

6 NATION

- Mockery of environmental impact assessment process in Great Nicobar project: Ramesh
- AAP protests over ED action against Sanjeev Arora

7 WORLD

- India signs 8 MoUs with Trinidad and Tobago during Jaishankar's visit
- Press freedom alarm as Niger suspends 9 French media outlets over 'national security'

NDA set for third straight term in Assam Himanta 2.0 govt to take charge tomorrow

GUWAHATI, May 10: Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Sunday invited Chief Minister-elect Himanta Biswa Sarma to form the next government, paving the way for the NDA's third consecutive term in Assam.

After being unanimously elected leader of the BJP-led NDA's legislature party, Sarma, along with alliance leaders, met the governor at Lok Bhavan and formally staked claim to form the government.

"The Governor has invited Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma to form the new government in Assam," a statement from Lok Bhavan said.

Acharya will administer the oath of office and secrecy to Sarma and members of the new Council of Ministers on May 12.

The swearing-in ceremony will be held at the Veterinary College Playground in Khanapara and is expected to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and BJP president Nitin Nabin, among others.

The NDA, comprising the BJP, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF), secured a sweeping mandate in the



assembly polls, winning 102 seats in the 126-member House. The BJP bagged 82 seats, while AGP and BPF won 10 seats each.

Sarma, who first became chief minister in 2021, is set to become the first non-Congress leader in Assam to serve two consecutive terms as CM. "I have been elected as the BJP's legislative party leader. The NDA parties, BPF and AGP,

also elected me as their leader," he said, while reading out the letter submitted to the governor.

"I have the support of 102 MLAs of the NDA. I have the signature of all of them," he added.

AGP chief Atul Bora and BPF leader Rihon Daimari also submitted letters of support to the governor. This will be the NDA's third consecutive term in the state since

the BJP-led alliance first came to power in 2016 under then CM Sarbananda Sonowal.

Union minister JP Nadda and Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini, who were appointed the BJP's central observer and co-observer, accompanied Sarma and other alliance leaders to Lok Bhavan.

Speaking to reporters, Nadda said the election result reflected

public endorsement of PM Modi's development policies. He also praised the Sarma government for implementing central welfare schemes effectively in Assam.

"In the next five years, the PM will introduce various schemes, which will be implemented in Assam by Himanta Biswa Sarma. We will have a government which is proactive, responsive, accountable and report card-driven," he added.

Earlier in the day, Sarma was elected the leader of the BJP legislature party, in the presence of Nadda and Saini.

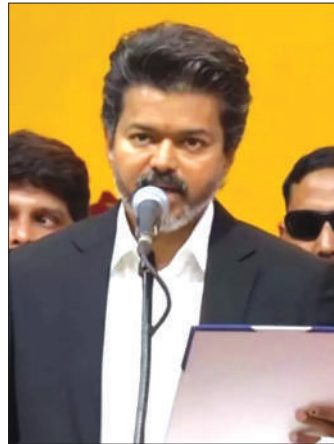
Eight party MLAs, including Ranjeet Kumar Dass, Ajanta Neog, Ashok Singhal and Pijush Hazarika, proposed Sarma's name as their leader, which was unanimously accepted.

Addressing the meeting, Sarma thanked the people for the mandate and said the new government would work with greater vigour for the welfare and development of all sections of society.

"This is a proud moment for the BJP-led NDA after the historic mandate, which was a support of our previous government's good work and the commitment of PM Modi for Assam's development," he said. (PTI)

Vijay begins new innings as TN CM

'A new era of real, secular, social justice' pledged



CHENNAI, May 10: Cheered and heralded by sea of delirious supporters, C Joseph Vijay took oath as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on Sunday with a pledge that "a new era of real, secular, social justice starts now."

The ascent of Vijay to the top job marks a significant realignment and a historic political shift in the state after his TVK emerged as the single largest party in the recent Assembly elections, shattering the decades-long dominance of the

DMK and AIADMK in the state. "Bussy" N Anand, Aadhav Arjuna and K A Sengottaiyan were also administered the oath of office of minister by Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here. The swearing-in ceremony was attended by senior leaders, including Congress' Rahul Gandhi and family and friends of Vijay.

Others who took the oath as ministers in Vijay's cabinet included K G Arunraj, P Venkataramanan, C T R Nirmal Kumar, A Rajmohan, Keerthana and K T Prabhu. "It is a fresh, new beginning. A new era of real, secular, social justice starts..." Vijay paused, looked down, pointed at his wrist watch and added with a dramatic flourish: "Now!" This statement was greeted with thunderous applause, cheers and whistles.

Ahead of his speech, he also signed three orders --200 units of free electricity, a task force for women's safety and a task force to tackle the drug menace. Asserting that he was not from any royal lineage, Vijay, in an emotive speech in chaste (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Arunachal CM hails Himanta's leadership

ITANAGAR, May 10: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Sunday congratulated his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma on being unanimously elected as the leader of the BJP-led NDA in the state, expressing confidence that Assam would witness greater progress under his continued leadership.

Sarma was elected as the leader of the BJP-led NDA in the Assam Assembly earlier in the day, paving the way for him to become the CM for a second term.

In a social media post, Khandu stated that Assam under Sarma's leadership has emerged as "a strong engine of growth and development in (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Three extortionists held in Dibrugarh

DIBRUGARH, May 10: Three youths were arrested for allegedly extorting money in the name of ULFA(I) from Dibrugarh district of Assam, police said on Sunday.

Acting on information regarding extortion calls and SMS received by a doctor, Dibrugarh Police immediately launched an operation led by DSP (HQ) Nayan Moni Barua, a senior officer said. "During the investigation, police identified three accused involved in the extortion attempt. The trio sent extortion SMS messages to the victim and also delivered an extortion letter in the name of ULFA(I), demanding ₹ 60 lakh," he added.

Preliminary probe revealed that the accused were allegedly involved in similar extortion demands targeting multiple victims across Upper Assam, particularly in Dibrugarh (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Arunachal Dy CM hails Subansiri hydropower milestone Project achieves 1,000 MW mark

ITANAGAR, May 10: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Sunday congratulated NHPC on the successful commissioning of unit 4 of the Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project, stating that the achievement marks a major step towards strengthening India's clean, sustainable and self-reliant energy future.

With the commissioning of the 250 MW fourth unit, the total operational capacity of the ambitious project has now reached 1,000 MW, marking another significant milestone in one of India's largest hydropower ventures.

Mein, who also holds the power and hydropower portfolio, lauded the efforts of engineers, technical experts, workers and all stakeholders associated with the project for their dedication and perseverance. "Congratulations to NHPC on the successful commissioning of unit 4 (250 MW) of the Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project, rais-



ing the project's total operational capacity to 1,000 MW," Mein said in a social media post.

Describing the development as a landmark achievement in the country's renewable energy sector, the deputy chief minister said the project symbolises India's growing commitment towards environmentally sustainable and self-reliant power generation.

"This achievement marks an-

other significant step in India's pursuit of clean, sustainable and self-reliant energy generation," he said.

Mein further extended his appreciation to every individual involved in the execution of the mega hydropower project.

"I extend my sincere appreciation to the engineers, technical teams, workers, officials and every stakeholder (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Strength of democracy lies in institutional balance: Shah

Union Home Minister launches two books authored by Tushar Mehta

NEW DELHI, May 10: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the strength of democracy lies not in conflict but in institutional balance and mutual respect.

Speaking at the launch of two books authored by Tushar Mehta -- "The Bench, the Bar and the Bizarre" and "The Lawful and the Awful" -- Shah said the author is not only the solicitor general of India and a knowledgeable lawyer, but also his friend.

He said the Constitution and the judiciary have made significant contributions in deepening the roots of India's democracy.

"Since 1947, changes brought by Parliament and the assemblies have been accepted without shedding a drop of blood, which shows how deeply rooted democracy is in our country.

Courts and the Constitution have a big role to play in achieving this," the home minister said. He said people across the country have faith that in case of any injustice, the Constitution is there to protect them.

"If there is an assault on rights, the doors of justice are open, and if anywhere the voice of a weak person is suppressed, the courts will surely hear those voices," he said.

Shah said the faith of the common man, the functioning of the society and the proof of a nation's character lie in a strong justice system, in maintaining trust, in which "we as a society have, by and large, succeeded".

Whatever the loopholes may be, the executive and the judiciary have to plug those through a concrete, time-bound roadmap, he said.

"The beauty of our democracy is that the Constitution has created institutions not for confrontation but to balance one another. The executive takes decisions and the judiciary conducts its judicial review. Our Constitution-makers wrote the Constitution with a spirit of maintaining dialogue, decorum and balance in a very fine manner," the home minister said.

He said in 76 years, hardly any other country has advanced while preserving such values.

"It is a matter of great joy for all of us that here, by and large, all constitutional proprieties have remained intact and we have carried those forward through traditions as well.

"The strength of democracy comes not from confrontation, but from institutional balance and mutual respect. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Nagaon robbery victim succumbs to injuries

Six suspects arrested

NAGAON, May 10: A woman who was critically injured in an armed dacoity at her residence in Assam's Nagaon district last month succumbed to her injuries on Sunday, while six suspected robbers have been arrested in the case so far, police said.

The victim, Ruprekha Bhuyan Saikia, had been undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Guwahati in a critical condition since the incident on April 24.

She died in the early hours on Sunday, family sources said. The body was taken to her Nagaon residence after post-mortem examination. A gang of eight robbers had carried out the dacoity at the residence of a local doctor, Ranjit Saikia, in Nagaon town's Morikolung area. The robbers had attacked Saikia and his wife with sharp weapons and looted cash and jewellery. The doctor was also injured

in the incident, though their nine-year-old son was unharmed by the dacoits. Talking to reporters here, Nagaon senior superintendent of police (SSP) Partha Pratim Das said six persons have been arrested in the case, with police on the lookout for two more. He said some of the accused, who were recruited by the local mastermind to carry out the dacoity, are from other districts. "They looted about ₹ 1.5 lakh in cash, some jewellery and other valuables. We have so far recovered ₹ 45,000 cash," Das said.

One blood-stained iron rod was recovered from the bedroom of Saikia's house, and two 'daos' (machete) with blood stains were found in a nearby dump site during investigation, the SSP said. A special investigation team of Nagaon police, led by the additional superintendent of police (crime), is conducting the probe. (PTI)

Three rhino poachers with arms arrested

TEZPUR, May 10: Three suspected poachers were apprehended from Assam's Lakhimpur district on Sunday, officials said.

The accused were allegedly planning to poach rhinos in the Kaziranga National Park (KNP), they said.

KNP director Sonali Ghosh said the arrests were made from Narayanpur, in a joint operation by forest officials of the Eastern Range, Gamiri, and the Crime Investigation Range of the Biswanath Wildlife Division of the park, based on intelligence inputs.

"The operation was conducted in connection with a wildlife offence case registered in March. The accused were planning rhino poaching in the sixth addition area of the national park," she said.

During the operation, forest teams also recovered parts of a country-made firearm, including a rifle bolt and butt without a magazine, from Ukhal Chuk in Majuli district. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Punjab minister Sanjeev Arora sent to 7-day ED custody

GURUGRAM, May 10: A special PMLA court in Gurugram on Sunday remanded Punjab Industries Minister Sanjeev Arora in Enforcement Directorate's custody for a week in an alleged ₹ 100-crore GST fraud-linked money laundering case, observing that the allegations against him are "very serious" and the agency needs to question him to unravel the money trail.

The lawyer for Arora, a senior leader of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab, alleged that a

"false and frivolous" case was "cooked up" against the minister and that "no prima facie evidence" was collected by the investigating officer before his arrest. Arora, 62, was taken into custody by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday evening at his official residence in Chandigarh by the following raids by the agency against him.

The central agency also searched the premises of a Gurugram-based company named Hampton (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Body recovered from abandoned M'laya coal mine

SHILLONG, May 10: An unidentified body was recovered from an abandoned coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and police, officials said on Sunday.

According to police, information regarding the body was received from the headman of Moolait Bri Sumer village on Friday after the corpse was spotted inside a water-filled abandoned coal mine.

Following the information, police conducted a spot inquiry and found the body drowned inside the abandoned mine.

However, the body could not be retrieved on Saturday due to the depth of the mine, East Jaintia Hills Superintendent of Police Pankaj Rasgania said. "A team of police and SDRF reached the site today and retrieved the body at around 11 am," the SP told PTI. He said the identity of the de-



The directive has been circulated to stakeholders as well as CDSCO's zonal Drug regulator asks firms to file safety reports from actual launch date of new drugs

NEW DELHI, May 10: India's drug regulator has directed manufacturers and importers to submit Periodic Safety Update Reports (PSURs) for new drugs from the date of actual marketing of the product rather than from the date of regulatory approval, in a move aimed at strengthening post-marketing safety surveillance.

In an advisory issued by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) on April 21, the regulator said it has observed instances where companies obtained approval for a new drug but launched the product in the market much later while submitting PSUR data from the approval date instead of the launch date.

The CDSCO said such a practice results in the loss of "valuable safety insights" that are critical for monitoring adverse effects and ensuring patient safety after commercial roll out of medicines.

Under the Fifth Schedule of the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019, manufacturers and importers are required to submit PSURs as part of post-marketing drug safety monitoring.

"In view of the above, all manufacturers/importers are hereby directed to ensure strict compliance," the advisory stated.

According to the regulator, PSUR submission timelines will now commence from the date of actual marketing of the new drug



"even if approval was granted earlier".

The advisory by the Drugs

Controller General of India (DCGI) also said that ordinarily all dosage forms, formulations

and indications for a new drug should be covered in a single PSUR to avoid duplicate submissions.

However, separate presentation of safety data for different dosage forms, indications or patient populations should be included within the same report, it added.

The directive has been circulated to stakeholders as well as CDSCO's zonal and sub-zonal offices. PSURs are critical documents used by regulators worldwide to assess the risk-benefit profile of medicines after they enter the market and help identify adverse drug reactions that may not have emerged during clinical trials. (PTI)

Cost of insulating India from global energy shock

₹1,600-1,700 cr a day, ₹1 lakh cr in 10 weeks

NEW DELHI, May 10: About ₹1,600-1,700 crore per day, over ₹1 lakh crore in 10 weeks. That's the cost that state-owned oil firms incur for insulating Indian consumers from the global energy shock but ever-widening losses are now raising questions on how long they can continue bearing the cost without financially capitulating.

Since the war broke out in the Middle East 10 weeks ago, state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) have ensured uninterrupted supplies of petrol, diesel and cooking gas LPG at rates that are way below cost, unlike many global energy systems that imposed rationing or passed through steep price increases.

