science and innovation fill the entire nation with pride. My sincere best wishes for your tenure," Modi said in response to Das thanking him for the appointment. Lahiri, in a message, said he met the prime minister to convey his deep gratitude to him and the government for reposing trust in him. He said he will serve in the key post with all sincerity, good intentions and clear policies (Niti, Niyot and Nistha) as envisioned by the prime minister.

"We will succeed in all three counts," he said.

Das also thanked the prime minister for allowing him to serve as a member of the Niti Aayog.

"Today is a very important day in my life. I am the son of an ordinary farmer family from the Dalit class in a remote village of West Bengal.

"Since childhood, the fragrance of the soil, the value of hard work, and the truth of struggle have been an integral part of my life. Today's responsibility is not just a position for me; it is a glimpse of the dreams, hopes, and beliefs of countless ordinary people like me," he said in a post on X in Hindi.

Das said he believed that for the development of the country, it is imperative that the quality of life in remote areas, the farming community and ordinary people is improved.

"For this purpose, I promise to work with honesty, dedication and full responsibility under the guidance of the Honourable Prime Minister," he said. "I seek everyone's blessings and cooperation," he added. Lahiri takes the place of Suman K Bery, who has been the vice chairman of Niti Aayog since May 2022. Vijay Kumar Saraswat, Ramesh Chand, Vinod Kumar Paul, Arvind Virmani and Gauba were the members. (PTI)

Amritpal Singh back in Dibrugarh

later transferred to various jails in Punjab, were also produced simultaneously via video-conferencing from jails in Goidwal, Bhatinda and Patiala. The Judicial Magistrate First Class in Dibrugarh has scheduled the next hearing in the electronics devices case for May 7, also via video-conferencing.

Amritpal was first taken into custody on April 23, 2023, from Punjab's Moga district, nearly two months after the Ajnala police station attack. Twelve other cases are pending against him and his supporters across Amritsar (Rural), Jalandhar and Moga, linked to incidents of violence and intimidation.

He is also named as the alleged main conspirator in the murder of social media influencer Gurpreet Singh, alias Hari Nau, who was shot dead in Kotkapura on October 9, 2024, while returning home from a village gurdwara. Amritpal had won the Khadoor Sahib Lok Sabha seat in the 2024 general elections as an Independent candidate while incarcerated in Dibrugarh Jail. He was administered the oath of office on July 5, 2024 after he was granted parole for four days. This was the only time he attended Parliament, and two subsequent pleas seeking parole to attend sessions were rejected by the high court, with the Punjab government consistently flagging law and order concerns. (PTI)

Bihu dancer killed, 11 others

the death, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma wrote in a social media post, "I am saddened to receive this sad news in the morning. The Bhaskariyoti Bihu Husori Team of Haribhanga in Nalbari district met with the deadly accident at Noakhata in Tamulpur. The lead dancer of the team and popular 'Nagara Naam' pathika' (singer) Nishamoni Haloi was killed in the accident."

Sarma said with Nishamoni's death, a rising artiste was nipped at the bud. He prayed for the departed soul and wished for an early recovery of the injured members of the troupe. "My deepest condolences to the victims' families," the CM added. Rongali Bihu functions are being organised across the state, marking the Assamese New Year celebrations from mid-April. (PTI)

Quota Bill: Jorhat BJP women's

supported by what she described as factual evidence. The Mahila Morcha president praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for taking decisive steps to safeguard women's political rights. She stated that the government is committed to ensuring greater representation of women in legislative bodies at the earliest, by addressing earlier challenges such as legal complexities, census requirements, and constituency delimitation.

President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Jorhat district unit, Santanu Puzari, among other BJP members and office bearers was present.

Silchar NIT curb on religious

with the hostel shall conduct or participate in any form of prayer, religious gathering, or related activity in open spaces or common areas within the hostel or the institute premises," the order said.

It said any violation of the order will be viewed seriously and may invite "appropriate disciplinary action." "This has the approval of the competent authority, and this order comes into effect immediately," the order added. (PTI)

AAP seeks action against

a wrong path with which no one wants to remain associated. "Because of this, leaders have been leaving the party one after another," he said. Chadha said MPs are abandoning and leaving the AAP together because they believe the party has gone into "corrupt and compromised hands", he claimed.

Mann used a culinary analogy to attack those who quit the party.

In a sarcastic post on X, he wrote in Punjabi, "Ginger, garlic, cumin, fenugreek powder, red chilli, black pepper, and coriander -- these seven things together make a dish taste great, but on their own cannot become a dish."

On Friday, the AAP suffered a jolt when Chadha, Ashok Mittal, Sandeep Pathak, Harbhajan Singh, Rajendra Gupta, Vikram Sahni and Swati Maliwal quit and merged the parliamentary party with the BJP. They alleged that the Arvind Kejriwal-led party had strayed from its principles, values and core morals.

Though Chadha and Maliwal had fallen out of favour of the AAP, the move by the other five MPs to switch sides came as a surprise to many.

Mann has claimed that the BJP, which has repeatedly faced rejection in Punjab, has responded with hostility towards both the state and the AAP, attempting to weaken a corruption-free government through intimidation, inducements and engineering defections.

Maliwal, who had a fallout with Kejriwal after she was allegedly assaulted by his close aide in 2024, said she quit the party as it had "strayed far" from its original principles.

She alleged the party had completely changed and is now known for "lies, corruption and hooliganism". (PTI)

RSS on global outreach

thought leaders, policy experts and a cross-section of the Indian diaspora as part of the outreach efforts. He said his conversations with a cross-section of Americans focussed on addressing misconceptions about the RSS that he said were a result of propaganda against the 100-year-old organisation for the past several decades.

Hosabale said his message to the Indian diaspora in the US was to be good citizens, win the hearts of locals through hard work and prove that Hindus can contribute to society and provide leadership in different walks of life.

The RSS view is that Indians who have come here to build their career, academic or otherwise, should be loyal to this country, because this is where they are earning their livelihood.

Hosabale described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the "best representative" of the RSS who has been spreading the message of the organisation in his own unique way.

He said the RSS has laid down five focus areas for the next 25 years that include working for social harmony and cohesion, creating self-awareness and shedding the colonial mindset, instilling civic sense, strengthening family values and pursuing sustainable development models.

"He (PM Modi) is doing these things in his own unique ways, all of them. He may not express the same words. For example, he said 'Ek Ped Maa ke Naam'. We have said, 'plant a tree'," Hosabale said.

The RSS leader further said that many government programmes reflect the values espoused by the RSS and cited the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative and the Five Resolves (Panch Pran) spelt out by the Prime Minister in his Independence Day address in 2022.

"So, being a Swayamsevak, he has these things naturally," the RSS leader said. (PTI)

Amritsar Traders Meet Haryana CM Saini

CHANDIGARH, April 25: A delegation of traders from Majitha Mandi, Amritsar, on Saturday met Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini at his official residence here, a release said.

The meeting focused on expanding their business operations and exploring investment opportunities in Haryana.

During the discussion, the traders proposed expanding their wholesale dry fruit business to Sonipat in Haryana.

The Chief Minister responded positively and approved the proposal, the release said.

Saini reiterated that the Haryana government is committed to promoting trade and industry and is ensuring all necessary support and facilities for investors.

Welcoming the traders from Amritsar to Haryana, Saini said the state is working on the principle of 'Ease of Doing Business', ensuring transparent, simple, and efficient processes.

Haryana is emerging as a major industrial and logistics hub in the country, offering a conducive environment for investment, he added.

He further said that expansions of major business centres like Khari Baoli and Bhagirath Palace in Delhi have already been approved in the Rai (Sonipat) area, as part of efforts to develop it into a large commercial hub.

The Chief Minister assured that the state government will fully support and protect investors, enabling them to grow their businesses successfully. BJP national general secretary, Tarun Chugh, was also present on the occasion. (PTI)

HADP facilitates 1.11 lakh units in J&K, benefits over 74,000 farming families

JAMMU, April 25: The Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) has facilitated the establishment of over 1.11 lakh units across all 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir, benefiting 74,589 farming families so far, a senior government official said on Saturday.

Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Production Department, Ashish Chandra Verma said the programme has achieved full geographic coverage but currently reaches only about 8.1 per cent of the PM-Kisan beneficiary base, indicating significant scope for expansion and improved utilisation to meet targets.

HADP is a flagship initiative of the J&K government, launched in March 2024, aimed at revamping the agricultural sector through 29 focused projects covering seed quality enhancement, niche crop cultivation, mechanization, and market linkage development.

Verma was briefing a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo here to assess the progress and performance of the HADP in the Union Territory.

The Chief Secretary noted that the programme reflects strong financial viability, with a government subsidy of around ₹ 450 crore expected to be recovered within approximately 2.6 years through enhanced farm incomes.

He directed the department to intensify outreach efforts



and ensure greater inclusion of eligible farmers, particularly in districts with lower coverage.

Regarding the functioning of Kisan Khidmat Ghars (KKGs), he directed for strengthening them further by improving licensing and expanding service delivery, including onboarding of banking and digital services at these centres.

Managing Director, J&K Bank, Amitava Chatterjee, highlighted key suggestions pertaining to digital interventions, including integration and onboarding of various stakeholder platforms onto the HADP portal to enhance efficiency and outreach.

He assured full support and closer institutional synergy with the Agriculture Production Department to ensure seamless implementation of the programme and achieve-

ment of its envisaged objectives across all districts of J&K.

Managing Director, HADP, Sagar Doifode Dattatray elucidated that the programme has generated an estimated annual revenue of ₹ 368 crore and annual profit of ₹ 173 crore at the beneficiary level, translating into an average income enhancement of about ₹ 25,000 per family per year, besides creating over 2.45 crore mandays of employment across 287 blocks and more than 5,100 villages and wards.

Revealing about the implementation quality, the MD gave out that about 92.9 percent of the units are functional and nearly 99 percent units are verified as existing, while 68.3 percent beneficiaries have undergone training under various components. (PTI)

MoS Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani calls for design-led innovation and deeper industry role to shape 6G future: COAI

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 25: The COAI DigiCom Summit 2026, the 2nd of the DigiCom Series by COAI commenced on Friday with Government officials, regulators and industry leaders calling for a secure, resilient and innovation-driven digital ecosystem, underpinned by next-generation telecom networks and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and 5G.

The event kickstarted with the inaugural session which witnessed participation from key leaders from the Government and Industry, including the Chief Guest Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar, Minister of State for Communications and Rural Development along with Anil Kumar Lahoti, Chairman, TRAI; Abhijit Kishore, CEO, Vodafone Idea and Chairperson, COAI; Julian Gorman, Head of APAC, GSMA; Nitin Bansal, Managing Director, Ericsson India; Ashwani Khillan, Chief Operating Officer, Altius Telecom Infrastructure Trust; Rahul Vats, Chief Regulatory Officer, Bharti



Airtel and Vice Chairperson, COAI; as well as Lt Gen SP Kochhar, Director General, COAI.

The Summit, themed "India's Techade: Accelerating and Shaping the Digital Future," has brought together policymakers, telecom operators, global technology leaders, academia and innovators to deliberate on key challenges and opportunities shaping India's digital trajectory. The event is positioned as a high-level platform to align policy direction, industry priorities and technological advancements in building a future-ready digital ecosystem.

In his inaugural address, Minister of State for Communications, Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar, expressed, "India's telecom sector stands at an inflection point, shaped by strong Government policy support and industry-led investments. Over the last decade, we have seen a transformative journey driven by reforms in spectrum management, right of way and a modern regulatory framework. This progress reflects a partnership between the Government and the Industry, enabling scale, affordability and global competitiveness. The industry has re-

sponded with massive investments, including a rapid 5G rollout in just 22 months and one of the highest data usage levels globally. I request operators and manufacturers to focus on design-led manufacturing, build export-grade testing and certification facilities, and form joint ventures with global technology leaders for design, IP and talent development. As AI, 6G, and Quantum Communications evolve, the next phase must focus on design-led manufacturing and deeper R&D participation, so that India helps write global standards."

Anil Kumar Lahoti, Chairman, TRAI said, "India's telecom sector has, over the years, delivered connectivity at a scale and affordability that is globally unparalleled. This achievement has been possible due to a combination of progressive policies, regulatory certainty and sustained investment by the industry. Over the last 10 years, the mobile network has grown more than 4.5 times and today, includes one of the largest 5G deployments."

Waris Punjab De chief remanded in Ajnala case; hearings to continue via video link

Amritpal Singh sent to judicial custody, shifted to Dibrugarh Jail

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, April 25: Waris Punjab De chief and Khadoor Sahib MP Amritpal Singh was on Saturday sent to judicial custody and transferred back to Dibrugarh Central Jail following the conclusion of his two-day police remand in the Ajnala police station attack case.

The controversial Sikh leader was produced before Sub-Divisional Court Judge Palwinder Singh in Ajnala, Punjab, via video-conferencing from Dibrugarh. The court ordered his remand to judicial custody and directed that he be lodged in Dibrugarh Central Jail, where he had previously been detained under the National Security Act (NSA) for three years.

