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- SC backs EC's power to conduct SIR, says exercise breathes life into mandate
- Political workers clash at several places during Punjab civic polls
- Prez Murmu flags off exclusive bus service for women in Gangtok
- Tripura CM meets BJP chief in Delhi, discusses organisational issues

Speaker rejects Oppn demand for sending Bill to select panel ● Assam becomes third state in India to pass UCC Bill

## Assembly passes Uniform Civil Code Bill

**GUWAHATI, May 27:** The Assam Assembly on Wednesday passed the UCC Bill that seeks to put in place a common legal framework to govern marriage, divorce, succession and live-in relationships irrespective of religion, even as the opposition demanded that it be sent to a select committee.

With the passage of the proposed legislation, Assam became the third state, after Uttarakhand and Gujarat, to pass a Uniform Civil Code Bill.

Goa also has one common civil law, which continued from its erstwhile Portuguese colonial period. After a day-long discussion on the 'The Uniform Civil Code, Assam, 2026 Bill', Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass asked Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to move it for passage.

Dass rejected the opposition's demand that the Bill be sent to a select committee

### Shah, Nabin hail UCC Bill passage in Assam

**NEW DELHI, May 27:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said the Uniform Civil Code has been the BJP's resolve since the day of its foundation. Congratulating the people of Assam on the passing of UCC Bill in the Assembly, Shah said on 'X', under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, BJP-led state governments are establishing uniform law for every citizen.

"I am delighted that after Uttarakhand and Gujarat, Assam too has passed the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

for wider consultation, prompting them to move to the Well of the House and keep



on shouting till the Bill was passed.

As the opposition did not move the amendments it had raised, the Speaker put the Bill for voice voting, amid continuous slogans of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and 'Jai

Shree Ram' by the ruling bench.

"I declare that the Bill is passed," he said after the ruling members voted in favour of it. As soon as the Bill was passed, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### TMC MLA walks out of House over UCC Bill

**GUWAHATI, May 27:** Lone Trinamool Congress MLA in the Assam Assembly, Sherman Ali Ahmed, staged a walkout on Wednesday, opposing certain provisions of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill and alleging that the proposed law has been introduced by the BJP-led NDA with "malicious intention".

Ahmed, participating in a discussion on the UCC Bill, said the government cannot bring in a law which is "violative of Fundamental Rights". He, however, welcomed several provisions in the draft legislation, like fixing the minimum marriageable age and regulations (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### NDA members hail UCC Bill in Assembly

**GUWAHATI, May 27:** MLAs representing the ruling NDA in the Assam Assembly on Wednesday said the Uniform Civil Code Bill, introduced in the House two days ago, seeks to protect women's rights and is not against any religion or religious practice.

They dubbed the proposed legislation a historic move and emphasised that the tribal communities of the state have been kept out of the ambit of the Bill, ensuring that the traditional laws remain intact.

The NDA MLAs were speaking during a discussion on the UCC Bill, which has been taken up in the House for passage on the last day of the first session of the new Assembly.

BJP MLA and former state minister Pijush Hazarika urged support from all sections for the Bill, and claimed that it was "not against any religion or religious practice".

The Assam government had on Monday tabled the UCC Bill, seeking to ban polygamy and make registration of live-in relationships compulsory. The Bill, however, said that it will not be applicable to any person belonging to the Scheduled Tribes residing in Assam.

It proposed several punitive measures, including seven years imprisonment for bigamy or polygamy, and three months in jail for not registering a live-in relationship.

He questioned how an existing system is called a justice mechanism if men of one section are allowed to marry four times, without the consent of the previous wives.

"If we speak of equality of all religions, then these men of this section should be jailed," the BJP MLA asserted, without naming any religion. Hitting out at the Congress for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Oppn terms UCC Bill as 'BJP's political agenda'



**GUWAHATI, May 27:** Opposition Congress and Rajiv Dal on Wednesday demanded that the Bill on Uniform Civil Code (UCC) be referred to a Select Committee, even as the government went ahead with its passage by a voice vote on the last day of the first session of the new Assam Assembly.

The opposition MLAs termed the Bill as "BJP's political agenda" and sought wider consultation among all stakeholders.

The lone Trinamool Congress MLA staged a walkout earlier, opposing certain provisions of the Bill and alleging that the proposed law had been introduced by the BJP-led NDA with "malicious intention".

During a discussion on 'The Uniform Civil Code, Assam, 2026 Bill', the opposition MLAs also said it will hurt the rights of a certain section of society.

"The topics mentioned in the UCC are already enforced in the form of different laws. Issues related to child marriage, polygamy,

registration of marriage and divorce, alimony and other issues are governed by various laws. Then why has UCC been brought in?" said Congress Legislature Party leader Wajed Ali Choudhury.

He stressed that it is "not a simplification of the laws, but rather complicating the whole process".

"The BJP brought it only for politics. It's not democratic to intervene in the personal issues of people. And how can a law excluding the tribals be called uniform?" Choudhury questioned. He alleged that bringing in the UCC is a diversionary tactic from the main issues like unemployment, flood and the condition of government schools, among others.

Aiming for a common set of laws on a range of personal matters like marriage, divorce, succession and live-in relationships irrespective of religion, the Assam government on Monday tabled a Bill on UCC, seeking to ban polygamy and make registration of live-in relationships compulsory. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Cong no longer a secular party: Himanta

'Cong first sought UCC in 1925; it represents only one community now'

**GUWAHATI, May 27:** Claiming that the Congress was the first to advocate a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) way back in 1925, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday alleged that the Opposition party is no longer secular and has become a representative of one particular community.

Replying to a discussion on 'The Uniform Civil Code, Assam, 2026 Bill', he said the proposed legislation is based on the foundation of the Constitution's Article 44, not on any BJP or RSS ideology as alleged by the opposition bench.

The Bill was later passed by a voice vote amidst uproar by opposition Congress and Rajiv Dal MLAs, demanding that it be sent to Select Committee for further



discussion. "The UCC has a long history. It was first demanded by the Congress in 1925. It was also suggested in 1937 by Jawaharlal

Nehru. That same Congress is opposing it from the angle of the Quran and Shariat angle, not from the Hindu or Christian or tribal angle," Sarma said.

### Pijush: Polygamy laws violate equality

Staff reporter

**GUWAHATI, May 27:** Assam senior BJP MLA and former minister Pijush Hazarika on Wednesday strongly defended the proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the state Assembly, asserting that laws permitting polygamy were contrary to the principles of equality and justice and should be abolished.

Participating in the discussion on the UCC Bill during the fourth day of the ongoing Assembly session, Hazarika questioned the continuation of separate marriage laws



for different religious communities, particularly Muslims.

"Why should there be different

marriage laws for Muslims?" the MLA asked while advocating the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code in Assam. Referring to the practice of polygamy, Hazarika argued that a man marrying multiple women without the consent of his existing wives should face strict legal action.

"If a man marries a second woman without the consent of the first wife, then marries a third woman without the consent of the second wife, and later a fourth woman without the approval of the earlier wives, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Cabinet expansion after June 3: Himanta

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, May 27:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday indicated that the much-anticipated expansion of the state Cabinet is likely to take place only after June 3.

Speaking briefly to reporters, Sarma said the process would happen gradually and hinted that the Governor's prior engagements would delay the exercise for a few days.

"I had said earlier that it would happen first, but before June 3 it may not be possible because the Governor will be in Mongolia for an official visit," the Chief Minister said. He further added that the Cabinet expansion process would move ahead after his return.

"Whatever happens will happen only after June 3. Gradually, everything will take place," Sarma remarked. Though the Chief Minister did not elaborate on the likely changes or (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Cash, luxury cars seized

ED raids illegal IPL betting racket in Assam, Delhi

Staff reporter

**GUWAHATI, May 27:** The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has conducted late-night search operations across Assam and New Delhi in connection with a large-scale illegal IPL cricket betting racket and alleged laundering of proceeds generated through the network, officials said on Wednesday.

According to the ED, searches were carried out under Section 17 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, on the night of May 26 and continued overnight at multiple locations in Guwahati and Tinsukia in Assam, as well as in New Delhi.

The probe was initiated on the basis of an FIR registered by the Crime Branch Police Station in Guwahati against Deepesh Bajoria, Ronak Bajoria, Rajesh Jain and others under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Assam Game and Betting Act, 1970.

The ED later expanded the scope of the investigation by recording an addendum to the Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) on March 30, 2026, after two additional FIRs were registered at Tinsukia Police Station

against Bikash Beria, Nitin Beria, Suprit Biswas and others in connection with similar IPL betting activities allegedly run by an inter-linked syndicate.

Investigators said the accused persons were operating a "well-organised, hierarchical and technologically enabled" betting racket centred around IPL cricket matches.

The betting operations were allegedly conducted through mobile phones and encrypted messaging applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram and Instagram, besides offshore online betting platforms.

The ED said bets were solicited, accepted and settled through both cash transactions and digital channels, including UPI and bank transfers. The proceeds were allegedly layered and projected as legitimate assets through a network of family members and associates based in Guwahati, Tinsukia and Delhi.

Searches were conducted at the residences of Deepesh Bajoria, Ronak Bajoria, Rajesh Jain, Vikash Agarwal, Suprit Biswas, Bikash Beria, Nitin Beria and Durga Prasad Beria. The agency also searched (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### SC bats for speedy trial of Manipur violence cases

**NEW DELHI, May 27:** The Supreme Court on Wednesday said that the ongoing trial in the 2023 Manipur ethnic violence needs to be expedited and sought a status report from authorities.

Ethnic violence in Manipur broke out on May 3, 2025, after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts. The protest was held against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. The violence claimed over 260 lives and left thousands of people displaced.

On Wednesday, a bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Jyotsna Banerjee noted that, according to a SIT report, chargesheets had been filed in 207 cases against more than 400 accused.

The bench was hearing a plea of CBI against the grant of bail by the Gauhati High Court to two accused, Arun Khundongbam and Nameirakpam Kiran Meitei, who allegedly gangraped the victims and paraded them naked.

"We are of the view that the ongoing trial needs to be expedited. We have



asked the CBI and others to provide legal aid counsel who are well-versed in Manipuri to counsel the victims... The status of the ongoing trial must be filed in the next hearing," it said.

At the outset, the bench said that the matter was to be heard regarding the issue of providing legal aid to victims' families and that it would not interfere with other issues.

Referring to a CBI report, the bench said that 20 chargesheets had been filed and trials had commenced in 16 cases, while, according to the SIT status report, chargesheets had been filed in 207 cases against over 400 accused.

The bench also noted that, according to a report filed by former IPS officer

Dattatray Padsalgikar, the law and order situation in the state was "precarious" on April 7 and 18 this year with some incidents of violence and the state police were stressed.

The bench also said that the victims' faith in the system was of key importance and that "confidence-building measures" with them were needed.

On September 8, 2025, the Gauhati High Court granted bail to the two accused on the grounds that they had been in custody for two years while charges were yet to be framed, and termed it to be "unjustified prolonged incarceration". "While the accusations here are grave and shocking, this court cannot overlook that indefinite detention without trial amounts to pretrial punishment, which is impermissible in law," the Gauhati High Court had said in its order.

The CBI sought the cancellation of bail due to grave allegations of sexual violence. During the proceedings on Wednesday, advocate Nizam Pasha, appearing for some of the victims, said that the same (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Ganja seized in Dibrugarh, 2 held

HT Correspondent

**DIBRUGARH, May 27:** In a major crackdown against illegal narcotics, a team from Assam Police attached to Moran Police Station in Dibrugarh District successfully recovered more than 2.25 kilograms of suspected ganja during a special operation carried out on the basis of credible intelligence inputs.

According to police sources, the operation was launched after receiving specific information regarding the movement and possession of narcotic substances in the area. Acting swiftly on the inputs, the police team intercepted two suspected individuals and conducted a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Maiden session of 16th state Assembly concludes

**GUWAHATI, May 27:** The first session of the 16th Assam Legislative Assembly, during which the important 'Uniform Civil Code, Assam, Bill 2026' was passed, concluded on Wednesday.

Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass, in his remarks at the end of the proceedings, said the five-day session witnessed several important events, including the oath-taking of the new MLAs and the governor's speech.

On the first day, the legislators were sworn in by pro-tem Speaker Chandra Mohan Patowary, with BJP leader Dass also getting elected as the Speaker the same day. Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya addressed the House on the second day. Dass said the House saw (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SPB carrying commercial payloads from seven national and international partners

### India's first indigenous super-pressure balloon launched

**NEW DELHI, May 27:** Red Balloon Aerospace on Wednesday launched the country's first indigenous super-pressure balloon (SPB) carrying commercial payloads from seven national and international partners.

SPBs are high-altitude balloons designed to maintain internal pressure higher than the surrounding atmospheric pressure, enabling them to carry payloads for extended periods.

Launched from the Indira Gandhi Stadium in Vijayawada, the SPB - named VISTA - ascended to an altitude of about 25 km.

Speaking to PTI, CVS Kiran,



co-founder and CEO of Red Balloon Aerospace, said. "The mission was launched to prove super-pres-

sure balloon capability, which has never been done in India before. This involves proving the balloon's

design and the material." While the balloon launched on Wednesday is expected to stay in the sky for 24 hours, the company ultimately aims to develop SPBs capable of staying aloft for months.

The mission is significant as SPBs offer several advantages over satellites. For instance, SPBs are much cheaper and are capable of doing all the tasks that a satellite does.

Sireesh Pallikonda, co-founder and COO of Red Balloon Aerospace, told PTI. "LEO satellites are at 500 km, and GEO satellites are at 36,000 km, while near space platforms (like SPBs) are at 20 km. Being 1,800 (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**NEW DELHI, May 27:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah has directed the authorities to strictly enforce a 'zero tolerance' policy against illegal constructions within 15 km of the country's borders and demolish all such structures that have come up over the years.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has assigned enhanced responsibility to the district magistrates to ensure legal and financial compliance of banking transactions in the border areas by all banks, verify big business establishments, examine their funding sources, track mule accounts and false companies, identify fake

Aadhaar cards and control cross-border smuggling, officials said.

Chairing a security review meeting in Bikaner on Tuesday, Shah assessed security related issues concerning the border districts of Rajasthan along the India-Pakistan border. Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, senior state officials, and the district magistrates and superintendents of police of five border districts - Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Sri Ganganagar and Phalodi - were present at the meeting.

In a statement, the home ministry said the border districts have been directed to carry out an in-depth study (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Cabinet extends SARTHAK-PDS scheme for 5 yrs with ₹ 25,530-crore outlay

**NEW DELHI, May 27:** The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the continuation of the 'SARTHAK-PDS' scheme for five years with a financial outlay of ₹ 25,530 crore till March 2031, marking a significant step towards overhauling the country's public distribution infrastructure through technology-led reforms.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, also cleared a revision in norms governing Central assistance to states and union territories for intra-state movement and handling of foodgrains, along with fair price shop (FPS) dealers' margins, while retaining the existing funding pattern.

SARTHAK-PDS has been conceived as an umbrella scheme, consolidating two existing programmes — "Assistance to State Agencies for Intra-State Movement of Foodgrains and FPS Dealers' Margin under NFSA" and the "Scheme for Modernization and Reforms through Technology in Public Distribution System (SMART PDS)."

The merger is aimed at comprehensively strengthening implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA), by bringing financial assistance and technology modernisation under a single administrative framework.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, briefing reporters after the Cabinet decisions, said the approval covers the entire PDS value chain.

"Right from selection of beneficiaries to movement of foodgrains, to getting proactive feedback from citizens, to reducing transportation distance — all those activities have been approved with an outlay of ₹ 25,530 crore for five years," he said.

The state governments were facing difficulties in bearing the cost of transportation of foodgrain to the PDS shops. This cost will be supported under the scheme wherein FPS dealers' remuneration will also be enhanced, he added.



Vaishnav was categorical that SARTHAK-PDS does not replace the existing PDS architecture but is designed to bring structural reform across delivery of foodgrains, logistics, transportation, material handling and grievance redressal.

The scheme carries a dual mandate: providing assured financial support for intra-state movement, handling and FPS dealers' margins on one hand, and building a unified, citizen-centric and interoperable PDS architecture on the other — aimed at ensuring last-mile service delivery while minimising leakages.

On the technology front, the scheme envisages deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Blockchain to modernise PDS operations.

Key deliverables include standardised architectures and unified databases for real-time monitoring, AI-driven grievance redressal and analytics systems, and State Command Control Centres for data-driven oversight. ISO-certified process frameworks will also be put in place to ensure transparency, security and operational sustainability.

The scheme is anchored to the government's legal and social commitment under NFSA, with coverage extending to 81.35 crore persons.

"The government has a commitment to the people of the nation — a dignified life by ensuring access to food and nutritional security through the availability of adequate quantities of quality foodgrains," the government said in a statement.

SARTHAK-PDS draws on over a decade of technology reforms in the PDS ecosystem. Earlier initiatives include end-to-end computerisation of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Integrated Management of PDS (IM-PDS) and SMART PDS, as well as citizen-facing applications such as Mera Ration, Anna Mitra, the Rightful Targeting Dashboard and Anna Sahayata.

Since April 1, 2023, the SMART PDS scheme has served as the cornerstone of technology-led reforms, enabling complete digitisation of ration cards, Aadhaar seeding, FPS automation through electronic Point of Sale (e-PoS) devices, online allocation and computerised supply-chain management across all 36 states and union territories. (PTI)

**Dreame technology names Cristiano Ronaldo as new Global Ambassador**

**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, May 27: Dreame Technology, a global leader in innovative home appliances and smart home solutions, today announced a historic global partnership with football legend Cristiano Ronaldo. This collaboration represents a definitive milestone in the company's trajectory, uniting one of the world's most disciplined athletes with a brand defined by its relentless pursuit of technological perfection and quality supremacy. This appointment represents a strategic elevation of Dreame's global brand presence, reflecting the company's current stage of international maturity. After years of rapid expansion and consistent breakthroughs in high-speed motor technology and AI-driven systems, Dreame has solidified its position as a global benchmark, now reinforced by this high-profile partnership.