This has resulted in the three OMCs - Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) - running record high under-recoveries (the difference between cost and retail selling price), two sources with direct knowledge of the matter said.

The combined under-recovery on petrol, diesel and cooking gas LPG is ₹1,600 crore to ₹1,700 crore daily, they said, adding total under-recovery for the 10 weeks is now well over ₹1 lakh crore.

Despite a 50 per cent surge in input crude oil prices, petrol and diesel continue to be priced at a two-year-old rate of ₹94.77 a litre



and ₹87.67 per litre respectively. Domestic cooking gas LPG prices were raised in March by ₹60 per cylinder, but they are still way lower than the actual cost.

The revenues that OMCs earn from selling fuel are the only source that is used by them to buy crude oil (raw material), build infrastructure to process it into fuel and lay a network to take the product to consumers.

For 10 weeks, the OMCs have managed to insulate the Indian market but now the cost is visible, sources said adding they may have to borrow more to meet the working capital requirement (buying of crude oil).

"If elevated crude prices persist for an extended period, OMCs

may require higher working capital borrowings and calibrated re-prioritisation of some capex timelines," a source said. "However, strategic investments in refining expansion, energy security infrastructure, ethanol blending, biofuels, and transition fuels continue to remain national priorities and are expected to proceed with Government support.

Another source said the OMCs are operating under significant financial pressure. "Financially strong OMCs are critical for India's energy security, supply continuity, infrastructure expansion, and economic stability. Sustained stress on OMC balance sheets could affect future investments in refining, pipelines, strate-

gic reserves, clean fuels, and energy transition initiatives."

To raise petrol and diesel prices is now a political call that the government will have to take, a separate source said. "There is no doubt that a fuel price hike has become inevitable, but the timing and quantum of increase have to be decided by the government."

While countries from Japan to the United Kingdom have raised petrol and diesel prices by up to 30 per cent since the start of the West Asia conflict, fuel prices in India continue at two-year-old levels.

This despite the war disrupting India's import of 40 per cent of crude oil (raw material for making petrol and diesel), 90 per cent cooking gas LPG and 65 per cent natural gas (used to generate electricity, make fertiliser, turned into CNG and piped to household kitchens for cooking).

While the three OMCs have worked overtime to keep the supply lines running even when demand spiked due to panic buying, the government intervention included excise duty reductions to absorb part of the fuel cost burden. The special additional excise duty on petrol was cut to ₹3 per litre from ₹13, while excise duty on diesel was reduced to zero from ₹10 per litre.

The government has taken a hit of ₹14,000 crore a month in cutting the excise duty, sources said. (PTI)

IG Saxena approves 500 kWp solar plant at Leh ice hockey rink



LEH/JAMMU, May 10: Ladakh Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday approved the installation of a 500 kWp on-grid solar photovoltaic (SPV) plant atop the Ice hockey rink in Leh, with the Union territory set to achieve a unique fusion of renewable energy generation and modern sporting infrastructure.

Saxena said that the project will strengthen Ladakh's green energy goals and support the development of world-class winter sports infrastructure.

The project, to be developed under the Special Development Package (SDP) of the Youth Services and Sports Department with an estimated cost of ₹2.38 crore, aims to promote renewable energy and sustainable sports infrastructure in the Union Territory, officials said.

Officials said the rooftop solar plant will help reduce electricity costs and carbon emissions while supporting Ladakh's goal of becoming a carbon-neutral region.

Calling the project an important step towards integrating clean energy with modern sports infrastructure, Saxena said the initiative reflects the administration's commitment to environmental sustainability and the development of world-class sports facilities for the youth of Ladakh.

The NDS Ice Hockey Rink in Leh has hosted the Khelo India Winter Games for three consecutive years and has emerged as a key venue for national-level winter sporting events. (PTI)

Need of hour is to use petro products with restraint: PM Modi

HYDERABAD, May 10: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that the need of the hour, in the wake of the West Asia crisis, is to use petro products with restraint.

Speaking at an event here where he virtually laid the foundation stone and inaugurated development projects worth around ₹9,400 crore in Telangana, Modi said that the imported petro products should be used only as per need, as it will not only save foreign exchange but also reduce the adverse impact of war.

Observing that, over the past few years, India has reached a spot among the top countries in the world in terms of solar power, he said, unprecedented work has been done in ethanol blending in petrol.

First, the government is focused on 100 per cent LPG coverage, and now, it is focused on the supply of piped gas economically. The government is also promoting a CNG-based system.

Due to all these efforts, India is dealing with the major energy crisis in the world, he said.

"But, today, the need of the hour is also to use petrol, gas, diesel and such things with great restraint. We have to use imported petro products only as per need. This will not only save foreign exchange but reduce the adverse impact of war," he said.

Referring to CM Revanth Reddy's comments that there should not be politics in development endeavour, Modi said he would also not talk politics.

Assuring Centre's support to Telangana, he asked Reddy to join him in the development journey.

"I would tell Revanth ji, I am ready to give you as much as the Centre gave to Gujarat during 10 years rule. But, as per my information, I will tell you, The moment I do that, what you are getting would become half. You will not be able to reach where you want to reach. That's why, it is better you join with me," he said.

Noting that it is not wrong to have different party governments in a democracy, he stressed that the development of states is as important as the country's development.



Country's development is not possible without the development of states, he stressed, calling for collective efforts to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat 2047.

He also said the country is implementing reforms at speed, and is also building modern infrastructure. He said he would like to assure every family in Telangana that the Centre will continue to work "with greater speed to realise your dreams".

Modi said, over the last 11 years, the National Highway network in Telangana has doubled. Taking a job at the previous

UPA government, he said, before 2014, the railway budget used to be less than ₹1,000 crore for undivided Andhra Pradesh. However, the railway budget today only for Telangana is ₹5,500 crore, he said.

"Are you listening to Revanth ji? During the undivided AP, the railway budget was less than ₹1,000 crore. I am not talking about undivided AP today, Telangana's railway budget alone is ₹5,500 crore," he said.

About ₹50,000 crore worth of railway projects are going on in Telangana, he said.

Earlier, in his address, CM Revanth Reddy said the Centre should support the state's development initiatives, including expansion of metro rail network, Future City project and Musi rejuvenation.

He sought two hours from Modi to review the development proposals of Telangana.

The state government has announced the Telangana Rising 2047 vision in line with the Centre's Viksit Bharat 2047 goal, he said.

The Telangana government aims to make the state a USD three trillion economy by 2047, Reddy said.

During the event, Modi virtually laid the foundation stone and inaugurated development projects worth around ₹9,400 crore in Telangana at the HICC here.

Telangana Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Union Ministers G Kishan Reddy, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, and several other leaders attended the event at the Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC).

Modi laid the foundation for projects, including the four-lane of National Highway-167 from Gudebellur to Mahabubnagar on the Hyderabad-Panaji Economic Corridor and Zaheerabad Industrial Area in Sangareddy district.

He inaugurated various sections of Kazipet-Vijayawada multi-tracking project of railways, Greenfield POL (Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants) Terminal in Hyderabad, Kazipet Rail Under Rail Bypass and PM MITRA Park at Warangal (Kakatiya Mega Textile Park).

Developed at an estimated cost of around ₹1,700 crore, the Kakatiya Mega Textile Park is India's first fully functional PM MITRA Park and operationalises the Centre's 5F vision - Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign. (PTI)

PM Modi inaugurates India's first PM MITRA Park at Warangal in Telangana

NEW DELHI, May 10: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's first functional PM MITRA Park in Warangal, Telangana on Sunday, developed at a cost of ₹1,695.54 crore.

The Park is poised to become a key driver of India's textile growth story, with over ₹6,000 crore in expected investment and significant progress already underway, with 62 per cent of the park already allotted, the Textile Ministry said in a release.

Spread across 1,327 acres, the park is set to generate large-scale opportunities across the textile

value chain, with over 24,400 jobs expected to be generated and thousands of jobs already created.

Under the PM MITRA Scheme, the government has approved seven sites for setting up of PM MITRA Parks, one each in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

The PM MITRA Parks are envisaged as modern, large-scale and integrated parks covering the entire value chain. The PM MITRA operationalises the Government of India's 5F vision - Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign.

Inaugurating the project, the Prime Minister said that the PM Mitra Park in Warangal will accelerate the textile revolution in the country, creating large scale employment opportunities especially for the women.

The park offers excellent multimodal connectivity to major railway networks and seaports, ensuring seamless logistics for global trade, the ministry said. Designed as a world-class industrial ecosystem, the park is equipped with modern infrastructure, including an extensive internal road network, a dedicated power

substation and an assured water supply.

Industries being set up in the park will not only have access to world-class infrastructure facilities for the textile sector (benchmarked against textile mega parks globally) but also receive Competitive Incentive Support (CIS) under the PM MITRA scheme.

A fund of ₹300 crore has been allocated to each park to make them more attractive to investors. Units in the PM MITRA parks are also eligible for benefits in convergence with other Government of India schemes. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Vijay begins new innings

Tamil, said people "welcomed and accepted" him, and he will never deceive them with false promises. Accusing the previous DMK regime of "burdening" the state with Rs 10 lakh crore debt, Vijay asked people to give him time to perform and meet their expectations. He also made it clear that there was only one power centre and that was him.

He also thanked leaders from parties that supported him, including "brother" Rahul Gandhi and Left leaders, before he concluded his speech with a round of selfies he took with those who shared the dais with him and the crowd. His Cabinet is a mix of young and experienced, with the 51-year-old actor-turned-politician's core team finding a place in his maiden ministry. The oath-taking ceremony, reflecting the atmosphere across the city of hard-won victory and high expectations, symbolised the arrival of a new political era, centred around Vijay's mass appeal, youth outreach and anti-establishment approach.

Although TVK on its own did not secure the majority in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly, Vijay managed to get support from the Congress, VCK, CPI, CPI (M) and IUML to gather 120 MLAs and cross the 118 majority mark to form the government, an act that is seen as a demonstration of his political adaptability beyond his image of a popular actor.

It would be tempting to frame the sound defeat of DMK and its arch-rival AIADMK as the end of Dravidian politics in Tamil Nadu, but that is not so. TVK also draws inspiration from old Dravidian leaders and has sold itself as a protector of Tamil pride. The opening of the swearing-in ceremony included a Tamil nationalist song after Vande Mataram and the National Anthem.

Vijay's emergence in one of the most influential states in the South is expected to reshape opposition politics at the national level and alter alliance calculations ahead of the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

The Congress, which severed its ties with the DMK to extend support to TVK, has announced that its ties with Vijay's party were for all future elections. This is the first time Congress has been part of any government in Tamil Nadu in six decades.

Politically, given its dependence on ideologically diverse allies-- from Congress to Left parties-- Vijay's coalition government has immediate structural challenges, raising questions about long-term stability.

Speaking to PTI Videos after the swearing-in, Minister Aadhav Arjuna described the election result as a "victory for the people", specifically crediting the youth and women of Tamil Nadu.

Arjuna emphasised that the new administration would be anchored in transparency, secularism, and social justice. "Our leader and all ministers will provide a transparent government. We will work for all minority brothers and sisters and prioritise development," he stated. (PTI)

Arunachal CM hails Himanta's

the Northeast", and asserted that the state's advancement would significantly contribute to the prosperity and economic progress of the entire region, including Arunachal Pradesh.

"Heartiest congratulations to Dr Himanta Biswa Ji on being elected as the leader of the BJP and NDA Legislature Party. Under your visionary leadership, Assam has emerged as a strong engine of growth and development in the Northeast," Khandu said in a post on X. The chief minister further expressed confidence that with the continued guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Assam would achieve "even greater progress in the years ahead". "The advancement of Assam will not only strengthen the state itself but will also greatly contribute to the development, connectivity, economic growth, and prosperity of Arunachal Pradesh and the entire Northeast region," Khandu said, while wishing Sarma a "successful, impactful, and glorious tenure in service of the people and the nation".

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also extended his congratulations to Sarma, describing his leadership as instrumental in bringing "unprecedented growth across sectors" in Assam.

In a social media post, Mein said Assam under Sarma has set "new benchmarks of development, good governance, and public welfare in the Northeast". "May your new tenure bring continued success, transformative achievements, and greater service to the people of Assam and the Northeast," Mein said.

The NDA will form its third successive government in Assam after first coming to power in 2016 under the leadership of former chief minister and current Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal. The BJP's alliance partners, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), also supported his nomination, leading to his unanimous election as the NDA leader. (PTI)

Project achieves 1,000 MW mark

associated with this landmark project for their unwavering commitment, hard work and resilience in overcoming challenges and steadily advancing towards full commissioning," he said.

The project, being developed by NHPC on the Subansiri River along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border, is India's largest hydroelectric project with an installed capacity of 2,000 MW comprising eight units of 250 MW each. NHPC declared the commercial operation of unit 4 effective from May 8, taking the project's operational capacity to 1,000 MW with four units now commissioned.

The mega hydropower project is considered crucial for strengthening energy security in the Northeast and enhancing the country's renewable energy capacity. Once fully operational, the project is expected to significantly boost power availability across the region while contributing to India's clean energy targets, officials said. The project, which witnessed years of delay due to environmental and social concerns before construction resumed in 2019, has in recent months achieved several engineering milestones, including the installation of India's heaviest hydro rotor for unit 5 earlier this year. (PTI)

Three rhino poachers with

she added. The three accused are residents of Majuli, Lakhimpur and Biswanath districts. Ghosh said that in the earlier wildlife offence case, forest officials had recovered a .303 rifle along with 13 rounds of ammunition from the Gopaljarani area near Kaziranga.

Forest authorities suspect the involvement of a larger poaching network. (PTI)

Three extortionists held

and Sivasagar districts. "All three accused are currently in the custody of Moran Police Station for further interrogation and necessary legal action," the official said. (PTI)

Strength of democracy lies

And when I speak of mutual respect, our Constitution has accepted this spirit in many places, which all of us have also seen," Shah said. The spirit should be taken further ahead, strengthening and advancing the good practice of maintaining a balance between the executive and the judiciary that has developed over 76 years, and everyone should work together for this, he asserted. (PTI)

Punjab minister Sanjeev Arora

Sky Realty Ltd (HSRL), in which Arora was a director and shareholder. In a statement on Saturday, the company denied any wrongdoing. It said it has faith in the legal process and is fully cooperating with all statutory authorities and will continue to do so.

Arora was brought by agency officials to Gurugram from Chandigarh by road overnight and was produced in the Sessions-cum-special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court of Judge Narender Sura.