Amritpal Singh was re-arrested by Punjab Police on April 23, hours after his NSA term expired at midnight. He was granted two days of police remand and shifted from Dibrugarh Central Jail to the local police station for investigation into the February 2023 attack on Ajnala police station.

"On Saturday, the sub-divisional court in Ajnala ordered judicial custody of Amritpal Singh through video-conferencing. He will now remain in Dibrugarh Central Jail. The next hearing in the Ajnala case will be conducted on April 30 through video-conferencing and Amritpal will participate from the jail



itself," said Jasbir Kaur, Amritpal Singh's lawyer.

The Ajnala case involves allegations that Amritpal and his supporters broke into the Ajnala police station on the outskirts of Amritsar and clashed with officers to secure the release of an aide. Charges have been framed against 41 accused persons, including the MP.

On Friday, while still in police custody at Dibrugarh Police Station, Amritpal underwent trial proceedings via video-conferencing in a separate case related to the recovery of unau-

thorised electronic devices from the NSA cell of Dibrugarh Central Jail on February 17, 2024. The recovery included a spy-camera pen, a smartphone with a SIM card, a keypad phone, smart drives, Bluetooth headphones and a smartwatch.

The Judicial Magistrate First Class in Dibrugarh has scheduled the next hearing in the electronic devices case for May 7, also via video-conferencing.

Amritpal's nine associates — Papalpreet Singh, Daljeet Singh Kalsi, Kulwant Singh, Varinder Johal, Gurmeet Singh Bhukhanwala, Harjit Singh, Basant Singh, Gurinder Singh Aujla and Bhagwant Singh are currently facing trial in Punjab jails after their NSA terms expired last year.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has permitted all proceedings in the Ajnala case to be conducted through video-conferencing, allowing the MP to remain in Assam during the trial. Beyond these two cases, at least 12 other FIRs remain pending against Amritpal and his associates across Amritsar, Jalandhar and Moga. He is also named as the alleged main conspirator in the murder of social media influencer Gurpreet Singh, alias Hari Nau, who was shot dead in Kotkapura on October 9, 2024.

First Birendra Nath Borthakur memorial lecture held at JB University

Hosts lecture on development and discontent in Northeast India, with MoU signing ceremony

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, April 25: The first memorial lecture in honour of noted sociologist Birendra Nath Borthakur was held at Jagannath Barooah University on Friday. The event was organised by the Assam Sociological Association in collaboration with the university's Department of Sociology.

The programme began with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Assam Sociological Association and the former litterateur Partha Bijoy Dutta Trust, represented by Swati Kiran, Assistant Professor in the Assamese Department at Dibrugarh University and spouse of noted thinker and writer late Partha Bijoy Dutta. The agreement aims to preserve and promote Dutta's diverse intellectual contributions. Inaugurating the lecture, Vice-Chancellor Jyoti Prasad Saikia stated that Birendra Nath Borthakur was not only a sociologist but also a profound social thinker and a pioneer



in advancing sociological studies in Northeast India.

The memorial lecture was delivered by Partha Pratim Bora, Associate Professor of Sociology, Birangana Sati Sadhani State University, Golaghat. Speaking on the topic "Unpacking the Imbroglio: Development and Discontent in Northeast India," Bora emphasised the need for a critical and nuanced examination of development in the region, adding that true progress requires balancing diversity with inclusivity.

The event was attended by several distinguished personalities, in-

cluding AIR singer Mamata Borthakur, wife of Birendra Nath Borthakur, Registrar Dr Utpal Mahanta, former JB College Principal Dr Bimal Barah, and academicians from various institutions.

The session opened with a welcome address by Association Secretary Abdul Motalib and was moderated by Sanju Kakati. The vote of thanks was delivered by Assistant Professor Madhurjya Handique, marking the conclusion of the programme.

Dr Ranjit Kumar Baruah, Principal of Dikhowmukh College was also present in the programme.

NFR strengthens infrastructure for safer operations

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 25: North-east Frontier Railway (NFR) has been consistently striving to enhance the safety and reliability of train operations through continuous monitoring and upgradation of its infrastructure. Adopting modern and technically advanced systems remains a key focus area to ensure safe and efficient train movement across the zone.

During March 2026, NFR undertook several significant initiatives in the signalling and safety domain. Thick Web Switch Point machines with clamp-type locking have been installed at five stations across Katihar, Alipurduar, Rangiya and Lumding divisions of the zone. System Integrity Testing has been carried out at seven stations across Katihar, Alipurduar and Tinsukia divisions, while an extensive System Integrity Testing drive covering 32 level crossing gates has also been completed across all divisions. Additionally, multiple level crossing gates in Lumding and Rangiya divisions have been interlocked to enhance operational safety.

Further strengthening the signalling infrastructure, 10 sliding booms have been commissioned at various level crossing gates in Katihar, Lumding and Rangiya divisions. Automatic Fire Detection



and Alarm Systems have been commissioned at two stations in Tinsukia division, including upgradation to advanced aspiration-type systems at two locations. Electric lifting barriers have also been installed at two level crossing gates in Tinsukia division by replacing older mechanical systems, thereby improving safety at rail-road intersections.

Signalling cable meggering has been carried out at 11 stations and 12 level crossing gates to ensure reliability and proper insulation performance. In order to improve the reliability of safety equipment, a total of 1,258 signalling batteries of various capacities have been replaced across all divisions.

Replacement of 246 glued joints and 92 integrated-type signal LEDs has also been carried out across the zone. Further, improved earthing arrangements have been provided at Gauripur station in Alipurduar division to enhance system safety and stability.

These infrastructural upgrades play a crucial role in ensuring safe train operations, improving reliability and enhancing the overall capacity of railway operations. NFR remains committed to providing a safer, more efficient and punctual travel experience for its passengers through continuous monitoring and strengthening of its infrastructure.

Demow Rongali Bihu Sanmillan concludes with vibrant celebrations

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, April 25: Under the patronage of the Demow Regional Students Union and in association with the people, the 34th Demow Kendriya Rongali Bihu Sanmillan was organised at the Demow Public Playground on April 23 and April 24, 2026.

On April 23 morning, the flag of the organising committee was hoisted by Rupjyoti Handique, president of the Demow Kendriya Rongali Bihu Sanmillan Organising Committee and Antony Lahon, president of the Demow Regional Students Union, hoisted the flag of the All Assam Students Union (AASU). Representatives of different organisations and schools hoisted their flags at the venue.

Swahid tarpan was offered by Plabon Buragohain, Chief Secretary of the Demow Kendriya Rongali Bihu Sanmillan Organising Committee. The earthen lamp was lit in front of the photo of heart-throb Zubeen Garg and tribute was paid to him by Aditya Sarma, vice-president of the All Sivasagar District Students Union as well as working president of the Demow Kendriya Rongali Bihu Sanmillan Organising Committee. On the occasion, egg fight, pitha-pana, drawing, Bihu dance and Bihuwati competitions were organised. Invited husori teams also performed.

On April 24, an All Assam-based open quiz competition was held. The dhol badan and jeng Bihu competitions were also held,

while invited husori teams performed during the programme. The prize distribution ceremony was held in the evening, where winners of various competitions were awarded. Samiran Phukan, General Secretary of the All Assam Students Union, Dhurba Jyoti Kalita, Central Executive Member of AASU, Diganta Sahu, Central Executive Member of ATTSA, Manab Hazarika, president of the All Sivasagar District Students Union and Dipankar Saikia, General Secretary of the All Sivasagar District Students Union were present as distinguished guests. The cultural programme was inaugurated by Samiran Phukan. Popular singer Gitanjali Das performed during the cultural evening.

Two inmates found dead in Nagaon jails; probe ordered

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, April 25: In two separate incidents reported on the same day, two jailed inmates were found dead in Nagaon Central Jail as well as in Nagaon Special Jail, prompting the district administration to order an inquiry.

According to sources, at Nagaon Central Jail, an inmate identified as Jitumoni Konwar of Raha was found dead in his bed early this morning. Jail authorities discovered his body during the morning check.

In a similar incident at Nagaon Special Jail, another inmate, Rupsing Dera was also found dead. Dera was an accused in a murder case, sources added.

The exact cause of death in both cases has not yet surfaced. No official statement has been issued by jail authorities regarding any signs of illness or foul play.

Taking note of the incidents, the Nagaon District Commissioner has ordered an investigation into both deaths. The inquiry has been entrusted to Gopal Sarma, Additional District Commissioner, Nagaon.

Husband kills wife at Chariduar in Sonitpur

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, April 25: In a shocking incident, a brutal murder took place on Friday night at Choy Mile under the jurisdiction of Chariduar Police Station. According to police sources, the incident occurred around 3 AM in a remote interior area of Behergaon village at Choy Mile, where a husband allegedly killed his wife following a domestic dispute. The accused, a daily wage labourer identified as Kanteswar Hazowari, reportedly attacked his wife, Kanduri Hazowari, with a wooden stick during an altercation, resulting in her death on the spot.

The deceased, a mother of a seven-year-old girl had reportedly been unwell for the past few days. The couple had been staying at the residence of the woman's sister during this period. Relatives of the accused, who arrived at the scene in the early hours, stated that Kanduri Hazowari had already succumbed to the severe assault inflicted by her husband. The police were subsequently informed and a team reached the spot, recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem examination. The accused husband has been arrested in connection with the crime. However, the exact motive behind the gruesome murder is yet to be ascertained, police said.

Meanwhile, in another incident, a 27-year-old woman identified as Geetashree Mahanta died recently after alleged poisoning at Saikia Chuburi Dipota under Tezpur Sadar Police Station. Based on the FIR filed by the victim's family, police have detained Geetashree's husband, Pranjit Saikia and initiated an investigation.

NAME CORRECTION

I kamal kant Mahto son of Harekrishna Mahato resident of Ganeshguri kachari Basti Dispur Guwahati 5, have corrected my name that my actual and correct name is kamal kant Mahto and that Kamal Kant Mahto, kamal kanta Mahato and kamal kant Mahato is only one and same person having single identity through an affidavit notarised Dated 11.03.2026 at Kamrup Metro Guwahati.

DC reviews HSLC results in Morigaon, orders strict action

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, April 25: In a determined push to improve academic standards, District Commissioner Anamika Tewari on Saturday chaired a comprehensive review meeting with the heads of government, venture and private schools of Morigaon district, focusing on the outcomes of the HSLC examination.

Held at the conference hall of the District Commissioner's office, the meeting brought together institutions that recorded both the poorest results and a commendable 100% pass percentage. Taking a firm stance, the DC sought detailed explanations from heads of schools that reported dismal performance, including those where not a single student cleared the examination. She expressed serious concern over the state of venture schools with zero pass results, stating that such outcomes are unacceptable, particularly when government schools are accessible nearby.

In a significant directive, she instructed the Inspector of Schools, Dr Apurba Thakuria, to withdraw Classes IX and X from venture schools that have consistently performed poorly for three consecutive years and to facilitate the shifting of students to nearby government schools. The Additional District Commissioner (Education), Anusuya Sharma was tasked with conducting an in-depth inquiry into these schools—examining teacher qualifications, quality of education and underlying causes of poor results—along with interacting with students and parents to submit a detailed report.

Reaffirming her commitment, the District Commissioner stated that she would personally visit one school every day to monitor ground realities. She also directed that special education-focused Gram Sabhas be convened four times a year, ensuring the active participation of parents, village heads, student bodies, Panchayat representatives and other stakeholders.

Emphasising discipline and accountability, she instructed that holidays for Classes IX and X be kept to a minimum. Schools with pass percentages below 50% will be closely monitored for student and teacher attendance. Further, to make education more engaging and future-oriented, she advocated the

introduction of vocational subjects such as agriculture, health-care, information technology, computer education and beauty and wellness, with a strong focus on skill development.

The DC also underscored the importance of regular parent-teacher meetings and mandated home visits by teachers to ensure continuous engagement with students' academic progress. During the meeting, high-performing schools were highlighted as models of excellence, with underperforming institutions encouraged to learn from their practices through exposure visits.

The Additional District Commissioner emphasised that improving the education system requires a united and sustained effort, assuring that no school will be left behind in this mission. The Inspector of Schools cautioned venture institutions against compromising the future of students, asserting that zero pass results will not be tolerated under any circumstances. The meeting was attended by officials from the district administration and the education department, along with the heads of 27 schools.

World Malaria Day observed across Karbi Anglong district



HT Bureau

DIPHU, April 25: World Malaria Day was observed with great enthusiasm on Saturday across all four Medical Block PHCs of Karbi Anglong District by the District Malaria Office (NCVBD), Department of Health & Family Welfare, to create awareness on malaria prevention, early diagnosis and timely treatment.

This year's theme, "Driven to End Malaria: Now We Can, Now We Must," emphasised that with the availability of effective prevention tools, improved healthcare services and active community participation, malaria can be eliminated. The theme also served as a strong reminder that urgent and collective action is needed from every section of society to protect communities from malaria and move closer towards a malaria-free future.