**DESIGN, SUPPLY, ERECTION AND MODIFICATIONS WORKS**

**Tender Notice No. TRD/LMG/12 of 2026-27 Dated: 23-05-2026.** Works tenders through "E" Tendering system for and on behalf of the president of India are invited for the works as detailed below:- **Tender No. EL-TRD-NFR-LMG-OHE-MOD-65. Name of work:** Design, Supply, Erection, and Modification of 25 kV Single Phase Overhead Equipment in connection with Shifting of LC Gate ST-34 and Launching of Girder of ROB in Chaparmukh Jn.-Kampur section under Lumding Division. **Tender Value:** ₹43,92,411.31/- **Earnest Money:** ₹87,900/- **Date & time of closing tender:** At 15.00 hrs. on 15-06-2026. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available in the website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

**Sr. DEE/TRD/Lumding NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
Serving Customers With A Smile

## SHORT TENDER NOTICE

No. Jt.DHS/Diet/Tender/2026/848 Dated Diphu, the 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2026.

Applications are invited from intending Diet Suppliers for supply of Dietary Articles to Bokajan CHC, Bokolia CHC, Howraghat CHC, Hamren Civil Hospital, Donkamokam CHC and Kheroni Model Hospital for 2026-27 at Rs. 90/- per patient per day.

Diet should include Mutton/Chicken every Sunday and fish/eggs twice weekly within the approved rate.

Supplied items should be fresh and of best quality as per hospital specifications and shall be supplied on credit basis as per demand.

Applications must reach the undersigned on or before 6th June, 2026 upto 2:00 P.M. positively. Tender will be opened on the same day at 2:00 P.M.

Details, formats and Earnest Money Deposit particulars may be collected and confirmed from the office of the undersigned during office hours on working days.

### Items of Dietary Articles:

#### Group-I

1. Butter (Annual 400 gm)
2. Cow's milk (100% pure)

#### Group-III

1. L.P. Gas (Commercial)

#### Group-IV

1. Fish (Rui, Katla, Mirga, Mahasoul with head)
2. Fish (Kai, Magoor without head)
3. Meat (He-Goat) fresh
4. Eggs (Duck & Hens)

#### Group-V

1. Potato 2. Radish 3. Bringer 4. Green Banana
5. Cauliflower 6. Cabbage 7. Pumkin 8. Tomato
9. Jinga 10. Papaya 11. Ginger 12. Potal
13. Bean 14. Ladies finger 15. Banana (Malbhug)
16. Orange 17. Horlic (450 gm) 18. Onion

#### Group-VI

1. Loaves

Sd/-

**Joint Director of Health Services,  
Karbi Anglong District, Diphu**

**IPRD/KA/2026-27/22**

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## Assembly passes Uniform

it was welcomed by a thunderous applause.

Aiming for a common set of laws on a range of personal matters like marriage, divorce, succession and live-in relationships irrespective of religion, the Assam government had on Monday tabled a Bill on the Uniform Civil Code, seeking to ban polygamy and make registration of live-in relationships compulsory. The Bill, however, said that it will not be applicable to any person belonging to the Scheduled Tribes and residing in Assam. It proposed several punitive measures, including seven years imprisonment for bigamy or polygamy, and three months in jail for not registering a live-in relationship. "There can't be a better start to our five-year tenure than passing the UCC in the first assembly session of our new government. Prices of gas can decrease and increase, but no government can return the dignity of women if it's lost once. If the BJP had not won this time, lakhs of women wouldn't be able to get the shield of security," Sarma said.

Earlier during the discussion on the Bill, he claimed that the Congress was the first to advocate a Uniform Civil Code way back in 1925, and the opposition party is no longer secular and has become a representative of one particular community.

Sarma said the proposed legislation is based on the foundation of the Constitution's Article 44, not on any BJP or RSS ideology as alleged by the opposition bench.

He justified the exclusion of tribals from the ambit of the proposed legislation, claiming that they already have many customary laws for ages on such personal matters. "Tribals don't support polygamy, give equal rights to girls and don't recognise live-in relationships. They, in a way, have been implementing the UCC for ages. Self-regulation is the best regulation. So, we don't want to impose it on the tribals," Sarma said. The opposition members, on the other hand, termed the Bill on Uniform Civil Code as "BJP's political agenda" and sought wider consultation among all stakeholders before the passage of the proposed legislation.

They also said it would hurt the rights of a certain section of society and alleged that bringing in the UCC is a diversionary tactic from the main issues like unemployment, flood and the condition of government schools, among others. (PTI)

## Shah, Nabin hail UCC Bill

Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill today. On this occasion, I congratulate Chief Minister of Assam Shri @himantabiswa Ji and all the legislators who supported this bill," he said. Meanwhile, BJP president Nitin Nabin on Wednesday hailed the passage of Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill by the Assam Assembly as "historic", saying the state has "strongly demonstrated" its commitment to ensuring social harmony and equal justice for all.

"The policy of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has always been clear: 'Justice for all and appeasement of none'," Nabin said in a post in Hindi on X. Commenting on the development, Nabin said, "The passage of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill in the Assam Legislative Assembly is a significant step towards equal rights and a uniform civil system across the country." "Such visionary decisions are continuously strengthening the resolve of 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat'," he added. (PTI)

## TMC MLA walks out of House

on live-in relationships. The TMC legislator maintained that the clause in the Quran on multiple marriages is "misinterpreted". "While I was ready to support the UCC, broad-based discussions were needed on certain issues," Ahmed said.

Aiming for a common set of laws on a range of personal matters like marriage, divorce, succession and live-in relationships irrespective of religion, the Assam government on Monday tabled a Bill on the Uniform Civil Code, seeking to ban polygamy and make registration of live-in relationships compulsory. The Bill, however, said that it will not be applicable to any person belonging to the Scheduled Tribes residing in Assam.

It proposed several punitive measures, including seven years imprisonment for bigamy or polygamy, and three months in jail for not registering a live-in relationship.

"The government has brought this Bill with malicious intention, and as a mark of protest, I walk out of the House," Ahmed said. He claimed that provisions of the UCC, like who a person can marry, violated verses of the Quran. "The Quran and what is written in it are main, and it should not be violated," he asserted. The TMC legislator claimed that the government cannot bring in a law, "violative of the Fundamental Rights with the excuse of leaning on Directive Principles of State Policy".

"Whatever mandate the government may have got, it cannot overwrite the Constitution," he said. Ahmed also questioned why tribals were left out of its ambit if the proposed law is to be 'uniform'. (PTI)

## Pijush: Polygamy laws

what should happen? He should directly be sent to jail," he said in the House.

The legislator maintained that laws based on equality should apply uniformly across all sections of society and stressed that the state required legal safeguards to prevent polygamy. "Standing in this respected House, we must clearly state that laws promoting equality are the correct laws," Hazarika said.

Rejecting allegations that the proposed UCC targeted any specific religion, the MLA said the legislation dealt solely with civil matters and not religious beliefs or rituals.

"Who is spreading this narrative that the Uniform Civil Code is against religion?" he asked. "The UCC is not an attack on any religion, nor does it seek to interfere with religious practices or customs," Hazarika said the Bill primarily addressed issues related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, maintenance, property rights and polygamy.

"That is the core objective of this Bill," he added.

The BJP-led Assam government, headed by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, has maintained that the proposed legislation is aimed at ensuring equality and social

justice. However, opposition parties and several organisations have expressed concerns regarding certain exemptions and provisions included in the draft Bill.

## Cong no longer a secular

warning the Congress against turning it into a "fundamentalist religion". Pointing towards Goa, he said, when the coastal state joined India in 1961, the then Congress government continued the Portuguese common civil code, and it became the first in the country to have such a law. The western state retained its existing family law — the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867 — when it merged with the Indian Union in 1961, and renamed it as the Goa Civil Code. Sarma said, "Assam will be the third state in India to have UCC after Uttarakhand and Gujarat. It will be a great step towards gender justice. Article 44 of the Indian Constitution is the foundation of this bill." He justified the exclusion of tribals from the ambit of the proposed legislation, claiming that they already have many customary laws for ages on such personal matters.

"Tribals don't support polygamy, give equal rights to girls and don't recognise live-in relationships. They, in a way, have been implementing the UCC for ages. Self-regulation is the best regulation. So, we don't want to impose it on the tribals," Sarma said. Elaborating on the provisions of the Bill, the CM said it deals with inheritance of property with a humane approach, making provisions for not just the spouse but also surviving parents and children of all genders. Asserting that no religion allows multiple marriages per se, he said the Bill further tightens the law against polygamy and also deals with 'love jihad' in a way. If any woman is married by making false statements about one's identity, religion, economic condition or any other such facts, it would stand nullified under the UCC, Sarma said. "It will save our girls from falling victim to frauds and betrayals, and ensure that they marry of their free will," he claimed. On live-in relations brought under the Bill, Sarma said such relationships are a fact of the changing times, and hence, there is a need to regulate it.

"We are not condemning live-in relationships, but legal coverage is needed for the woman if she is abandoned. Registration of live-in relationships is just one part of it, the more important aspect ensures that children born out of such relationships get both parents' identity and the woman gets maintenance, inheritance rights," he affirmed. Sarma asserted that the UCC is about giving respect, equality and justice to women, and the BJP is fulfilling its election manifesto bringing the Bill.

Aiming for a common set of laws on a range of personal matters like marriage, divorce, succession and live-in relationships irrespective of religion, the Assam government on Monday tabled the UCC Bill, seeking to ban polygamy and make registration of live-in relationships compulsory. The Bill, however, said that it will not be applicable to any of the Scheduled Tribes residing in Assam. It pro

## NDA members hails UCC Bill

opposing the Bill, Hazarika said the opposition party was denying equal rights and respect for women by doing so. He also pointed out that the proposed law does not ban live-in relationships, but only seeks their registration.

Showing a copy of the red-covered Constitution of the country that is often displayed by Congress leaders, Hazarika said, "The Congress and Rahul Gandhi went on shouting that the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi destroyed the Constitution. But they don't even know what is inside it." He claimed that the Congress opposes any move to ban cow slaughter even though the Constitution is against it.

"The UCC Bill is a historic one, and I urge all to support it," he added.

BJP legislator Dipu Ranjan Sharma said bringing the Bill was a manifestation of the NDA's commitment to keep its assurances. Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) legislator Prithiraj Rava said the UCC Act will help in addressing the changing demographic pattern in the state. "Marrying more than once is not the main problem. The issue is several children from multiple marriages, which is leading to a population explosion and a change in demographic pattern," he said. Rava said the government is committed to implementing the UCC as it will "benefit and protect our women".

Bodoland People's Front (BPF) MLA Rabiram Narzary, supporting the Bill, said that the age-old traditional laws of the tribals have been exempted from its ambit.

"For strengthening the unity and integrity of our country, such a law is a necessary step," he maintained.

Narzary sought clarity on the status of divorced tribal women married to non-tribals, and also urged that the relevant provisions under the existing law against SCs and STs remain intact even after the UCC is implemented. (PTI) posed several punitive measures, including seven years imprisonment for bigamy or polygamy, and three months in jail for not registering a live-in relationship. (PTI)

## Cash, luxury cars seized

a commercial establishment operating under the name "Roycece", previously known as "Playboy", in Guwahati.

During the raids, the ED seized several digital devices, including mobile phones and electronic storage media, which allegedly contained records of betting transactions, coded communications and digital trails linked to the movement of proceeds of crime. The agency also recovered and seized unaccounted cash amounting to Rs 13 lakh. Three luxury vehicles — a Mercedes-Benz, an MG Hector and a Toyota Fortuner — suspected to have been purchased using proceeds of crime were also seized.

In addition, multiple bank accounts allegedly used for routing betting proceeds have been frozen. Further investigation is underway.

## SC bats for speedy trial

court, which on May 9, 2025, noted the heinous nature of offences, granted bail on September 8 on the grounds of delay.

"As it is a matter of liberty, an egregious ground is required to cancel the bail. Our

main concern is bringing home the truth, and for that, whatever rehabilitation measure is necessary, we will examine..." the apex court bench said. Earlier in March, the apex court had directed the appointment of legal aid counsel for the victims by the state legal services authority. On July 20, 2023, the apex court took suo-moto cognisance of the matter after a video of the assault surfaced online and was widely shared months later, triggering nationwide outrage. The violence was preceded by earlier tensions over the eviction of Kuki villagers from reserve forest land, which had led to a series of smaller agitations. In August 2023, the Centre constituted the Justice Gita Mittal Commission to oversee relief and rehabilitation of the victims of ethnic violence in Manipur on the recommendation of the government of Manipur, citing the necessity of an inquiry into a matter of public importance. Its tenure was recently extended till July 31. (PTI)

## Cabinet expansion after

possible inductions into the Cabinet, political circles in Assam have been speculating for several weeks about a reshuffle and expansion in the BJP-led government.

The proposed expansion is expected to fill vacant berths in the Council of Ministers and may also involve redistribution of portfolios among existing ministers.

Currently, the cabinet consists of only four ministers apart from Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

## Ganja seized in Dibrugarh,

thorough search operation. During the initial search, the police recovered 1.029 kilograms of suspected ganja from their possession. The two accused were immediately detained for questioning. During sustained interrogation, the suspects reportedly disclosed further information regarding the storage of additional contraband. Based on the revelations and subsequent follow-up action carried out by the police team, another 1.221 kilograms of suspected ganja was recovered at the instance of the accused.

Altogether, the total quantity of suspected ganja seized in the operation stood at approximately 2.25 kilograms. The accused persons have been taken into custody, and a case has been registered in connection with the seizure.

Police officials stated that further investigation is currently underway to ascertain the source of the narcotic substance, possible links to larger drug trafficking networks, and whether more individuals are involved in the illegal trade.

## India's first indigenous super

times closer to Earth than a geostationary satellite allows for higher resolution and faster data rates." "Also, with SPBs, we do not need a whole constellation. We can launch it wherever service is required, such as hilly terrains or locations where terrestrial towers are not economical," Pallikonda added.

SPBs are typically placed in a high-altitude stratospheric layer between 20 and 40 km from the Earth's surface, according to the company. This allows them to provide telecommunications coverage, monitor large-scale industrial networks spanning hundreds of kilometres, support disaster-management operations across entire states, and enable continuous spatial observation for strategic applications, it said.

The company plans to launch 12 to 16 such balloons during the current financial year, offering both types of services, rideshare and dedicated missions. (PTI)

## Shah directs demolition of

of the sources, patterns and networks behind crimes and the drug menace, and to develop lasting solutions so that these problems do not resurface.

Shah stressed formulating a 360-degree security cover for every border district involving citizens, state machinery and security agencies.

The home minister called for strict enforcement of the zero tolerance policy against illegal constructions, particularly within 0 to 15 km of the internal borders, and to demolish all such structures, officials said. He underscored the importance of a coordinated approach to border management involving the BSF, CBDT, NCB and the state machinery to address issues of infiltration, narcotics smuggling, encroachment, terror financing and other trans-border crimes. (PTI)

## Maiden session of 16<sup>th</sup> state

the passage of two Bills during the sitting, including the crucial law introducing UCC in the state. A government resolution seeking expeditious implementation of 33 per cent women's reservation in Parliament and state legislatures, after the process of delimitation, was also adopted in the Assembly, he said. (PTI)

## Oppn terms UCC Bill as

The Bill, however, said that it will not be applicable to any persons belonging to the Scheduled Tribes residing in Assam. It proposed several punitive measures, including seven years imprisonment for bigamy or polygamy, and three months in jail for not registering a live-in relationship.

Rajior Dal's Akhil Gogoi also questioned the need for the UCC when the primary issues of minimum marriageable age and banning polygamy have already been addressed by existing laws. In case of live-in relationships brought under the Bill, he claimed that it is bureaucratic red-tapism on private relations and complete state interference into personal liberty.

Termining the provision a case of 'moral policing', he maintained that it was a case of "law overstepping into personal space" and is nothing more than forwarding the government's agenda. TMC's Sherman Ali Ahmed said the government cannot bring in a law which is "violative of Fundamental Rights". (PTI)

## District-level Census 2027 training begins in Morigaon

Officials brief participants on digital census operations and self-enumeration process

**HT Correspondent**

**JAGIROAD, May 27:** A district-level training programme on House Listing and House Census Operations (HLO) under Census 2027 (Phase-I) commenced on Tuesday at the conference hall of the District Commissioner's office in Morigaon. The training programme is being organised to ensure the smooth and effective implementation of the upcoming Census operations and will continue on May 29 and 30, 2026. The inaugural session was chaired by Morigaon District Commissioner Anamika Tewari in the presence of Co-District Commissioner, Jagiroad, Hriday Kumar Das and Additional District Commissioner, Morigaon, Nitisha Bora. The programme was attended by Assistant Commissioner Santosh Buragohain, Circle Officers, Block Development Officers, the District Informatics Officer (NIC) and other concerned officials of the district administration.

Assistant Director (IT) from the Directorate of Census Operations, Saptaraj Das, along with Dipak Barua (DPA-A), conducted the training as resource persons. Detailed sessions were held on various aspects of House Listing and House Census Operations, data collection procedures, digital enumeration processes and coordination mechanisms required for the successful implementation of Census 2027 Phase-I.