The ED has alleged that its case was against HSRL, linked entities and Arora, who was the "beneficial owner and controller" of the company along with his family members.

The company, during the 2023-24 financial year, sold mobile phones worth ₹157.12 crore to several local and overseas entities, and, as the CMD of the company, Arora was responsible for the conduct of the business of the company, which undertook alleged illicit transactions, the ED told the court.

It alleged that the company, in connivance with its directors, employees and linked persons, used "a network of shell entities" to generate "fake" purchase invoices and used them to show "bogus" sales and exports.

The agency claimed the minister was the "key person" involved in the offence of money laundering by bogus billing, fraud, forgery and payment to shell entities.

"Since the allegations against the accused are very serious and the ED is seeking to decode the money trail, role of the accused, vis-a-vis his persons/aides, who facilitated the offence of money laundering, so as to get to know as to how the accused persons were successful in generating proceeds of crime, in opinion of the court, a valid ground exists for the applicant for custodial interrogation of the accused," Judge Sura said in his order.

The order said the ED "has a good and sufficient reason" to claim the custody of Arora for interrogation and it will be "just and proper" that he is remanded to the agency's custody for 7 days. The agency had sought his remand for ten days.

"The ED is duty-bound to trace the money, reveal the modus operandi adopted by the accused for generating proceeds of crime and its circulation from one source to another.

"In my considered opinion, the above mentioned goal can be achieved only when the opportunity is given to the applicant (ED) to interrogate the accused in custody," it said.

The court observed that the money laundering case stems from a Gurugram Police FIR, filed on April 14, on the basis of information provided by the ED which it found after conducting searches against him in April under the FEMA.

"It has been alleged by the applicant (ED) during the course of investigation of the above mentioned FIR and the present ECIR (ED's FIR) that Sanjeev Arora was the Chairman and managing director of HSRL, and during that, on the basis of forged and fabricated documents, export of mobile phones were shown and GST refunds were received on the basis of bogus purchases and the amount was transferred to multiple shell and intermediate entities," the court said.

Arora's lawyer told the court that there was "no material on record" and it was not demonstrated by the ED as to how his client was having any concern with the alleged offence.

The ED told the court that Arora "committed" the offence of money laundering in connivance with others, by generating ₹102.5 crore worth proceeds of crime, by way of purported export and bogus purchases, by way of forging the documents and receiving GST refunds on exports made, which he is not entitled to, and, thereby causing loss to the government exchequer and corresponding wrongful gains to himself. It informed the court that it has recorded the statement of a "daily wage labourer" who is shown to be the proprietor of a company which supplied mobile phones to HSRL.

The said company and some others like it merely provided "accommodation entry" (illicit funds) to HSRL, the ED claimed.

The minister's lawyer later told reporters that this was a "politically motivated" case.

The HSRL said in the statement issued on Saturday that every export of phones made by it was verified at multiple statutory stages by independent authorities outside the company's control, as it denied any wrongdoing.

It added that where the GST authorities raised concerns regarding input tax credit, the corresponding amount was already deposited by the company, and it is being contested before the GST appellate authority. (PTI)

DC Ananda Kumar Das reviews slaughter house operationalisation plan in Tezpur

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, May 10: A meeting regarding the operationalisation of the newly constructed slaughter house at Barika Chuburi, Tezpur was held on Friday at the Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office, Sonitpur under the chairmanship of District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das.

The meeting was attended by District Development Commissioner Sanjeev Kumar Sharma, Chairperson of Tezpur Municipal Board Ramen Tamuli, Vice Chairperson of Tezpur Municipal Board Sangita Ghose Bose, ward commissioners of Tezpur Municipal Board, Executive Officer of Tezpur Municipal Board, officials from the District Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department, representatives of civil society organisations, butchers of the Tezpur Municipal area and other stakeholders.

During the meeting, Panjal Borthakur of Assam Hill Fresh delivered a detailed pres-

entation by Assam Livestock And Poultry Corporation (ALPCo) Ltd, highlighting the importance of scientifically managed slaughter houses and hygienically processed meat for ensuring public health, food safety and animal welfare. He elaborated on the need for ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection of animals by qualified veterinary doctors and stressed compliance with prescribed food safety and municipal regulations. He also requested cooperation from the district administration, stating that veterinary doctors would be deputed by the concerned department for regular inspection and certification processes.

The presentation further highlighted how a modern slaughter house facility would help ensure clean and safe meat supply, scientific waste management, reduction of contamination and better regulation of meat trade practices. The new facility has been designed with provisions for hygienic

slaughtering, meat inspection, chilling, storage and proper disposal systems in accordance with prescribed standards. It was informed during the meeting that the slaughter house is tentatively scheduled to become operational from June 1, 2026.

Addressing the meeting, the District Commissioner urged all butchers of the Tezpur Municipal area to avail the government facility and strictly abide by the prescribed directions and guidelines in the interest of public health and supply of quality, scientifically slaughtered meat to consumers. He further directed the Executive Officer of Tezpur Municipal Board to closely monitor any violations of government and municipal directives related to slaughtering and meat sale practices.

The meeting concluded with detailed discussions and suggestions from stakeholders regarding the smooth implementation and operation of the facility.

Bodo Sahitya Sabha raises concern over textbook delay

BSS urges govt to ensure timely distribution of books to Bodo-medium schools

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, May 10: The Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS), an apex literary body of the Bodo community has expressed serious concern over the recurring delay in supplying textbooks to students in Bodo-medium schools across the state.

Addressing reporters at a press conference held in Kokrajhar on Sunday, BSS president Gopinath Borgoyary said the concerned department and the Assam government should take immediate measures to address the issue and ensure timely distribution of books in future academic sessions.

He stated that students from Bodo-medium backgrounds face a shortage of textbooks every year due to the negligence of the concerned authorities in the state. He said that although the academic



session began as per the yearly academic calendar, students have still not received textbooks.

He appealed to the state government to adopt concrete steps to resolve the problem permanently, stating that the delay is adversely affecting students studying in Bodo-medium schools.

Borgoyary also expressed concern over the declining enrolment

in vernacular-medium schools and appealed to guardians and parents to encourage children to enroll in mother tongue-based educational institutions.

He urged the Government of Assam and the Education Department to resolve the delay in the distribution of textbooks for Bodo-medium schools across the state at the earliest.

NFR revises timings of over 80 train services



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 10: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has undertaken a major revision of train timings for several additional Mail/Express, Passenger, DMU and long-distance trains across its network with effect from April 30, 2026.

The revised timings have been introduced for over 80 train services as part of ongoing efforts to improve punctuality, streamline train operations and provide greater convenience to passengers travelling

across Assam, other Northeastern states, adjoining regions and beyond. The changes cover a large number of important trains operating to and from the NFR zone.

Among the prominent trains for which timings have been revised are the 12087/12088 Naharlagun-Guwahati Shatabdi Express, 20501/20502 Anand Vihar-Agartala Tejas Rajdhani Express, 12423/12424 Dibrugarh-New Delhi Rajdhani Express, 15641/15642 Silchar-New Tinsukia Express, 15669/15670 Guwahati-Dibrugarh

Express and 15675/15676 Guwahati-NIP Intercity Express.

Revised timings have also been implemented at important stations including Guwahati, Kamakhya, Lumding, New Haflong, Badarpur, Dibrugarh, New Tinsukia, Rangiya, Silchar and Agartala.

Several Passenger and DMU services in Assam and Tripura have also been rescheduled to ensure better connectivity and smoother train movement across different sections of the zone.

The revised schedules are expected to reduce operational delays, improve sectional running time management and ensure better punctuality for passengers travelling on both short- and long-distance services. The changes are also aimed at maintaining improved connectivity at major junctions and terminals while enhancing the overall efficiency of train operations under Northeast Frontier Railway.

Passengers have been advised to verify the revised timings before commencing their journey through NTES, PRS enquiry systems or the nearest railway stations.

ICAI Guwahati Branch holds seminar on audit quality

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 10: The Guwahati Branch of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (EIRC), under the aegis of the Centre for Audit Quality Committee, successfully organised a focused CPE seminar on "Improving Audit Quality using Tools and Checklist & Financial Statements of Non-Corporate Entities" on May 8 at ICAI Bhawan.

In the first session on "Financial Statement Formats for NCEs & Practical Presentation Aspects", Branch Chairman CA Anjali Kumar Mundhra welcomed the delegates and highlighted the importance of the topics. The technical session was delivered by CA Sandip Dey from Kolkata. The session was initiated by Branch Secretary CA Piyush Birmwal, followed by a vote of thanks by CA Victor Saha.

The second session on "Enhancing Audit Quality Using Tools and Checklists" was addressed by CA Vishal Doshi. The session was initiated by CA Jayprakash Gupta, while the vote of thanks was delivered by CPE Chairman CA Vikash Choudhary.

Woman injured in Morikolong dacoity dies; 3 more arrested

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, May 10: Dr Ranjit Saikia's wife, Ruprekha Bhuyan Saikia, who had sustained grievous injuries in a brutal attack by a gang of dacoits at their residence on April 24, finally succumbed to her injuries last night while undergoing treatment at a Guwahati-based private hospital.

In the fatal attack carried out by the gang, both Dr Ranjit Saikia and his wife were grievously injured and were immediately shifted to Guwahati right after the incident. While Dr Saikia somehow managed to recover, his wife, Ruprekha Bhuyan Saikia went into a coma and had been undergoing advanced treatment at the private hospital in Guwahati.

Meanwhile, in a major breakthrough in the sensational Morikolong dacoity case, Nagaon police arrested three more persons allegedly involved in the crime.

Addressing a press conference at Nagaon Police Station on Sunday, Nagaon Senior Superintendent of Police Partha Pratim Das said that the arrests were made following an operation conducted in Lakhimpur and Dharmaji districts.

The three arrested dacoits have been identified as Rajibur Rahman, Rezzak Ali and Nur Hussain Ali. With this, the total number of arrests in the case has risen to six. Earlier, police had arrested Umar Ali, Mintu Hussain and Nazrul Islam in connection with the same case.

Based on confessions made by the accused, police recovered two machetes used in the dacoity from an abandoned site in the Morikolong area. Police also seized a Boloro vehicle bearing registration number AR01M 4013, which was allegedly used in the crime. The owner of the vehicle has been summoned for questioning.

Further, during the investigation, police recovered photographs of fake gold ornaments looted from Ranjit Saikia's residence from the mobile phones of the accused.

To ensure a thorough probe, SSP Das has constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) under the leadership of an Additional Superintendent of Police to investigate the dacoity case. The investigation is ongoing.

Aelita Art & Craft School announces annual exam results

HT Correspondent
GUWAHATI, May 10: The annual examination results and prize distribution ceremony of Aelita Art & Craft School was held on Saturday at Nandi Mikir Primary School, Chachal, Guwahati.

Aelita Art & Craft School is registered under the Government of Assam and is part of the MSME scheme of the Government of India. The institution has earned recognition from the India Book of Records, Asia Book of Records and Solan Book of World Records.

The event began with young student



Shivangi Bora performing Zubeen Garg's song 'Mayabini'. Distinguished guests included Dr Budhin Saikia, retired Deputy Superintendent of Gauhati Medical College; Dr Akshay Jyoti Sharma, Head of the Political Science Department at Kabirgur Rabindranath Tagore Vishwavidyalaya; social activist Dipankar Kalita; Abani Sarma, Head Teacher of Nandi Mikir Primary School; and Santosh Das, Staff Reporter of Dainik Purvodi.

In their addresses, the guests lauded the school's contribution to art and sculpture education over the past three

years and encouraged the students. The dignitaries also presented awards to the prize winners.

Student Mayurdeep Talukdar's guitar rendition of Zubeen Garg's 'Ejak Boroxone Muk Dhui Thoi Gog' captivated the audience.

In Rainbow Class, Dipti Dutta secured first position, Firoz Ali second position and Dibija Sarma third position. In Chitrangada Class, Adrika Sinha secured first position, Karanjit Deka second position and Devasmita Devi third position. In Ankan-Achar Class, Anisha Baishya secured first position, Hansaraj Mahanta second position and Karnav Kaushal Sarma third position.

In the first year category, Harshik Nath secured first position, Ukshit Barman second position and Janardan Debnath third position. In the second year category, Kapil Ray secured first position, Anjumoni Barman second position and Mayurdip Talukdar third position.

First, second and third place holders from each class were awarded prizes and certificates. Three students from each class also received encouragement awards. Special prizes were given to students with 100 per cent attendance.

The ceremony was conducted by Dhananjay Talukdar, president of the school's Managing Committee. Rector Jonaki Kalita Talukdar delivered the vote of thanks and announced that admissions are now open for the school's programme, which includes 93 specialised subjects in art and sculpture. The event came to an end with the state song.

Hajagafar Rising Youth felicitate Dimasa students in West Karbi Anglong



HT Bureau
KHERONI, May 10: In a commendable move to foster education and community growth, the Hajagafar Rising Youth organised a grand felicitation ceremony on Saturday in Hajagafar, West Karbi Anglong. The event aimed to honour the academic excellence of students from the Dimasa community and provide them with a roadmap for their future careers.

A wave of celebration swept through Hajagafar as the Hajagafar Rising Youth organisation hosted the felicitation programme. The event saw the participation of over 150 students belonging to the Dimasa community, hailing from nearly 30 villages across the greater Hajagafar and Lanka regions.

Tagore birth anniversary observed at Gossaigaon school

HT Correspondent
GOSSAIGAON, May 10: The 165th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore was celebrated with a colourful programme at Shastri Vidyapith Higher Secondary School in Gossaigaon town of Kokrajhar district on Saturday.

The programme began with floral tributes to the portrait of Tagore by the headmaster of the institution, Shankar Debnath, while teacher Debashish De lit the ceremonial lamp.

Speaking on the occasion, headmaster Shankar Debnath highlighted the multifaceted personality of Tagore, stating that he was not only a literary figure but also a poet, dramatist, essayist and philosopher. He further said that Tagore was a true patriot whose contribution to the field of education remains unparalleled.

Teacher Debashish De in his address, spoke on the ideals and philosophy of Tagore and encouraged students to learn more about his life and works. Another teacher, Dilip Kumar Nath, also delivered a speech highlighting various aspects of Tagore's life and achievements.

Durba Ghosh receives Brahmaputra Valley Journalism Award

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, May 10: PTI Guwahati Bureau Chief Durba Ghosh was conferred the Brahmaputra Valley Journalism Award by the Assam State Journalists Union (ASJU) during its 12th Foundation Day celebration at Charaideo on Saturday.

The award carries a citation, mementoes and a cash prize.