The main district-level programme was held at Upper Hapjan High

School under Manja BPHC, where Obed Killing, DVBD, Karbi Anglong; Kanchan Dev, AMO and Kripeswar Engti, SI conducted an awareness meeting highlighting the importance of mosquito control, use of insecticide-treated bed nets, cleanliness and early treatment-seeking behaviour. The programme was attended by students, teaching staff, village headmen and community members.

To mark the occasion, various activities such as awareness meetings, fever surveillance, distribution of IEC materials, source reduction drives, ITBN camps and malaria clinics were conducted across all Block PHCs of the district.

The observance concluded with a renewed commitment from health officials and the public to work hand in hand towards eliminating malaria and ensuring a healthier and safer Karbi Anglong.

Sansari Puja observed on Jiya Bharali bank

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARALI, April 25: The 'Sansari Puja', convened by the Bordekorai-Purusotam Kirtan Sangha, Rangachakuwa was held on the bank of the Jiya Bharali at Nameri on Saturday.

Notably, Sansari Puja is an annual religious rite of the Gorkhas in which nature gods and Mother Earth are worshipped since time immemorial for world peace, agricultural prosperity, an illness-free society and overall progress. The Gorkhas observe this agri-based religious rite every year during the months of April-May after the commencement of the Hindu New Year.

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Lions Club of Guwahati Gold organises 5th Artificial Limb Camp

20 beneficiaries fitted with artificial limbs at Jaipur Foot-assisted camp

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 25: Lions Club of Guwahati Gold successfully organised its 5th Artificial Limb Camp on Saturday at Kalyan Bhawan, Ganeshguri, Dispur. The camp, conducted by experts from Jaipur Foot, provided artificial limbs to 20 differently-abled individuals, enabling them to regain mobility and confidence.

Project Chairperson Lion Anil Garg (past president) and Lion Deepak Daga stated that the aim is to provide limbs to those in need and help them live independently. The camp's objective was to provide artificial limbs and make life easier for the beneficiaries. All 20 individuals were fitted with artificial limbs and expressed sat-



isfaction, opening new avenues in their lives.

Lion Ashok Goel, Founder president of Gold Club and Lion Sandeep Bhajanka, past president, expressed pride in the project and hoped it would bring positive

change to the lives of the needy. Lion Jaya Pareek, Public Relations Officer, announced that the event was graced by Lion Pankaj Poddar (District Governor), Lion MP Agarwala (ID Endorsee), Lion Manoj Bhajanka (District

Governor Elect) and Lion Rajesh Agarwala (Vice District Governor-1 Elect).

Other Lions members, including Naveen Agarwal, Rakesh Pareek, Amit Poddar, Vikram Agarwal, Rahul Tulsyan, Indu Bhajanka, Saloni Bhajanka, Niti Garg, Jyoti Daga and Sumita Singhal, also attended the event. The camp was conducted by Lion Anil Garg and Lion Deepak Daga. President Lion Deepak Bhajanka, Lion Deepak Daga and Lion Anil Garg also bore the cost of the mentos presented.

Lion Deepak Bhajanka, president of Lions Club of Guwahati Gold, thanked all members for their support and announced plans to expand the initiative to the district level in the future.

Gujarat youth cycles 4,000 km to spread solar awareness

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, April 25: In a remarkable feat that blends gritty determination with a noble cause, Kotres T, a patriotic youth from Gujarat, pedalled into Margherita on Saturday after a gruelling 28-day trans-India expedition. Covering a staggering 4,000 kilometres, Kotres T travelled from Koteswar on India's western edge to the lush landscapes of the Northeast, proving that with enough willpower, the "impossible" is merely a starting line.

This was not just a test of physical endurance, but a journey driven by a strong purpose. As the world grapples with the escalating crisis of global warming, Kotres T took to his bicycle to champion a sustainable future, raising nationwide awareness about the need for solar energy and encouraging citizens to transition to renewable sources to protect the environment for future generations.

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Kalyani Devalaya: A story of faith and mystery

AUTHOR

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The origin story of Kalyani Devalaya is also mysterious. According to local folklore, there once lived a landlord named Kochan in the Dipara region. He had four daughters, and a very beautiful young woman used to frequently visit their house to weave cloth. Her beauty and charm captivated everyone. One day, King Arimatta arrived at the landlord's house and was mesmerized by the young woman's beauty. He proposed marriage to her, but she rejected his proposal and fled. The king chased her, but to escape from him, the young woman struck the ground with her foot. Instantly, a cavity was formed at that spot, and she disappeared into it. This incident left the king distressed and created a deep void in his mind



The origin story of Kalyani Devalaya is also mysterious. According to local folklore, there once lived a landlord named Kochan in the Dipara region. He had four daughters, and a very beautiful young woman used to frequently visit their house to weave cloth. Her beauty and charm captivated everyone. One day, King Arimatta arrived at the landlord's house and was mesmerized by the young woman's beauty. He proposed marriage to her, but she rejected his proposal and fled. The king chased her, but to escape from him, the young woman struck the ground with her foot. Instantly, a cavity was formed at that spot, and she disappeared into it. This incident left the king distressed and created a deep void in his mind. Later, the king saw in a dream that the young woman was actually an incarnation of Goddess Kalyani. The goddess instructed him that if he built a temple at the place where she had disappeared and performed worship, his life would be saved. The king immediately followed this instruction and built a temple at that very spot, which later came to be known as Kalyani Devalaya. Through this story, the mythical significance of the temple is established, and it becomes the center of faith for the local people. Within the depth of this folklore, a distinct aspect of Assam's religious and cultural beliefs is revealed. The story of the miraculous disappearance of the young woman and the creation of the cavity symbolically represents the relationship between humans and nature, as well as belief in supernatural powers. Because of this cavity, the temple is also known as "Gambhar," which



constructed a tunnel to carry the flowers and basil offered in worship at the temple to the Brahmaputra River. Whether this story is historically accurate or merely part of mythological belief, it adds a unique dimension to the mysterious identity of Kalyani Devalaya. Although there is no reliable historical evidence of the existence of this tunnel, the story reflects the depth of imagination and tradition among the local people.

Another important aspect of the historical background of Kalyani Devalaya is its relocation and preservation efforts. According to folklore, the original temple began to be damaged due to the erosion of the Brahmaputra River. The local people preserved the stone slabs, idols, and other architectural elements of the temple. After the devastating earthquake of 1950, the need for relocation of the temple became evident. At that time, the local people united and relocated the temple to the banks of Dipara Pukhuri. Through this process, the community's sense of responsibility toward preserving heritage and the depth of their religious belief became evident. This event established Kalyani Devalaya not only as a religious site but also as a symbol of cultural unity and solidarity among the local community. Due to these efforts, Kalyani Devalaya continues to shine as a living witness to Assam's heritage.

This temple is not just a religious place but a living symbol of the faith, traditions, and historical memories of the local people. The folklore and stories associated with it reflect the imagination and creativity of the community. These narratives create a unique blend of mythological and historical elements within the daily life of Assam. The rituals and religious ceremonies of the temple foster unity and social cohesion among the local people. Especially during Durga Puja, a large number of devotees gather here, reflecting the vibrancy of local culture. Through the worship of Goddess Kalyani, people seek prosperity and peace in their lives. These re-

ligious events cultivate a sense of unity and mutual connection within the community, establishing Kalyani Devalaya as a cultural center.

The environment of Kalyani Devalaya is another important aspect of its attraction. Situated on the banks of Dipara Pukhuri, the temple is surrounded by natural beauty, creating a serene and spiritual atmosphere. The still waters of the pond and the mythological background of the temple add a unique dimension to this place. Visitors and devotees find spiritual peace here. The combination of natural beauty and religious significance makes Kalyani Devalaya an attractive destination.

To conclude, Kalyani Devalaya is an invaluable treasure of Assam's historical, cultural, and religious heritage. The folklore and historical narratives associated with it create a unique blend of mythological and historical elements within the life of the people. Through proper preservation and promotion, this heritage can be safeguarded for future generations. At the same time, the temple's religious and cultural significance fosters unity and social cohesion within the community. The mythological stories, historical background, and natural beauty of Kalyani Devalaya establish it as a living symbol of Assam's heritage.



Located on the banks of Dipara Pukhuri in Kalyanpur of Barongabari under Gohpur subdivision in Biswanath district of Assam, Kalyani Devalaya is a heritage-rich pilgrimage site where a unique blend of mythology, historical events, and cultural richness can be observed. The folklore and historical background associated with this temple have established it as an important symbol of the religious and cultural life of Assam. Kalyani Devalaya is not merely a religious place; it is a living document of Assam's heritage, reflecting the deep connection of faith, tradition, and history among local people as well as devotees from different parts of the state.

Further deepens its mysterious character. The people of this region worship Goddess Kalyani as a benevolent and protective force. Shakti worship holds an important place in the history of Assam, and Kalyani Devalaya stands as a living example of it. Through this story, the unique blend of imagination and religious belief of the local people is reflected. The tale of the goddess's incarnation serves as a symbol of prosperity, peace, and protection in the lives of the people of this region.

Another fascinating story associated with the construction of Kalyani Devalaya is the existence of a tunnel from the temple to the Brahmaputra River. According to folklore, King Arimatta had

The tourism potential of Kalyani Devalaya is highly significant. Like other historical and religious sites of Assam, this temple can become an attractive destination for tourists. Its mythological stories, historical importance, and natural beauty can draw the attention of visitors. With the cooperation of local administration and the tourism department, steps have been taken to develop it as a tourist center. This can contribute to the improvement of the local economy as well as promote Assam's heritage. The peaceful environment and historical significance of the temple can offer a unique experience to visitors. Particularly in the field of religious tourism, Kalyani Devalaya holds great potential. Through tourism promotion, its historical and cultural importance can be shared with visitors from across the world. At the same time, giving importance to the preservation of Kalyani Devalaya is essential. The folklore and historical narratives associated with it form an important part of Assam's cultural heritage. There is a need to document these stories in written form and disseminate them among the younger generation. Alongside this, the physical structure of the temple requires preservation through cooperation between the local community, administration, and heritage conservation organizations



The shadow war: North Korea's Grey-zone strategy in the Digital Age

By: Soumya Awasthi, Sweekriti Pathak

North Korea has engineered one of the most sophisticated grey-zone strategies of the 21st century. It is a deliberate, multi-domain campaign of coercion, theft, and covert influence that operates in the space between war and peace. From record-breaking cryptocurrency heists and AI-augmented social engineering to spy satellite launches, battlefield deployments in Eastern Europe, and the quiet infiltration of Western tech firms by fake IT workers, Pyongyang has systematically weaponised ambiguity. This article maps the architecture of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s grey-zone strategy, assesses what it finances, and argues that the international response remains structurally inadequate.

The Grey Zone as Strategy: The DPRK's Tactics

Grey zone warfare refers to coercive actions that deliberately stay below the threshold of conventional armed conflict, a space where attribution is difficult, legal frameworks are ambiguous, and the cost-benefit calculus favours the aggressor. For a state as economically crippled and diplomatically isolated as the DPRK, operating in the grey zone is a structural necessity.

Pyongyang has almost no conventional economic leverage. It has, however, built a formidable asymmetric arsenal across five domains: cyber and cryptocurrency theft, human infiltration (IT workers and espionage), space-based reconnaissance, proxy military deployments, and disinformation. Each domain reinforces the others, and together they serve to expand its operational reach and finance its WMD programme without crossing the tripartite of kinetic war.

Pyongyang has almost no conventional economic leverage. It has, however, built a formidable asymmetric arsenal across five domains: cyber and cryptocurrency theft, human infiltration (IT workers and espionage), space-based reconnaissance, proxy military deployments, and disinformation.

The Lowy Institute Asia Power Index 2024 ranked DPRK seventh in cyber capabilities, ahead of Japan, Taiwan, and India, despite its near-zero domestic internet penetration. That paradox is the key to understanding Pyongyang's grey-zone logic: minimal exposure, maximum offence.

Crypto Heists as Sanctions Evasion

No element of DPRK's grey zone strategy has been more consequential than its systematic looting of the global cryptocurrency ecosystem. Between 2017 and 2023, UN sanctions monitors documented 58 cyberattacks on crypto platforms, resulting in approximately US\$3 billion in losses. But the pace has since accelerated dramatically. In 2025 alone, DPRK-linked groups stole US\$2.02 billion in cryptocurrency, a 51 percent year-on-year increase, pushing their verified all-time total to US\$6.75 billion. The single largest heist in crypto history oc-

curred on 21 February 2025, when hackers compromised the Dubai-based exchange Bybit for US\$1.5 billion. North Korea's Lazarus Group was responsible for 76 percent of major attacks in 2025.

The laundering network is equally sophisticated. Stolen assets are cycled through Decentralised Financing (DeFi) protocols, no-KYC exchanges, cross-chain bridges, and Chinese-language payment processors. The Cambodia-based Huione Group emerged as a critical node, reportedly processing at least US\$4 billion in DPRK cyber proceeds between 2021 and early 2025, before the US Treasury barred American institutions from transacting with it.

Pyongyang has, in effect, built a shadow national treasury: a crypto reserve that bypasses every SWIFT channel, sanctions regime, and correspondent banking restriction.