It was stated that the house listing and house census activities under Phase-I will be conducted from August 17 to September 15. Population Enumeration under the Census exercise will commence from February 2027. Officials stated that a major highlight of Census 2027 will be the introduction of digital census operations for the first time in the country. Digital devices and online platforms will be used to ensure faster, more accurate and transparent data collection.

In addition, a self-enumeration facility will also be introduced from August 2, 2026, enabling citizens to voluntarily submit their details digitally before the field verification process. The self-enumeration process will remain open for a period of 15 days from August 2, 2026.

It was further informed that Census 2027 will be the 16th Census since Census operations began in India in 1872 and the eighth Census after Independence.

## Financial aid extended to meritorious students at Nagaon University

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, May 27:** Kunhiparna Nyas in association with Anusandhan Bartaluchoni magazine, organised a financial assistance programme at the auditorium of Nagaon University on Monday to help meritorious students from economically weaker families purchase textbooks. The event was attended by several dignitaries, including Nagaon University Vice Chancellor Dr Hitesh Deka, Additional District Commissioner Dipankar Barman and noted social worker and businessman Jun Rajkhowa. Also present were Kunhiparna Nyas Managing Trustee and Anusandhan Bartaluchoni Managing Editor Rajnarayan Bora, along with trustees Abhinanda Bora, Bhadra Saikia and Anindya Bora. Young vocalist Turanjit Kashyap also attended the programme.

Office-bearers of the Nagaon University Students' Union for 2025-26 participated in the event. Those present included president Himanko Sarma, vice president Kaustav Atri, acting general secretary Fardin Ahmed and Literary and Magazine Secretary Smita Hira.

The initiative by Kunhiparna Nyas aims to support deserving students in continuing their education without financial barriers.

## NFR renovates century-old steam locomotive

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 27:** In a significant step towards preserving India's rich railway heritage, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has successfully renovated the historic Steam Locomotive No. 808-C Class NG Loco of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) Type (4-6-2) Pacific and installed an upgraded heritage display at its headquarters campus in Maligaon. The renovated heritage locomotive was inaugurated on May 26, 2026, by Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, General Manager of Northeast Frontier Railway, in the presence of senior railway officials and staff members.

The heritage locomotive was built in 1914 and manufactured by the North British Locomotive Company Ltd., Glasgow, UK. The steam locomotive is regarded as a rare symbol of India's railway legacy. It had already been installed and displayed at the Maligaon headquarters of Northeast Frontier Railway and has now been given a new life through extensive repair, painting and renovation works. Under the motivation and guidance of the General Manager of Northeast Frontier Railway, the restoration work was carried out by the C&W Workshop, New Bongaigaon. The renovated locomotive has been enhanced with decorative lighting along with real sound and smoke effects, making it an attractive heritage display for railway visitors and enthusiasts.

Steam Locomotive No. 808 belongs to the renowned 4-6-2 Pacific Class steam locomotives introduced in 1914 for service under the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. Along with its twin engine No. 807, the locomotive played an important role in hauling freight trains of up to 800 tonnes on the Kishanganj Extension section of DHR.

After the Siliguri-Kishanganj line was converted to metre gauge in 1948, the locomotive continued service as a shunting pilot at Siliguri before being decommissioned in the 1960s. The preserved steam engine now stands as a reminder of the steam era and the engineering excellence of Indian Railways. The restoration of Steam Locomotive No. 808 reflects Northeast Frontier Railway's continued commitment to the conservation and promotion of historical railway assets while creating awareness about the legacy of steam locomotives in India.

## Disaster awareness programme held at two Karbi Anglong schools

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, May 27:** A disaster awareness programme was successfully conducted at Parakhuwa Higher Secondary School and Dengaon Higher Secondary School under Samelangso Block of Karbi Anglong district, drawing active participation from students and teachers.

The initiative was organised in close collaboration with the District Disaster Response Force (DDRF) and the Community Quick Response Team (CQRT). The training focused on disaster preparedness, emergency response protocols, critical safety measures during natural disasters and the hands-on use of fire extinguishers.

According to organisers, the primary objective of the programme was to equip students and the wider school community with effective, real-time response mechanisms during sudden emergencies. By targeting educational institutions, the initiative aims to strengthen disaster preparedness and resilience at the grassroots level across the district.

## Bijay Biswas nominated for Rashtriya Divya Pratibha Samman 2026

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, May 27:** Noted Nagaon based singer and the retired senior planning officer, Bijay Biswas has been nominated for Rashtriya Divya Pratibha Samman 2026. The award will be presented by Blue Star Event for his dedication, devotion and hard work in the field of music. It's pertinent to mention that Biswas is a dedicated singer, lyricist and music composer and has already earned a brand in the field of music in national level. He was highly appreciated in Kolkata as well as in Assam. Being a strict follower of musical maestro, Sudhakantha Dr Bhupen Hazarika along with his official duties as a planning officer, Biswas also accorded a new identity in various television channels in Kolkata and Assam and often took part in musical programmes telecasted time to time in various television channels in West Bengal and Assam.

Leaders discuss tribal issues and Gelephu connectivity project

## UPPL delegation meets Governor

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, May 27:** A three-member delegation of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), led by party president and Rajya Sabha MP Pramod Boro, along with MP Joyanta Basumatary and former MLA Jolen Daimary, called on Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya at Lok Bhawan in Guwahati on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the UPPL leaders discussed issues concerning the Scheduled Tribes residing in the hill districts of Assam. They also deliberated on the proposed redesign of the Gelephu National Highway and Railway projects in the region.

Differently-abled vendor becomes symbol of resilience

**HT Correspondent**

**DEMOW, May 27:** With the help of two crutches, Amin Rahman has been selling vegetables from a handcart and fish and boiler meat from a table since 2008 at Bokota Jutuliting Chariali near Demow. Speaking to the media, Amin Rahman said that he lost his left leg after suffering an injury and infection, which eventually led to amputation. He lives with his wife, a son and a daughter and his wife assists him in running the business.

Regarding government schemes, he said that earlier he used to receive benefits under the disability scheme annually, but now the assistance is provided monthly and has been transferred to the Orunodoi scheme.

He said that he earns his livelihood through his own hard work. Amin Rahman has become an inspiration for many people through his determination and perseverance.

## West Karbi Anglong launches NMBA e-Pledge awareness drive

**HT Correspondent**

**HAMREN, May 27:** In a decisive step towards eradicating drug abuse and building a healthier community, the District Administration of West Karbi Anglong has officially launched a district-wide awareness initiative to promote the Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA) e-Pledge.

The initiative aligns with direct mandates from the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, under the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR). The national plan focuses on preventing substance abuse through grassroots awareness and active community participation. The NMBA e-Pledge platform offers a digital avenue for citizens, students, youth, government officials and community leaders to take an online oath against substance abuse, formally committing themselves to the vision of a drug-free India. To ensure wider reach across the district, the Office of the District Commissioner has mobilised key departmental heads. The Inspector of Schools, District Social Welfare Officer, District Information & Public Relations Officer (DIPRO) and the Centre Administrator of the One Stop Centre have been directed to promote the NMBA e-Pledge QR code actively.

District authorities are placing major emphasis on mobilising school and college students, youth clubs and public servants. Beyond digital outreach, the administration plans to roll out extensive ground-level publicity campaigns and awareness activities across West Karbi Anglong.

The district administration has appealed to all residents of West Karbi Anglong to join the initiative. By scanning the official QR code and taking the e-Pledge, citizens can contribute to the collective fight against substance abuse and help build a safer and healthier society for future generations.

## 6th Ribboi-Dima Ethnic Cultural Convention on May 31

**HT Correspondent**

**HOWRAGHAT, May 27:** Extensive preparations are underway for the upcoming 6th annual convention of the Ribboi-Dima Ethnic Cultural Convention. The mega event is scheduled to be held with a day-long colourful programme on May 31 at the premises of Chunpura Dimasa Gaon Primary School.

The convention aims to bring together the diverse indigenous communities residing across the greater Chunpura area of Karbi Anglong district onto a common



The discussion focused on incorporating an elevated bridge through the animal corridor area of Sikhna Jwhlwao National Park to ensure ecological protection

while promoting sustainable infrastructure development.

The leaders emphasised the importance of balancing connectivity and environmental conservation in

## Police seize over 2.25 kg ganja in anti-narcotics operation

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, May 27:** In a major crackdown against illegal narcotics, a team of Assam Police attached to Moran Police Station in Dibrugarh district recovered more than 2.25 kilograms of suspected ganja during a special operation carried out on the basis of credible intelligence inputs.

According to police sources, the operation was launched after receiving specific information regarding the movement and possession of narcotic substances in the area. Acting swiftly on the inputs, the police team intercepted two suspected individuals and conducted a thorough search operation. During the initial search, the police recovered 1.029 kilograms of suspected ganja from their possession.

The two accused were immediately detained for questioning. During sustained interrogation, the suspects reportedly disclosed further information regarding the storage of additional contraband. Based on the revelations and subsequent follow-up action carried out by the police team, another 1.221 kilograms of suspected ganja was recovered at the in-

stance of the accused.

Altogether, the total quantity of suspected ganja seized in the operation stood at approximately 2.25 kilograms. The accused have been taken into custody and a case has been registered in connection with the seizure.

Police officials stated that further investigation is underway to ascertain the source of the narcotic substance, possible links to larger drug trafficking networks and whether more individuals are involved in the illegal trade.

The successful operation reflects the continued commitment of Assam Police towards intensifying its anti-drug campaign across the state. Senior officials have reiterated their resolve to eradicate the menace of narcotics and take strict action against those involved in drug trafficking and related activities.

The seizure has been viewed as another significant achievement in the ongoing statewide drive against narcotics being conducted under the directives of the state government and senior police authorities.

## Concerns rise over unregulated rental market and hotel misuse

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, May 27:** Concerns are mounting among residents and civic bodies in Nagaon over the alleged use of rented houses and hotels as safe havens for criminals, amid a booming but largely unregulated rental market in the rapidly growing town.

The fast-paced economic growth in Nagaon and job creation have triggered an unprecedented surge in demand for rental housing. Every year, thousands of students, workers and families move to the town. However, behind this housing boom, a large, unregulated and illegal rental network has taken root, locals alleged.

A section of landlords in Nagaon is reportedly running profitable rental businesses without informing the local administration or police, violating mandatory tenant verification norms. Under existing law, landlords must submit complete identity details of tenants to the nearest police station. However, in Nagaon, this rule is being widely flouted.

Most landlords are renting out properties without checking valid ID proofs or notifying police, creating a serious public safety threat. Officials fear such premises could shelter anti-social elements, drug traffickers, cyber criminals or extremists. If a tenant commits a crime and absconds,

police are left with no records, hampering investigations.

Similar concerns extend to hotels in the town. Suspicion intensified after notorious dacoit Khairul Ali, alias Moni was killed in police firing on May 25. According to Nagaon Senior SP Partha Pratim Das, the gang had been using Hotel Star in Nagaon to plan criminal activities. The disclosure has heightened public anxiety over hotels being misused by criminals.

Beyond security concerns, the illegal rental trade is also allegedly causing significant losses to the state and central exchequers. Many landlords reportedly insist on cash-only rent, avoiding digital payments, cheques or bank transfers to leave no financial trail. This allows them to underreport or conceal rental income from the Income Tax Department. Since these businesses remain unofficial, they also evade proper property tax payments to the Nagaon Municipal Board.

While honest citizens pay income tax regularly, these landlords earn substantial profits without paying taxes, running a parallel black economy, said a member of a local civic group.

With the Assam government emphasising zero tolerance for corruption and lawlessness, concerned citizens are urging the administration to take decisive action.

## Bokajan Police seize 4 kg ganja, cash in anti-drug raid

**HT Correspondent**

**BOKAJAN, May 27:** In a major crackdown against illicit drug trafficking, Bokajan Police seized a consignment of cannabis (ganja) and cash during a late-night raid at Sukanjan on Monday night.

According to police sources, the operation was carried out based on specific inputs near the Sukanjan Shani Mandir area. During a thorough search conducted at a residential house, police recovered approximately 4 kilograms of cannabis along with cash worth over ₹40,000.

The house belongs to an elderly couple, identified as Krishna Kumar Singh and Shiva Kumari Devi. Initial investigations suggest that the duo had allegedly been running the illegal contraband business for a long time.

Police officials said, "We have seized 4 kg of cannabis and cash exceeding ₹40,000 from the spot. The elderly couple has been detained and intensive interrogation is underway to uncover further details and links to this illegal trade."

A case has been registered and Bokajan Police are continuing investigations to determine the source of the contraband and identify other individuals involved in the network.

## Woman goes missing from Morigaon

**HT Correspondent**

**MORIGAON, May 27:** As of now, police have not received any information about a missing woman, Banita Deka Patar of Salmari, Mikirgaon, who is a mother of three sons and reportedly went out from her home on Tuesday morning without informing her husband.

The missing woman, Banita Deka Patar, wife of Ganesh Patar, left home, leaving her three sons behind, which has caused resentment among people in the area. The kith and kin of her family have been searching for her since Tuesday morning but have failed to trace her.

The children have been suffering due to maternal absence at home and have been crying for their mother. The family's sole bread earner, Ganesh Patar, said that the woman had earlier allegedly eloped with a youth, but was later brought back home by family members.

Ganesh Patar has lodged an FIR at Morigaon Police Station regarding the incident.

## PWD warns against dumping construction materials on roadsides

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 27:** In a significant move aimed at ensuring public safety and maintaining smooth traffic movement, the Public Works Department has issued an urgent notification for residents of the Silchar and Udharbond constituencies.

It has been observed that some people are frequently storing construction materials along roadsides and in public passage areas, creating serious inconvenience for both pedestrians and vehicular traffic. Such practices are also increasing the risk of accidents in various parts of the area.

In view of the growing concern, the department has directed all concerned not to keep or dump any construction materials on roads, drains or public pathways under any circumstances.

## World-famous skater Puneet Singh visits Guru Nanak Senior Secondary School

Young skater on nationwide expedition promotes peace, fitness and youth awareness

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 27:** Guru Nanak Senior Secondary School, Guwahati had the honour of welcoming 19-year-old world-famous skater Puneet Singh on Monday during his nationwide skating expedition promoting peace, fitness and social awareness among the youth of India.

Puneet Singh, whose inspiring journey began in Punjab, is currently travelling towards Arunachal Pradesh, with Tawang Teesri Udassi Sahib as one of the major spiritual destinations of his mission. After reaching Tawang, he will continue his extraordinary journey through Bhutan, Nepal, Leh, Ladakh and finally return to Punjab, covering thousands of kilometres solely on skates. Notably, he has already travelled from Punjab to Guwahati over a span of three months, displaying exceptional determination, discipline and commitment towards his cause.



The primary objective of his journey is to spread the message of love, peace, unity and spiritual awakening among the youth of the nation. Through his expedition, Puneet Singh is actively encouraging young people to stay away from drugs, in-

toxicants and other harmful addictions and instead dedicate their time and energy towards sports, physical fitness, personal growth and the welfare of society.

Adding greater significance to his mission, Puneet Singh has even sacrificed his profes-

sional career as a skating instructor in order to devote himself fully to this cause. His selfless dedication and courage have become a source of inspiration for many young individuals across the country.

During his visit to the school, students and staff members interacted with him and were deeply motivated by his life journey, determination and social message. The school administration appreciated his efforts in promoting a healthy and positive lifestyle among the youth.

Bhupinder Pal Singh Kiki, Secretary of Guru Nanak Senior Secondary School, Guwahati, congratulated Puneet Singh on his mission and wished him success, safety and strength for the remaining part of his journey.

The visit concluded with encouragement and blessings from the school fraternity for the young skater's continued efforts in spreading harmony, positivity and social awareness throughout the nation.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

Shoot for the moon and if you miss you will still be among the stars. - Brainy

## US-Iran war dialogue

The month-long ceasefire that followed the most dangerous phase of the U.S.-Iran conflict in decades is beginning to resemble an uneasy diplomatic intermission rather than a settled peace. Yet in the past 72 hours, a convergence of signals from Washington, Tehran, New Delhi and the Gulf has raised the possibility that the war may be edging toward a negotiated pause—if not a durable settlement. At the centre of the latest diplomatic choreography is U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who arrived in New Delhi for a Quad-related engagement amid intensifying negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, and the broader architecture of Middle Eastern security. Standing beside Indian officials after meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Rubio suggested that negotiations had moved into a decisive phase. The phrase was vintage Trump-era diplomacy: ambiguous enough to imply both compromise and coercion. But Rubio went further, hinting that "more news" could emerge within days and privately signalling to regional diplomats that Washington hopes to conclude a framework understanding within a week.

That optimism contrasts sharply with Tehran's public posture. Iranian officials insist that no final agreement exists, and that major disputes remain unresolved—particularly over uranium enrichment, sanctions relief and Iran's demand for sovereign authority over shipping arrangements in the Strait of Hormuz. The mixed messaging reflects the core paradox of the current crisis. Both Washington and Tehran appear desperate to avoid renewed warfare, yet neither side wants to appear to have surrendered. For President Trump, the stakes are immense. The conflict that began with coordinated U.S.-Israeli strikes earlier this year succeeded in damaging Iranian military infrastructure, but failed to achieve decisive strategic objectives. Iran retains significant missile capability, proxy networks remain intact across the region, and Tehran continues to possess highly enriched uranium that Western intelligence agencies believe could eventually support a weapons programme. Trump now faces growing domestic pressure over surging fuel prices, market volatility and fears of a broader Middle Eastern war ahead of U.S. midterm elections. Oil traders have reacted nervously to disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas flows once transited before the conflict.