Born and brought up in Jharkhand, Durba Ghosh joined the PTI Kolkata office in 1991 and later took charge of the Guwahati bureau, where she has written extensively on various issues concerning the Northeast. She has also edited the voluminous biography of scholar Rajmohan Nath under a project sponsored by the Asom Sahitya Sabha.

Receiving the award, Ghosh said she was proud to receive the recognition at a World Heritage Site, the centre of Ahom monarchical rule and as someone married into the illustrious Ahom family of Padmanath Gohain Baruah, the first president of the Asom Sahitya Sabha.

Speaking on the challenges faced by journalism, she said jour-

nalists must evolve new strategies to survive and prosper in the digital era, which poses a challenge to mainstream journalism.

The meeting, held at Charaideo Tourist Lodge, was presided over by ASJU president Jitu Sharma Rajkhowa and inaugurated by Prof Manorama Borgohain, Assistant Professor of Gargaon College. She said journalists are like oxygen for a democratic society, without whom it becomes difficult to breathe and live.

Earlier, the ASJU flag was hoisted by Jitu Sharma Rajkhowa, while the smrititarpan ceremony was conducted by Manoj Kumar Borthakur, executive president of ASJU and Alim Ahmed, president of Sonari Press Club. Pradip Deka, secretary of ASJU, spoke on the objectives of the organisation.

On the present crisis in journalism, noted writer Lu Syun Shyam Gohain expressed gratitude to BR Ambedkar for ensuring freedom of speech in the Constitution. He also spoke on the challenges faced by journalists today, including social media, electronic media, artificial intelligence, black money and unhealthy competition.

Rongjali Bwisagu festival celebrated in West Bengal

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, May 10: A noble effort has been initiated by the Bodo people of Shalkumari to preserve their culture, identity, existence and roots with an aim of promoting coexistence.

The vibrant Rongjali Bwisagu festival was celebrated on Sunday with a day-long programme at Shalkumari First Block in Alipurduar district of West Bengal, a place deeply connected to the Bodo community.

The Alongbar Nagar public playground at Shalkumari came alive with Bwisagu songs and dances. The Rongjali Bwisagu event was enthusiastically attended by Khabam Harimu Hanja from Kokrajhar, the local Alongbar Gelong Cultural Association and a large gathering of people.

Sahitya Akademi Award-winning writer Dr Jaishree Boro attended the event as the chief guest. BTC Joint Secretary Kuldeep Basumatary, chief convener of Kokrajhar Bathou Traditional Cultural and Research Centre Mahim Chandra Basumatary and Falakata Polytechnic College lecturer Pranab Narzinary also graced the occasion as invited guests.

Bodo, Adivasi and Koch-Rajbongshi young women performed Bwisagu dances together, spreading a message of communal harmony among different communities.

Around five hundred Bodo families are living in the village. People belonging to Muslim, Nepali, Koch-Rajbongshi and several other communities also reside in the surrounding areas.

Animal Welfare People organises adoption drive and promotes care for rescued animals

HT Bureau
DIBRUGARH, May 10: In a heartwarming initiative marking Mother's Day, the organisation Animal Welfare People organised its 12th adoption camp in Dibrugarh on Sunday, offering abandoned and stray animals a chance to find caring homes.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from animal lovers and local residents many of whom came forward to adopt rescued animals and support the organisation's ongoing welfare activities.

The initiative traces its roots back to 2018, when noted animal lover Vineet Bagaria launched a movement in Dibrugarh dedicated to the protection and care of stray animals. Fondly remembered as the "Dogs Father" by many locals,



Bagaria devoted his life to animal welfare and compassion for voiceless creatures.

Even after his untimely demise, his mission has continued through

a dedicated group of young volunteers who transformed the movement into Animal Welfare People. The organisation remains actively involved in rescuing, treating and

rehabilitating stray and injured animals, while also spreading awareness about kindness towards animals.

As part of the Mother's Day adoption camp, veterinary consultation facilities were arranged for individuals adopting pets. Special provisions for animal food and medicines were also made available to help new caregivers provide proper care to their adopted companions.

Speaking on the occasion, organisation president Gayatri Hazarika said that more than 500 dogs have been vaccinated against rabies under the initiative started by Vineet Bagaria. She added that the organisation regularly carries out treatment and care for sick and abandoned animals across the district.

Hazarika further stated that Vineet Bagaria had shown deep affection for animals since childhood and began helping stray animals independently during his youth. Over time, many like-minded young people joined his efforts, helping the movement grow into a recognised welfare initiative.

The campaign continues to receive support from Vineet Bagaria's father and social worker Kailash Bagaria, along with family members and well-wishers who remain committed to carrying forward his humanitarian vision.

The organisation's continued efforts are widely appreciated as a symbol of compassion, humanity and social responsibility in the community.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The meek shall inherit the Earth, but not its mineral rights. - J. Paul Getty

MP cruise boat tragedy

The tragic incident of 13 persons drowning after a cruise boat carrying tourists capsized while sailing in the reservoir of a dam on River Narmada in Madhya Pradesh offers a microcosm of what is wrong with our system. On the afternoon of April 30, the cruise boat, operated by the MP State Tourism Development Corporation (MPSTDC) — an undertaking of the Madhya Pradesh Government — carrying 43 tourists from different parts of the country capsized in the reservoir of the Bargi Dam on River Narmada following a storm. The boat was named 'Maikal Suta'. While there were 43 passengers on board, only 29 tickets had been officially issued. This may mean that the remaining 14 passengers were accommodated without buying the official ticket — costing Rs 200 per person — and might have well paid a lesser amount that must have been pocketed by the MPSTDC personnel manning the ticket counter. After the tragedy, police officials used CCTV cameras installed at the boarding point to count the number of tourists entering the boat and discovered that their number was much more than the number of tickets sold.

Be that as it may, once water began entering the cruise and the passengers began panicking, the crew on the boat dashed to the lower deck, where safety jackets were stored, neatly packed in polythene bags with bundles stacked one over another. According to safety protocols, each passenger and all members of the crew should have been wearing safety jackets while onboard. But not a single one actually was. The fact that safety jackets were still packed and stored showed that they had never been used. But for this major security lapse, many lives would have been saved. It has now come to light that neither the boat nor the passengers were insured. This meant that when the disaster struck, passengers and families were left without immediate financial protection. Several other states, including Kerala, provides accident insurance coverage bundled with tickets at eco-tourism centres. It also transpires that the cruise was being operated by a government agency without environmental clearance.

Also, the state does not have any Standard Operating Procedures for cruise operations. In other words, a cruise carrying dozens of tourists was operating without any rulebook. And last but not the least, before an investigation into the tragedy, ordered by the state government, could even begin, the cruise was dismantled. This may have destroyed vital clues about the vessel's design, structure, safety mechanisms and possible maintenance failures.

Opposition-less assembly and the responsibility of the people

Assam's political landscape has entered an unprecedented phase following the declaration of the Assam Legislative Assembly Election 2026 results. The ruling BJP's overwhelming victory and the miserable defeat of the opposition parties have opened a new chapter in the history of parliamentary democracy in the state. The Assembly that once echoed with intense debates, arguments and counterarguments, and persistent questioning of the government over public issues, has today become almost opposition-less. This situation is not merely an electoral outcome; rather, it raises a massive question mark over Assam's political consciousness and democratic process itself. While this victory is undoubtedly a matter of celebration for the ruling side, it has simultaneously emerged as a grave challenge for the health of democracy in the state. Because in an Assembly without opposition, there always remains the possibility that the government's will may become the final will, creating a dangerous vacuum in safeguarding public interest. If one deeply analyses the factors behind the manner in which the people overwhelmingly supported a single political force by overturning all pre-election equations, it becomes evident that the opposition parties have gradually lost their relevance. They failed to understand the aspirations of the people and could not establish themselves as a strong alternative. As a result, the reins of governance are now concentrated in the hands of a single and unchallenged force.

Behind the BJP's massive victory lies its well-planned organisational strength and the successful implementation of various welfare schemes. By creating a vast network of beneficiaries at the grassroots level, the party succeeded in building a dependable vote bank. For ordinary people receiving the benefits of government schemes, practical support in daily life has become more important than political ideology. However, amidst the euphoria of this victory, hardly anyone is examining what impact this beneficiary-centric politics may have on the economic and social balance of the state in the future. The 2026 election results have clearly demonstrated that Assam's politics has now come completely under the control of central leadership, while the stream of regionalism that once shaped Assam is facing an existential crisis. The opposition parties attempted a performative unity only during elections, which the people refused to accept. Due to internal disagreements, lack of proper leadership, and the absence of a clear future roadmap, voters once again chose the ruling side while searching for an alternative. Consequently, the opposition benches in the Assembly

have now become either empty or extremely insignificant. There is no longer a strong voice inside the House capable of criticising the government or speaking against flawed policies. Such a condition may strengthen the administration further and even make it authoritarian at times.

The miserable condition of the opposition in Assam's current political context has imposed enormous responsibility upon the media and conscious civil society, often regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy. Since there is no substantial opposition voice inside the Assembly, the responsibility of critically analysing every action of the government now rests upon the people themselves. From this point onward, the people must become the opposition outside the Assembly. Citizens will have to keep a sharp eye on how government policies affect ordinary people and whether state resources are being utilised properly. Democracy certainly grants the right to form a government through numbers, but it does not grant immunity from criticism.

The recently declared results clearly show that the opposition parties merely attempted to defeat the BJP through anti-BJP rhetoric, but they possessed no positive agenda of their own. Instead of prioritising the burning issues of the people, they remained busy with personal attacks and politics of religious polarisation. In contrast, the ruling side projected an image of development and succeeded in winning public confidence. The question now is how accountable the ruling side will remain after receiving such a massive mandate. If the government begins taking anti-people decisions by exploiting the absence of opposition, who will protest against it? This is where the issue of active public participation and responsibility becomes crucial.

The presence of opposition in a legislative assembly is not merely a numerical necessity; it is a moral necessity. In a healthy Assembly, the opposition acts as a mirror to the government. By identifying flaws and loopholes in government schemes, the opposition plays a significant role in making the administration more active and responsive. But under the present circumstances in Assam, there may be no meaningful questioning inside the Assembly, no debates, and perhaps every bill will pass without resistance. Such a one-sided governance structure may become harmful for the state in the long run. According to political analysts, an opposition-less Assembly is an ominous sign for democracy. It may create a sense of arrogance within the ruling side, causing it to drift away from the real problems of ordinary people and focus only on glamorous projects. Assam's present political reality has

made it evident that elections can no longer be won merely through emotion or old glory. Today's voters are more intelligent and aware. They know whom to prioritise and why. But that does not mean the people should remain unconcerned about the atmosphere of opposition-less politics that has emerged. Because without healthy criticism, any government has the potential to go astray.

In a diverse state like Assam, every community possesses its own concerns and aspirations. Therefore, representation of these different voices inside the Assembly is extremely important. But the current results indicate that except for a few pockets, BJP's influence has become dominant across almost the entire state. This means the opposition parties failed to properly understand the grievances and dissatisfaction existing among Assam's various ethnic and social groups. They confined themselves within limited sections of society instead of becoming a broader political force. As a consequence, there is no powerful opposition leader in the Assembly today who can speak strongly on behalf of the entire state. If the government imposes any controversial decision by taking advantage of this vacuum, street protests may become the only alternative left for the people. But movements on the streets are not always orderly or constructive. That is why the role of opposition in parliamentary democracy is indispensable. Since the opposition parties have become nearly irrelevant after the 2026 elections, the responsibility of Assam's intellectual circles, student bodies, and conscious citizens has increased manifold. They must now raise their voices rationally against every wrong step of the government and create public awareness so that the government cannot ignore public opinion.

In democracy, the government exists for the people and is formed by the people. The responsibility of citizens does not end with casting votes during elections. Rather, the real responsibility begins after elections. An opposition-less Assembly grants a certain degree of unchecked freedom to the government, and such freedom may sometimes work against public interest. In the context of the Assam Legislative Assembly Election 2026 results, it is evident that the people desired a stable government. But stability does not mean that nobody should question the government. In the present political environment, the role of the media has also become extremely significant. If the media fails to maintain neutrality and expose the failures of the government, the future of the state may become dark. In the absence of opposition, the media itself must function as the real opposition. Instead of glorifying the government, it must highlight the actual problems faced by ordinary citizens. Social media too has become a powerful platform today. But only its responsible and ethical use can ensure government accountability. This election result is a serious warning for

Assam's politics. For the opposition parties, it is a moment of introspection, and for the people, it is a moment to remain highly vigilant.

A study of Assam's political history reveals that the state always had a strong opposition, whether during Congress rule or AGP rule. But the present one-sided political situation has deeply worried many people. It is now the responsibility of the public to ensure that the pride of electoral victory does not distance the ruling party from ordinary citizens. In democracy, the right to question is the greatest right. If there is no one inside the Assembly to raise those questions, then democracy will survive only in name. Therefore, viewed impartially, the defeat of the opposition is not merely the defeat of a political party; it is a weakness in the entire democratic structure. In the post-2026 period, Assam must create a new definition of political accountability. The people must not remain satisfied merely by receiving benefits from welfare schemes. They must also question whether public money is being spent properly and whether the administration is functioning without corruption. This is the true responsibility of the people in an opposition-less Assembly. Assam certainly needs to become strong, but if democratic voices are silenced in that strong Assam, genuine progress can never be achieved.

The opposition parties themselves are responsible for this failure. They became disconnected from the people while remaining busy with personal interests and calculations of power. Their internal conflicts and opportunistic alliances created negative reactions among voters. As a result, unable to find a stable alternative, the people embraced the ruling side once again. But this does not mean that the people are satisfied with everything the government has done. In many cases, people voted for the ruling party because they saw no other viable option. Now the government's responsibility is to honour this immense trust. And the responsibility of the people is to ensure that this huge mandate is not misused. The new character of the Sixteenth Assam Legislative Assembly has placed us before a fresh challenge. The opposition benches may remain empty, but the list of public problems has certainly not disappeared. Floods, unemployment, price rise, and climate change still stand before Assam as serious issues. Only time will tell how successfully the government addresses these problems. But in the absence of opposition, the people must remain alert so that these issues do not lose their importance. Political parties may come and go, but the interests of the state and democratic dignity are permanent. Therefore, after this one-sided electoral result, the responsibility of all of us is to strengthen Assam's democracy and make it more transparent. Public awareness alone can prevent an opposition-less Assembly from becoming a pathway to authoritarian rule. This is the political reality of Assam today, and this is the heavy responsibility that rests upon all of us.