France's UN delegation has publicly stated that illicit cyber activity accounts for up to 50 percent of the DPRK's weapon of mass destruction (WMD) financing. Pyongyang has, in effect, built a shadow national treasury: a crypto reserve that bypasses every SWIFT channel, sanctions regime, and correspondent banking restriction.

Embedded Operatives in Western Tech

The DPRK's hacking groups, such as Lazarus, Andariel (APT45), and Kim-suky (APT43), have now shifted to adding a human layer to the attack surface. DPRK operators are no longer simply exploiting software vulnerabilities. They are running elaborate social engineering campaigns that the FBI has described as "difficult to detect, even by those well versed in cybersecurity". Operatives conduct deep pre-operational surveillance on LinkedIn and other professional networking platforms, crafting fictional personas as recruiters, venture capital investors, and AI company representatives to approach engineers and executives at crypto and DeFi firms.

Typically, targets are led through a convincing fake hiring process that culminates in a "technical interview" requiring them to run code or open documents, thereby delivering malware (notably TraderTraitor and AppleJeus) that siphons credentials, source code, and VPN access to employers' systems. In another variant, senior executives are approached by fake investors who use staged pitch meetings to map internal networks.

The newly emerging AI integration is particularly alarming. The DPRK's Research Center 227, a dedicated AI cyber warfare unit, has reportedly been established to develop AI-assisted hacking and information theft capabilities. Operatives are already deploying tools such as ChatGPT, FaceSwap, and generative coding assistants to create synthetic identities, enhance phishing payloads, and automate offensive operations at scale. Microsoft and OpenAI have both confirmed that the DPRK-linked group Emerald Sleet is leveraging large language models to fa-



facilitate cyberattacks.

Perhaps the most structurally novel element of the DPRK's grey-zone strategy is the deployment of thousands of DPRK nationals as remote IT workers embedded inside Western technology and crypto firms, where they generate income, steal intellectual property, and serve as persistent insider threats.

Using fabricated identities, AI-generated facial deepfakes, and laptop farms operated by foreign facilitators, DPRK workers have successfully obtained remote employment at firms in the United States, Europe, and beyond. The US Department of Justice indicted two DPRK nationals and three facilitators in January 2025 for running a multi-year fraudulent IT worker scheme that generated direct revenue for Pyongyang.

South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS) has reported that 80 percent of cyberattack attempts against South Korea's public sector by state-sponsored groups originate from DPRK-linked actors. This underscores the degree to which the IT worker programme serves intelligence collection, not just financial ends.

Space as an Extension of the Grey Zone

The DPRK's space programme is inseparable from its grey-zone strategy. Every satellite launch simultaneously functions as a WMD test in disguise. UN Security Council resolutions explicitly recognise DPRK satellite launches as violations, viewing them as covers for ICBM technology development.

The DPRK's space programme is inseparable from its grey-zone strategy. Every satellite launch simultaneously functions as a WMD test in disguise.

After two failed attempts, the DPRK successfully placed its first military reconnaissance satellite, Malliyeong-1, into a sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 500 km in November 2023. The satellite is estimated to have a maximum imaging resolution of around one metre — below the threshold of militarily actionable intelligence — but it remains a significant symbolic and developmental milestone. Pyongyang claimed it had already transmitted imagery of the White House and the Pentagon, though no images were released, and foreign analysts remain sceptical of its operational capability.

Kim Jong Un pledged three additional reconnaissance satellite launches in 2024. A second attempt in May 2024 ended in a mid-air explosion over DPRK waters. The space race on the peninsula is now bilateral and openly competitive: South Korea, operating under a contract with SpaceX, had launched five military spy satellites by 2025.

The Russia angle is crucial here, as the DPRK is reportedly close to obtaining advanced Russian space technology, particularly guidance systems that could improve ICBM accuracy and satellite launch reliability. This technology transfer, transacted in exchange for troops and munitions, represents one of the most dangerous proliferation dynamics currently unfolding.

The Russia-DPRK Strategic Exchange

The deployment of DPRK combat troops to Russia's war in Ukraine constitutes the most dramatic grey zone escalation in a generation. In autumn 2024, Pyongyang dispatched approximately 11,000–12,000 soldiers—including elite

Storm Corps special forces—to the Kursk region, their first foreign combat deployment since the Korean War. By mid-2025, Ukrainian intelligence assessed total deployments at potentially 30,000 troops.

The strategic transaction is transparent: in exchange for troops and munitions, including at least 100 ballistic missiles and an estimated nine million artillery shells transferred to Russia in 2024 alone, Pyongyang receives battlefield combat experience, food and energy aid, and advanced military technology, including potential submarine development assistance and satellite guidance systems.

This exchange is rewriting the security calculus in the Korean Peninsula. DPRK soldiers have gained combat experience unprecedented since the Korean War. Russia has granted North Korea technological concessions that Pyongyang could not obtain through any other channel. Meanwhile, Russia's April 2024 veto ended the mandate of the UN Panel of Experts that had monitored sanctions on the DPRK, removing the UN's primary mechanism for sanctions enforcement.

Limits of the Current International Response

The international response has been substantive but structurally inadequate. A US-Japan-South Korea trilateral secretariat was institutionalised in November 2024. An 11-nation Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT) was formed in February 2025 to partially fill the void left by the dissolved UN Panel. South Korea has adopted an "offensive cyber defence" posture aligned with the US Defend Forward doctrine. Joint cyber exercises have expanded. The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has sanc-

tioned multiple DPRK-linked cyber actors and facilitator networks.

China and Russia remain outside these monitoring frameworks. The global cryptocurrency regulatory landscape remains fragmented, with significant KYC blind spots that DPRK money launderers continue to exploit. Western AI platforms currently lack effective safeguards against state-directed cyber operations.

However, China and Russia remain outside these monitoring frameworks. The global cryptocurrency regulatory landscape remains fragmented, with significant KYC blind spots that DPRK money launderers continue to exploit. Western AI platforms currently lack effective safeguards against state-directed cyber operations. The DPRK, meanwhile, is estimated to hold a billion dollars in unlaunched cryptocurrency reserves, a war chest that grows each year. The United States and its allies remain "calibrated to an earlier era" of DPRK threat assessment.

Confronting the Grey Zone: A Policy Agenda

The international community must treat the DPRK's crypto theft architecture as a WMD financing mechanism, not merely as cybercrime. Interdiction of DPRK crypto flows deserves the same diplomatic urgency and inter-agency resources as conventional non-proliferation enforcement. The Huione designation was a step in that direction and must be replicated systematically.

Western governments must develop AI-specific attribution and enforcement capacities for state-sponsored cyber operations. Research Centre 227's exploitation of open commercial AI tools is a direct consequence of the absence of any export or use-control regime governing AI applications in offensive cyber operations.

Research Centre 227's exploitation of open commercial AI tools is a direct consequence of the absence of any export or use-control regime governing AI applications in offensive cyber operations.

The Russia-DPRK military axis demands a coordinated deterrence posture that links sanctions enforcement on the Korean Peninsula to the costs of Russian-DPRK technology transfers. Allowing Moscow to provide Pyongyang with space and missile-guidance technology as a silent quid pro quo for Ukrainian battlefield losses would represent a proliferation failure of the first order.

Conclusion

The DPRK has engineered its grey-zone strategy with deliberate precision. Its cyber-crypto nexus, its ghost workforce embedded inside Western tech firms, its nascent satellite capability, and its battlefield alignment with Russia are not separate phenomena. They are interlocking components of a single, sanctions-defying strategic architecture designed to sustain a nuclear-armed, internationally isolated regime indefinitely. Pyongyang is no longer merely hiding; it is operating at scale and with increasing impunity. (Courtesy: ORF)

Clean energy meets entire global demand growth as renewables overtake coal: Ember report

By: Puja Das

The rise of clean electricity reached a new turning point in 2025 as clean power sources contributed to all growth in global electricity demand, preventing an increase in fossil generation. Near-flat hydropower growth, however, highlighted emerging constraints in balancing rapidly expanding renewables, according to a new report by global energy think tank Ember.

According to Ember's Global Electricity Review 2026, this shift pushed renewables to nearly 34 per cent of global electricity generation, overtaking coal's 33 per cent share for the first time in over a century. Clean generation rose by 887 TWh, slightly exceeding demand growth of 849 TWh, resulting in a 0.2 per cent decline in fossil fuel-based generation.

At the same time, coal power dropped by 63 TWh (-0.6 per cent) in 2025, marking the first fall since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Combined with steady overall electricity demand growth, this meant that the share of coal fell below a third of global generation for the first time in history.

In 1919, when global electricity demand was nearly 300 times smaller than in 2025, renewables, at the time overwhelmingly hydropower, briefly exceeded coal power. For over 100 years since then, coal power has remained the largest source. Its share stayed consistently around or just below 40 per cent of the global power mix from the 1970s to the mid 2010s.

Combined with a fall in the share of gas (down to 21.8 per cent in 2025 from 23.9 per cent in 2020) and other fossil fuels in the global electricity mix, emissions intensity — the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced per unit of electricity — also declined. In 2025, the average kilowatt hour produced globally resulted in emissions of 458 gCO_{2e}, 2.7 per cent less than in 2024 (471 gCO_{2e}) and down 16 per cent from two decades ago in 2005 (543 gCO_{2e}).

Solar and wind drive era of clean growth

The transition was powered overwhelmingly by solar and wind energy. Global solar generation rose by 636 TWh in 2025, a 30 per cent increase over the previous year and the fastest growth rate in eight years. Since 2015, solar output has grown more than tenfold, roughly doubling every three years, and is now comparable to the total electricity demand of the EU-27.

Wind power also registered strong growth, reinforcing the rapid scale-up of variable renewables worldwide.

Solar alone met 75 per cent of the increase in global electricity demand, while together with wind it accounted for 99 per cent of demand growth, underscoring the dominance of these sources in the current phase of the transition.

"We have firmly entered the era of clean growth," said Aditya Lolla, managing director at Ember. "Clean energy is now scaling fast enough to absorb rising global electricity demand, keeping fossil generation flat before its inevitable decline."

China led the surge in both solar and wind, contributing more than half of the global increase in solar capacity and generation in 2025, alongside significant additions in wind power.

China, India central to fossil decline

Asia is now the only region where coal still exceeds renewables, accounting for 52 per cent of generation versus 32 per cent for renewables in 2025, and making up 82 per cent of global coal



generation though its share has been steadily declining as renewables expand.

The report highlights that the global shift away from fossil fuels was driven largely by developments in China and India, the two largest contributors to fossil power growth over the past two decades.

In China, fossil generation fell by 56 TWh as clean energy expansion met all demand growth. In India, fossil generation declined by 52 TWh (-3.3 per cent), supported by record increases in solar and wind generation, strong hydropower output and relatively moderate demand growth.

In Europe, coal's share fell from 25 per cent in 2005 to 13 per cent in 2025, and to just 9.2 per cent in the EU-27, with renewables exceeding coal since 2013. North America saw coal drop from 45 per cent to 15 per cent over the same period, largely replaced by renewables and gas. In Oceania, coal's share declined from 67 per cent to 36 per cent, with renewables overtaking it in 2023 and reaching 45 per cent in 2025.

In Africa, coal's share nearly halved from 45 per cent to 24 per cent, with renewables surpassing it in 2025. Coal remains marginal in Latin America

(4 per cent) and the Middle East (0.3 per cent).

This marked the first time this century that fossil generation declined simultaneously in both countries, helping tip the global balance in favour of renewables. Globally, coal generation fell by 63 TWh, dropping below one-third of total electricity generation for the first time.

Hydro flat globally despite regional swings

Despite the rapid growth in solar and wind, hydropower remained largely unchanged globally, increasing by just 3 TWh (+0.1 per cent) in 2025 compared to 2024.

This stability masked sharp regional variations. Hydro output increased most in China (+45 TWh),

while strong monsoon rainfall drove a 21 TWh rise in India. However, these gains were offset by significant declines in Brazil (-25 TWh), Türkiye (-17 TWh) and the European Union (-43 TWh), particularly in alpine regions such as Italy, France and Switzerland that saw lower precipitation after strong hydro conditions in 2024.

The data highlights hydro's continued dependence on weather patterns even as it remains the largest source of flexible, low-carbon electricity.

India last month cleared a new Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme for FY27-FY31, allocating Rs 2,584.6 crore (about \$310 million) to support 1.5 GW of capacity across projects ranging from 1 MW to 25 MW, with a focus on hilly and north-eastern states where untapped potential remains. The move marks a renewed push after earlier policy support waned. An exclusive small hydropower policy introduced in 2009, revised in 2014 to include Central Financial Assistance and attract private investment, was discontinued in 2017 due to budget constraints, project delays and a policy shift toward cheaper solar and wind energy.

India's structural gap stands out

For India, the report shows a divergence between rising hydro output and a declining share in the overall electricity mix. Hydropower accounted for 13.8 per cent of India's generation in 2005 but fell to 8.6 per cent in 2025, indicating that growth has not kept pace with rising demand and the rapid expansion of solar and wind.