An unlikely mediator has emerged in neighbouring Pakistan. Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir and senior Pakistani officials have quietly shuttled between Tehran, Gulf capitals and Washington, carrying messages intended to narrow gaps between the two sides. Islamabad's involvement reflects both geopolitical opportunism and strategic anxiety: Pakistan fears that a prolonged Iran conflict could destabilize the entire region, threaten Chinese trade corridors and inflame sectarian tensions at home.

## Guwahati: Where tradition drapes the future

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Guwahati is no longer just the bustling gateway to Northeast India—it is steadily emerging as a city of style, expression, and evolving cultural confidence. Over the past decade, the city's fashion life has undergone a remarkable transformation. What was once largely defined by traditional attire and occasion-based dressing has now expanded into a vibrant, everyday culture of fashion, where global trends and local identity co-exist in striking harmony. At the heart of this transformation lies a growing urban consciousness. The expansion of shopping malls, branded outlets, and boutique stores has brought contemporary fashion within easy reach of Guwahati's residents. Young people, in particular, are driving this change. With smartphones in hand and social media as their window to the world, they are constantly exploring, adapting, and redefining style. Fashion, for them, is not merely about appearance—it is a language of individuality.

Yet, what sets Guwahati apart from many other emerging fashion centres is its deep-rooted connection with tradition. Unlike cities where modern fashion often replaces the old, Guwahati chooses to reinterpret it. The timeless mekhela chador, for instance, has found new life in contemporary wardrobes. Designers and wearers alike are experimenting with cuts, fabrics, and draping styles, transforming this traditional attire into something that resonates with modern sensibilities. It is now common to see young women pairing mekhela chadors with crop tops or styling them with minimalist jewellery and even sneakers. Men, too, are redefining ethnic wear—combining kurtas with denim or structured jackets to create a look that is both rooted and contemporary. This fusion is not just a fashion statement; it is a reflection of a generation that is proud of its heritage while being open to global influences.

Fashion events and exhibitions have further energised the city's style landscape. Pop-up shows, designer exhibitions, and modelling platforms are gradually becoming part of Guwahati's cultural calendar. These events provide a much-needed platform for local designers, artisans, and aspiring models, helping them connect with wider audiences. They also bring national attention to the region's rich textile traditions, particularly its handloom heritage.

At the same time, the rise of social media has democratised fashion in the city. Influencers and content creators from Guwahati are showcasing local styles on national and global platforms, often blending regional aesthetics with contemporary trends. Street fashion, especially in areas like GS Road and university campuses, tells its own story—one of comfort, experimentation, and self-expression. Oversized silhouettes, layered outfits, and athleisure have become everyday staples, reflecting a lifestyle that values both ease and individuality. The retail landscape has also played a crucial role in shaping Guwahati's fashion identity. The arrival of national and emerging brands has expanded choices for consumers, making the city's fashion scene more diverse and dynamic. From affordable fast fashion to curated designer pieces, there is now something for every taste and budget. This growing market reflects not only rising disposable incomes but also a shift in lifestyle aspirations. Interestingly, Guwahati's engagement with global fashion trends is neither passive nor imitative. While international styles do influence local wardrobes, they are often adapted to suit regional preferences and cultural sensibilities. Bright colours, for instance, continue to dominate, inspired by the vibrancy of Assamese textiles. Similarly, layering and fabric choices often reflect the region's climate and comfort needs.

Another noteworthy development is the increasing awareness around sustainability. In a region known for its rich weaving traditions, there is a renewed interest in handloom and locally crafted garments. Designers are consciously incorporating indigenous textiles into modern designs, while consumers are gradually becoming more mindful of their fashion choices. This shift towards slow fashion is not just an environmental response—it is also a cultural reaffirmation. Fashion in Guwahati today is, therefore, much more than a matter of clothing. It is an evolving narrative of identity, aspiration, and cultural continuity. It reflects a city in transition—one that is negotiating its place between tradition and modernity with creativity and confidence. Of course, challenges remain. The city still lacks the large-scale infrastructure and institutional support that define established fashion capitals. Opportunities for professional training, exposure, and investment are relatively limited.

As Guwahati continues to grow, its fashion life will likely become an even more compelling expression of its identity. In the folds of a reimagined mekhela chador, in the confidence of its youth, and in the creativity of its designers, lies the story of a city that is not just following trends, but shaping them in its own distinctive way.

## Modern education and importance of native languages

Modern education is often associated with technological advancement, digital classrooms, artificial intelligence, scientific innovation, and global communication. Across the world, societies are transforming rapidly under the influence of globalization and information technology, and naturally educational systems are also evolving to meet new challenges. Yet amid this race toward modernization, one fundamental question continues to remain deeply relevant: can education truly become meaningful if learners are disconnected from their own language and cultural identity? The answer to this question lies at the center of the growing debate regarding the importance of native languages in education. Language is not merely a medium

through which information is transmitted from teacher to student. It is the foundation upon which human thought, emotional expression, imagination, and intellectual understanding are built. A child first learns to recognize relationships, values, experiences, and emotions through the language spoken within the family and community environment. That language becomes the child's first window to understanding the world. When education begins in a completely unfamiliar language, learning often turns into a mechanical process rather than an organic intellectual experience. Instead of naturally understanding concepts, children become burdened with memorizing definitions and translating meanings. A significant portion of mental energy is consumed by linguistic adjustment rather than conceptual learning. Modern psychology and educational research have repeatedly demonstrated that children grasp ideas more effectively when taught in their mother tongue during their formative years. Concepts related to mathematics, science, society, and nature become clearer when connected with familiar words and experiences. This is why many educational thinkers across the world have consistently emphasized the importance of native language-based education. Unfortunately, in many post-colonial societies including India, English gradually became associated with intelligence, prestige, and economic opportunity. Over time, sections of society began believing that success was impossible without abandoning native languages in favor of English-medium education. Such attitudes created a deep cultural and educational imbalance. Many children became linguistically alienated from their homes while simultaneously struggling to build strong conceptual foundations in education. The obsession with English often overshadowed the actual purpose of education itself. Fluency in a foreign language came to be mistaken for intellectual superiority, while native language education was unfairly considered inferior or outdated. However, true education does not emerge merely from the language being used; it emerges from clarity of understanding, independent thinking, and the ability to apply knowledge meaningfully. Native language education strengthens these very qualities because it allows learners to think freely without linguistic fear or hesitation. Modern education, therefore, must not become a process of cultural displacement. Instead, it should create individuals who are intellectually capable, emotionally rooted, and socially confident. The importance of native languages in this process cannot be ignored or underestimated. Many of the world's most advanced nations



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have achieved scientific and technological excellence without abandoning their native languages as mediums of education. Countries such as Japan, Germany, South Korea, China, and France built modern educational systems primarily through their own languages while simultaneously learning English and other foreign languages for international communication. Their technological progress did not require the destruction of linguistic identity. Instead, they demonstrated that a strong native language foundation can coexist with global competitiveness. In contrast, several developing societies developed an inferiority complex toward their own languages due to colonial influence and globalization. India became one of the clearest examples of this contradiction.

Despite possessing extraordinary linguistic diversity and ancient intellectual traditions, the country gradually witnessed the rise of an educational culture where English-medium schooling became a symbol of status and modernity. Parents often began admitting children into English-medium institutions from extremely early ages without considering the psychological effects of linguistic separation. As a result, many children lost emotional connection with their native languages while also experiencing anxiety and confusion within the learning process. The issue became more complicated because educational inequality also became linked with language. Urban children from privileged backgrounds received better access to English education, whereas students from rural or economically weaker communities frequently remained disadvantaged despite possessing equal or greater intellectual potential. Such inequalities weakened the democratic spirit of education. Native language-based learning can play a crucial role in reducing these barriers because it creates a more inclusive and accessible educational environment. When children learn in their own language, they participate more actively in classroom discussions, ask questions confidently, and develop stronger comprehension skills. Their creativity and imagination also flourish more naturally because they are not constantly struggling with linguistic insecurity. At the same time, promoting native languages does not mean rejecting English or isolating students from the global world. English undoubtedly remains important in fields such as science, technology, business, diplomacy, and international collaboration. However, there is a significant difference between learning English as a skill and using it as the sole foundation of intellectual development. A child with a strong conceptual base in the mother tongue can learn additional languages far more effectively later in life. Educational systems must therefore aim for balanced multilingualism rather than linguistic replacement. Native languages should provide the foundation of learning while English and other languages can function as additional bridges toward global communication. This balanced approach can create individuals who remain culturally grounded while also becoming internationally competent. In regions such as Assam, the discussion regarding native language education carries even deeper significance because language is closely connected with cultural survival, literature, social identity, and historical continuity. Assamese language possesses a rich intellectual and literary tradition, but the growing dominance of English-medium education has gradually created

anxiety regarding the future role of Assamese within modern society. Therefore, strengthening Assamese and other Indian languages within educational institutions has become not merely an educational issue but also a cultural necessity.

The success of native language education in modern times depends greatly upon the quality of educational infrastructure, teacher training, and technological integration. Merely translating textbooks into regional languages cannot solve deeper educational problems. Native language education must become modern, innovative, and intellectually dynamic if it is to earn long-term social confidence. Teachers play a central role in this transformation because effective education requires much more than linguistic familiarity. Teachers must possess the ability to explain difficult concepts through examples connected with students' lived realities. A science teacher explaining environmental concepts through local rivers, agriculture, weather patterns, and village experiences can create stronger understanding than abstract textbook language disconnected from social context. Such contextual learning becomes more effective when conducted in the native language. However, many teachers themselves continue carrying psychological assumptions that English-medium education represents superiority while regional language education signifies backwardness. This mindset must change through proper training, academic reform, and public awareness. The digital revolution also presents enormous opportunities for strengthening native language education. Educational technology today includes online learning platforms, animated videos, virtual classrooms, interactive applications, digital libraries, artificial intelligence-based translation systems, and open educational resources. Unfortunately, most digital educational content available online continues to remain dominated by English. Consequently, younger generations increasingly associate modern knowledge with English alone. If native languages are to survive meaningfully within future societies, they must establish strong digital ecosystems capable of supporting education, research, communication, and innovation. Assamese-language educational applications, scientific dictionaries, academic archives, e-books, and online learning platforms must therefore be developed systematically. Governments, educational institutions, writers, linguists, software developers, and technology experts must collaborate in building such resources. Modern education also requires expanding native language usage within higher education, including disciplines such as engineering, medicine, law, economics, and technology. Many talented students from rural backgrounds struggle not because they lack intelligence but because they find it difficult to express knowledge within an unfamiliar language environment. Native language-based higher education can democratize opportunities and reduce unnecessary psychological barriers. Nevertheless, achieving such transformation requires long-term commitment, financial investment, institutional planning, and intellectual dedication. Technical terminology, research materials, professional journals, and advanced academic content must be produced consistently in native languages. Societies that fail to modernize their native languages risk creating generations disconnected from both intellectual originality and cultural roots. Language survives with dignity only when it remains capable of carrying modern knowledge and participating actively within changing social realities. Therefore, strengthening native languages in education should not

be viewed as emotional nostalgia but as an essential strategy for building intellectually independent societies.

Native languages also carry immense significance in preserving cultural continuity, social ethics, and collective memory within rapidly modernizing societies. Every language contains unique ways of understanding life, nature, relationships, morality, spirituality, and human experience. Folk songs, oral traditions, stories, proverbs, historical narratives, and indigenous knowledge systems are all deeply embedded within language. When younger generations gradually lose fluency in their native languages, they also lose access to these cultural treasures. Across many urban families today, communication gaps between generations are increasing because children educated entirely in foreign linguistic environments often struggle to connect emotionally with grandparents and traditional cultural practices. Such disconnection weakens social cohesion and creates identity confusion among younger people. Modern education must therefore balance technological advancement with cultural preservation. A society that forgets its linguistic roots eventually risks losing confidence in its own intellectual traditions and historical experiences. Native language education helps create emotionally secure individuals who understand both their local identity and global responsibilities. Such individuals are more likely to develop social sensitivity, ethical awareness, and cultural respect because they remain connected with the lived realities of their communities. Modernization should never mean imitation without reflection. True progress emerges when societies combine technological advancement with cultural self-confidence. The growing importance of artificial intelligence, automation, and digital communication in contemporary society makes this balance even more necessary. Future generations will require creativity, adaptability, communication skills, and emotional intelligence in addition to technical expertise. Native language education contributes significantly to these qualities because it encourages natural expression and deeper emotional understanding. At the same time, societies must avoid turning language debates into rigid ideological conflicts. The objective should not be replacing one language with another but creating educational systems where multiple languages coexist harmoniously according to practical and intellectual needs. English can remain a valuable global language while native languages continue serving as the foundation of identity, creativity, and conceptual learning. The future of education depends upon this balance. Societies that abandon native languages entirely in pursuit of globalization may eventually achieve economic growth while simultaneously suffering cultural emptiness and intellectual dependency. On the other hand, societies that remain closed to global communication may struggle within international environments. Therefore, modern education must create a synthesis where native languages preserve cultural depth and emotional connection while global languages expand professional and international opportunities. The ultimate purpose of education should be the creation of thoughtful, confident, creative, and humane individuals capable of contributing meaningfully both to their own communities and to the wider world. Native languages remain indispensable in achieving this vision because they connect human beings not only with knowledge but also with identity, memory, belonging, and the deeper meaning of existence itself.

## Marco Rubio's brave face couldn't mask the Indo US fray

By: Satyabrata Borah

The four day visit of United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio to India was supposed to be a major turning point. Taking office in January 2025 he made this his very first official trip to New Delhi because the relationship between the two nations had hit a really rocky patch over the previous year. Everyone involved in diplomacy knew that the ties were deeply ruptured and the list of problems was growing longer by the day. We were looking at a situation where the United States had clamped down with high tariffs on Indian goods while making visas incredibly hard to get for Indian professionals. The policies coming out of Washington were squeezing immigration and cutting into the outsourcing business that so many young Indians rely on for their livelihoods. On top of that the American government had slapped heavy sanctions on India regarding its energy procurement and investments which made it very difficult for New Delhi to secure the oil and resources needed to keep its economy moving. There was also a lot of friction over how India was managing its diplomatic moves with China and Pakistan. To make matters worse the personal remarks coming from President Donald Trump and his cabinet colleagues were becoming increasingly derogatory. President Trump had even gone on social media to post messages that amplified intense anti immigrant sentiments explicitly referring to India as a hell hole. It was a massive insult that did not sit well with the public or the political circles in New Delhi.

Even though the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose not to openly criticize the United States for these harsh steps there was no hiding the immense economic worry spreading through the country. The American military action in Iran on February twenty eighth had triggered a massive regional conflict that destabilized the whole Middle East. When the Hormuz Strait was blockaded India found itself facing a massive crisis because that narrow strip of water is the main route for its energy supplies. With fuel costs threatening to skyrocket and trade routes shut down the economic pressure on India was becoming unbearable. This was the tense backdrop against which Marco Rubio arrived. His schedule was packed because he had to handle a heavy bilateral agenda with Indian leaders while also attending the crucial Quad Foreign Ministers meeting. There was a lot of hope in the air that this visit would serve as a healing touch to repair what was easily one of the worst phases in the history of Indo US relations. Most of this damage had been caused by Washington making unilateral moves without consulting its partner but people hoped Rubio would bring some reassurance.

When the journalists in New Delhi repeatedly questioned Marco Rubio about the insulting social media posts and the tense state of affairs he put on a brave face. He consistently maintained that the relationship was doing perfectly well and he kept using the phrase that President Trump loves India to brush off the controversy. He tried his best to make it sound like the bond was as strong as ever even when the reality on the ground looked completely different. For its part New Delhi did not let the political tension spoil their hospitality. They went all out and laid the red carpet for the American visitor. In

a major departure from the usual strict diplomatic protocol Prime Minister Narendra Modi went himself to welcome Rubio upon his arrival. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar cleared his schedule and spent a massive portion of his weekend sitting in meetings with Rubio trying to find common ground. The hospitality extended to two separate receptions at the US Embassy. On Sunday Jaishankar even joined a special celebration that combined marking the United States two hundred and fiftieth Independence Day with Rubio's own birthday party. The visit was not just about sitting in dark conference rooms either because Rubio was taken to see the Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata and he traveled to Agra and Jaipur to do some classic sightseeing. During the official bilateral talks the two foreign ministers covered a massive range of topics trying to talk through everything from trade and energy to civil nuclear technology defense cooperation and the ongoing geopolitical conflicts shaking the world.

When the dust settled and the visit came to a close it became obvious that all the grand hospitality had not yielded much substance. Aside from a single agreement focused on critical minerals cooperation the bilateral segment of the trip ended with almost no significant outcomes. This particular agreement did not even feel new because it simply replicated a partnership that both countries were already pursuing within the framework of the Quad and the fifteen nation Pax Silica alliance. The fact that Rubio refused to even acknowledge that a problem existed in the relationship was a clear sign of a deeper disconnect. It showed that the United States, which India had long considered one of its most trusted global partners, was failing to recognize the genuine fears and complaints of New Delhi. It is a situation that leaves a bitter taste because you cannot fix a broken fence if you refuse to see the holes in it. There is still a glimmer of hope that the Indian leadership managed to clearly communicate their worries to Rubio behind closed doors even if he did not admit it to the cameras. This is crucial because both sides are currently gearing up for a highly anticipated face to face meeting between Modi and Trump at the G7 Summit in Evian, France which is scheduled for mid June. India has been invited to this summit as a special invitee which gives it a powerful platform. This upcoming meeting will be the very first time that the two leaders will look each other in the eye since Modi's visit to Washington in February 2025. A lot of damaging events have taken place since that winter visit and the June summit represents a critical window to mend a relationship that has frayed in the most vital areas. If they want to get things back on track they will have to focus heavily on repairing their economic cooperation, sorting out the energy crisis and finding common ground on regional security.