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma's leadership: Assam's journey of progress

By: Lalit Nath

Assam is witnessing a seismic shift in its developmental landscape, marking the dawn of a Golden Era in governance. Under the decisive leadership of Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, the NDA government's second consecutive term has signalled a radical departure from incremental growth to total transformation.

The mandate of 2026 was not merely a choice of candidates, it was a resounding endorsement of a vision that seeks to place Assam among the top five states in India. Over the past five years, the Sarma administration has fundamentally redefined the relationship between the citizen and the state, fostering an environment where merit, infrastructure and cultural pride form the trinity of progress. The most profound achievement of Dr Sarma's tenure lies in the silent but powerful revolution within the state's administrative machinery. Historically, government recruitment in the region was often shadowed by skepticism. Dr Sarma's government dismantled this legacy of doubt by institutionalizing a recruitment process defined by absolute transparency and surgical precision.

By delivering on the promise of over one lakh government jobs—conducted without a single blemish of corruption—the administration has revitalized the aspirations of Assam's youth. This move did more than just provide employment, it restored the social contract. When the son of a tea garden worker or the daughter of a small-scale farmer dons the uniform of the Assam Police or takes a seat in the state secretariat based purely on their performance in a competitive exam, it sends a powerful message: in the New Assam, merit is the only currency. Under Dr Sarma's leadership, infrastructure is no longer viewed merely as bricks and mortar but as the essential veins and arteries of a growing economy. The geographical isolation that once hampered Assam's growth is being systematically dismantled. The Asom Mala project has emerged as a landmark initiative, transforming the state's road network into a high-speed grid that connects remote production centers to vital trade hubs. This is complemented by the construction of majestic bridges over the Brahmaputra, including the technically challenging cable-stayed structures that are becoming new landmarks of engineering excellence. The proliferation of flyovers in Guwahati and the development of elevated corridors are not just solutions to urban congestion, they are symbols of a state in a hurry to catch up with the future.

Furthermore, the modernization of the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (LGBIA) with its state-of-the-art new terminal has positioned Guwahati as the definitive Gateway to Southeast Asia, aligning perfectly with India's Act East Policy. This physical connectivity is the precursor to the massive industrial investments the state is now attracting. For decades, Assam's industrial identity was largely tethered to its lush tea gardens and ancient oil fields. Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma has catalyzed a shift toward a diversified, high-tech industrial base. The establishment of the Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test (ATMP) facility at Jagiroad is a historic milestone. It signifies Assam's entry into the global semiconductor supply chain, an achievement that seemed impossible only a decade ago.

This high-tech leap is balanced by a focus on sustainable energy and traditional sectors. The revitalization of the Namrup Fertilizer Plant and the push for ethanol production units demonstrate a commitment to both food and energy security. Simultaneously, the Chief Minister's Atmanirbhar Asom Abhijan is nurturing a new generation of indigenous entrepreneurs. By providing financial scaffolding and institutional support to MSMEs, the government is ensuring that the state's wealth is generated and retained by its own people.

Dr Sarma's governance model is uniquely character-

ized by compassionate capitalism. While the state pursues multi-billion dollar investments, it remains deeply rooted in the welfare of its most vulnerable. The Orunodoi scheme has become a benchmark for Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) in India. By putting financial resources directly into the hands of the female heads of households, the government has triggered a grassroots economic stimulus while fostering female agency and financial literacy. This social empowerment is bolstered by the 'Nijut Moina' scheme, which targets the root causes of child marriage by incentivizing girl-child education. By funding higher education for girls, the state is investing in its future human capital. Similarly, Mission Basundhara has addressed the long-standing grievances of indigenous land rights, using technology to simplify land records and protect the ancestral holdings of the Khilnija people from legal ambiguity. The transformation of Assam's healthcare sector can be described as nothing short of a silent revolution. The operationalisation of AIIMS Guwahati has brought world-class tertiary care to the Northeast, ending the era where citizens had to travel to distant metros for life-saving treatments. The visionary policy of establishing a medical college in every district is rapidly closing the gap in doctor-to-patient ratios. When combined with the Ayushman Bharat and the Ayushman Asom schemes, the government has provided a robust financial shield against medical bankruptcy. Assam is now emerging as a regional healthcare hub, attracting patients from across the Seven Sisters and neighboring nations, thereby boosting medical tourism and local employment.

Dr Sarma has frequently articulated that a nation or state that forgets its history cannot build its future. His administration has taken unprecedented steps to project Assamese culture on the global stage. The Guinness World Record for the largest Bihu performance was a masterclass in cultural branding, instilling a sense of collective pride among the people. The successful inscription of the Charaideo Maidams as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the grand celebrations of Bir Lachit Barphukan's 400th birth anniversary in the national capital have ensured that Assam's martial and architectural history is integrated into the national and global consciousness. Initiatives like Khel Maharan and Sanskrit Maharan further ensure that this cultural energy is channeled into the youth, keeping the heritage alive at the grassroots. The foundation of all this progress is the return of enduring peace. Through strategic negotiations and a firm administrative stance, Dr Sarma has overseen the signing of historic peace accords that have effectively ended decades of insurgency. The state has moved from an era of frequent strikes and bandhs to a vibrant, 24/7 work culture. The government's uncompromising war on drugs has further secured the social fabric, protecting the youth from the shadows of addiction.

As the state looks toward the future, challenges remain—most notably the perennial struggle with floods and erosion. However, the Sarma administration's approach is moving toward scientific, long-term mitigation rather than temporary relief. The vision for a Viksit Assam involves leveraging technology, preserving the environment, and ensuring that the benefits of growth reach the last person in the last village.

Under the stewardship of Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam is no longer a land defined by its problems, but by its solutions. The state has found a leader who balances the technicalities of modern governance with the soul of Assamese tradition. As the journey of progress continues, the foundation laid in these past years ensures that Assam is not just participating in India's growth story, but is leading it. This is the era of a secure, prosperous, and self-reliant Assam—a legacy in the making for generations to come.

By: Satyabrata Borah

The political landscape of West Bengal has undergone a transformation that many observers saw coming for years yet few expected to manifest with such overwhelming finality. To understand how the Bharatiya Janata Party managed to secure 207 seats in the 294 member assembly and unseat a formidable force like Mamata Banerjee, one has to look far beyond simple election statistics or campaign slogans. This was not just a change in government; it was the collapse of one political era and the aggressive birth of another. For over a decade, the Trinamool Congress held the state in a grip that seemed unbreakable, rooted in a potent mix of charismatic leadership and a fierce protection of regional identity. However even the most deeply entrenched power can rot from within if it loses its connection to the fundamental needs of the people it serves.

For a long time, the narrative in Bengal was about the protector versus the outsider. Mamata Banerjee successfully branded herself as the sole guardian of the Bengali soul, painting the BJP as a party of the Hindi heartland that didn't understand the nuances of fish, football, or the intricate intellectual history of Kolkata. In 2021, that strategy worked brilliantly. But identity politics has a shelf life, especially when it is used to mask systemic failures in governance. Over the last few years, the average citizen in Bengal started feeling a growing disconnect between the lofty talk of regional pride and the harsh reality of their daily lives. The primary issues were simple yet devastating: a lack of jobs, rampant corruption that reached into the very classrooms of the state, and a breakdown of law and order that made political violence feel like an inescapable part of the weather.

The teacher recruitment scam was perhaps the first major crack in the TMC's armor. In a state that prizes education above almost everything else, the revelation that jobs were being sold while deserving candidates sat on the streets for years was a visceral blow. It wasn't just a financial scandal; it was a betrayal of the Bengali middle class's most sacred values.

Then came the RG Kar Hospital tragedy. The rape and murder of a young doctor within the walls of a state-run institution became a flashpoint that transcended party lines. It galvanized the youth and the urban middle class in a way that traditional politics never could. It signalled a loss of control. When a government can no longer guarantee the safety of a woman at her workplace or the integrity of a job interview, its claim to be a protector rings hollow. Mamata Banerjee didn't just lose the election; she lost the narrative of being the state's Didi or elder sister.

On the other side of the fence, the BJP's rise was a masterclass in patient, calculated growth. This wasn't an overnight victory fueled by a single wave. It was a decade-long project supervised by the highest levels of the party's central leadership. While the TMC was perhaps becoming complacent in its third term, the BJP was building itself up vote by vote, booth by booth. They didn't just rely on national slogans; they crafted a localized version of identity politics that could go toe-to-toe with the TMC. By focusing on the Citizenship Amendment Act and engaging deeply with refugee communities

like the Matuas, they created a sense of belonging for groups that felt marginalized by the state's traditional power structures. They turned the debate from Bengali versus outsider to a more complex discussion about citizenship, migration, and Hindu consolidation.

The appointment of Suwendu Adhikari as the new Chief Minister is the ultimate culmination of this shift. Adhikari is not an outsider; he is a product of the Bengal soil who knows the TMC's playbook because he helped write it before his defection. His victory over Mamata Banerjee in Bhabanipur is a symbolic passing of the torch, mirroring his previous win in Nandigram. It proves that a leader with local roots and a strong organizational backing can successfully challenge the cult of personality that had defined Bengal politics for so long. The split in the Muslim vote, which was once the bedrock of the TMC's strength, further suggests that the promise of better governance and safety eventually began to outweigh traditional communal alignments for a significant portion of the electorate.

But winning an election is only the beginning, and for the new BJP government, the honeymoon period will likely be non-existent. The state they are inheriting is one scarred by cycles of political retribution. Even as the victory celebrations were underway, reports of violence and the targeted assassination of a key aide to the new Chief Minister served as a grim reminder of the challenges ahead. Bengal has a long and tragic history where political change is often written in blood. For decades, the party in power has used coercion to maintain its thumb on the state, and the primary task for Suwendu Adhikari will be to break this cycle. If the BJP merely replaces the TMC's brand of violence with its own, then the historic nature of this win will be squandered.

The most urgent priority for the new administration is the total restoration of law and order. Governance cannot happen in an atmosphere of fear. The people of Bengal voted for a change from the chaos, not just a change of flags. This means depoliticizing the police force, ensuring that the bureaucracy can function without partisan interference, and making it clear that political workers on all sides will be held accountable for violence. It is a massive undertaking because the roots of political interference in Bengal run deep, stretching back through the TMC era and into the decades of Left rule before it. Ending the culture of the party society where the local party office is more powerful than the police station is the only way to bring true stability.

There is the massive challenge of economic revitalization beyond safety. Bengal was once the industrial heart of India, but years of labor unrest and a perceived anti-industry stance from successive governments led to a flight of capital. The youth of Bengal are forced to migrate to Bengaluru, Hyderabad, or Pune for white-collar jobs, or to Kerala and the Gulf for manual labor. The BJP's vision for a Shonar Bangla or Golden Bengal will remain a mere slogan unless they can convince investors that the state is open for business. This requires more than just holding investment summits; it requires a fundamental overhaul of how business is done in the state, removing the culture of syndicates and extortion that has stifled small and medium en-

terprises.

There is also the delicate task of social cohesion. The BJP's path to victory involved a heavy emphasis on contentious issues like the CAA and electoral roll revisions. While these were effective mobilization tools, they have also left a significant portion of the population feeling anxious. A successful government must be a government for all its citizens, regardless of how they voted or what their background is. The rhetoric of the campaign trail must now give way to the inclusive language of administration. The challenge for the new leadership is to prove that their version of politics can provide a sense of security and progress for everyone in Bengal, including the minorities who may be skeptical of this change.

The decline of the Trinamool Congress serves as a cautionary tale for the new incumbents. Power in Bengal has a way of becoming insular. When a party begins to believe that it is synonymous with the state, it stops listening to the whispers of discontent until they turn into a roar. The BJP has been given a historic mandate, but it is a mandate born out of a desperate desire for normalcy. The people haven't just voted for a party; they have voted for the right to live without fear of political violence, for the right to get a job based on merit, and for the right to see their state progress alongside the rest of the country.

The eyes of the entire nation will be on Kolkata in the coming months. The transition from a fiery opposition to a responsible ruling party is never easy, especially in a state as politically charged as West Bengal. Suwendu Adhikari and his team have the benefit of a central government that is aligned with their goals, which should theoretically help in bringing in resources and clearing administrative hurdles. But the real test will be on the ground in the villages of Birbhum, the neighborhoods of North 24 Parganas, and the streets of Kolkata. Can they provide a new vision for development that moves beyond the handout culture? Can they rebuild the public trust that was eroded by years of scams?

The success of this new government will be measured by whether it can change the political culture of Bengal ultimately. For too long, the state has been defined by its struggles rather than its potential. The intellectual and cultural capital of Bengal is immense, but it has been overshadowed by the grim reality of its politics. This election result is a chance to reset that balance. It is a moment of hope for many, but it is also a moment of immense responsibility. The priority must be peace. Without peace, there can be no progress. Without law and order, there can be no investment. And without a sense of fairness, there can be no lasting trust. The BJP has made history by winning the state; now they must fulfill the much harder task of winning the future of the people who live there. The road ahead is long and filled with obstacles, but for the first time in a generation, the people of Bengal have chosen a completely different path. Whether that path leads to the promised prosperity or back into the cycle of conflict is something that only time and the quality of governance will tell. For now, the mandate is clear: the state wants to breathe, it wants to work, and above all, it wants to end the violence that has defined its public life for far too long.

Britain's u-turn on vapes upholds India's early ban

By: Pranav Lal

In the early 2010s, there was an explosion of seductive technologies that sustain the addiction of nicotine. Called variously such as e-cigarettes, vapes, heated tobacco products, and heat-not-burn devices, among several others. Promoted by both tobacco and non-tobacco companies, these attractive products aimed to expand and deepen nicotine addiction.

Last week, Britain reversed its position on vaping. Once the world's most vocal champion of vapes as a harm-reduction tool, the United Kingdom now bans the sale of tobacco products and vapes to anyone born after January 1, 2009. This generational prohibition marks a shift in global public health policy. It undermines the argument that vapes are safer than smoking. For India, which banned vapes in 2019 but continues to struggle with weak enforcement, the British reversal delivers both validation and a sharp warning.

In August 2015, Public Health England (PHE) gave vaping a clean chit, claiming that these new technologies were significantly 'less harmful' than conventional cigarettes. The tobacco and vape industry positioned vaping as a tool to help smokers quit. PHE's endorsement fuelled a global boom in the vape industry and created enormous pressure on governments across South Asia to permit or regulate these products. India remained circumspect and resisted. As the world's largest tobacco consumer, with a large legal tobacco economy and an even larger illegal one, India's stakes were enormous. India's public health advocates presented two arguments in favour of a ban. First, the country already struggled to regulate a bewildering variety of smoked and smokeless products; adding vapes would further overwhelm an already overstretched regulator. Second, no clinical trial had conclusively proven their safety.