In absolute terms, hydro generation reached a record 178 TWh in 2025, surpassing the previous high of 175 TWh in 2022. India also added 4 GW of hydro capacity during the year.

While India recorded one of the largest increases in hydro generation globally, this growth was largely driven by favourable rainfall rather than sustained capacity expansion at scale, in contrast to China's more structural growth.

Balancing challenge grows

The divergence between rapidly expanding solar and wind and relatively stable hydropower has implications for power systems. Solar generation peaks during the day, while demand typically rises in the evening, creating mismatches that require flexible generation.

Across countries, this increases the importance of dispatchable clean power such as hydropower. However, the limited and uneven growth in hydro suggests that many systems are adding renewable capacity without a proportional increase in balancing resources.

In India, coal continues to meet a significant share of demand during non-solar hours, even as overall fossil generation declines. Gas-based power remains constrained, reinforcing the importance of flexible alternatives.

Nuclear sees modest growth

Nuclear power rose moderately by 35 TWh (+1.3 per cent) in 2025. The increase was driven primarily by new reactors coming online in China (+37 TWh), along with higher output in France (+12 TWh) and Japan (+9 TWh). These gains were partially offset by reactor closures in Belgium, which reduced output by 7 TWh.

New phase of transition

Ember's seventh annual review, based on country-level data covering 91 countries representing 93 per cent of global electricity demand, underscores a turning point in the global power sector.

With clean power now meeting incremental demand growth and renewables overtaking coal, the world has entered a new phase of the energy transition. The report suggests that the next challenge lies not just in scaling clean power, but in ensuring that electricity systems can integrate and balance it effectively.

For India, the data highlights a dual trend: Rapid clean energy expansion alongside a declining share for hydropower, pointing to the need to strengthen flexible generation as the transition accelerates. (Courtesy: Down To earth)

In 1919, when global electricity demand was nearly 300 times smaller than in 2025, renewables, at the time overwhelmingly hydropower, briefly exceeded coal power. For over 100 years since then, coal power has remained the largest source. Its share stayed consistently around or just below 40 per cent of the global power mix from the 1970s to the mid 2010s. Combined with a fall in the share of gas (down to 21.8 per cent in 2025 from 23.9 per cent in 2020) and other fossil fuels in the global electricity mix, emissions intensity — the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced per unit of electricity — also declined. In 2025, the average kilowatt hour produced globally resulted in emissions of 458 gCO_{2e}, 2.7 per cent less than in 2024 (471 gCO_{2e}) and down 16 per cent from two decades ago in 2005 (543 gCO_{2e})

Bengal polls: Matua first family split deepens battle in Bagda, Gaighata

BAGDA (WB), April 25: In Matua strongholds Bagda and Gaighata in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district bordering Bangladesh, the election has slipped beyond the familiar BJP-TMC duel. The battle now runs through the divided Matua first family, with brothers, wives and cousins contesting from rival camps, while the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has stirred fresh anxieties among refugee Hindus who once voted together.

Matuas, originally from East Pakistan, are Hindus who migrated to India during the Partition and after the creation of Bangladesh.

At Thakurnagar, headquarters of the Matua Mahasangh, the anxiety is visible in tea stalls, courtyards and party offices. Families speak in hushed voices about names disappearing from the final voter list, voters being kept "under adjudication", and decades-old residents suddenly being asked to prove they belong to the area.

The Thakur family of Thakurnagar is often referred to as the Matuas "first family" as it traces

its lineage to the sect's founder Harichand Thakur, and has shaped the community's religious leadership and political direction.

The tension has made Bagda and Gaighata in the Bongaon subdivision among the most closely watched constituencies in the second phase of the polls on April 29.

In Bagda, the contest has entered the Thakurbari drawing room. The TMC has fielded sitting MLA Madhuparna Thakur, daughter of Rajya Sabha MP Mamatabala Thakur. The BJP has responded with Soma Thakur, wife of Union minister Shantanu Thakur. The result is a rare political duel between two sisters-in-law, with both claiming to represent the Matua legacy.

Bagda, where Scheduled Castes account for more than 53 per cent of the electorate and Matuas make up over 40 per cent of voters, has long been seen as a political weather vane in the refugee belt.

BJP's Biswajit Das won the seat in 2021 with nearly 49 per cent of the votes. But Das later crossed over to the TMC. In the 2024 bypoll, the



TMC brought in Madhuparna Thakur, one of the youngest members of the Thakur family, and she won with more than 55 per cent of the votes.

Yet the BJP's decision to field Soma Thakur has not gone down well with many local workers. They wanted a local face and rallied behind former BJP MLA Dulal Bar, now contesting as an In-

dependent. The resentment is similar in neighbouring Gaighata, where BJP MLA Subrata Thakur, elder brother of Shantanu Thakur and chairman of the All India Matua Mahasangh, is seeking re-election.

Gaighata was one of the BJP's showcase victories in 2021. Subrata Thakur won the seat with around 47 per cent of the votes, consolidating the Matua support that had shifted towards the saffron camp after the citizenship promise.

This time, he is facing not only TMC candidate Narottam Biswas, but also discontent in his own party. Tanima Sen, a BJP mandal president, filed nomination as an Independent in protest against Subrata's candidature, accusing the party of imposing a "family candidate" and ignoring grassroots opinion. Though she later withdrew after a truce with the BJP leadership, the episode exposed simmering anger against what several local workers describe as the growing dominance of the Thakurbari in party affairs.

The rebellion has been sharpened by the SIR.

According to party leaders and local estimates, around 55,000 names were deleted from electoral rolls in Bagda and nearly 39,000 in Gaighata. North 24-Parganas, the district with the largest concentration of Matua refugees, lost more than 12.3 lakh names after the revision.

For the BJP, the deletions have struck at the core of its political message. Since 2019, the party had built its rise in the Matua belt around a simple proposition — support the BJP, and the uncertainty over citizenship would end through the CAA. But many of those who applied for citizenship certificates now claim their names have vanished from the voter list.

"We were promised citizenship. Now we are being told we may not even vote," said Sukhomoy Haldar, a resident of Gaighata.

The unease has produced political consequences. In Gaighata, 61 BJP workers joined the TMC after the publication of the final rolls. In Bagda, nearly 50 Matua families switched sides. (PTI)

Shah says BJP will win 110 seats in first phase

JAMALPUR/ SHYAMPUR, April 25: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday asserted that the BJP virtually sealed its victory in phase 1 of the West Bengal assembly polls itself, claiming the party would win 110 seats in the first leg of polling and promising swift implementation of the CAA, a crackdown on infiltration, and a "fear-free" Bengal for women after coming to power.

Addressing back-to-back rallies in Jamalpur of Purba Bardhaman district and Shyampur in Howrah, Shah sharpened the BJP's campaign around three of its core Bengal planks—the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) for the Matua community, women's safety, and alleged infiltration from Bangladesh—while projecting the election as a battle to end Mamata Banerjee's rule.

"Voting for the first phase is over. In the very first phase itself, the BJP will win 110 seats, and Didi (Mamata Banerjee) will be thrown out of power. Instead of TMC, BJP will form the government here," he said.

Polling was held in 152 of the 294 assembly constituencies on April 23 and recorded a turnout of nearly 93 per cent. The second phase of polling for the remaining 142 seats will be held on April 29. Results will be an-



'Promises swift implementation of CAA in Bengal'

nounced on May 4.

With the politically influential Matua community's vote central to BJP's electoral calculations in several border districts, Shah accused Banerjee of deliberately blocking the implementation of the CAA and keeping those refugee families in uncertainty for vote-bank politics.

"Didi does not allow the implementation of the CAA. You form the government of the lotus, and after May 5, the BJP government will ensure that every brother and sister of the Matua community receives citizenship," he said.

The former BJP president said

members of the Matua community, many of whom migrated from Bangladesh and remain emotionally tied to the citizenship debate, would no longer have to "live in fear" under a BJP government.

He also linked infiltration to unemployment and resource scarcity, accusing the TMC leadership of shielding illegal entrants for electoral gains.

"Infiltrators in Bengal are eating away at our youths' jobs and the poor's rations. Didi and her nephew (TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee) are nurturing infiltrators for the sake of their vote bank. After May 5, the BJP government

will handpick and drive out every single infiltrator from Bengal," Shah said.

The remarks come amid a sharpened BJP pitch in border districts where questions of identity, refugee status and demographic anxieties remain electorally potent.

Seeking to consolidate Hindu votes further, Shah contrasted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya with controversial remarks allegedly made by TMC MLA Humayun Kabir.

"On one hand, after 550 years, Modi ji has built a grand temple of Lord Shri Ram in Ayodhya. On the other hand, Mamata Didi wants her disciple Humayun Kabir to build the Babri Masjid in Bengal. As long as even one BJP worker is alive, we will never allow the Babri Masjid to be built in Bengal," he said.

On governance, Shah sought to widen the BJP's social welfare pitch by announcing promises for government employees, women, unemployed youth and expectant mothers.

He said a BJP government would implement the 7th Pay Commission and ensure dearness allowance benefits for all state government employees, an issue that has repeatedly embarrassed the TMC government amid prolonged protests. (PTI)

Rahul attacks RSS; alleges 'farzi nationalism in Nagpur, pure servility in US'

NEW DELHI, April 25: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday dubbed the RSS as "Rashtriya Surrender Sangh" and alleged that its leader Ram Madhav has revealed the outfit's true nature of "farzi (fake) nationalism" here and "pure servility" in the US.

He was referring to a video of Madhav from an event in the US, where the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leader said that India agreed to stop buying oil from Russia and also agreed to higher tariffs imposed by the US.

Madhav, however, later apologised, saying what he said was "factually incorrect" as India did not agree to stop importing oil from Russia and had "vigorously protested" the 50 per cent tariff imposition by the Trump administration.

Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, said in a post on X, "Rashtriya Surrender Sangh. Farzi nationalism in Nagpur. Pure servility in the USA. Ram Madhav has only revealed Sangh's true nature."

Congress leader K C Venugopal said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has lost his authority to continue in the post, claiming that the senior RSS leader has made a "clear admission" that Modi is "dancing to Washington's tunes".

In a post on X, Venugopal said, "Clear admission by a senior RSS leader - PM Modi is dancing to Washington's tunes."

"There was once a time when the US' 7th Fleet was in the Bay of Bengal, and India didn't budge. And then there is today, where a Compromised PM has handed over India's sovereignty to the US," Venugopal alleged in a post on X.

"India has lost its independent voice on the world stage. After this surrender, it's clear that Narendra Modi has lost his authority to continue as Prime Min-



ister," Venugopal said.

In the video, Madhav is heard saying, "India agreed to stop buying oil from Iran. We agreed to stop buying oil from Russia, facing so much criticism from our Indian opposition."

"We agreed to a 50 per cent tariff... Agreed means - we did not say anything. We maintained our patience. Fifty per cent tariffs we agreed. Today, in the new trade deal we agreed for 18 per cent tariffs, higher than what it used to be... I mean, average tariff."

Madhav made the remarks during a event at the Hudson Institute in Washington.

Later, in a post on X, the RSS leader wrote that what he said was "wrong" as India did not agree to stop import of oil from Russia.

"What I said was wrong. India didn't agree to stopping import of oil from Russia anytime. Also it vigorously protested 50 per cent tariff imposition. I was trying to make a limited counterpoint to the other panelist. But factually incorrect. My apologies," Madhav said while sharing his video. (PTI)

JU row: Pradhan attacks Mamata, alleges institutional decline in Bengal

NEW DELHI, April 25: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan hit out at West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, alleging that years of "silence and decay" under her leadership had weakened the state's institutions and that she was rattled by the growing demand for their revival.

The remarks came after Banerjee criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his comments on Jadavpur University, saying they undermined a premier institution known for academic excellence.

In a post on X on Friday, Pradhan said Banerjee appeared "more disturbed by the call for revival than by the condition in which those institutions have been left under her government", after Prime Minister Modi spoke the need to restore the "dignity" of West Bengal's most respected institutions and return them to the academic excellence they once symbolised.

Citing findings of a UGC expert committee on Jadavpur University, constituted after the death of a first-year student, he said the panel had described the varsity's anti-ragging framework as "feeble and lacklustre" and flagged "serious administrative failures marked by indifference, negligence, and a troubling absence of accountability".

"The committee found that institutional safeguards had weakened, governance had become ineffective, and the system had failed to respond with



the seriousness expected of a premier university," he said.

Pradhan added that the findings were "so severe" that the panel recommended a 10 per cent reduction in the university's capital and recurring grants for non-compliance with UGC regulations. He further alleged that the Trinamool Congress government showed "little intent to address the deeper structural failures", claiming that "campuses have too often been viewed through the prism of political influence rather than academic responsibility".

"What has clearly unsettled Mamata Banerjee ji is not criticism, but the possibility that Bengal is beginning to recognise how deeply her politics has corroded institutions that once commanded respect far beyond the state," he said.

"The people of Bengal can see that the real threat to its institutions came from years of silence, decay and a politics that reduced pride to paraly-

sis. What truly worries her is that Bengal is no longer willing to accept decline as destiny, and that the demand for renewal has now become stronger than the politics that tried to suppress it," Pradhan added.