The economic friction is perhaps the hardest part to ignore because it directly impacts millions of ordinary citizens and businesses. When a country like the United States raises tariffs it tells its partners that trade is no longer a two way street. For India, a growing economy that relies on global markets to create jobs for its massive youth population, these trade barriers are a direct hit to its growth story. The visa restrictions make it feel like the human bridge between the two nations which was built over decades by brilliant students and tech workers is being dismantled. When you call a partner country a hell hole while simultaneously relying on its top minds to run your

biggest tech companies it creates a massive sense of disrespect. You cannot expect a nation to stand by you as a strategic ally in Asia while you actively undermine its economic stability and insult its people on global platforms.

The energy situation is another massive wedge that needs urgent attention from both sides. India is a country that has to import the vast majority of its oil to keep its factories running and its cities moving. When Washington decides to impose sanctions on nations like Iran or blocks investment paths it forces India into a corner. New Delhi has to look out for its own people first and ensuring affordable fuel is a matter of national survival. If the United States wants India to align with its geopolitical goals in the region it must offer viable alternatives instead of just throwing threats and penalties around. The conflict in the Middle East and the vulnerability of shipping lanes like the Hormuz Strait show that India cannot afford to let its energy security be dictated by the shifting whims of a government in Washington. The security dynamics in Asia are changing rapidly and this is where the partnership matters most for the United States. With China expanding its footprint across the Indo Pacific region Washington desperately needs a strong reliable democratic counterweight in Asia. India fits that role perfectly but it cannot be a one sided deal where India takes all the risks while the United States reaps the benefits. The relationship has to be built on mutual respect and shared benefits. If the American administration keeps playing a double game by making nice statements during visits but passing hostile laws at home the trust will completely erode. The Quad alliance is a good step but it cannot survive on empty statements and repetitive agreements about critical minerals. It needs real economic backing and an understanding that India's security concerns regarding Pakistan and China are just as important as America's global ambitions. As the preparations for the June meeting in France begin the diplomats in both Washington and New Delhi have their work cut out for them. They need to look past the grand receptions, the birthday cakes and the protocol breaks to address the real bitterness that has crept into the system. The Modi Trump meeting cannot just be another photo opportunity filled with hugs and speeches because the stakes are far too high this time. The economic ties need a complete reset with a clear path toward reducing tariffs and making immigration smoother. Energy cooperation needs to be insulated from political sanctions so that India can plan its growth without constant fear of American intervention. Most importantly the language used by top American leaders needs to change because a lasting partnership can only be built on a foundation of dignity.

Marco Rubio's trip might have been a missed opportunity to deliver immediate results but it served as a very clear reality check for New Delhi. It showed that the old assumptions about the United States being a reliable friend need a careful rethink. India is realizing that it has to navigate this relationship with a lot more caution and self reliance. The upcoming G7 Summit is the perfect stage to see if the two nations can genuinely fix the bad fences that have grown between them or if they will let the walls grow higher and separate them even further. The future of regional security and global trade depends heavily on which path these two giants choose to walk together.

# Environmental conservation and public awareness

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The long journey of human civilization upon the bosom of nature has always been deeply and inseparably connected with the environment. Within this vast universe, every essential element required for sustaining life exists within the environment itself. Air, water, soil, forests, rivers, seas, and countless forms of living beings together constitute this environment, which serves as the fundamental basis of our existence. Without this foundation, the existence of humankind cannot be imagined even for a single moment. Therefore, the idea of environmental conservation is not merely a moral responsibility; it is an essential strategy for the survival of the entire human race, a command of nature itself. Conservation means protecting the life-giving resources around us from every form of misuse and destruction, so that while fulfilling the needs of the present generation, these resources also remain preserved for future generations. This effort is not limited only to the protection of natural resources; rather, it also ensures that the natural biological processes of nature continue to function normally. Maintaining ecological balance is the primary objective of conservation, because once this balance is disturbed, the existence of all living beings comes under threat. In order to preserve this balance, it has become necessary to address the negative impact created by the ruthless exploitation of natural resources for temporary human interests. As a result of the excessive use of forest resources, uncontrolled burning of fossil fuels, and increasing pollution of water bodies, the environmental crisis has now assumed such a frightening form that it has become a matter of collective concern. The only path out of this deep crisis lies in creating profound awareness among the public and making every individual conscious of their responsibility towards environmental conservation. Through such awareness, every person will realize how even the smallest individual action can initiate a major transformation.

At present, the world is passing through a severe environmental crisis, one that is largely the consequence of human activities and whose intensity is continuously increasing. Climate change, pollution of water sources, deterioration of air quality, destruction of forests, and the gradual extinction of biodiversity are some of the major manifestations of this crisis, all of which are seriously damaging the natural systems of life on Earth. Each of these problems is interconnected, and as a result, not only is the quality of life declining, but the intensity of natural disasters is also increasing. Driven by a consumerist mentality, human beings have treated natural resources merely as personal property and have exploited them limitlessly without any foresight, causing these life-sustaining reserves to shrink rapidly. Toxic waste released from industries has placed immense pressure on rivers and the atmosphere, uncon-

trolled extraction of groundwater and excessive use of chemical fertilizers in agriculture have reduced soil fertility, and unnecessary interference in natural biological processes has disrupted the delicate balance of the environment. A deeper analysis of this widespread environmental degradation reveals that it is not merely the result of industrialization or population growth, but also the consequence of a profound lack of environmental knowledge and responsibility among the general public. Most people remain unaware of the long-term environmental impacts of their everyday activities. For example, the uncontrolled use of single-use plastic products has created a long-term threat to marine life and soil health, largely because people lack adequate understanding of its consequences. Unless the public becomes conscious of the long-term impacts of every environmentally harmful activity, large-scale transformation will remain impossible. Therefore, to confront this crisis, it is first necessary to equip people with accurate information and knowledge.

The necessity of environmental conservation is not simply a temporary subject of discussion; it is an effort to build a strong foundation for the future of human society and a long-term investment in survival. If we aspire to live in a healthy and secure environment, then it is essential for us to acknowledge our responsibility towards nature and fulfill this duty voluntarily. Conservation opens the path toward the sustainable use of natural resources, where resources are utilized in such a way that their regenerative capacity remains intact and depletion is prevented. Through this, natural habitats are protected and biodiversity is preserved, both of which are essential for environmental stability and ecological health. Within a healthy ecosystem, every living being has a specific role, and protecting biodiversity ultimately strengthens the support systems of human life itself. It is extremely important to awaken within people a deep sense of respect and gratitude towards nature. Only through such a perspective can we truly understand the immeasurable value of forests, rivers, oceans, and clean air, values that no economic indicator can adequately measure. The philosophy of conservation reminds us not only of our present needs but also of our responsibilities toward future generations. If we destroy these resources today, then the coming generations will inherit a weakened and dangerous planet where survival itself will become a continuous struggle. Therefore, environmental conservation programs must be accepted as long-term and organized efforts in which every personal and collective decision gives importance to the protection of nature. This responsibility does not belong solely to governments; it is the personal and social duty of every citizen.

Creating public awareness is the foundation of environmental conservation and the primary key to achieving success in this field. Environmental protection can-

not be ensured merely through governmental laws and policies; it requires the active, sincere, and voluntary participation of society as a whole. It is essential to provide people with accurate, detailed, and scientific knowledge regarding environmental problems, their causes, and their consequences. Such awareness inspires people to develop environmentally responsible habits in their daily lives and encourages them to become part of the solution rather than contributors to the problem. Through awareness, people begin to understand how every small decision they make affects the larger ecological system—from the use of plastic to the careful use of electricity and water, and even understanding the complete lifecycle of the products they consume. The spread of environmental awareness must take place through education, communication, and various forms of public outreach, where information is presented in a simple, accessible, culturally relevant, and trustworthy manner. Including environmental science as a compulsory subject at all levels of education can create a loving relationship with nature among children from an early age, enabling them to accept it as an inseparable part of life. Alongside this, discussions, workshops, and awareness campaigns should be organized among all sections of society so that people can understand local environmental issues and become part of their solutions. Activities such as cleaning riverbanks or participating in local tree plantation drives directly involve people in conservation efforts. The public must not only be informed about environmental problems but also about practical solutions, so that instead of despair, they move forward with hope and determination.

Strategies based on the principle of sustainability are extremely important for environmental conservation and form the basis of future-oriented development. These strategies introduce a new perspective regarding the use of natural resources, where long-term stability receives the highest priority. Reducing waste is the central pillar of this principle and is based on three major approaches: reduce, reuse, and recycle. This means minimizing the production, consumption, and disposal of materials, encouraging the repeated use of reusable items, and transforming unusable waste into new products through recycling. Proper management of waste generated in industries and households is essential in this regard. Special emphasis must be given to reducing the use of non-biodegradable and environmentally harmful materials such as plastic, while encouraging the use of natural and biodegradable alternatives. Practicing moderation in the use of water and energy is also an essential aspect of sustainable strategy. In domestic, agricultural, and industrial sectors alike, advanced technologies such as rainwater harvesting systems and efficient irrigation methods should be implemented to prevent water wastage. Increasing the use of renewable energy sources such as

solar and wind energy has become a necessity of the times in order to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and decrease greenhouse gas emissions. Promoting organic farming for soil conservation and preventing illegal deforestation for forest protection are also integral parts of this broader strategy. The successful implementation of these strategies requires a balanced combination of governmental policy, industrial cooperation, and active public participation, where every participant fulfills their respective responsibilities.

In the field of environmental conservation, there exists a profound interrelationship between personal habits and collective responsibility, and only the coordination of both levels can bring meaningful success. If each individual introduces small changes into daily life, their combined impact can become immensely powerful. Through the products they choose, the transportation methods they use, and their patterns of energy consumption, individuals directly influence the environment. For example, carrying cloth bags to markets, purchasing locally produced goods, using public transportation or bicycles instead of private vehicles, and switching off unnecessary lights at home are simple habits that can initiate major transformation. These seemingly small steps collectively generate enormous strength. Personal changes gradually create a new social culture where caring for the environment becomes natural and admirable. This sense of personal responsibility must gradually evolve into a collective movement in which local environmental committees are formed to address regional problems together, such as cleaning rivers and ponds or establishing proper waste management systems within communities. Rather than merely criticizing or depending entirely upon governments, every citizen must learn to consider themselves part of the solution. Success in the journey of environmental conservation requires the awakening of genuine love and respect for nature within every human heart, motivating people to participate in conservation efforts voluntarily and sincerely, not merely out of obligation.

Educational institutions play an extremely important role in preparing future citizens for environmental conservation, because today's students are tomorrow's leaders and decision-makers. Schools and colleges must go beyond providing textbook knowledge and instead cultivate environmental awareness among students through a strong educational framework. Environmental science should be incorporated into academic curricula as a dynamic, practical, and interdisciplinary subject that provides not only theoretical discussion but also opportunities for direct engagement with nature through field trips and research projects. Students should gain deep understanding of natural ecological processes, the interdependence of living organisms, the complexity of ecosystems, and the importance of environmental balance. Such education en-

courages them to analyze the root causes of environmental problems and search for logical, creative, and sustainable solutions. Educational institutions themselves should adopt environmentally friendly practices within their campuses and actively involve students in these efforts, such as waste segregation, water conservation, organic composting, and tree plantation. This practical learning enables students to apply environmental conservation strategies in real life and helps them develop an emotional bond with nature. Through education, a deep moral responsibility grows within future citizens, inspiring them to demonstrate love and respect for the environment throughout their lives. Only through such education can a conscious and responsible society be built where every citizen actively participates in environmental protection.

Establishing a deep and harmonious coordination between development and environmental balance, rather than allowing them to remain in conflict, is the primary objective of sustainable development. Development is essential for the progress of human society, but such development must take place in a manner that does not exhaust natural resources or hinder the ability of future generations to fulfill their needs. Earlier, the concept of development was based mainly upon economic growth, large-scale construction, and unrestricted extraction of resources, often ignoring environmental value and causing long-term damage to society. However, the need has now arisen to transform this mindset, and sustainable development clearly demonstrates that no economic growth can achieve long-term success without environmental well-being. While establishing industries, designing agricultural systems, or planning urban infrastructure, the environmental impact of every action should be carefully analyzed and guided through strict policies and regulations. Technological innovations should be developed in ways that require fewer resources, produce less waste, and generate minimal pollution. Environmentally friendly industries should be encouraged through tax benefits and other financial incentives, while new markets should be created for sustainable products so that industries themselves become interested in environmental protection. In this process, governments must formulate long-term plans, industries must accept social and environmental responsibilities, and the public must make conscious consumer choices. Only through such balanced planning can we improve human living standards while simultaneously protecting natural resources. Achieving this harmony requires not only governmental decisions but also the active cooperation and trust of industrialists, experts, and ordinary citizens alike.

The role of media and communication in creating environmental awareness is extremely powerful, functioning as a vital instrument for social transformation. Through newspapers, television, radio,

and social media platforms, environmental issues and stories of successful conservation can be brought before the public. These mediums should not merely highlight alarming news; they must also discuss solutions and demonstrate how individuals can contribute to positive change. Through accurate information and deep analysis, people can develop an objective understanding of environmental issues and overcome misconceptions. Media organizations should present environmental stories in ways that emotionally connect with people and inspire them toward action, rather than merely frightening them. Communicating environmental messages through local languages and cultural contexts often proves more effective because people more easily relate to issues connected with their own lives. Media plays a major role in shaping public opinion, and if used responsibly, it can bring positive changes in the thoughts and behavior of society as a whole. These communication platforms should also serve as bridges connecting different sections of society so that collective action for environmental conservation becomes possible. To inform the public in depth and create meaningful understanding, the foundation of such communication must remain strong, reliable, and accessible. Only then can environmental conservation truly transform into a mass movement.

Finally, it can be said that environmental conservation and public awareness are inseparably connected and mutually dependent concepts. The effort to protect the environment is not a temporary program limited to a particular period of time; rather, it is a continuous, lifelong process that must become an integral part of everyday life. Nature is the foundation of human existence, and without protecting this foundation, the progress of civilization itself becomes impossible. Public awareness is the force that unites millions of individuals into a powerful movement for conservation. Such awareness helps every person understand their own power and responsibility, encouraging them to show love and respect toward nature through their daily actions. If humanity truly dreams of a secure and prosperous future, then all of us together must realize the eternal value of nature from the depths of our hearts. Our sincere sense of responsibility and awareness toward the environment will give us the courage to move toward sustainable development and secure the future for generations to come. The historical responsibility resting upon our generation is to preserve ecological balance so that future generations may inherit a beautiful, healthy, and peaceful world. Therefore, the journey of environmental conservation is not merely the effort to save the planet; it is also a solemn commitment to protect the dignity and survival of human life itself. To fulfill this commitment, every heart must remain awakened with awareness, because such consciousness forms the very foundation of all conservation efforts.

## Rivers beyond borders: Why the Siang is more than water

By: Dr Murari Lal Gaur

Standing beside the Siang River recently in Arunachal Pradesh, watching the enormous Himalayan waters descending through deep valleys and ancient forests, one thought repeatedly came to my mind:

- Rivers are not merely flowing water.

- They are living civilizations.
- They carry the memory of mountains, the chemistry of landscapes, the songs of forests, the struggles of communities, and the destiny of nations.

Long before political boundaries appeared on maps, rivers were already flowing across valleys, civilizations, cultures, and continents - silently connecting humanity.

- Political boundaries may divide maps, but rivers refuse to recognize them.

- They rise in one nation, gather strength in another, nourish millions across landscapes, and finally merge into seas beyond human boundaries.

- Rivers are among the few living systems on Earth that simultaneously connect geography, ecology, climate, culture, economy, spirituality, and civilization.

- Long before humanity learned diplomacy, rivers had already mastered the art of connection.

The story of humanity is essentially the story of rivers.

A few days ago, while recording a short video clip during discussions surrounding the proposed Upper Siang Multipurpose Project in Arunachal Pradesh, I stood silently near the mighty Siang River, watching the enormous force of water descending from the Himalayas. The sound of the river was powerful yet peaceful. The water was carrying not merely sediments and discharge, but centuries of geological history, ecological memory, and civilizational continuity.

At that moment, one thought repeatedly came to my mind:

- "A river is never merely water flowing in a channel. A river is geography in motion, ecology in ac-

tion, and civilization in liquid form."

- During the last four decades, I have had the privilege of working closely with many rivers across India - through hydrology, watershed management, river-bank erosion control, ravine restoration, irrigation engineering, groundwater recharge, stream hydraulics, grassland hydrology, forest-water interaction, and landscape ecology.

From the ravines of the Chambal River to the shifting meanders of the Yamuna River, from drought-prone watersheds to flood-sensitive Himalayan valleys, I have seen rivers behaving like living entities. Some rivers are calm and disciplined. Some are energetic and unpredictable. Some quietly nurture civilizations, while others constantly challenge human understanding through floods, erosion, sedimentation, and channel migration.

- But among all river systems, international rivers are perhaps the most complex and sensitive.

These rivers do not recognize political borders. They begin in one nation, flow through another, influence several others, and finally merge into seas or oceans. Such rivers carry not only water but also diplomacy, ecology, culture, energy, economy, biodiversity, and geopolitics.

The Siang River is one such extraordinary river.