Researchers found sharp divisions within India over whether to ban or regulate vapes. Advocates argued that vaping offered adult smokers a less harmful path to quitting. Critics warned of a gateway effect that could draw young people into nicotine addiction. By default, India chose caution. In September 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the ban. India became one of the first countries in the world to prohibit the production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution, storage, and advertisement of all vapes products. The law imposed strict penalties for violations.

Science has since vindicated that decision. Recent global studies confirm that vaping is not safe. Researchers have identified toxic agents in vape aerosols that cause measurable harm. Studies link the use of vape and the like products to serious lung damage, with adolescents facing the greatest risk because their respiratory systems are still developing. Investigators conclude that vaping actively undermines existing tobacco-control efforts



rather than supporting them. The idea that vapes function purely as harm-reduction tools has collapsed under the weight of evidence. Britain's shift on tobacco and vaping for younger generations reflects this emerging consensus and signals the end of the industry's most powerful narrative. Like tobacco, vapes too have a massive environmental footprint, a fact the tobacco industry likes to sideline.

India moved first, but it has not moved far enough since. Despite the 2019 ban, vapes continue to circulate freely in grey markets. A systematic review and meta-analysis published in 2025 found a pooled vaping prevalence of 14 per cent among study populations in India after the ban, far higher than pre-ban levels. Researchers identify inconsistent enforcement as the primary reason. The ban exists in law but not in practice. It does

not reach markets, alleys, or the backstreets of colleges and schools, nor the social media feeds where young buyers find sellers.

Young people face the greatest danger. Studies document rising vape use among middle- and high-school students across India. The tobacco industry has long targeted youth through flavoured products, aspirational marketing, and calculated normalisation in popular culture. 'Flavoured' vapes now occupy visible space in the Indian market. Researchers warn that industry-driven debates about harm reduction distract from the urgent need to keep these products out of young hands. The window to act is narrowing.

India's tobacco-control framework (the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, the National Tobacco Control Programme) and its

commitments under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, gives the government the tools it needs. Public health leaders have embraced the idea of phasing out tobacco entirely, and the 2019 vaping ban fits that vision. But the vision lacks a clear roadmap and, without one, remains a declaration rather than a programme.

Several departments, such as food and drugs, customs and excise, lack a clear mandate to prohibit the vape trade within the ambit of the 2019 law. The enforcement failure is not just administrative; but there is also a culture in which there is a tendency to violate norms and push boundaries. Indian cricketers, actors, and models vape openly. Films, television shows, and social media content normalise the habit and direct young audiences to sources where they can buy products that the law forbids. India's law

compounds the problem by permitting personal importation and possession of vapes. This contradiction undermines the ban from within. Celebrities endorse, and content creators glamorise, vaping. Such actions must face legal accountability. The entertainment industry often ignores existing guidelines that prohibit the depiction of tobacco-related products on screen, and regulators allow it. A hidden trade combined with open public defiance constitutes a crisis that demands a coordinated national response.

India must close legal loopholes. It must hold platforms and celebrities accountable for promoting banned products. It must equip enforcement agencies to dismantle the grey market that sustains vaping despite the ban.

Another conflict is emerging. India is witnessing a rapidly growing synthetic and natural nicotine industry, with manufacturers seeking to profit from the booming global market. Some of those proposing to extract "natural" nicotine from tobacco leaves are based in politically sensitive tobacco-growing regions such as Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. This raises a fundamental question: does India want to contribute to producing nicotine for vapes while banning them domestically? This is morally untenable. There are already products that can be manufactured but not sold or consumed in India, such as gutka, certain pesticides and chemicals, and asbestos. Another persistent concern is that some doctors and medical practitioners in their ignorance support vaping, often at the behest of industry-backed lobby groups.

Britain's reversal should prompt all nations to revisit their positions. This process must begin with the WHO, which has so far remained ambiguous and has not called for an outright ban on vapes. India banned vaping before much of the world understood the need to do so. More important, it lacks the will to enforce what it has already enacted. The world is catching up to India's 2019 vaping ban decision. India cannot gloat on its precience. Instead, India must now catch up to enforce its own law.

India's policymakers must rethink on how it wants to relook at tobacco as a whole. Tobacco use is the single largest cause of avoidable death among adults in India. Its use gives India the dubious honour of having the world's largest tuberculosis, lung and oral cancer, and several other diseases. Britain colonised India and hooked it on cigarettes. One 'imperial tobacco' company stayed behind to make sure the habit never died. Although the cigarette industry is regulated, the bidi and smokeless tobacco sector operates with almost no oversight. Irrespective of regulation, all forms of tobacco undermine India's public health goals. Now with Britain dismantling its tobacco addiction at home, it is time India looked inwards. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

Public health challenges in migration and conflict



By: Shantesh Kumar Singh

Global health is a shared responsibility among all nations, not the duty of any single country, because no nation exists in complete isolation in today's interconnected world. This basic concept has been the foundation for ensuring that no one is left behind until today. It has guided international cooperation since the adoption of the Constitution of the World Health Organization in 1948 and led to the development of the International Health Regulations in 1969 and their revision in 2005. This cooperation is reflected in Article 1 of the World Health Assembly in May 1980: "THE WORLD AND ALL ITS PEOPLES HAVE WON FREEDOM FROM SMALLPOX". Therefore, it was a collective global effort that won the battle against and eradicated smallpox worldwide. However, this concept now appears to be under jeopardy amid the current massive changes in the multilateral world.

The current trend of international negotiations suggests the possibility of emerging threats such as Mpox, a return of COVID-19, and the increasing spread of influenza. These risks require a comprehensive understanding of their underlying mechanisms, cross-national variations, and the available strategies for prevention and mitigation. This cannot be achieved by one country alone; it requires collaboration, trust, knowledge-sharing, and transparency. Such cooperation cannot be sustained through bilateral negotiations that protect one side over the other. This raises the question: have we truly been within a multilateral system, or has it been ruled by bilateral arrangements that continue without fulfilling multilateral obligations? And how will this impact different countries?

There are multiple perspectives regarding the decisions the Trump administration has made since

early 2025. They could be seen as a way to direct health priorities, with multilateralism shifting towards bilateral and power-based interests rather than collective global interests, which does not work well in health. They may also highlight a defect that has been eroding multilateral diplomacy for a long time, though this was not very clear before 2025. However, one thing is evident: the growing focus on health security over "health for all" and the broader improvement of the international economy.

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, many countries are under multiple stressors; many are in conflict or in a fragile state. The sense of possibly being left without support since January 2025 has revealed these countries' vulnerabilities in terms of public health. In countries such as Yemen and Sudan, all the main aspects of the health system have been depleted because of civil conflicts, and the added weight of losing support has had a major impact. In Yemen, the depleted health system must deal with increased morbidity and mortality caused by the conflict, alongside the spread of communicable diseases, a rising burden of non-communicable diseases, and widespread malnutrition.

The health systems of both countries need to support a huge number of internally displaced persons—over three million in Yemen and over nine million in Sudan. Yemen also acts as a transit country for migrants, which requires additional support from health services. In 2025, over one hundred and fifty thousand migrants passed through the country, with more than 21,500 in December alone, marking an increasing trend in migrant arrivals. These migrants have significant health needs, particularly regarding communicable diseases, which could become a future concern for the government of Yemen and surrounding countries.

Prioritising such needs and determining how countries should address them remain critical questions. Irregular migration predisposes both migrants and the local population to increased health risks.

A study by LP Goldsmith on COVID-19 vaccination equity among undocumented migrants highlighted that low vaccination coverage, driven by supply—and demand-related barriers such as limited vaccine availability, documentation requirements, fear of deportation, lack of accessible information, and weak local health systems, further increases public health vulnerabilities in fragile and conflict-affected settings. This represents a serious situation that requires multi-level investment, including strengthening health infrastructure, improving biological disaster preparedness, and building inclusive health systems—all of which demand doubled or even tripled rebuilding efforts in contexts of collapsed governance following civil conflict.

At the same time, countries such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar may also be at risk of disease spread and may require support. This could influence the emerging shape of multilateral health cooperation. Addressing these issues will involve shifting priorities, especially in light of changing geopolitical interests. Prioritising national health security alone will lead to greater individualism if all countries follow the same approach. This also reinforces the perception that outbreaks originate only in developing countries—an unpredictable and misleading assumption that may further deepen divisions between nations. Many countries are already under extreme political and social tensions. Should we wait until another large-scale global health crisis spreads, and a new wave of widespread mortality leads to the loss of a large percentage of the world's population, as smallpox once did—killing over 1.4 million annually worldwide in the 1960s—before we regain our solidarity as humans and our sympathy for one another and for the world? Must we wait until then to admit that it is our shared responsibility? Or is this a call to rediscover that same solidarity and unified aim to protect against diseases?

The global landscape is likely to disproportionately affect countries that are already at the bottom of the priority list for support during crises, making them increasingly vulnerable to future disease outbreaks. In the end, the answer here is closing borders? And how will that impact the world? These are questions that must be asked and carefully considered. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

Does running make your waist bigger?

By: Katy Wallis

“Runner's waist” and other fitness-related fears usually start with a misunderstanding of how muscles and fat work.

Influencers may make unsubstantiated claims, such as:

- “Running causes your obliques to get too bulky.”
- “Doing cardio actually thickens your core.”
- “Famous sprinters sometimes have blocky waists, so it must be running that causes that.”

This medically reviewed article will debunk these claims, using primary research and scientific evidence.

Does running build bulky obliques?

Running does engage your core, including the obliques. However, it does not do this in a way that would build out-proportioned or oversized obliques.

Growing a muscle is called hypertrophy. To go into hypertrophy, you usually need the following:

- High resistance (heavy load)
- Progressive overload
- Sufficient recovery and calories

Some people do target specific weight groups and aim for hypertrophy, such as people who lift weights. However, running is different, because it causes:

- Low resistance
- Repetitive, endurance-based movement
- A calorie-burning environment

A 2025 analysis found that internal obliques are active during running, but within normal stabilizing ranges across speeds. This shows that causes core involvement that centers around coordination and stability, rather than overload.

Another 2025 academic paper investigates how groups of muscles coordinate to produce efficient running motion. Its findings show that running relies on stable muscle coordination patterns, not progressive overload of specific muscles.

Therefore, it's very unlikely that running alone would cause oversized or “bulky” oblique muscles. Running teaches your body to grow in endurance, rather than growing in size.

Does running make your waist thicker?

No. This claim is misleading.

If someone's waist measurement changes while running regularly, it's usually due to:

- Overall body composition changes
- Running often reduces total body fat. Some people even find that leads to a smaller waist, rather than a larger one.

Temporary factors

Some people might experience temporary changes in how their waist looks. This might be related to:

- Post-run inflammation or “pump”
- Water retention
- Bloating

These are not structural changes, and are temporary. If you do notice these symptoms persisting, or are concerned, you should speak with a doctor.

Natural body shape

Humans naturally differ from one another in how their bodies appear. Genetics determine:

- Rib cage width
- Pelvic structure
- Fat distribution

Running doesn't override those factors, but sometimes social media, especially with the use of filters, can make it seem like there is less variation in people's body types than there actually is.

Do runners have “blocky” waists?

Not necessarily. This idea often comes from looking at elite athletes who are publicized or



televized, especially sprinters.

Elite sprinters train with heavy strength work, not just running. They have genetic traits suited to power and speed, and their physiques reflect years of specialized training, not casual jogging.

Remember that distance runners, recreational runners, and sprinters often have very different body types.

Using one group to generalize all running is misleading.

Can running target specific areas of fat loss? No. You cannot target where your body loses or gains fat.

Running can:

- Increase calorie expenditure
- Reduce overall body fat
- Improve cardiovascular health

But running does not selectively increase fat or muscle around your waist.

Core activation during running is also too low-intensity. Trusted Source to significantly increase muscle size in the obliques.

What does the science actually say?

Next, we'll break down some primary research papers that help to explain why “runner's waist” is not a thing.

Hypertrophy requires specific conditions that running does not provide

A 2019 peer-reviewed research paper Trusted Source shows that even targeted core training must be sufficiently intense and specific to drive hypertrophy. This paper implies that low-load activities, like running, are unlikely to produce size increases.

Core training itself doesn't dramatically change physique in runners

An older 2009 paper Trusted Source examines whether core stability training affects running mechanics and performance. It detailed a 6-week intervention that showed performance changes, but not major structural/body composition changes. So, even direct core training has limited visible hypertrophy, and running even less so.

Running can improve core stability, but not waist size

A 2019 academic paper investigates how an eight-week core-strengthening program influences trunk endurance and running efficiency in trained runners. Results showed improvements in core endurance and performance, but not muscle size changes, distinguishing endurance adaptations from hypertrophy.

Why might your waist appear bigger?

In some cases, people might notice a genuine change in how their waist looks, whether or not they run. This might be due to:

• Heavy weighted oblique training like loaded side bends, which can increase muscle thickness over time

• Bulking phases, also known as a calorie surplus, which can increase overall size, including the waist

• Posture changes, which can affect how your waist looks

These situations are not caused by running, but they may overlap with people who run regularly.

It is important to remember that the appearance of the waist is not also change according to its size in contrast to the rest of the body. Even a person with a large waist may have the appearance of a small waist if their shoulders and thighs are muscular and well developed.

Professional runners quite often have relatively low-mass physiques. So, especially on a screen, some waists could very easily appear blocky simply because upper and lower bodies may be smaller in comparison to the midsection.

Why did this claim go viral?

The “running makes your waist bigger” claim is gaining traction for a few reasons:

• Fear-based fitness content performs well: Warnings like “avoid this mistake” are more attention-grabbing than nuanced claims, which might take longer to explain, or be perceived as less interesting.

• Aesthetic trends are cyclical: Trends on hourglass shapes, including “hourglass preservation” are common, and this spotlight means people can feel anxious or pressured to look this way.

• Misinterpretation of strength training advice: Some advice to limit heavy oblique training for physique goals gets incorrectly applied to running, which is a completely different stimulus.

Summary

The idea that running makes your waist bigger is misleading and potentially dangerous. This claim stems from scientific misinterpretation and anxieties around body appearance. It might discourage people from running who were previously using it, or considering it, as a way to improve their health.

Running does not provide the stimulus needed to “bulk” your obliques. It typically supports fat loss, not fat gain, and waist size is driven by far more by genetics, diet, and total body composition.