At a rally in Howra on Friday, Banerjee said Modi has insulted Jadavpur University (JU) as well as higher educational institutions like Calcutta University (CU), Presidency University and St Xavier's University, which are known for their academic excellence and rich talent pool of students, researchers and academics in the country and abroad for years. "Before speaking in such a way about JU, he must check the NIRF (National Institutional Ranking Framework) rankings of JU and CU currently and in past years. Such comments by the prime minister show his anti-Bengal, undemocratic mindset against free thinking," she said.

Modi launched a blistering attack on the TMC, alleging that the Mamata Banerjee-led party had destroyed the state's identity through corruption and infiltration and turned premier institutions like Jadavpur University into symbols of disorder and political intimidation.

The prime minister also referred to frequent unrest at Jadavpur University, saying the premier institution, once respected globally for its academic legacy, had become a symbol of anarchy under the present dispensation. (PTI)

AAP no longer the same party, no one can work with Kejriwal: Swati Maliwal

NEW DELHI, April 25: Defected AAP MP Swati Maliwal on Saturday alleged that her former party had "strayed far" from its original principles, and its leader Arvind Kejriwal is no longer the same.

Barely a year after losing power to the BJP in Delhi, AAP suffered its greatest jolt on Friday when seven of its Rajya Sabha MPs, including Raghav Chadha and Maliwal, quit the party.

The other defectors were Sandeep Pathak, a key face of the party organisation, former cricketer Harbhajan Singh, Ashok Mittal, Rajinder Gupta and Vikram Sahney.

Maliwal, who joined the BJP after defecting, praised the "decisive and strong leadership" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"I left my home, lived in slums for seven years, quit my job and supported every movement. But when I tried to file an FIR after being assaulted, I was beaten up at Kejriwal's residence by his aide," Maliwal told PTI Videos. She claimed that when she tried to pursue the complaint, she was "threatened and pressured" to withdraw it.

"For two years, I was put under pressure to take my case back, but I did not bow down. Because of this, I was not given even a minute to speak in Parliament by the party," she said.

Maliwal alleged that the Aam Aadmi Party had completely changed and is now known for "lies, corruption and hoiganism."

"The real betrayal is not leaving the party, but not standing by your own principles. People are not leaving out of fear; they are leaving because of Arvind Kejriwal," she said. She claimed that more leaders would quit the party in the coming days.

"No good person can work with him for long. He says one thing and does another," she said about her former boss.

Maliwal said Kejriwal once projected himself as a "common man" but has since changed.



"There was a time when he carried a Rs 2 pen and wore simple clothes. Today, only his status has changed," she said, alleging that he built multiple "sheeshmahals" — a coinage by the BJP to impute a lavish lifestyle to Kejriwal.

She also accused Kejriwal of running the Punjab government through "remote control" after AAP's loss in Delhi.

"The Punjab government has become a personal ATM. Illegal sand mining and drug use are happening openly, and corruption is at its peak," she alleged.

She also claimed that people in Punjab were unhappy with AAP's style of functioning.

"Those who once came on scooters now own big houses, cars and businesses. All this is happening under Kejriwal's protection," she alleged.

Maliwal said she had joined the BJP after careful consideration, not out of compulsion.

"Under his leadership, India is progressing rapidly and has emerged strong globally due to his diplomacy," she said about Modi.

Rejecting claims that leaders were joining the BJP due to fear of agencies like the ED and CBI, she said, "I am not someone who can be scared. I have joined wholeheartedly. If I wanted, I could have joined two years ago." (PTI)

Punjab BJP Mahila Morcha holds protest, slams AAP-Cong for opposing women's quota bill

CHANDIGARH, April 25: The Punjab BJP Mahila Morcha on Saturday held a protest to condemn the alleged anti-women stance taken by opposition parties, which led to the defeat of the Women's Reservation Bill in the Lok Sabha. The protest follows the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 — seeking to implement 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies — on April 17. The Bill sought to increase the strength of the Lower House to 816 (from 543 at present) following a delimitation exercise to operationalise the reservation before the 2029 parliamentary elections.

The members of BJP Mahila Morcha tried to march towards the residence of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, demanding an explanation from the Aam Aadmi Party for opposing the passage of amendment.

The Chandigarh Police briefly detained several leaders — including senior BJP leader Preet Kaur, state president of BJP Mahila Morcha JaiINDER Kaur, and Mohinder Kaur Josh and Mona Jaiswal, both vice presidents of the state unit. Raising slogans of "Nari Shakti Zindabad", the women vowed to continue their fight for equal rights and demanded the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill.

Addressing a gathering earlier, Punjab BJP working president Ashwani Sharma said party has consistently stood for women's empowerment under the leadership of Narendra Modi. (PTI)

Need closer coordination between cancer treatment institutions: V-P

JAIPUR, April 25: Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Saturday called for closer coordination among cancer treatment institutions across the country, saying that better sharing of knowledge and technology can improve treatment outcomes and expand access to quality care.

Addressing the 23rd Cancer Survivors' Day organised by Bhagwan Mahaveer Cancer Hospital and Research Centre here, he said advancements in cancer treatment should reach hospitals across both public and private sectors so that more patients can benefit.

"Greater understanding and cooperation among institutions would strengthen efforts to tackle the disease," he said.

Referring to the growing burden of cancer, he cited data from the Indian Council of Medical Research's National Cancer Registry Programme, which estimates over 15 lakh cases annually in the country.

He said government initiatives are focusing on prevention, early detection and accessible treatment.

The Vice-President said more than 68 lakh



cancer treatments worth over Rs 13,000 crore have been carried out under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

He said day care cancer centres are being set up in district hospitals across the country, and over 450 are already operational.

Speaking about prevention, he referred to the

nationwide HPV vaccination drive aimed at protecting girls against cervical cancer and appreciated efforts by the Union Health Ministry and the Rajasthan government in taking the initiative forward.

He also highlighted the need for continued public awareness on the risks linked to smoking, tobacco use, drug use and unhealthy eating habits, saying lifestyle choices play an important role in reducing the incidence of cancer.

Describing cancer survivors as "warriors", he said their journeys offer hope to others battling the disease. He also acknowledged the role of doctors and caregivers in providing treatment and support.

He urged people to come together to promote early detection and ensure that patients receive timely care and community support.

The Vice-President also honoured cancer survivors on the occasion.

Governor Haribhau Bagade, health minister Gajendra Singh Khimsar, and hospital chairman Navratan Kothari were also present at the programme. (PTI)

BJP says Kejriwal spent private money on 'Sheesh Mahal 2'

NEW DELHI, April 25: The Bharatiya Janata Party on Saturday cornered Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal over the new bungalow allotted to him at Lodhi Estate here, dubbing it as "Sheesh Mahal 2" and alleging expenditure of private money to build amenities in it.

AAP has denied the allegation, calling it fake.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, Delhi Public Works Department Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma said Kejriwal has become habituated to living lavishly.

"After he was forced out of Sheesh Mahal by Dhurandhar voters of Delhi, he shifted to Punjab, where he grabbed a bungalow, and now he has prepared Sheesh Mahal 2 at Lodhi Estate," Verma said.

Showing pictures of the Type VII bungalow allotted by the Centre to Kejriwal as chief of AAP, which is a national party, the minister said the Central Public Works Department does not spend so much money on bungalows and alleged that "private money" was spent to create superior quality amenities in it.

He sought to know from the AAP and Kejriwal how much money was spent on the bungalow and what the source of it was.

Meanwhile, AAP leader Atishi said the photographs released by Verma were fake.

In an X post in Hindi, the former chief minister said, "All the pictures released by Parvesh Verma are fake. They are not pictures of Kejriwal ji's house."

"To find out whose house is how luxurious, (chief minister) Rekha Gupta ji and lieutenant governor sahib should open their own houses, and Kejriwal ji will open his house. The public will decide for itself," she added.

The BJP had dubbed the 6, Flagstaff Road bungalow in Civil Lines, where Kejriwal lived as Delhi Chief Minister till September 2024, as "Sheesh Mahal" over alleged financial irregularities involved in its reconstruction and acquisition of lavish interiors and household goods. Verma said that Kejriwal's new residence at 95, Lodhi Estate, where he has shifted now, has five bedrooms and four drawing rooms. It has amenities superior to any other bungalow in Lutyens' Delhi, including those of the leaders of other parties, such as the Congress and the DMK. (PTI)

COCOMI-led rallies demand justice, rehabilitation amid ongoing ethnic unrest

Manipur: Protesters clash with police during march to CM's residence

IMPHAL, April 25: Thousands of people demanding permanent peace in strife-torn Manipur on Saturday clashed with the police as they were prevented from marching towards the chief minister's residence here.

However, a group of agitators were later allowed to meet Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh and they submitted a memorandum on the matter. The agitators, under the aegis of Meitei organisation COCOMI (Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity) took out four different rallies, which were, however, stopped at different locations ahead of the CM's bungalow in Babupara area.

Additional security forces were deployed and barricades were put up on all four directions leading to the CM's residence, including Keisampat junction, Kangla Gate, Konung Mamang and Moirangkhom in the heart of Imphal, officials said.



At Khurai Lamlong in Imphal East district, nearly 2 km from the CM's bungalow, security forces fired several rounds of tear gas shells to disperse the protesters after they attempted to break through the police barricades, they said.

The agitators raised slogans and held placards demanding justice

for two children killed in a recent bomb blast in Bishnupur district and rehabilitation of the internally displaced persons affected by the ethnic conflict.

COCOMI convenor Y K Dhiren, after meeting the CM, told reporters, said that the organisation, along with the public, will in-

tensify agitation to press for people's demands.

He said no concrete resolution has been achieved in the Manipur crisis since May 3, 2023, alleging a lack of decisive political will and that conflicting narratives have hindered peace efforts.

COCOMI spokesperson Nahapam Shanta Singh had earlier said that the organisation demands an action taken report from the Manipur government on the death of two children in a bomb blast at Tronglaobi on April 7.

"Along with that, we have raised several other demands. If the government fails to answer, we would be compelled to pursue other democratic forms of agitation," he said.

Over 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 3, 2023. (PTI)

Arunachal CM calls for collective push to eliminate malaria by 2030

Khandu says 19 districts now malaria-free, calls for people's movement by 2030



ITANAGAR, April 25: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday said 19 districts of the state have become malaria-free, urging people to join hands to eliminate the disease by 2030.

On World Malaria Day, he said the elimination of the disease must become a people's movement, urging everyone to adopt simple preventive steps that might make a big difference in the fight.

"This day reminds us of our shared commitment to eliminate malaria and ensure a healthier future for all," he said in a social media post.

"I am proud to share that Arunachal Pradesh has made significant progress, moving from a high disease-burden state to category I (low burden) in 2022. Today, 19 districts have achieved malaria-free status, reflecting the dedication of our health workers and communities," he added.

Khandu said, however, the fight is far from over. "We aim to make Arunachal Pradesh a completely malaria-free state by 2030," he said, urging people to consistently use long-lasting insecticidal nets, eliminate stagnant water, wear protective clothing during peak mosquito activity, use repellents indoors, and seek immediate testing in case of fever.

"Together, through awareness and action, we will build a vibrant and malaria-free Arunachal Pradesh," he said. (PTI)

3 arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, April 25: Three persons have been arrested with 5 kg of heroin in Manipur's Churachandpur district, police said on Saturday. In a statement, police said the arrests were made in Bolkot under the Singnang police station area.

Those arrested have been identified as Nengmuanlal and Ginlamthang Guite of M Buangmun village and Hangkhanlian of Gurgaon in Haryana. Heroin weighing 5.43 kg has been seized from them, the police statement said.

On April 20, police arrested a 28-year-old man from his house in Saidan village of Churachandpur district and recovered 11.7 kg of raw opium from him, an official said. (PTI)

BJP holds protest in support of women's bill

SHILLONG, April 25: BJP Meghalaya unit held protest marches at various locations in Shillong on Saturday, demanding that the opposition parties support the Women's Reservation Bill.

The protest at Khyndailad in the city centre was led by BJP Meghalaya Mahila Morcha president Arena Hynniewta, East Khasi Hills district president Priambadah Blah and other members. Hynniewta expressed confidence that the Narendra Modi-led Central government would be successful in gifting the 33 per cent reservation to women of India. Another rally was also organised by BJP women members near Polo, which saw state BJP secretaries Daniela Nonglait, Susuki Pariat and Angie Sangma as participants. (PTI)

Crime Branch raids Tripura DFO's residence after recovery of huge cash from his relative



AGARTALA, April 25: A team of Crime Branch on Saturday carried out a raid in the official residence of District Forest Officer (DFO), South Tripura, Gaurav Ravindra Wagh in connection with the recovery of ₹ 59.95 lakh in cash at Agartala railway station on April 23, an official said.

Police seized some documents, CCTV footage, one laptop and a drone camera from the DFO's residence as part of

the investigation.