Originating in Tibet as the Yarlung Tsangpo, the river enters Arunachal Pradesh as the Siang before transforming into the mighty Brahmaputra in Assam and eventually flowing into Bangladesh toward the Bay of Bengal. In this long and majestic journey, the river connects glaciers, mountains, forests, tribal societies, agricultural plains, wetlands, fisheries, biodiversity hotspots, and millions of people.

The Siang therefore is not merely a river of Arunachal Pradesh.

- It is a transboundary ecological corridor.
- It is a geopolitical waterway.
- It is a climatic regulator.

- It is a cultural messenger from the Himalayas.

And perhaps above all, it is a living artery of South Asia.

The future geopolitics of the world may increasingly depend not only upon oil and minerals but also upon freshwater systems and river diplomacy. Interestingly, rivers are among the few natural systems where physics, chemistry, biology, geology, ecology, sociology, economics, culture, spirituality, and politics all interact simultaneously.

Very few natural systems are so multidimensional.

The physics of rivers is itself fascinating. Rivers continuously adjust their slope, velocity, depth, width, sediment load, and channel shape. A river is not a static pipeline carrying water.

It is a dynamic self-adjusting system.

One little-known scientific reality is that rivers actually transport mountains.

Yes, rivers carry mountains in dissolved and sediment form → The Brahmaputra, for example, is among the highest sediment-carrying rivers in the world. Scientific studies suggest that this river system may transport nearly 700-800 million tonnes of sediments annually from the fragile Himalayas toward downstream plains and the Bay of Bengal.

This sediment is both a blessing and a challenge → It creates fertile agricultural plains but also intensifies channel instability, bank erosion, flood vulnerability, and embankment pressure. Thousands of hectares of valuable land are lost annually in Assam due to river-bank erosion. Villages shift. Agricultural fields disappear.

Human settlements migrate. Yet the same river also nourishes soils, wetlands, fisheries, groundwater recharge systems, and biodiversity. This duality is the true philosophy of rivers → A river gives life and simultaneously tests human wisdom.

The chemistry of rivers is equally remarkable. Rivers are not chemically uniform systems. They carry dissolved oxygen, nutrients,



carbon compounds, minerals, organic matter, nitrogen, phosphorus, and biological elements. The chemistry of a river continuously changes from glacier zones to forests, from agricultural lands to urban settlements.

In many ways, a river records the chemical signature of the landscapes through which it flows.

Another hidden scientific truth is that rivers and groundwater continuously interact beneath the Earth's surface. During floods, rivers recharge underground aquifers. During dry seasons, groundwater sustains river flow. This invisible dialogue between rivers and aquifers maintains ecological continuity across landscapes. Freshwater ecosystems occupy less than one percent of Earth's surface, yet they support nearly ten percent of all known species. Healthy rivers sustain fish, amphibians, birds, aquatic insects, wetlands, floodplain vegetation, microbial ecosystems, and ecological food chains.

- A healthy river is therefore not merely flowing water.
- It is a moving biodiversity corridor.

The Brahmaputra basin itself supports rich aquatic biodiversity, river dolphins, migratory birds, wetlands, fisheries, and unique floodplain ecosystems.

Almost every major civilization

of the world evolved around rivers; the Nile civilization, the Indus civilization, the Yellow River civilization, and the Tigris-Euphrates civilization. Human civilization itself is fundamentally a river-bank phenomenon.

Even today, rivers shape livelihoods, transportation, agriculture, culture, spirituality, and regional identities. In Northeast India especially, rivers are deeply connected with indigenous and tribal life systems. For many local communities, rivers are not merely "water resources." Rivers are sacred companions. They are songs, rituals, memories, fisheries, transport systems, agricultural lifelines, and ecological ancestors.

Traditional communities often understood river behaviour more wisely than modern planners.

- They knew where floods naturally spread.

- They knew where erosion intensifies.

- They knew how ecological co-existence could be maintained.

Modern science must now learn to respect this traditional wisdom.

The Himalayan region adds another level of complexity to rivers like the Siang and Brahmaputra. The Himalayas are geologically young, tectonically active, fragile, and highly erosion-prone mountains.

This is why Himalayan rivers

behave differently from many stable peninsular rivers.

Heavy rainfall, cloudbursts, landslides, seismic activity, glacial melt, and steep slopes make these rivers highly dynamic.

The Northeast region of India is among the wettest regions on Earth. Many areas receive annual rainfall exceeding 2000-4000 mm. When such intense rainfall interacts with fragile mountain systems, rivers become highly energetic and sediment-rich.

The river of tomorrow may not behave like the river of yesterday.

- One emerging scientific concern is the increasing frequency of glacial lake outburst floods, which may significantly affect downstream river systems in future decades.

- One of the greatest lessons rivers taught me during four decades of field experience is this:

- "Successful river management must always begin from upstream and gradually move downstream."

Nature itself follows this principle.

- The upstream zones regulate forests, springs, infiltration, sediment generation, and hydrological stability. Disturbances in upper catchments eventually travel downstream in the form of floods, erosion, instability, sedimentation, and ecological stress.

- If forests disappear upstream, flood intensity increases downstream. If slope instability increases upstream, disasters intensify downstream. If soil erosion accelerates upstream, sedimentation expands downstream.

Nature always works in continuity → Therefore, river restoration and watershed treatment should ideally proceed from upper catchments toward middle and lower reaches. Attempting to repair only downstream areas while neglecting upstream degradation often becomes expensive, unstable, and ecologically ineffective. This is one of the most neglected truths in river management globally.

The future of river science is changing rapidly → Tomorrow's rivers may increasingly be moni-

tored through satellite hydrology, artificial intelligence, drone mapping, LIDAR surveys, digital twins, IoT river sensors, real-time flood forecasting systems, and advanced sediment monitoring technologies.

- The 21st century may become the century of smart rivers.

- Yet even the most advanced technologies cannot replace human wisdom.

- A river cannot be fully understood only through computer models and satellite imagery. Rivers must also be walked, observed, heard, respected, and emotionally understood.

- Another little-known scientific reality is that forests and rivers maintain deep ecological partnerships. Healthy forests stabilize slopes, regulate infiltration, reduce sediment loss, improve water quality, sustain springs, and moderate flood peaks. Destroy forests, and rivers gradually change their character.

- In many ways, rivers are climate regulators themselves.

- As I stood near the Siang recently, listening to the rhythm of the Himalayan waters, I realized once again that rivers do not divide humanity - they connect it.

- Political boundaries may fragment maps, but rivers continue their ancient journey beyond those lines.

- The future of Asia - and perhaps the future of global ecological stability - may significantly depend upon how wisely humanity understands and manages international rivers like the Siang and Brahmaputra.

- These rivers are not merely flowing water systems. They are living universities of geology, hydrology, ecology, sociology, culture, climate, biodiversity, civilization

- Perhaps the greatest challenge before modern humanity is not how to control rivers, but how to coexist wisely with them.

- Because when rivers survive, civilizations survive → And when rivers begin to suffer, humanity eventually suffers with them.

## SC backs EC's power to conduct SIR, says exercise breathes life into mandate for fair polls

**NEW DELHI, May 27:** Delivering a major victory for the Election Commission, the Supreme Court on Wednesday upheld its power to conduct a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter rolls and said the exercise "breathes life" into the constitutional mandate for fair elections.

Ruling on the intensely debated issue, a Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant held that the exercise advances the "constitutional imperative of free and fair elections".

The bench, also comprising Justice Joymalya Bagchi, said the poll panel was empowered under Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) to carry out special revisions.

Disposing of a batch of petitions challenging the SIR exercise in Bihar, the apex court also held that deletion from the voter list does not amount to a legal declaration that an individual is not a citizen.

"We are equally satisfied that, in its object and design, the impugned SIR bears a direct nexus to the constitutional goal of a free and fair election. Free and fair elections do not rest merely upon the mechanics of polling. They equally depend upon the integrity, accuracy and purity of the electoral roll which forms the foundation of the democratic process," the court said.

"The SIR breathes life into the constitutional mandate for fair elections," the court said while rejecting arguments that the EC had



overstepped its statutory powers.

The 124-page judgment, authored by the CJI, agreed with the EC's reasoning on the need for SIR. The passage of more than two decades since the last intensive revision, large-scale additions and deletions over that period, rapid urbanisation, migration, and the resulting possibility of repeated or defective entries are valid grounds for the SIR to preserve foundational integrity of polls, the judgment said.

"The impugned SIR, therefore, is not a process designed to subvert the established procedure, but one intended to secure the constitutional mandate of free and fair elections by ensuring that the roll on which the election rests is accurate and reliable," it said.

The verdict led to sharp political reactions from across the political

spectrum.

"The Supreme Court declares the SIR process legal and constitutional. It is clear that Rahul Gandhi and Congress opposed (the SIR) all through because they stood with illegal infiltrators, not with Indian voters," BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said in a post on X.

TMP MP Mahua Moitra expressed a diametrically opposite view.

"The SC's Bihar SIR decision today puts a stamp of approval on EC's illogical, hurried & discriminatory practices that ultimately led to 27 lakh valid voters unable to vote after Bengal SIR & whose fate is still in limbo. Justice must be done & must also be seen to be done," she said.

Psychologist and activist Yogendra Yadav, one of the litigants in

the case, said he stayed away from court because the outcome had been apparent long before the formal verdict.

"The news is not that the Supreme Court has today declared the Election Commission's SIR to be constitutional. The real news is that now in this country, the BJP will decide who can vote and who cannot. The news is that the part of the constitution of this country, which was perhaps the last pillar to save it, some parts of it have broken and fallen today," Yadav said in detailed posts on X.

According to the apex court, the credibility of the democratic process rests on the accuracy of the voter list.

"We are unable to conclude that the impugned exercise is a process resorted solely for administrative convenience," the bench said.

So long as the EC acts within the bounds of the statute, records reasons for recourse to the special power and does not transgress any express prohibition contained there, the SIR cannot be struck down as ultra vires merely because it adopts a procedure different from that applicable to an ordinary revision, it said.

There were sufficient procedural safeguards to prevent arbitrary exclusion, the court said.

The documentation regime prescribed by the EC represented a considered exercise of its administrative discretion in furtherance of its Constitutional mandate, it said. (PTI)

## Political workers clash at several places during Punjab civic polls



**CHANDIGARH, May 27:** Clashes involving supporters of Congress, AAP, BJP and SAD and allegations of booth capturing were reported on Tuesday at several places in Punjab during the civic elections that saw 63.94 per cent polling amid a heatwave.

The local body elections is being seen as crucial for all major political parties of the state as they are taking place ahead of the assembly polls next year. It is a litmus test for the ruling AAP which is hoping to retain power in Punjab.

Polling through ballot papers began at 8 am and continued till 5 pm. Counting will take place on May 29.

According to officials, out of total 35 lakh voters, 22.38 lakh votes polled, showing a voter turnout of 63.94 per cent.

Elections were held in 1,897 wards across eight municipal corporations -- Mohali, Bathinda, Abohar, Barnala, Kapurthala, Moga, Batala, and Pathankot -- besides 75 municipal councils and 19 nagar panchayats, officials said.

They further said in polling for municipal corporations, the voter turnout was 59.91 per cent. In municipal councils and nagar panchayats, polling percentages were 65.06 and 76.18 respectively.

There were reports of clash incidents at many places. Congress candidate from Ward number 4 in Raikot, Jagdev Singh Jagga was injured in an attack with sharp-edged weapons by a group of people. He was admitted to a private hospital in Ludhiana, officials said.

Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring and Congress MLA Partap Singh Bajwa con-

demned the incident and slammed the AAP government over the law and order situation in the state.

"The brutal attack on Congress candidate Jagdev Singh Jagga in Raikot exposes the complete collapse of law and order under the Bhagwant Mann government.

"Gangsters and political goons are roaming freely while the government is busy with ads and reels. If election candidates are unsafe, imagine the condition of common people in Punjab," Warring said on X.

Warring later in the evening inquired the health of Jagga after visiting the hospital in Ludhiana.

"Any attack on my Congress worker is like an attack on my family. The brutal attack on Jagdev Singh Jagga is deeply disturbing and unacceptable. Violence has no place in democracy. Those responsible must be identified and brought to justice immediately. Punjab cannot be allowed to function through fear and intimidation," Warring said.

In Barnala, the husband of BJP candidate from Ward number 15, Deepinder Kaur, was assaulted by a group of people following heated exchanges after he made allegations of bogus voting. His turban was removed and he suffered injuries, after which he was taken to a hospital.

A clash erupted between the supporters of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Gidderbaha in Muktsar district during polling in Ward numbers 18 and 19, officials said.

The SAD later lodged a complaint with the Punjab State Election Commission against AAP MLA Hardeep Singh Dimpy Dhillon and others, accusing them of indulging in booth capturing, assault and intimidation during municipal elections and demanded an FIR be registered against them.

However, officials rejected the claims of any booth capturing incident during polling.

Tension prevailed in Samana in Patiala supporters of two rival political parties clashed and later pelted stones at cops during polling in Ward number 19.

The police resorted to cane charging to disperse the crowd and polling was temporarily stalled, the officials said. (PTI)

## 110 electric buses to connect Jewar airport

**LUCKNOW, May 27:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday directed officials to ensure the availability of 110 electric buses in the first phase for connectivity to the upcoming Noida International Airport at Jewar and strengthen public transport arrangements before flight operations begin.

Chairing the fourth meeting of the State Transformation Commission, the chief minister reviewed the progress of the operation of 500 electric buses in Noida, Greater Noida and the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) region, according to an official statement issued here.

He directed the officials to complete preparations for public transport before the proposed commencement of flight operations from the airport by June 15. The chief minister also stressed the rapid expansion of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles in the state.

Officials informed the meeting that around 15.5 lakh electric vehicles are currently registered in Uttar Pradesh and the government has set a target of establishing 10,000 charging stations by 2030. Around 2,500 charging stations are already operational, the statement said.

Reviewing expressway projects, Adityanath said improved connectivity would boost industrial development, investment and employment generation. He directed officials to expedite land acquisition and exchange-related work for key projects. (PTI)

## Hopeful JSW's ₹ 65,000 cr steel plant will be completed by 2029: Majhi

**BHUBANESWAR/PARADIP, May 27:** Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Majhi on Wednesday said he was optimistic that JSW's ₹ 65,000 crore integrated steel plant near Paradip would be operationalised by 2029, and asserted that it would set a milestone in the state's industrialisation process.

Majhi announced an event marking the commencement of construction of the 13.2 MTPA integrated steel plant of JSW Utkal Steel Limited at Dhinkia near Paradip in Jagatsinghpur district.

It is the same spot where South Korean steel major POSCO had proposed in 2005 to set a 12 MTPA steel facility at an investment of ₹ 52,000 crore, but later scrapped the project due to resistance from the locals and raw material linkage issues.

"We are optimistic that the steel plant will be inaugurated in 2029 and set a milestone in Odisha's industrialisation process," Majhi said, while addressing a gathering.

He said the proposed integrated steel plant will have an initial capacity of 13.2 million metric tonnes per annum (MTPA). The investment in the initial phase is estimated to be ₹ 65,000 crore, and it is expected to be scaled up to ₹ 1,00,000 crore in future phases, Majhi said.

The project will feature JSW's own 900 MW captive power plant, a specialised cement grinding unit, and a dedicated captive jetty near the Paradip Port to streamline shipping.

In an X post, CMO Odisha said, "Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri @MohanMOdisha attended the event marking commencement of construction work for the 13.2 MTPA Integrated Steel Plant of JSW Utkal Steel Limited at Dhinkia near Paradip. The mega industrial project is set to strengthen Odisha's position as a leading manufacturing and investment destination, while creating significant employment

and economic opportunities for the people of the state. @InvestInOdisha@PMOIndia."

The chief minister also assured JSW Group chairman Sajjan Jindal and the company in the public meeting that the state government will provide all required support for the grounding and operation of the mega project.

Describing the JSW project as a milestone in Odisha's industrial growth story, the chief minister said the state government has transformed years of pending proposals into fast-track execution through coordinated governance, speedy clearances and industry facilitation. The chief minister urged the firm to create adequate jobs for the locals and invest more in Odisha.

"The project would create substantial opportunities for local communities, MSMEs, ancillary industries, logistics, services and skilled youth across the region while accelerating economic growth in coastal Odisha," he said.

Sharing his vision for Paradip, Majhi said that while the port city has already established itself as a nationally significant chemical and petrochemical hub, the government is now working towards transforming Paradip into a diversified industrial and manufacturing centre with investments across steel, downstream industries, textiles, green energy and port-led manufacturing sectors.

Drawing reference to globally integrated port-led industrial ecosystems, the chief minister said, "We are actively working to develop Paradip on the lines of Mundra in Gujarat and preparing a similar blueprint, positioning this port city at the centre of Odisha's coastal industrial corridor."

Majhi also announced that the state government has plans to establish an engineering college in Paradip in keeping with the requirements of the local industries. (PTI)

## SC decision on SIR complete defeat of Oppn, Rahul must introspect

**NEW DELHI, May 27:** The BJP on Wednesday termed the Supreme Court's verdict on the SIR a "complete defeat" of the Congress and other opposition parties on "moral, political and constitutional" grounds, and asked Rahul Gandhi to introspect.

The apex court on Monday upheld the Election Commission's power to conduct a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter rolls, and said the exercise "breathes life" into the constitutional mandate for fair elections.

Delivering a major victory for the poll panel, a top court bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant also held that the exercise advances the "constitutional imperative of free and fair elections".

Commenting on the top court's verdict, BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said, "This is a complete defeat of the Congress, particularly Rahul Gandhi. The Congress and the opposition parties have collapsed across all three dimensions -- ethical, political, and constitutional." (PTI)

## SIR to begin on June 30, final electoral roll on October 7: Delhi CEO

**NEW DELHI, May 27:** The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voters list will begin in Delhi with door-to-door visits by booth-level officers from June 30 in a transparent manner, Delhi Chief Electoral Officer Ashok Kumar said on Wednesday.