Primary research shows running activates the core for stability and endurance, but at intensities far below what's required to increase muscle size, making the idea that it “widens your waist” physiologically implausible.

Aura cracked, fault lines exposed: TMC stares at existential churn after Bengal rout

KOLKATA, May 10: On a humid Saturday evening, barely hours after Suwendu Adhikari took oath as West Bengal's first BJP chief minister at the Brigade Parade Grounds, the mood at several TMC offices across the state was marked by disbelief and unease.

At a party office in south Bengal, workers sat silently before television screens replaying saffron celebrations. Tea cups remained untouched and conversations repeatedly returned to one question: what remains of the political machine Mamata Banerjee built over the past 28 years -- the first 13 years in opposition and the last 15 years in power?

For the TMC, the crisis unfolding now is no longer merely electoral. It is structural, psychological and existential.

The first signs of internal strain surfaced almost immediately after the verdict. Leaders who defended the party leadership until days ago have

begun speaking in divergent voices, exposing fault lines long buried beneath uninterrupted electoral dominance.

Veteran TMC leader Asit Mazumdar accused sections of the leadership of arrogance and administrative paralysis, alleging that factional rivalries stalled governance and development projects. Senior MP Kalyan Banerjee blamed political consultant I-PAC and spoke of "sabotage" within the organisation.

The rebellion remains scattered, but Bengal's political history suggests such moments often signal the beginning of deeper churn.

"No political force can remain at its peak forever. Once the rise reaches saturation, decline begins from within. TMC was defeated by TMC itself," the four-term MP said.

He also blamed I-PAC-driven electoral management and ticket distribution strategies, saying, "Every gram panchayat member believed he de-



served a ticket. Internal sabotage played a major role in our defeat."

The TMC functioned less like a conventional party and more like a tightly centralised political

ecosystem revolving around one axis: Mamata Banerjee. Candidate selection, welfare messaging and organisational control flowed downward through a structure where loyalty often outweighed institutional autonomy.

That model delivered electoral returns for years, helping Banerjee dismantle the 34-year Left Front regime in 2011 and survive successive waves of anti-incumbency. But the same centralisation has now emerged as TMC's biggest vulnerability.

"The party's structure depended heavily on uninterrupted access to power. Once that chain weakens, fragmentation becomes inevitable," political analyst Biswanath Chakraborty observed.

Another political commentator described the developments unfolding inside TMC as "the early stages of organisational loosening where fear disappears faster than loyalty."

Unlike the BJP or the Left, TMC never evolved into an ideological cadre-based structure with multiple power centres. Nor did it expand meaningfully outside Bengal despite experiments in Goa and Tripura. Over time, the party became inseparable from both Bengal and Banerjee.

At 71, Banerjee remains TMC's tallest mobiliser and only leader with mass emotional resonance cutting across regions and social blocs. But, the terrain confronting her now is different from the years of Singur and Nandigram that fuelled her rise.

Then, she fought an entrenched regime from the streets. Now, she carries the baggage of 15 years in office -- recruitment scams, corruption allegations, bureaucratic fatigue, factional rivalries and resentment against sections of the party's local leadership. The poll verdict appears to have punctured the aura of inevitability that surrounded the TMC since 2011. (PTI)

Mockery of environmental impact assessment process in Great Nicobar project: Ramesh

NEW DELHI, May 10: Congress leader Jairam Ramesh wrote to Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav on Sunday, claiming that the Great Nicobar Island development project would "destroy" the unique ecosystem there, and urging him to pause, reflect, and revisit the venture in its present design and detail.

In his letter to Yadav, Ramesh said the studies based on which environmental clearance has been granted to the project are "grossly inadequate" and there has been a "mockery of the Environmental Impact Assessment process".

Ramesh highlighted that security experts have written that the country's essential security needs can be met without inflicting such "ecological devastation".

"I wish to reiterate that the Great Nicobar Island's biodiversity is globally unique, and new discoveries are being made from time to time. It is this unique ecosystem that will be destroyed by the Great Nicobar Island development project," the former environment minister said in his letter to Yadav.

Ramesh argued that the compensatory afforestation argument is completely bogus and the minister knows it.

"Security experts have themselves written that the country's essential security needs can be met without inflicting such ecological



devastation. I once again urge you to pause, reflect, and revisit the project in its present design and detail," the Congress general secretary in-charge communications asserted.

Ramesh said it is evident that the studies based on which environmental clearance has been granted to the project are not even rapid environmental impact assessments (EIA) and are based on baseline data collection over a few days and weeks at best and are grossly inadequate.

"These reports are an insult to science and make a mockery of the EIA process. All my efforts to locate the 'comprehensive studies, detailed assessments and robust EIA and Environmental Manage-

ment Plan' relied on in the FAQs have failed," he said.

"The 'Great Nicobar Project: FAQs' published by the government on May 1, 2026 stated that 'The potential ecological impacts of the project have been comprehensively identified, assessed, and are being effectively managed through a robust Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and a detailed Environmental Management Plan (EMP).'

"I have already responded to these FAQs in considerable detail on May 3, 2026. I now wish to make a few additional points following the exchanges we ourselves had in writing in September 2024 on this matter of great (and grave) public importance," Ramesh said

in his letter. The law mandates that port projects, especially those in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are subjected to comprehensive EIA studies, he pointed out.

Considering the unique biodiversity and ecology of the Great Nicobar Island, a robust and complete baseline study needs to cover at least three seasons, so that seasonal variations are adequately studied and assessed, he said.

The sector specific EIA Manual for ports and harbours issued by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) also requires the collection of at least two seasons physical, chemical and biological baseline data apart from oceanographic data, Ramesh pointed out.

In addition to the above requirement, clause 8(i) (c) of the ICRZ Notification, 2019 also mandates a comprehensive EIA for projects located in low or medium eroding stretches of the coast, Ramesh said.

The importance of a Comprehensive EIA for port projects was reiterated by one of Yadav's distinguished predecessors, Prakash Javadekar, on May 5, 2015, in the Lok Sabha, while rejecting a request from Gujarat government to consider clearance for ports based on Rapid EIA studies, the Congress leader said. (PTI)

AAP protests over ED action against Sanjeev Arora

AAP, BJP workers come face to face in Ludhiana

LUDHIANA/HOSHIARPUR, May 10: AAP on Sunday held protests across Punjab against the BJP over the ED action against Cabinet minister Sanjeev Arora, accusing the Centre of misusing central agencies against its party leaders.

At a few places, tension prevailed under the BJP and AAP workers came face to face, prompting police to intervene to avoid further escalation.

In Ludhiana, a scuffle broke out between AAP and BJP workers during a protest outside the BJP district office near the grain market on Gill Road.

AAP's protests came a day after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Punjab Industries Minister Sanjeev Arora in connection with an alleged ₹ 100 crore GST fraud-linked money laundering case involving certain entities linked to him.

Arora, 62, was taken into custody under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act following raids conducted at his official residence in Chandigarh's Sector 2 on Saturday morning.

While AAP dubbed the ED raid at Arora's residence and his subsequent arrest as a politically motivated act, Hampton Sky Realty Limited, at which the Punjab minister served as a director, said the company has faith in the legal process and is fully cooperating with all the statutory authorities and will continue to do so.



Arora's arrest has triggered a fresh political confrontation between AAP and the BJP.

The ruling party in Punjab had given a call to 'gherao' the BJP offices across the state.

The AAP leaders and volunteers burnt effigies of the BJP-led Centre and raised slogans against it. They were also carrying placards which read 'ED-BJP gathjod mardabad'.

In Ludhiana, a scuffle broke out between AAP and BJP workers during the protest outside the BJP district office.

AAP workers were protesting near the BJP office against Arora's arrest when BJP workers arrived and staged a counter-protest. The situation escalated into a scuffle between both sides, giving a tough time to the police to avoid further escalation.

Punjab BJP state general secretary Anil Sareen alleged that AAP workers "attacked" BJP activists, leaving four of them injured. During the protest, AAP workers

burnt an effigy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In response, BJP workers burnt effigies of AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal and Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, said BJP district president Rajnish Dhimman.

AAP's protest was led by Cabinet Minister Hardip Singh Mundian, MLAs Ashok Prashar Pappi, Kulwant Singh Sidhu, Bhola Grewal and Mayor Inderjit Kaur.

Condemning the police's role, Dhimman alleged that the police acted like AAP activists.

In Bathinda also, AAP and the BJP workers came face to face. Heavy police force was deployed during the protest, and they formed a human chain to avoid a clash.

Participating in a protest against the BJP in Jalandhar, Cabinet minister Mohinder Bhagat condemned the ED action against Arora and also slammed the BJP-led Union government for indulging in "high-handedness" against AAP leaders. (PTI)

Yogi cabinet 2.0: Celebrations in Aligarh, Kannauj as new ministers inducted into UP govt



LUCKNOW, MAY 10: Celebrations erupted in Aligarh and Kannauj as Surendra Diler, the BJP MLA from Khair in Aligarh district, and Kailash Rajput, the BJP MLA from Tirwa in Kannauj district, were inducted into the council of ministers headed by UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

In the second expansion of the Yogi Adityanath 2.0 ministry, two cabinet ministers and four state ministers were inducted into the Uttar Pradesh government, while two state ministers were promoted to independent charge on Sunday. This expansion comes ahead of the assembly elections, scheduled for

early next year in the state. Reports of celebrations also came from Raebareilly as Dr Manoj Kumar Pandey took the oath of office.

In Aligarh, friends, party associates, and neighbours flocked to Surendra Diler's home in Suraksha Vihar Colony as news of his induction into the council of ministers spread. Mukesh Singh, the president of the Suraksha Vihar Residents Association, told reporters that Surendra Diler is very popular among his neighbours, and they were delighted by his inclusion in the ministry. Residents began distributing sweets to celebrate. Chaudhary Jitendra Singh, the dis-

trict general secretary of the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), noted that Diler is well-liked in his constituency for his polite and helpful nature.

Surendra Diler, 31, was first elected as MLA from the Khair (SC) assembly constituency in November 2024 during a by-election. He comes from a politically prominent family in the BJP that spans three generations. His grandfather Kishen Lal Diler, a notable Valmiki leader from Aligarh, was first elected as the MLA of the Kol seat in 1985. In 1992, he was elected as an MP from Hathras and held that seat for four consecutive terms.

After Kishen Lal retired from active politics, the responsibility fell to Surendra's father Rajveer, who was elected as MLA from the Iglas (SC) seat in Hathras district. He inherited the legacy of his father, known for his humble demeanour.

Speaking to PTI Videos before the swearing-in ceremony, Surendra Diler said, "I would like to express my gratitude to the Bharatiya Janata Party government, the state government, as well as to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath." (PTI)

UP Cabinet expansion: Akhilesh questions BJP over accommodation of turncoat leaders

LUCKNOW, May 10: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday took a swipe at the BJP over the expansion of the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet, raising a series of questions about the accommodation of turncoat leaders, "dissatisfied" legislators and alliance partners. The Yogi Adityanath government's Cabinet expansion is scheduled later in the day.

In a post on X, the Samajwadi Party chief said the public is asking whether all defectors from other parties who had joined the BJP would be rewarded with ministerial posts despite there being only six vacancies in the state Cabinet.

"People are asking that there are only six vacancies in the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet, while the number of leaders who switched sides from other parties is much higher. Will all of them be rewarded with ministerial positions?" Yadav said in the post.

He further questioned the criteria that would be adopted if only a few legislators from a particular community were selected for ministerial berths.

"If one MLA is chosen from among several legislators belonging to a community, what will be the basis of that selection?" he asked.

The former chief minister also raised concerns about the possible resentment among those who may not find a place in the Cabinet.

"What will happen to the remaining turncoats? Will their neglect and humiliation be pacified through some compromise, or will they also realise that the BJP belongs to no one?" he said.

Yadav alleged that leaders left out of the Cabinet ex-



pansion would feel "cheated" and may struggle to face voters in their constituencies. "Will those left out not feel betrayed? Will they be able to show their faces in their constituencies?" he asked.

Targeting BJP legislators awaiting ministerial positions, Yadav said many leaders in the ruling party had been "waiting for years" to become ministers. "What about the BJP's own people who have been drying up like thorns while waiting to become ministers?" he remarked. The Samajwadi Party president also questioned whether reducing portfolios of existing ministers would send a message among the public that they had "failed" in governance.

"If departments are taken away from current ministers, will that not send a message that they were unsuccessful and therefore, stripped of their ministries? Such ministers may lose elections without even fighting," he said. (PTI)

MP: Village roads gateways to prosperity, says Chouhan

BHOPAL, May 10: Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday termed village roads the "gateways to prosperity" while launching projects worth ₹ 1,763.08 crore under the fourth phase of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-IV) to mark the scheme's silver jubilee in Madhya Pradesh.

Addressing a gathering in Bherunda in Sehore district, Chouhan, the Union minister for agriculture, farmers' welfare and rural development, spoke about road projects worth crores being undertaken in the state. Bherunda is part of the Vidisha Lok Sabha seat, being represented by Chouhan for the sixth term.

"Village roads are not just roads, but gateways to prosperity, respect, education, treatment, markets, and opportunities," Chouhan said.

He said that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the government remains committed to transforming the lives of farmers, women, and the poor.

India is rapidly progressing towards becoming a glorious, proud, self-reliant, prosperous, and developed nation under the prime minister's leadership, Chouhan said.

As many as 973 roads spanning 2,117.52 km have been approved under PMGSY-IV, costing a total of ₹ 1,763.08 crore, covering 987 settlements in Madhya Pradesh.

Similarly, the Vidisha region has received approval for 259 roads spanning 600.393 km, benefiting 264 settlements, marking a major achievement in Chouhan's regional development agenda. (PTI)

PM hails Art of Living's service ethos, calls for collective action for developed India

BENGALURU, May 10: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lauded the role of the Art of Living Foundation in promoting service, spirituality and social transformation, and called for collective efforts to build a developed India through environmental responsibility, youth empowerment and inner well-being.

Addressing the gathering at the Art of Living International Centre here to mark 45 years of the foundation and participate in celebrations linked to founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Modi said Bengaluru has not only emerged as a global technology hub but also elevated India's spiritual and cultural consciousness.

The Prime Minister also inaugurated a new meditation hall at the sprawling campus and congratulated the organisation for creating what he described as a centre of peace and healing for generations to come.

Referring to India's civilisational values, he said the essence binding the country's immense diversity was selfless service.