"During routine checking at Agartala Railway station on April 23, Rajendra Chintaman Kaklij, a Mumbai-based relative of the DFO, was found with ₹ 59.94 lakh in cash and was taken to Agartala GRP police station for interrogation," Officer in Charge (OC) of the police station, Raju Bhowmik told PTI.

The OC said that as Rajendra failed to explain the source of

the money and intended use of the cash, he was arrested under the Prevention of Corruption Act and various sections under BNS and was produced before a court, which granted him police custody for five days.

According to Bhowmik, the person who was arrested for carrying the huge amount of cash used the DFO's official vehicle to reach the Agartala railway station from Belonia in South Tripura.

"Sensing the gravity of the crime, the case has been handed over to the Crime Branch for proper investigation (on Saturday). A team conducted a raid in the official residence of the DFO at Belonia and seized some documents, CCTV footage, a laptop and a drone camera as part of the investigation," he said.

Meanwhile, the DFO has been asked to report to Aryana Bhavan (headquarters of the Forest department) to ensure an impartial probe into the huge cash recovery case. (PTI)

Arunachal Pradesh PWD engineer killed as tree uprooted by strong winds falls on car



ITANAGAR, April 25: An engineer of the Arunachal Pradesh Public Works Department (PWD) died on Saturday morning when a tree uprooted from a hillside by strong winds and heavy rain fell on his car in Keyi Panyor district, police said.

Deken Sorang, a 43-year-old junior engineer of the PWD, was travelling to Parsi Parlo from Itanagar, along with his driver Shan Rai (36), when the tree fell on his car, said Angad Mehta, the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Keyi Panyor.

Upon receiving information about the incident, a police team rushed to the spot, pulled both Sorang and Rai from the debris and took them to a community health centre, the police officer said.

While Rai sustained minor injuries, doctors at the health centre declared Sorang as "brought dead", the SP said. Police said a post-mortem was held, and further legal formalities are being carried out in coordination with the family members of the deceased. (PTI)

Tipra Motha Party chief pledges complete overhaul of education infra in tribal council areas

AGARTALA, April 25: Tipra Motha Party founder Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma on Saturday promised to "completely overhaul" the education infrastructure in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) areas.

According to the northeastern state's education department, Tripura's 340 schools with a single teacher are under the TTAADC as of September 2025.

A week after the TMP registered a landslide victory in the Tripura tribal council elections, winning 24 of the 28 seats, its supreme said in a Facebook post that during the poll campaign, he had seen barefoot tribal students in torn uniforms going to schools that did not have adequate teachers.

"I promise to completely overhaul the education system to ensure quality education for all tribal students. We have begun preparing a draft education policy for a qualitative change in education," he said.



Debbarma assured people that the tribal council will also set up a coaching centre at Khumulwng, the headquarters of TTAADC, to provide training to UPSC and state civil services aspirants.

The TMP chief stated the new tribal council will also ensure drinking water in all tribal hamlets, where the "basic needs remain unfulfilled".

"The TMP-governed tribal council

will introduce a transparent recruitment policy to provide a level playing field to all job aspirants. There will be no recruitment without advertisements in local media and proper interviews," he said.

The TMP chief also made a commitment to establishing a modern sports coaching centre at Khumulwng to provide proper guidance to the tribal youth who are interested in sports. (PTI)

BJP to contest village committee elections in TTAADC areas without any alliance: CM

AGARTALA, April 25: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Saturday said the BJP has decided to contest the elections to the Village Committees in Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) without any alliance.

In the recently concluded elections to the tribal council, the Tipra Motha Party (TMP) led by Pradyot Kishore Debbarma registered a massive victory by winning 24 out of 28 seats, while the BJP secured only four seats.

"We have a meeting to review the results of the tribal council at the party headquarters today. The leaders who remained present in the meeting decided to contest the upcoming elections to the Village Committee without any alliance. Whatever weakness we have discovered on the organisational side during the election process (of the tribal council), the party will address them with due care and move forward in tribal belts", he told reporters. (PTI)

Arunachal Dy CM calls for responsible, ethical journalism

ITANAGAR, April 25: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Saturday underscored the importance of accuracy, ethics and legal awareness in journalism, stating that responsible reporting is vital for strengthening democracy and maintaining social harmony.

Addressing a workshop on "Responsible Media Initiative", organised by the Arunachal Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ) in Namsai district, Mein said journalism is not merely a profession but a responsibility towards society.

"Had a meaningful interaction with our media fraternity on the theme 'Responsible & Legal Aspects of Reporting'. I shared my thoughts on how journalism is not just a profession, but a responsibility towards society," he said later in a post on X. Highlighting the challenges of the digital age, the deputy chief minister stressed the need for fact-checking and sensitivity in reporting.

"In today's fast-paced digital world, it is more important than ever to verify facts, stay sensitive to our diverse social fabric, and uphold the highest ethical standards,"

he said. Emphasising accuracy over speed, Mein said, "While news travels faster than ever, accuracy must always come first. Responsible journalism plays a key role in strengthening democracy, building public trust, and maintaining harmony in society."

He also called for improved legal awareness among journalists to enable them to function with greater confidence.

"I also emphasised the need for greater legal awareness among journalists so they can work with confidence and clarity," he added. (PTI)

Nagaland meets only 44.5 pc of demand for animal-based food products: official



KOHIMA, April 25: Nagaland can meet only around 44.5 per cent of its demand for animal-based food products, forcing the state to import meat worth over Rs 263.56 crore, an official said on Friday.

Speaking at the state-level World Veterinary Day programme in Kohima, Land Revenue and Tourism Secretary Chusi said the shortfall presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the veterinary sector to strengthen the rural economy.

He said the per capita availability of key food items remains well below recommended levels.

"Milk availability is around 67 grams per person against the recommended 150 grams, while egg availability stands at 34-40 against the desired 110 per person," he said, noting that Nagaland's pork consumption is also high, exceeding local production.

Urging veterinary professionals to do more, Chusi said the profession plays a key role in improving rural livelihoods and boosting economic growth.

"Veterinarians, among the highest-paid professionals, must go beyond routine duties and deliver impactful services, especially in rural areas," he said.

Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department Secretary Angelina Tajen described veterinarians as the first line of defence in the food chain, ensuring meat and animal products are safe and helping prevent diseases such as avian influenza and African Swine Fever.

She said animal health and human health are closely linked, stating that diseases such as rabies and Nipah can spread from animals to humans if not properly controlled.

"Veterinary services such as vaccination, disease monitoring, deworming, artificial insemination and farmer training are important for public health as well as rural incomes," she said.

Nagaland Veterinarians' Association president KN Zubemo Humtsoe said veterinarians play a vital role in animal care, public health and environmental sustainability.

He said they ensure food is safe and disease-free while supporting livestock productivity, agriculture and rural economies.

Humtsoe also stressed the need for better infrastructure, access to modern technology and regular training, especially for professionals working in remote areas. (PTI)

Kham pulling ceremony celebrates Wancho heritage in Longding

Traditional log drum ritual draws thousands in Arunachal Pradesh

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, April 25: In a vibrant celebration of Wancho tribal heritage, thousands of villagers gathered at the Chief's Residence in Pumao under Longding district of Arunachal Pradesh on Friday for the much-anticipated Kham (Log Drum) Pulling Ceremony-cum-Installation Programme.

The event, steeped in centuries-old tradition, drew participants from four villages — Pumao, Longkhow, Chatting and Maihua — coming together in a show of cultural pride and community solidarity.

The ceremony was presided over by Chief Guest Gabriel D Wangsu, Minister for Agriculture and Allied Departments, Arunachal Pradesh. Ranphoa Ngowa, Secretary for Tourism, Political and Border Affairs, attended as Guest of Honour, while Thangwang Wangham, MLA of the 59th Longding-Pumao Assembly Constituency, graced the occasion as Special Guest.

The Kham, or log drum, holds deep significance in Wancho society. The pulling ceremony begins with a sacred song called 'Kham Pai Tsai' — meaning the "song of lifting the log drum" — in which the community seeks permission from the spirits of nature, asking birds, squirrels and insects to forgive them for taking the tree that once sheltered them.

The Kham varies in size, sometimes reaching up to 12 metres in length and 3 metres in circumference and its structure typically com-



prises a head, body and tail.

In earlier times, it was beaten with large wooden sticks called 'Kham Thutkia' to communicate urgent messages to the village —

warning of approaching enemies, alerting about a tiger near the settlement, or announcing festivals and the death of community elders.

The programme featured a welcome dance by Pumao girls and a cultural performance titled "Echoes of Ancestral Beginnings" by Nahphua Wangpan and his group.

Rahane, Pant under scrutiny as KKR, LSG fight to stay alive

LUCKNOW, April 25: The adage that a captain is only as good as his team holds a grim truth for Rishabh Pant and Ajinkya Rahane. As Lucknow Super Giants and Kolkata Knight Riders prepare to meet this Sunday in the IPL, both find their leadership under fire, mirroring the fading fortunes of their respective franchises.

KKR's bold call to persist with Rahane at the helm after a woeful IPL 2025 campaign was debated even before the tournament began. The concerns have only deepened as results failed to follow.

It took them seven matches to register their first win -- a narrow escape powered by individual brilliance from Rinku Singh rather than a collective resurgence.

It's true that Rahane has shown a transformative approach with flashes of positive intent -- a 67 off 40 against Mumbai Indians and a brisk 41 off 24 against LSG.

But, in a format on the fast lane, those starts have rarely translated into match-shaping contributions.

At a time when he is nearly 38, persisting with him as a long-term T20 leader looks increasingly out of step with the demands of the format.

Rahane hasn't been helped by a depleted pace attack and a quiet start from

spin spearhead Varun Chakravarthy. Yet, along with head coach Abhishek Nayar, who had an equally uninspiring campaign with UP Warriorz at this season's Women's Premier League, Rahane has been found wanting in key areas -- team selection and resource utilisation.

Rachin Ravindra continues to warm the bench, while Finn Allen and Tim Seifert have played musical chairs without clarity.

Rahane's calls at the toss have also been baffling, like choosing to bat on a two-paced, moisture-laden surface against Gujarat Titans led to a collapse to 32/3, while a similar decision under over-cast conditions against Punjab Kings had them reeling at 25/2 in two overs before rain intervened.

Even as he has adopted a more aggressive approach with the bat, Rahane's decision-making has lacked conviction.

His recent returns reflect that disconnect including consecutive ducks, the latest coming when the situation demanded composure against Rajasthan Royals. Instead, he fell to an expansive stroke, leaving KKR in deeper trouble before Rinku's unbeaten 53 salvaged the chase.

KKR may carry some momentum into the Ekana Stadium, but with just three points, they now need at least six wins



from their remaining seven matches which seem an improbable task.

LSG's campaign too has unravelled. Placed ninth with just two wins at the halfway mark, the Pant-led side is also starting at an early exit, compounded by four straight defeats and a string of questionable on-field decisions from their captain.

Pant's struggles have been particularly stark. Since a match-winning unbeaten 67 against Sunrisers Hyderabad, he has managed only 72 runs in five innings, in-

cluding a three-ball duck against Rajasthan Royals. That dismissal summed up his current state.

Chasing 160 on a challenging pitch in Lucknow, Pant walked in after an early run-out and responded recklessly. The situation demanded patience and awareness and Pant offered neither.

Against a disciplined Rajasthan attack featuring Jofra Archer and Nandre Burger, preserving wickets in the power play was crucial but Pant's approach showed little regard for match conditions. LSG's struggles are compounded by a

poor home record. The Ekana Stadium has hardly been a fortress for the Sanjiv Goenka-owned side: six losses in eight matches here last season, including five in a row, and three consecutive defeats this year already.

Overall, they have just nine wins from 24 games at the venue.

Their batting has lacked consistency, with frequent top-order collapses exposing a misfiring middle order.

Overseas mainstays Nicholas Pooran (73 runs) and Aiden Markram (162 runs) have failed to deliver.

The round one has belonged to the Pant-led side who unearthed a new star in Mukul Choudhary but he has faded since his 27-ball 54 net out.

Pathirana boost KKR are set to receive a boost with the return of Sri Lankan slinger Matheesha Pathirana, their Rs 18-crore recruit, who is in line for his debut in purple brigade.

Likely to replace Tim Seifert, Pathirana's presence could add bite to an attack that has lacked penetration.

Known for his deadly yorkers, Pathirana was seen honing his skills under bowling coach Tim Southee here.

His potential match-up against the likes of Mitchell Marsh and Pant could be one of the defining contests of the

game. As far as their overall captaincy records are concerned, Rahane has so far won six matches and lost 12 games in 20 outings as KKR skipper, while LSG have won eight times and lost on 13 occasions in 21 matches under Pant's leadership.

Teams : **LSG:** Rishabh Pant (captain), Aiden Markram, Himmat Singh, Matheesha Pathirana, Mukul Choudhary, Akshat Breetzke, Anukul Roy, Vaibhav Arora, Umran Malik, Varun Chakravarthy, Cameron Green, Matheesha Pathirana, Rahul Tripathi, Tim Seifert, Tejasvi Dahiya, Rachin Ravindra, Akash Deep, Blessing Muzarabani, Navdeep Saini, Prashant Solanki, Finn Allen, Daksh Kamra, Kartik Tyagi, Sarthak Ranjan, Saurabh Dubey.