Addressing a press conference, Kumar said that from June 20 to June 29, training of booth-level officers (BLOs) and printing of enumeration forms and other papers will be underway as the in-house activity for the SIR.

Around 25,000 personnel, including 13,000 BLOs, will take part in the mega exercise. No documents will be required to be attached to the enumeration forms, Kumar said. Stressing that the aim of the SIR was to ensure that no eligible voter is left behind and no ineligible person is a voter, Kumar said that only those under the ASDDF category -- absent, shifted, dead, duplicate or foreigners -- will be removed from the voters' list.

There are checks and balances at every step of the verification process, and political parties will be involved through booth-level agents (BLAs). All the information will be shared through the website of the CEO's office, he said.

Awareness activities will be carried out,

and special camps will be set up to help voters submit their enumeration forms, Kumar said.

As a pre-revision exercise, mapping of the electors of the year 2002 is underway, Kumar said. Mapping of 62.44 lakh voters has been done (42.5 per cent) out of the total 1.45 crore voters as on May 26, 2026, said Delhi CEO.

The voters will be provided two copies of the enumeration forms, one of which will be filled out and returned to the BLOs. The voters will also have the facility to submit completed enumeration forms online.

The BLOs will visit households thrice. If any house is locked and nobody is to be found, they will leave behind an enumeration form there. If any voter fails to submit his/her enumeration form, the BLO concerned will make an enquiry from local voters and report him/her as absent, shifted, or dead, as the case may be. The exercise will cover all voters aged 18 years and above by the qualifying date of October 1.

During SIR, over 13,000 BLOs will conduct house-to-house enumeration. Every existing voter will be provided an enumeration form (in duplicate) to be filled out by them and return one copy to the BLOs, the CEO's office said. (PTI)

## Technology must be used for improving trust between citizens, institutions: Jitendra Singh

**NEW DELHI, May 27:** Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Wednesday told a group of civil servants that technology must be used not merely for efficiency but also for improving trust between citizens and institutions.

Interacting with trainee officers of the 2024 batch of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) here, he said modern governance no longer functions through rigid hierarchies and one-way communication.

Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel, encouraged the officers to remain open-minded learners throughout their careers, saying the ability to adapt, unlearn and evolve is now more valuable than static knowledge.

He said the nature of administration has changed significantly in the last decade with greater emphasis on transparency, responsiveness and citizen participation.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's philosophy of "maximum governance, minimum government," the minister said technology must be used not merely for efficiency but also for improving trust between citizens and institutions.

Singh said future administrators would be expected to combine technological competence with empathy, sensitivity and ethical public conduct.

During the interaction, the minister also exchanged views with the trainee officers on district administration, governance challenges, leadership responsibilities and changing public expectations from civil servants.

He encouraged them to maintain neu-



trality, remain accessible to citizens and focus on meaningful public outcomes rather than visibility.

Describing India@2047 as a national mission rather than merely a milestone, Singh said the officers of this generation would become the principal drivers of India's rise in the coming decades.

He urged them to approach public service with humility, discipline and a larger sense of national purpose.

Referring to nearly 41 per cent representation of women officers in the 2024 batch of IAS, marking one of the highest-ever gender participation in the history of the service, Singh said the changing character of India's civil services mirrors the transformation taking place across the country, where access to opportunity is expanding beyond traditional social and regional boundaries and young Indians are shaping a new governance culture driven by aspiration, technology and accountability.

The minister said the high representa-

tion of women officers "reflects wider social change underway in India".

He said the growing presence of women across competitive examinations, higher education and professional spaces demonstrates how opportunity and access are becoming increasingly democratised, according to a statement issued by the personnel ministry.

The interaction formed part of the assistant secretary programme, under which 184 IAS officers of the 2024 batch have been attached with 49 ministries and departments of the Government of India for an eight-week period from May 4 to June 25, 2026, to gain first-hand exposure to policy making, coordination mechanisms and administrative functioning at the Centre.

Singh said the Assistant Secretary programme, introduced under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, has fundamentally changed the early administrative exposure available to young IAS officers.

Recalling the evolution of the initiative over the last decade, he said the programme has helped create a generation of officers that is more confident, policy-oriented and institutionally connected from the very beginning of service.

Singh also spoke about the changing regional profile of civil services selections, noting that states which earlier had limited representation are now producing large numbers of successful candidates, while several traditionally dominant regions are witnessing a shift in career preferences towards emerging sectors and global opportunities. (PTI)

## Govt health spending triples to ₹ 3.85 lakh crore in 2022-23: National Health Accounts

**NEW DELHI, May 27:** Government expenditure on healthcare has nearly tripled over the last decade to ₹ 3.85 lakh crore in 2022-23, while out-of-pocket spending by households on treatment has declined significantly, according to the National Health Accounts (NHA) estimates released by the Union Health Ministry on Wednesday.

The report showed that government health expenditure increased from ₹ 1.30 lakh crore in 2013-14 to ₹ 3.85 lakh crore in 2022-23, stating higher public investment in the health sector.

The share of government health spending in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose from 1.15 per cent in 2013-14 to 1.43 per cent in 2022-

23. According to the new GDP series with base year 2022-23, the figure stands at 1.48 per cent. The ministry said the increase in public spending has contributed to a substantial decline in out-of-pocket expenditure incurred by households on healthcare.

According to the report, out-of-pocket expenditure as a share of total health expenditure fell from 64.2 per cent in 2013-14 to 43.4 per cent in 2022-23, indicating reduced financial burden on people seeking treatment.

The report also highlighted that the share of government health expenditure in total health expenditure increased from 28.6 per cent in 2013-14 to 43.7 per cent in 2022-23.

"In per capita terms, Government Health Expenditure increased nearly 2.7 times from ₹ 1,042 in 2013-14 to ₹ 2,786 in 2022-23," the ministry said in a statement.

The NHA estimates noted that government spending on healthcare saw a major rise during the COVID-19 pandemic period, with health expenditure reaching 1.84 per cent of GDP in 2021-22 due to emergency response measures, implementation of Emergency COVID Response Packages (ECRP-I and II) and the nationwide vaccination programme.

During the pandemic period, out-of-pocket expenditure as a share of total health expenditure declined further to 39.4 per cent, the report said. (PTI)

No. TDB/15" FC/106/2024-25/105

Date-27/05/2026

**INVITATION FOR BIDS**  
The Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Development Block, Dist-Tamulpur, BTC, Assam invites bid affixing non-refundable Court fee Stamp of Rs.8.25(Rupees Eight and Twenty-Five Paise) only from the approved and eligible contractor Class I (A, B, C), Class II or Class III category registered with Assam PWD (R&B)/Im'gation Deptt. for the following work under P&RD Deptt. under 15" FC during 2025-26. Tender Box will be available for dropping tender in the Office of the Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Development Block from 28/05/2026 up to 2.00 PM on 18/06/2026 (if any holidays or Bandh falls then the subsequent day) and the tender box will be opened at the same day on 3.00 PM in same office.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Tender value(In Lakh)	Time of Completion	Tender Cost & Earnest Money & Date of Tender
1.	Const. of CC Block Road from Kumanikata Senior Secondary School to Bahbai village road	15.00	180 days from the date of issue of final work order.	1.Tender cost @ 0.03% of A/A amount to be pledged by Bank draft in favour of Principal Secretary, BTC. 2.Earnest money @2% (Increase of ST/SC 1%) of estimated value to be pledged by demand draft/FDR in favour of B.D.O Tamulpur Development Block 3.Bidders are specifically requested to inspect the field and study the working condition before submitting their offer/bid.
2.	Const of Community toilet at Greesh Bazar	11.00		
3.	Const. of CC Block road from Fagn Swargiary house to Tumes Brahma House	10.00		
4.	Conl. of Community Toilet at Greesh Bazar	11.00		
5.	Const. of Open Auditorium hall for community activities at Patkijuli Mission Hospital	17.00		
6.	Const. of Community toilet at Lathibari Pakribari Chowk near Darrangajuli	11.00		
7.	Const. of CC Block road from Kumanikata Senior Secondary School to Bahbai village	15.00		

Details NIT may be seen at Office of the B.D.O Tamulpur Development Block, Tamulpur, Dist- Tamulpur.

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/370

Sd/-Block Development Officer  
Tamulpur Development Block, Tamulpur

## Commercial slaughter of Mithuns banned in Arunachal's Itanagar

**ITANAGAR, May 27:** The administration of the Itanagar Capital Region banned the commercial slaughter of Mithuns on Wednesday and warned of a penalty if the order was violated. Itanagar Capital Region's Deputy Commissioner Toko Babu issued the ban order citing the Agricultural Produce Marketing (Regulation) Act, 1989, and the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

Babu, who is also the chairperson of the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC), said a fine of ₹ 20,000 will be levied for any illegal slaughter. The APMC vice-chairperson has been appointed as the head of a team tasked with monitoring illegal Mithun slaughter.

The deputy commissioner also directed the superintendents of police of Itanagar and Naharlagun to deploy personnel as and when required by APMC members.

In a separate order, the Itanagar Municipal Corporation (IMC) has ordered the immediate removal of meat, fruit, and vegetable stalls operating along the National Highway NH-415 stretch within the city, stating that they caused traffic congestion and posed a risk to public health. Shopkeepers and vendors have been directed to remove their structures within 10 days. (PTI)

## 'Aama Didi Bahini Bus Sewa' launched at Ridge Park President Murmu flags off exclusive bus service for women in Gangtok



**GANGTOK, May 27:** President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday flagged off buses exclusively for women in Gangtok.

The 'Pink City Runner - Aama Didi Bahini Bus Sewa' was launched at Ridge Park in the presence of Governor Om Prakash Mathur and Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang.

Officials said the service is unique as it is operated entirely by women, creating a secure and empowering environment for women commuters across the state.

The Pink City Runner buses will operate between Ranipool and the Secretariat in Gangtok at a fare of ₹ 25, covering a distance

of nearly 12 km, they said.

The buses are equipped with CCTV surveillance systems, mobile charging points and air-conditioning facilities to ensure a safe and comfortable travel experience, they added.

"It is a moment of immense pride for us to witness the launch of the Pink City Runner -- Aama Didi Bahini Bus Sewa, our government's unique initiative inaugurated by the Hon'ble President of India, Droupadi Murmu Ji," Tamang said in a social media post.

The chief minister said the initiative marks an important step towards ensuring safe, affordable and convenient transportation exclusively for women commuters.

He said the project reflects the state government's commitment to women's empowerment and encouraging greater participation of women in education, employment and social activities.

"Such progressive initiatives not only promote gender equality but also strengthen and modernise public transportation services in the country," he said. (PTI)

## Tripura CM meets BJP chief in Delhi, discusses organisational issues



**AGARTALA, May 27:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday met BJP president Nitin Nabin at the party headquarters in New Delhi.

Saha said in a social media post that the meeting discussed various organisational issues and the latest developments in Tripura.

The chief minister, who has been in the national capital since Tuesday, said the party remains committed to strengthening its organisational base and delivering for the people of the state.

On Tuesday, Saha met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and congratulated him on completing 12 years in office.

According to a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), Saha discussed several key infrastructure and development proposals during the meeting with the prime minister.

Among them were the establishment of an AIIMS in Tripura, the extension of the national highway from Kamalpur to Shantirbazar, the development of the dairy sector, the expansion of double-line railway connectivity and the introduction of Vande Bharat trains in the state.

The discussions also covered tourism development, allocation of additional houses under the PM Awas Yojana, increasing the number of Eklavya Model Residential Schools, additional AAY ration cards for Bru families, and higher outlay for natural gas infrastructure, the statement said. (PTI)

## More households back SUMP's PFR in two Arunachal districts

**ITANAGAR, May 27:** More

households have submitted consent papers and signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) in favour of the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project's (SUMP) pre-feasibility report (PFR) survey initiative, an official said on Wednesday.

In Upper Siang district, 12 households from Ramsing village on Wednesday submitted their consent papers supporting the MoU signed by the pro-PFR group on March 15, this year, at Yingkiang.

Tuesday.

The MoU signing process was overseen by Siang deputy commissioner Tayi Taggu in the presence of district administration officials.

Earlier, 36 households from the village had already signed the agreement. With the latest addition, the total number of households supporting the MoU in Begging village has risen to 54.

Officials said the increasing participation reflected continued dialogue and engagement among stakeholders regarding the proposed project.

The district

administration, led by DC Taggu, has been facilitating consultations and discussions to ensure community participation in the developmental initiative.

The SUMP is expected to play a transformative role in improving the socio-economic

conditions of the local population in the state.

Besides generating substantial hydroelectric power and strengthening the region's infrastructure, the project is likely to create large-scale employment opportunities for local youth during both the construction and operational phases, officials said.

The project may also contribute to rural development by enhancing livelihood opportunities, increasing income generation and promoting overall economic growth in remote areas.

However, experts and local stakeholders have also emphasised the need for balanced development, proper rehabilitation measures and environmental safeguards to ensure that the benefits of the project sustainably reach the indigenous communities while preserving their cultural and ecological heritage. (PTI)

The list of consenting households was submitted by Dunge Apang to Upper Siang deputy commissioner Talo Jerang at his office chamber in the presence of administrative officers, heads of departments and members of the pro-PFR families.

With the latest submission, 31 out of 60 households from Ramsing village have now extended their consent in support of the PFR-related activities and the proposed SUMP.

The deputy Commissioner appreciated the increasing participation and cooperation of local stakeholders and said such collective support would help bring positive developmental changes to the district.

Meanwhile, in Siang district, 18 more households from Begging village signed the MoU for the project's PFR at the deputy commissioner's office in Bolong on

## Arunachal gov calls upon youths to eliminate regional barriers, strengthen national unity

**ITANAGAR, May 27:** Arunachal Pradesh Governor K T Parnaik on Wednesday urged the youths to connect with people from different parts of the country, preserve traditional values and work towards eliminating regional barriers through greater interaction and mutual respect.

Participating in the Yuva Sangam programme under the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' initiative at Lok Bhavan here, the governor said such exchanges help strengthen national integration and deepen the spirit of "oneness" among people, an official statement said.

Interacting with students from Uttar Pradesh and the North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology (NERIST) here, Parnaik encouraged young people to actively participate in programmes promoting cultural understanding, emotional bonding and shared national pride.

He said curiosity and inquisitiveness are essential for learning, innovation and personal growth.

NERIST is the nodal institution



for Arunachal Pradesh for Yuva Sangam Phase VI and has been paired with the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Lucknow.

Parnaik also called upon the youth to preserve indigenous knowledge, languages and cultural practices while contributing towards environmental protection and sustainable living.

Stressing the role of young people in nation-building, he advised them to remain educated, disciplined and self-motivated.

Addressing the visiting students from Uttar Pradesh, Parnaik high-

lighted Arunachal Pradesh's rich history, vibrant culture and development journey.

He spoke about the state's potential in hydropower, horticulture, tourism and organic farming, while also referring to the geographical and infrastructural challenges faced by the frontier state.

The governor said Arunachal Pradesh continues to make steady progress with the support of the Centre and the determination of its people.

He highlighted the state's civilisational and cultural heritage, re-

ferring to Parashuram Kund as an important spiritual destination linked to Indian mythology and faith. He also mentioned the historical and archaeological significance of Bhismaknagar and Malinithan, saying these sites reflect Arunachal Pradesh's deep cultural links with the rest of the country.

Parnaik urged the visiting students to carry back fond memories of Arunachal Pradesh's culture, traditions and natural beauty, along with the warmth and hospitality of its people.

He expressed hope that their visit would strengthen friendship and improve understanding about the Northeast and its people.

The governor said the people of the Northeast are equally patriotic and committed to the nation's unity, security and development, and therefore deserve equal respect, opportunities and understanding in every sphere.

The programme also featured a vibrant cultural exchange showcasing the spirit of unity in diversity. (PTI)

## Four militants arrested in Manipur, arms recovered

**IMPHAL, May 27:** Four militants belonging to proscribed outfits have been arrested while arms and explosives were seized during separate operations in different districts of Manipur, police said on Wednesday.

In a statement, police said that one militant was apprehended from the Kakwa Lilando Lampak area in Imphal West district on Monday.

Also, a self-styled captain of militant outfit Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) was arrested from his residence at Kiyamegu in Imphal East district the same day, they said.

Two active cadres of the PLA and NRFM were arrested from Mayai Keithel in Thoubal district on Sunday, according to the statement.

On Tuesday, security forces destroyed three illegal bunkers in Ukhrul district and recovered 5 kg of IED and two locally made pompi guns, a police official said.

In another operation in the forest area of Hengkot village in Churachandpur district, six rifles, magazines and IEDs were seized, the official added. (PTI)

## Mizoram tourism department's staff association defends Lalrodingi's reappointment as director

**AIZAWL, May 27:** The Mizoram Tourism Service Association, representing officers and staffers of the tourism department, on Wednesday backed the state government's decision to engage retired official R Lalrodingi as the director of the department.

Mizoram's influential student organisation, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), has accused Chief Minister Lalduhoma of blatant favouritism over the re-engagement of Lalrodingi as the tourism director following her superannuation.

In a statement, the association expressed deep regret over an agitation by a student organisation blocking officers and staff from entering the Directorate of Tourism, halting official work.

It said the state government decided to appoint Lalrodingi as the director of the tourism department as it understood the difficulties the department faced, and welcomed the order.

The association clarified that Lalrodingi's appointment would neither block promotions of joint directors and other officers nor affect job prospects for the educated youth.

"The director's post can't be filled through direct recruitment. Instead, it is a promotional post filled sequentially only after a joint director completes the required qualifying service," the statement said, adding that only candidates with Tourism and Hospitality specialisation are eligible for feeder posts within the department.

Lalrodingi, who retired as the additional director in the Commerce and Industries department on April 30, was re-employed by the government, giving dual charges as tourism director as well as OSD to the Chief Minister with effect from May 1 through an order issued on April 24.

However, on May 15, the government cancelled the order and de-

cidated that she would continue only as OSD to the chief minister after the MZP met Chief Minister Lalduhoma and urged him to rescind her re-engagement as tourism director on May 13.

The government changed its decision again on May 22 and ordered that Lalrodingi would take the additional charge as the director of tourism with immediate effect.

The Mizoram Tourism Service Association clarified that Lalrodingi's assignment was not a promotion, as the posts of additional director in the Commerce and Industries department and tourism director carry the same pay level.

It noted that Lalrodingi had been handling the dual responsibilities of OSD to the chief minister and tourism director since February 9, 2024.

The present arrangement, it said, is merely a continuation of a stop-gap arrangement due to the absence of eligible officers to occupy the director's post. (PTI)

## Five arrested for assaulting youth in Aizawl

**AIZAWL, May 27:** Five people, including two minors, have been arrested in connection with a violent gang assault on a teenager, a police officer said on Wednesday.

The incident occurred in the early hours of Tuesday near the Grand Hotel in Aizawl's Chanmari area when a group of five teenagers assaulted a 19-year-old youth following an altercation, he said.

The victim was returning home, the officer said. While three of the accused have been remanded for judicial custody, the other two minors were placed under the care of the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), he said.

The victim admitted to the hospital was reportedly out of danger. Meanwhile, sounding the alarm over deteriorating public safety, the central committee of Young Mizo Association (CYMA), voiced grave concerns regarding the recent surge in nighttime gang brawls and street disturbances across the state capital Aizawl involving youths.

In a statement on Wednesday, the state's largest and most influential civil society organisation said that Aizawl "is becoming increasingly unsafe after dark" and urged families and YMA branches across the city to play an active role in maintaining peace and security within their respective localities and help curb incidents of street violence and disorder.

The CYMA has also called upon state government and law enforcement agencies to deploy maximum effort and resources to ensure public safety and curb the escalating lawlessness in the state capital.

It further urged citizens and eyewitnesses to immediately report any instances of street violence or public disruption to the police helpline (112) or local community leaders to enable swift action. (PTI)

## Manipur gov to extend cooperation to high-level panel on demographic change: CM



**IMPHAL, May 27:** Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Wednesday called the formation of a high-level commit-

tee to assess demographic change a historic move and said his government would extend full cooperation to the panel.

Singh lauded the Centre for its decision to constitute the panel to study demographic change in the country due to "illegal immigration and other unnatural causes". "The government of Manipur will extend full cooperation to the high-level committee," the CM said in a statement.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi's declaration of a high-powered demography mission on August 15, 2025, followed by the Union Cabinet's approval on September 11, represents a historic and long-awaited intervention for the people of Manipur and other border states," he said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said the committee would be chaired by retired Supreme Court judge Justice Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar and would also include the census commissioner, along with retired IAS officer Durga Shankar Mishra, ex-IPS officer Balaji Srivastava and Dr Shamika Ravai as members. Singh also appreciated Shah's statement that infiltration and other reasons are causing "unnatural" demographic change, which poses a significant challenge to the present and future of any nation.

Singh said that the people of Manipur are deeply grateful to Modi and Shah for their unwavering commitment to securing India's borders and checking demographic imbalance. (PTI)

## Manipur Cong on abduction of people by armed groups

**IMPHAL, May 27:** The Manipur Congress on Wednesday alleged the BJP-led governments at the Centre and the state have been "silent spectators" when several people were abducted by armed groups and many are still being held hostage.

Interacting with reporters on the sidelines of an event to mark the 62nd death anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru, state Congress president Okram Ibobi Singh alleged that "there is no rule of law in this tiny state".

"What immediate steps have been taken by the state and the central governments when the civilians were abducted? We strongly condemn it and demand that those held hostage be rescued immediately," he said. The three-term former chief minister also asked, "Why are both the state and Centre being silent spectators? Is there any hidden agenda?" (PTI)

## Nagaland committee inspects environmental management at Pfuersero

**DIMAPUR, May 27:** A six-member Committee on Environment and Climate Change of Nagaland Legislative Assembly conducted an official site visit at Pfuersero under Phek district on Tuesday to inspect and review matters relating to environmental management, developmental activities and civic administration, an official statement said on Wednesday.

As part of the visit, the committee, led by its chairman and MLA Achumbemo Kikon, inspected the Pfuersero Town Council dumping site to assess the existing waste management system and the environmental challenges associated with solid waste disposal in the area.

During the inspection, discussions were held on the need for scientific waste management practices, proper sanitation measures, and sustainable environmental protection initiatives to ensure a cleaner and healthier environment for the public.

The committee also visited the Mountain Radar System site at Glory Peak, where members were briefed on the installation and related infrastructural and environmental considerations.

It also interacted with representatives of the Chakhesang Public Organisation, Chakhesang Mothers' Association and Pfuersero Town Mothers' Association.

## Sikkim CM congratulates people on completion of 7 years of SKM gov

**GANGTOK, May 27:** Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Wednesday congratulated the people of the Himalayan state for their trust, support and cooperation on the completion of seven years of the SKM government.

In a Facebook post, the CM also thanked all government employees, party functionaries and workers, business communities, social organisations, youths, farmers and women, who stood with the party and its leadership throughout the journey.

"Despite various challenges and difficult times, including natural calamities and other adversities, the collective strength, unity, and resilience of our people enabled us to move forward with determination and commitment towards the welfare and progress of the state," he said.

Tamang said he is committed to working tirelessly for the development of the state.

The CM said, "As we complete seven years of dedicated service, I reaffirm our government's commitment to continue working tirelessly for the peace, prosperity, inclusive development, and bright future of Sikkim. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart." (PTI)

# India hope to regain rhythm in series against England ahead of T20 WC



**CHELMSFORD (UK), May 27:** India will look to regain consistency and finalise their combination in the final dress rehearsal for next month's women's T20 World Cup when they take on hosts England in a three-match series starting here on Thursday.

With the global event set to begin on June 12, the tour assumes added significance for Harmanpreet Kaur's side, which has shown flashes of brilliance over the past year but has struggled to maintain momentum consistently.

India's preparations for the T20 World Cup have been a mixed bag. They began strongly with a commanding 5-0 clean sweep over Sri Lanka at home last December before scripting history in Australia by clinching a 2-1 T20I series victory, their first bilateral series win there in a decade.

The triumph in Australia was seen as a major step forward for a

side that has often struggled overseas, especially in pressure situations. The batters' aggressive approach and the bowlers' discipline offered encouraging signs in the lead-up to the World Cup.

However, the momentum dropped during the subsequent South Africa tour where India endured a disappointing 1-4 defeat in conditions that exposed several concerns ahead of the marquee tournament.

The batting lacked consistency, the middle order struggled to finish games, and the bowling attack failed to deliver regularly in crunch moments as India looked out of rhythm for most of the series.

The England series thus gives India the opportunity to work on these aspects before their opening T20 World Cup match against Pakistan on June 14.

Renuka Singh Thakur, Kranti Goud and Arundhati Reddy are ex-

pected to share the pace-bowling responsibilities, while the team management could also look at giving rookie Nandini Sharma some game time after the youngster impressed with her fast-bowling skills in the Women's Premier League.

With India's pacers struggling in South Africa and conditions in England expected to assist seam bowling, the visitors' pace attack will need to be far more disciplined and alert from the outset.

There are positives, though, with Radha Yadav and Yastika Bhatia returning to the squad after missing the South Africa series.

Bhatia, India's first-choice wicketkeeper, had been sidelined due to an ACL injury, while Radha's return adds valuable experience to the spin department that also features Deepti Sharma, Shree Charani and Shreyanka Patil.

India will also draw confidence

from their tour of England last year when they secured their first-ever bilateral T20I series victory on English soil with a 3-2 triumph over the hosts.

Harmanpreet said adjusting to the pitches will be the challenge for the Indian team and not the conditions.

"We love playing in England conditions because of the weather, it is quite easy for us. The only challenge is the pitches because we are not used to these kind of pitches but this series will give us little bit of confidence and experience before the T20 World Cup," Harmanpreet told reporters on the eve of the series opener.

England, on the other hand, head into the series after a dominant showing against New Zealand but will miss regular skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt, who is continuing her recovery from a calf injury.

The hosts, however, have been boosted by the return of star batter Danni Wyatt-Hodge following the birth of her first child.

England wicketkeeper-batter Amy Jones said her side is expecting a lot of spin threat from India.

"(Playing against) India, you'd probably expect a lot more spin and they have got some brilliant spinners and a lot of firepower with the bat as well so that is what we are planning for," Jones told the media.

**Teams:**  
**India:** Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Bharti Fulmali, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (WK), Sree Charani, Yastika Bhatia (WK), Nandini Sharma, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Thakur, Kranti Gaud, Shreyanka Patil, Radha Yadav.  
**England:** Em Arlott, Tammy Beaumont, Lauren Bell, Alice Capsey, Charlie Dean (C), Sophia Dunkley, Sophie Ecclestone, Lauren Filer, Amy Jones, Nat Sciver-Brunt, Paige Scholfield, Linsey Smith, Danni Wyatt-Hodge, Issy Wong.  
 Match starts 11pm IST. (PTI)

## MoS Sports Raksha Khadse undertakes district review in East Garo Hills



**SHILLONG, May 27:** Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Raksha Khadse inspected sports facilities and infrastructure development during a review visit to Williamnagar in Meghalaya's East Garo Hills district on Wednesday.

Conceived by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER), the Poorvotar Sampark Setu initiative is aimed at strengthening Centre-State coordination and deepen developmental outreach in the North Eastern Region.

It facilitates periodic visits of Union Ministers to assess implementation of government programmes, review local priorities on the ground, and engage closely with district administrations and communities.

During the visit, Khadse inspected sports facilities in the district and reviewed ongoing efforts to strengthen grassroots sporting infrastructure.

She visited the artificial football turf at RGHSS Playground and assessed facilities aimed at promoting sports participation and nurturing young talent in the region.

She also reviewed progress at the Khelo India Multipurpose Indoor Hall at Tambo A' ding, which is currently under construction.

"The North Eastern Region occupies a central place in the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for inclusive and balanced development. Through initiatives such as Poorvotar Sampark Setu,

we are ensuring closer engagement with local communities and district administrations to better understand regional priorities."

Khadse was quoted as saying in a statement by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

"I am encouraged to see the progress being made in strengthening sports infrastructure, promoting sustainable livelihoods through fisheries and animal husbandry, and preserving the rich handicraft traditions of East Garo Hills.

"The Government remains committed to ensuring that development reaches the grassroots and creates meaningful opportunities for youth and local communities," she added.

Khadse also reviewed initiatives related to fisheries and animal husbandry, emphasising the importance of sustainable livelihood generation and rural economic development in the region.

The Minister also visited facilities showcasing local handicraft materials and traditional products and highlighted the need to promote indigenous craftsmanship and strengthen market linkages to support local artisans and self-help groups.

Khadse was accompanied by Deputy Commissioner of East Garo Hills, R. P. Marak, IAS, and Superintendent of Police, Pawar Swapnil Vasantrao, IPS, along with senior district officials, who briefed her on ongoing developmental initiatives and district priorities. (PTI)

## End of an era: Veteran sports administrator Randhir Singh dies

**NEW DELHI, May 27:** Veteran sports administrator and India's first shooting gold-medallist in Asian Games, Randhir Singh, died here on Wednesday after battling age-related ailments, marking the end of an era in the country's sporting landscape on which he left a lasting impact in varied roles.

Singh was 79 and had undergone hospitalisation for several days before breathing his last at his residence here. He is survived by his wife Vinita and three daughters -- Mahima, Sunaina and Rajeshwari, who is also a shooter.

Singh recently quit his position as the President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) due to health issues, ending his run of over four decades as a sports administrator.

He was elected to the OCA top position for a four-year term in 2024, having already served the body as Secretary General from 1991 to 2015. Singh's last rites will be conducted in Haridwar on Thursday afternoon.

"With deep sorrow, we share the sad news of the passing of Raja Randhir Singh, who left for his heavenly abode today, on 27th May 2026," Secretary of the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), Rajiv Bhatia, stated.

"A distinguished Olympian, Arjuna Awardee, and one of the most respected sports administrators in India, Asia, and the International Olympic Committee, Raja Randhir Singh, made invaluable contributions to the development of shooting sports and the Olympic movement.

"The National Rifle Association of India and the entire shooting fraternity mourn this irreparable loss and extend heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones. May his noble soul rest in eternal peace," he added.

Singh's death triggered an outpouring of condolence messages as administrators current and former, along with top athletes issued emotional tributes, lauding his role in Indian sports.

Singh's stellar sporting career included five Olympic appearances and the historic trap gold in the 1978 Bangkok Asian Games that earned him the Arjuna Award in 1979. (PTI)

## Prannoy stuns Christie in Singapore Open

**SINGAPORE, May 27:** Star Indian shuttler HS Prannoy notched a stunning three-game win over fifth seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia to advance to the men's singles second round at the Singapore Open Super 750 badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

The 33-year-old Indian, a 2023 World Championships and Asian Games bronze medallist, produced a composed performance to prevail 10-21 21-12 21-18 over the world No. 5 Indonesian in just over an hour.

It was his first win over Christie in five years, having last defeated him at the 2021 Indonesia Open.

Prannoy, who played epic roles in India's 2022 Thomas Cup triumph and the recent bronze medal win in Denmark, will face Singapore's former world champion Loh Kean Yew next.

The Indian mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto also progressed to the second round after beating Malaysia's Wong Tien Ci and Lim Chiew Sien 21-14, 20-22, 21-13 in their opening match. (PTI)

## RCB's collective firepower makes them a 'complete team', says Bobat



**DHARAMSALA, May 27:** Royal Challengers Bengaluru director of cricket Mo Bobat credited the franchise's "collective contributions" and fearless identity after the defending champions thrashed Gujarat Titans in Qualifier 1 to storm into a second successive IPL final.

RCB, who piled up a massive 254 for five before bundling out GT for 162, were powered by skipper Rajat Patidar's blistering unbeaten 93 off 33 balls and an all-round bowling effort on Tuesday.

Bobat said the biggest takeaway from RCB's dominant run over the last two seasons was the number of players stepping up consistently in pressure situations.

"I'm especially pleased that we've got a

number of people contributing to wins. We're not too dependent on one or two players with the bat or one or two with the ball. We've got a number of people contributing and that's the really pleasing thing," Bobat said after the 92-run win.

"If everybody contributes and fulfils their roles, then results should take care of themselves. That's probably the most encouraging thing to come out of today's game, as well as the fact that obviously you're into the final," he added.

Bobat reserved special praise for captain Patidar, whose explosive innings dismantled the Titans attack after RCB lost a couple of early wickets.

"He's certainly batting brilliantly right now and that was a really special knock today. I'm sure he'll be really pleased about being able to stand up in a big qualifier and a big game," he said.

"I think any team that's got the captain playing well, it fills them with even greater confidence. He's leading by example."

Calling Patidar a calm leader, Bobat said the skipper's game awareness and ability to absorb pressure has stood out this season.

"One of the things he's done well this year is he's picked his moments really well. A game like today, he took his time to get in after we lost a couple of wickets, built a little partnership and then went through the gears again," he said. (PTI)

## IOC president Kirsty Coventry says sports cut from 2032 Brisbane Games could return in future



**LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND), May 27:** Sports and medal events cut from the 2032 Brisbane Olympics program will have a path to return at future Summer Games, IOC president Kirsty Coventry told sports leaders on Wednesday.

Coventry's reassurance to the annual meeting of Summer Games sports bodies came after she warned in February of "uncomfortable" talks ahead to make future Olympic hosting more efficient.

The International Olympic Committee

aims to finalize within months the list of sports on the Brisbane program that Coventry previously told their leaders will be fewer than the 36 being played at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"There is a path (back), it's not just an end," the IOC president told The Associated Press on Wednesday on the sidelines of the assembly of the summer sports group known as ASOIF.

Brisbane also could have fewer than the 353 medal events being competed for at Los Angeles.

"I know that not everyone will be happy," Coventry acknowledged to ASOIF members Wednesday, adding "the goal is not to destroy any sport."

Coventry also met Tuesday with ASOIF members and assured them "we don't have specific numbers" as targets for the sports and events program for Brisbane.

The most important metric shapes to be the number of venues needed as the IOC looks to manage costs for hosts.

"The cost and complexity comes when you start adding additional venues for sin-


gle purpose events," Coventry told the AP. "That's where we need to look and say: How could we change that?"

A major step toward streamlining the program for Brisbane and beyond is a June 24 meeting of the full IOC membership in Lausanne that should agree a process for evaluating sports and events.

A list of sports at Brisbane could be confirmed in September, with a longer timeline to confirm the detailed program of medal events.

Sports at risk? Modern pentathlon has long been seen as vulnerable to losing its historic Olympic status, while sports added to the LA program — including flag football, lacrosse and squash — will be competing for their place in Brisbane before having their showcase in 2028.

The 2036 Olympics hosting contest was paused by Coventry last year in the first big decision of her new presidency. Qatar is widely seen as a strong contender for a project likely to be spread in the Middle East region, which has been targeted during the conflict between the United States and Israel against Iran. (AP)



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