KKR: Ajinkya Rahane (captain), Manish Pandey, Rovman Powell, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Ramandeep Singh, Rinku Singh, Sunil Narine, Anukul Roy, Vaibhav Arora, Umran Malik, Varun Chakravarthy, Cameron Green, Matheesha Pathirana, Rahul Tripathi, Tim Seifert, Tejasvi Dahiya, Rachin Ravindra, Akash Deep, Blessing Muzarabani, Navdeep Saini, Prashant Solanki, Finn Allen, Daksh Kamra, Kartik Tyagi, Sarthak Ranjan, Saurabh Dubey.

Match starts at 7:30 PM. (PTI)

BHULLAR STAYS IN TOP-5 DESPITE TOUGH THIRD ROUND

SINGAPORE, April 25: Battling tough conditions, India's Gaganjeet Bhullar shot one-over 72 in the third round but remained inside the top-5 at the Singapore Open here Saturday.

Sitting at the top of the leaderboard at the USD 2 million International Series event is Korea's Jeongwoo Ham, who, after shooting a 68, has been in the lead across all three days.

In energy sapping conditions with the formidable Serpong course at the Sentosa Golf Club to boot, Bhullar hung on gamely to shoot 1-over 72 on a moving day in a round that was all about minimising the damages and staying in the mix.

Bhullar currently lies at tied fifth place at 6-under 207, a position he shared with Thai Jazz Janewattananond (68-66-73) and Pakistan's Ahmad Baig (69-71-67), who with an eagle and two birdies, was one of the standout performers of the day.

Bhullar encountered a nasty double bogey early on the third hole which threatened to derail his progress.

"That was unfortunate. I hit a good drive, it was in the first cut and the lie was fine. I had about 210 yards with a five-iron but made a poor swing and pulled it left.

"From there, I ended up in a

tricky spot near the bunker with no proper stance for my fourth shot. I managed to get it to about 10 feet but missed the putt," Bhullar said.

He got back a stroke immediately on the fourth and then went on to birdie the ninth as well. He would have hoped to go low in the back nine to make a charge up the leaderboard, but ended up making 8 pars and a bogey after the turn.

Bhullar currently lies seven shots off the pace from leader Ham, yet remains hopeful.

"Overall, with 18 holes to go, I'll keep my head down, get some lunch, and spend some time working on my putting."

Young Pukhraj Singh Gill (71-70-72), playing on an International Series invite, played steady once again.

The Ludhiana player is at level-par and at the Tied-45 place.

The other Indian to make the cut, Karandeep Kochhar had a rather forgettable outing today, carding a 6-over 77 to lie at T-67.

Ham has a four-shot lead over Australia's Cameron John, who returned a 67, the joint-lowest round of the day along with Baig and Thailand's Ithiphat Buranatanayarat, while Japan's Tomohiro Ishizaka is in third, another stroke back, following a 70.

Ham was unflappable again on Saturday, conducting a putting exhibition. (PTI)

Indian stars headline UTT Season 7 pool; Sathiyam, Manika among key retentions



NEW DELHI, April 25: Leading Indians Manav Thakkar, Manush Shah and Diya Chitale headline the player pool for Ultimate Table Tennis Season 7, while stalwarts Sathiyam Gnanasekaran and Manika Batra were retained by their respective franchises ahead of next week's auction.

The seventh edition of the franchise-based league will be held from July 9 to 26 at the Dr Shyamala Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium in Goa.

The auction is scheduled for April 28 in Mumbai, where teams will assemble squads from a di-

verse pool featuring established Indian names, emerging talent, and top international players.

Thakkar and Shah return to the auction pool after a year-long hiatus due to international commitments, with the duo currently ranked World No. 5 in men's doubles and a regular presence on the international circuit. Shah also pairs with Chitale in mixed doubles, with the duo ranked World No. 6 and having created history as the first Indians to qualify for the WTT Finals.

Chitale, the most expensive pick in last season's auction, returns to the pool after Dabang

Delhi TTC opted to retain Sathiyam, extending his association with the franchise into a record seventh successive season.

Batra, meanwhile, returns to the league after missing the previous edition due to injury, having been retained by Ahmedabad APL Pipers.

Alongside Batra and Gnanasekaran, Ankur Bhattacharjee and doubles specialist Akash Pal were retained by Kolkata Thunderblades and U Mumba TT respectively. Dempo Goa Challengers and PBG Pune Jaguars opted against using their retention and will start the auction with a full purse alongside newly inducted UP Prometheans.

All teams of the franchise-based league has been allocated a purse of 1 crore tokens.

"It's exciting to see such a strong and diverse player pool for Season 7," UTT Co-Promoter Niraj Bajaj said in a release.

"The return of top Indian players like Manav, Manush, and Manika, combined with a competitive international field, reflects the growing depth and quality of table tennis associated with Butterfly UTT. The mix of experienced names and emerging talent will make for a highly competitive auction and an exciting season ahead." (PTI)

CSK look to build momentum; GT seek course correction after back-to-back losses



CHENNAI, April 25: Riding a resurgent run, Chennai Super Kings will look to consolidate their position in the top half, while Gujarat Titans aim to arrest a slide when the two sides face off in a crucial mid-season IPL clash here on Sunday.

After a sluggish start, CSK have turned things around, winning three of their last four matches, including a commanding 103-run victory over Mumbai Indians that was powered by Sanju Samson's second century of the season.

Led by Ruturaj Gaikwad, CSK are placed just outside the top four with six points and will be keen to avoid further slip-ups as they chase a playoff berth.

At the moment, things are looking up for CSK. Samson's brilliance with the bat, complemented by a clinical bowling effort led by Akeal Hosen, scripted their emphatic win over Mumbai.

Notably, they achieved it without talisman MS Dhoni (calf injury) and local talent Ayush Mhatre (hamstring), who has contributed 201 runs this season.

However, a few concerns remain. While the top order has delivered consistently, the middle order has struggled to show intent and build partnerships. Against Sunrisers Hyderabad, CSK should have comfortably chased down 130 from 90 balls with eight wickets in hand, but a middle-order collapse derailed the effort.

Gaikwad himself is enduring a lean run, much like Riyan Parag for Rajasthan Royals, while the likes of Sarfaraz Khan, Shivam Dube and Dewald Brevis have failed to convert starts into substantial scores.

The bowling unit, though, has been a major positive. Anshul Kamboj has been rewarded for his consistency with 14 wickets to lead the charts, while Jamie Overton has chipped in with nine, including a four-wicket haul earlier in the tournament. Noor Ahmad has maintained control, and Hosen showcased his impact with a four-wicket spell in the previous outing.

For Gujarat Titans, the story has been one of missed opportunities. After a strong start, they have lost their last two matches -- a 99-run defeat to MI and a five-wicket loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Friday.

Despite being level on six points with CSK, GT are languishing in seventh place due to a poor net run rate (-0.790), which has hurt their campaign.

Their conservative approach has not always worked in a format that increasingly rewards aggression. The middle order, in particular, has underperformed, often failing to capitalise on strong starts.

Even in their last outing against RCB, GT looked set for a 230-plus total but failed to accelerate between the 16th and 19th overs, a phase that proved decisive. Sloppy fielding has compounded their problems, including a costly drop of Virat Kohli.

"We didn't get as many runs as we would have liked. Those three overs were very crucial for us," skipper Shubman Gill said.

GT possess a pace-heavy attack featuring Prasadidh Krishna, Kagiso Rabada and Mohammed Siraj, with young Ashok Sharma also contributing with six wickets. However, they have lacked consistency in hitting the right lengths, particularly in the middle overs.

Also, Rashid Khan remains the lone reliable option in the spin department, with Manav Suthar featuring in just one match so far and Washington Sundar didn't have much impact either.

One major positive has been Sai Sudharsan's impressive century against RCB, while Gill has led from the front with 293 runs, including three fifties, alongside Jos Buttler's 231 runs.

Cricket fans to be allowed to attend the Pakistan Super League final on May 3

ISLAMABAD, April 25: Spectators will be allowed to attend the Pakistan Super League final after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approved a request from franchise owners, a top official of the Pakistan Cricket Board said on Saturday. PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi, who is also interior minister in the government, wrote on social media that Sharif has "graciously approved" the presence of fans at the May 3 final in Lahore.

Pakistan's biggest sports spectacle of the year started behind closed doors late last month with fans asked to stay home because of soaring fuel prices related to the Iran war. Pakistan's government had urged people to restrict travel and to work from home because of rising fuel prices and Naqvi had said it wouldn't be right to have 30,000 fans attending cricket matches every day while the government is asking the public to stay home.

The PCB also reduced the number of PSL venues from six to two as part of austerity measures, but barred spectators from PSL games at Lahore and Karachi. (AP)

Reigning two-time champ Carlos Alcaraz out of French Open due to wrist injury

MADRID, April 25: Carlos Alcaraz won't play for a third successive French Open title due to a right wrist injury.

Alcaraz posted on X on Friday that neither would he appear in the preceding Italian Open in Rome, where he also won last year.

No. 2-ranked Alcaraz was injured at the Barcelona Open this month during his first-round win and withdrew the day after.

He pulled out of this week's Madrid Open and attended the Laureus World Sports Awards in the Spanish capital on Monday with his wrist immobilized. Alcaraz was named world sportsman of the year at the gala.

Alcaraz confirmed he was a no-go for Paris after undergoing more medical tests on Friday.

"After the results of the tests carried out today, we have decided that the most prudent thing is to be cautious and not participate in Rome and Roland Garros," he wrote on X. "It's a complicated moment for me, but I'm sure we'll come out stronger from here."

Alcaraz started the year in sensational form, beating Novak Djokovic in the Australian Open final. That made him the youngest man ever to win all four major titles in tennis.

He has won only one title since -- at Doha in February -- and will be without a title in the major clay-court events. He lost the Monte Carlo final to Janik Sinner at the start of this month and surrendered the No. 1 ranking to his Italian rival. (AP)

Millwall fumes after anti-racism booklet shows club's logo on a Ku Klux Klan robe

LONDON, April 25: An English soccer team's attempts to shake off its rowdy reputation have been damaged by, of all things, a children's anti-racism booklet.

Millwall was blindsided by the educational pamphlet that featured the southeast London club's badge edited onto an illustration of a Ku Klux Klan robe. The Westminster City Council has since apologized.

A British lawmaker told The Associated Press that the misuse of Millwall branding is an "insult," and the team's leading fan group said it was "outraged" at the portrayal.

The second-division club said it is considering legal action because the imagery creates "a false and damaging image of the club."

The incident comes at a time when Millwall has a strong chance to secure a first ever promotion to the Premier League. The team was last in the top flight in the 1989-90 season.

Millwall's imageThe checked reputation of fan behavior dates to the days of England's worst episodes of hooliganism in the 1970s and 80s. Hardcore Millwall fans proudly chanted, "No one likes us, we don't



care."

But the club has worked to change its perception. The anti-discrimination body it created in 1994 was "the first organization of its kind at an English football club." Millwall also boasts of its working relationship with anti-discrimination organizations Kick it Out and Show Racism the Red Card.

Despite the initiatives, Millwall has suffered dings to its image. Millwall fans turned on each other -- and police -- during the 2013 FA Cup semifinal

against Wigan at Wembley Stadium.

A few days after players were booed for taking a knee before kickoff at a December 2020 game, fans entering The Den received a printed statement that read: "The eyes of the world are on this football club tonight -- your club -- and they want us to fail." That night, fans respected anti-racism gestures by both teams.

The English Football Association suggested its disciplinary commission consider a partial stadium closure because of offensive chanting by Millwall supporters about disabilities during a September 2025 game at Crystal Palace in the League Cup. The commission called the chants "abhorrent" and opted to fine Millwall 45,000 pounds (\$60,000) in its recent ruling.

It was the third breach in the past three years -- the previous chanting focused on religion and sexual orientation.

What was in the pamphlet?The educational booklet distributed to London primary schools tells the story of Paul Canoville, a Black player who was subjected to racial abuse while playing for Chelsea in the early and mid-1980s.

One page depicts a Ku Klux Klan member in a white robe that has Millwall's logo on the chest. It's next to a Canoville quote about being racially abused at Millwall.

The Paul Canoville Foundation said it wasn't consulted on any of the contents. It said the illustration "is a depiction of a real incident Paul experienced whilst playing for Chelsea Reserves against Millwall Reserves in the 1980s, in which he was subjected to serious racial abuse by a number of individuals wearing Ku Klux Klan-style white hoods."

The Westminster City Council said the booklet has been removed from circulation.

"We accept the use of this image was an insensitive way to illustrate the historic problem of racism within football. We have apologized to Millwall Football Club for the improper use of their logo and for any offense caused," it said in a statement.

Neil Coyle, Labour MP for Bromley and Old Southwark, told AP on Friday that the decision to use the Millwall branding "is an insult to southeast London frankly," because of the club's work in the community. (AP)