He said India's spiritual movements had historically expressed themselves through service to humanity and praised Art of Living for embodying that principle

'No govt can succeed unless society itself actively participates in nation-building'

through welfare-oriented programmes, including tribal empowerment initiatives and efforts to improve the mental health of prisoners.

"Spiritual movement in India lay emphasis on serving mankind," Modi said.

The PM emphasised that societal participation was more powerful than political systems and was essential for nation-building.

No government can succeed unless society itself actively participates in nation-building, he said, citing the success of the Swachh Bharat mission as an example of a campaign sustained by public ownership.

Highlighting India's transformation in the digital era, Modi said the country had become a global leader in digital payments, developed one of the world's fastest-growing startup ecosystems and was making unprecedented advances in infrastructure and space technology, driven largely by its youth.



"India is not only partnering in scientific innovation, but also leading in many areas," Modi said.

He credited institutions such as Art of Living with helping young people navigate the challenges of modern life.

Noting that technology allowed people sitting far apart to connect instantly, he underscored that whether or not we connect with the world, it is essential that we connect with ourselves.

He said a developed India would be

built by youth who were mentally peaceful, socially responsible and sensitive towards society, underlining the importance of spiritual well-being, yoga, meditation and mental health initiatives.

The Prime Minister also urged the organisation's volunteers to intensify their engagement in natural farming and environmental conservation.

"Today, even in illness, people are seeking natural healing. Our Mother Earth too needs natural healing. Chemical fertilisers

have exhausted our fields and harmed Mother Earth. Protecting Mother Earth from chemicals is also Art of Living," he said.

He called for greater support for the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign, stressing that protecting the environment was inseparable from sustainable development.

"Ecology and economy cannot be separated," Modi said.

He also exhorted volunteers to promote water conservation ahead of the monsoon, expand awareness around electricity conservation, discourage single-use plastic and encourage local products.

Pointing to the Centre's Mission LiFE initiative, Modi said it represented a conscious and responsible lifestyle rooted in harmony with nature.

"In my view, Mission LiFE too is, in a way, a manifestation of Art of Living," he said.

Expressing confidence that Art of Living would continue expanding its social outreach and strengthen its role as an agent of transformation, Modi said he hoped all these goals would be realised by the time the organisation celebrated Ravi Shankar's centenary. (PTI)

LOST

I have Lost my Registration certificate of H.S.L.C. (ASSEB) Reg No- 146716, Code No 165432 of session 2024-25.

Name : Mohammed maruf Ahmed
S/o Nizam Uddin Vill-
Moudanga pather
P/s Murajhar
Dist- Hojai (Assam)

EAM's visit sees agreements in tourism, health, infrastructure and Ayurveda India signs 8 MoUs with Trinidad and Tobago during Jaishankar's visit

PORT OF SPAIN, May 10: India and Trinidad and Tobago have signed eight agreements in sectors including tourism, healthcare, infrastructure and Ayurveda during External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's two-day visit to the Caribbean nation, according to an official statement.

Jaishankar, who visited the Caribbean nation on May 8-9, held talks with Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and other senior leaders on expanding bilateral cooperation and reviewed progress on announcements made during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Trinidad and Tobago last year. India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in its statement on Sunday.

"A total of 8 MoUs were signed between the two sides in the areas of tourism, solarisation of T&T's Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs building, vector control, infrastructure upgrade of Nelson Island where the Indian immigrants were stayed initially and for setting up of an Indian Chair on Ayurveda at the Uni-



University of the West Indies," it said. In the presence of Persad-Bissessar, Jaishankar handed over the first batch of 2,000 laptops to selected schoolchildren and inaugurated an agro-processing facility for which machinery worth USD 1 million was provided by India last year.

Persad-Bissessar and Jaishankar jointly inaugurated Trinidad and Tobago's National Prosthetics Centre in Penal.

According to the MEA statement, discussions also covered cooperation in infrastructure, security, forensics, healthcare and capacity building.

The two sides reaffirmed coordination in regional and multilateral forums, including on issues concerning the Global South.

The MEA said the visit gave "fresh impetus" to India's ties with Trinidad and Tobago.

Jaishankar concluded his visit to Trinidad and Tobago on Saturday. He was in Port of Spain on the concluding leg of his three-nation tour of Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, aimed at deepening India's engagement with the Caribbean nations. (PTI)

Press freedom alarm as Niger suspends 9 French media outlets over 'national security'

NIAMEY (NIGER), May 10: An international advocacy group Saturday condemned Niger's suspension of nine French media outlets accused of "threatening public order and national security."

Reporters Without Borders called the charges "fabricated" in a post on X. It condemned a "coordinated strategy to repress press freedom" and called for the decision's reversal.

The National Observatory of Communication, the West African nation's media regulatory authority, said in a statement late Friday that the suspension of France 24, RFI, France Afrique Média, LSI Africa, AFP, TV5 Monde, TF1 Info, Jeune Afrique and Mediapart was necessary to "preserve peace, social co-

hesion and the stability of institutions."

It accused the affected outlets of "repeatedly broadcasting content likely to seriously endanger public order" and undermine the morale of defense and security forces operating in the region.

Niger, alongside neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso, are ruled by military leaders who took power by force, pledging to provide more security to citizens.

Since seizing power, the juntas have cut ties with France and other Western powers, created their own security alliance and turned to Russia for military support to fight extremist insurgencies.

The security situation in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso has wors-

ened in recent times, analysts say, with a record number of attacks by Islamic extremists.

In January, Islamic militants attacked an air force base in Niger's capital, killing four soldiers. Niger's military ruler Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani accused the presidents of France, Benin and Ivory Coast of supporting the armed group behind the attack, without providing any evidence to support the claim.

Military leaders in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso have also cracked down on political dissent and journalists.

Niger's media regulatory authority did not specify the duration of the suspensions or provide detailed examples of the content that prompted the action. (AP)

Bangladesh's HC rejects detained Hindu monk's bail petition

DHAKA, May 10: Bangladesh's High Court on Sunday rejected a bail petition of Hindu monk Brahmachari Chinmoy Krishna Das since he is being tried in a lower court in connection with a lawyer's murder in 2024.

Das, a spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested from Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on November 25, 2024 for alleged sedition.

He was jailed after he was denied bail by a court in the southeastern port city of Chattogram, which prompted his followers to protest in Dhaka and other places the next day. The protest turned violent in Chattogram, where the lawyer, a junior government prosecutor Saiful Islam Alif, was killed. (PTI)

Bangladesh's deposed PM Hasina congratulates newly appointed West Bengal CM



DHAKA, May 10: Bangladesh's deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday congratulated Suwendu Adhikari as he assumed office as West Bengal's Chief Minister after BJP's landslide victory in the state.

"I congratulate Suwendu Adhikari on my personal behalf and on behalf of the people of Bangladesh on his assuming office as the Chief Minister after the huge victory of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the West Bengal State Assembly," Hasina said in a statement.

She said West Bengal's role in genuine friendly relations between Bangladesh and India was unique and "I believe under his leadership this relationship will reach a new trajectory".

"As a neighbour, we always wish for prosperity and peace in West Bengal," said Hasina, whose Awami League was disbanded by Muhammad Yunus' past interim regime, while the ban was endorsed by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's incumbent Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government in parliament.

In another development, Jamaat chief Shafiqur Rahman, told reporters his party was observing the situation in West Bengal following the polls.

"We will do whatever is needed as a neighbour ... not just West Bengal alone, we are opposed to any injustice against innocent people in any place in the world," he said, adding that India was a secular country and its constitution entitled followers of any faith to every civic right. (PTI)

15 security officials killed in militant attack in northwest Pakistan



PESHAWAR, May 10: At least 15 security officials were killed and several were injured in a suicide attack and ambush at a police post in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the police said.

The incident took place on Saturday in the northwest district of Bannu where an explosive-laden vehicle approaching a police post was fired at by security personnel, leading to a blast, the police said.

The impact of the explosion led to the collapse of the roofs of several houses in the vicinity. The police post building was also razed to the ground, and several security personnel were buried under the rubble.

After the explosion, the police said, a large group of militants launched an attack on the police post, triggering heavy exchange of fire.

A spokesperson of Bannu police told PTI that 15 security officials were killed in the attack and several were injured.

There is no clarity yet on the number of militants killed in the incident or whether any of them were held.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi condemned the "terrorist attack" and expressed sorrow over the loss of lives. His office said he has directed the authorities to ensure the best possible medical treatment for the injured.

He termed the attack on the police post as "highly tragic and a cowardly act," adding that such attacks could not undermine the morale of the police and the public.

In a similar incident last week, Pakistani security forces gunned down a suspected militant who was approaching a check post in an explosive-laden vehicle in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's South Waziristan region. (PTI)

Pak Army chief terms last year's conflict with India as 'battle of two ideologies'

ISLAMABAD, May 10: Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir on Sunday termed last year's conflict with India as a "battle between two ideologies."

Addressing a ceremony at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi to mark the first anniversary of 'Marka-e-Haq', the name given by Islamabad to the four-day conflict with India, Munir also claimed that Pakistan's strategy was "superior" to that of India during the conflict.

In response to the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed, India launched Operation Sindoore on May 7 last year, carrying out airstrikes on nine terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, eliminating at least 100 terrorists.

The action triggered a rapid escalation in tensions, with Pakistan launching retaliatory strikes, though most of them were thwarted by the Indian military.

The hostilities ended with an understanding on halting the military actions on May 10, 2025, following talks over the hotline between army officials of the two sides.

Addressing Sunday's event, Munir alleged that India "violated the sovereignty and territory" of Pakistan between the night of May 6-7 and May 10 last year, and said Pakistan responded "with full national unity and military force".

"Marka-e-Haq was not merely a traditional war fought between two countries or militaries, but in reality, it was a decisive marka (battle) between two ideologies," he said.

Munir claimed that Pakistan had struck 26 targets during the conflict. He, however, did not provide any evidence in support of his claims.

He also claimed that India had sought a ceasefire through the US and that Pakistan agreed to it "in the interest of peace".

India maintains that the understanding to stop military actions was reached directly between the two sides.

Stating that future wars would be different due to their "multi-domain" nature, Munir said Pakistan is preparing for conflicts through technology, hardware and training.

"Our defence will remain impeccable. We want peace and will maintain it through credible deterrence," he said, highlighting Pakistan's military modernisation, including Hangor-class submarines, a new Rocket Force and fighter aircraft acquisitions. (PTI)

Iran war could make Trump's trip to China a bit chillier than his first-term visit

WASHINGTON, May 10: Weeks before his trip to China, President Donald Trump was already predicting on social media that his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, would "give me a big, fat hug when I get there".

But Beijing's deep economic ties to Iran, as well as trade tensions over tariff threats stretching back to Trump's first term, could crimp the good feelings when Trump flies to Beijing this week — even though the Republican president has for years effusively praised Xi, making it clear he sees China's leader as a competitor strong enough to warrant his respect and admiration.

Trump isn't fond of long plane rides or extended stretches away from the White House or his properties in Florida and New Jersey. He is expected to only spend parts of three days on the ground in China.

There will be plenty of pomp, but the grandeur is not expected to rival Trump's first visit to China in 2017, which Beijing dubbed a "state visit-plus".

"Even before this whole conflagration with Iran, they weren't going to go state visit-plus like last time, just because things are tense," said Jonathan Czin, a former director for China at the National Security Council during the Biden administration.

On Trump's first-term trip, China rolled out the red carpet for his arrival, with a band playing military music and children waving flags and chanting "Welcome". Xi offered a tour of the Forbidden City. Trump and first lady Melania Trump even had a private dinner there. Trump was the first foreign leader since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949 to experience what was once reserved for emperors.

The following morning brought another welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People and featured a military parade. There also was a state banquet in Trump's honour with video highlights from the Chinese leader's previous visit to Florida and a clip of Trump's granddaughter Arabella singing in Chinese.

Beijing does not offer this level of spectacle to most visiting foreign leaders. When British Prime Minister Keir Starmer visited the Forbidden City in January, Xi did not attend and the site remained open to the public. Starmer had to contend with tourists.

Ali Wyne, senior US-China research and advocacy adviser for the Washington nonprofit the Crisis Group, said the "Chinese delegation will likely do its utmost to ensure that Trump leaves Beijing

believing that he has just concluded the most extraordinary state visit of his two presidencies."

But, he said, the "pomp and circumstance would serve a different role now than they did when he first visited Beijing" because "Xi has a much better understanding of Trump, and the administration's own national security strategy and national defence strategy recognise China as a near-peer".

Expectations for what gets accomplished could be lower this time, said Czin, now a fellow at the Brookings Institution. He predicted that the Chinese may not offer major breakthroughs on trade or anything else because they are "working backward from our midterm elections" with the theory that the closer they get to Election Day "the more leverage they are going to have".

The GOP is focused on retaining control of Congress, even as polling shows most Americans are unhappy with Trump's economic policies and believe that the United States went too far in Iran.

Still, the White House argues that Trump's previous firm hand with Beijing on tariffs — which the Supreme Court subsequently struck down — means the US will remain in a strong position.

"President Trump cares about results, not symbols," White House spokesman Anna Kelly said. "But even still, the president has a great relationship with President Xi, and the upcoming summit in Beijing will be both symbolically and substantively significant."

Trump could meet with China's leader four times in eight months. After his visit to Beijing, Trump plans to host Xi at the White House. Trump might also attend the November Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Shenzhen, China. And Xi could come to the Group of 20 summit the following month at Trump's resort in Doral, Florida.

Czin noted that Xi also is not very fond of travel, meaning not all of the planned encounters may happen. He said China's leader also does not "do personal connections" like the kind Trump relishes, noting Xi led a Chinese military purge in January that included replacing officials with long-standing personal ties to his family.

Wyne, though, said Xi also "appreciates that he is unlikely to deal with another US president who admires him as greatly and embraces as narrow a view of strategic competition".

That means Xi may "attempt to pocket as many economic and security concessions from Trump as possible," Wyne said. (AP)

President Dissanayake congratulates CM Vijay

COLOMBO, May 10: President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Sunday highlighted the deep historical and cultural ties between Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu as he congratulated actor-turned-politician Chandrasekar Joseph Vijay on being sworn in as the Chief Minister of the southern Indian state.

In a social media post, Dissanayake said Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu are "connected through history, culture, enterprise, and enduring people-to-people ties across generations".

"Our future holds immense economic promise and opportunity as Sri Lanka and India continue to build ever closer ties and a stronger partnership," he said.

Dissanayake said he looked forward to working together within the framework of the India-Sri Lanka partnership towards "greater prosperity and progress".

"The people of Sri Lanka join me in wishing you and the people of Tamil Nadu every success," he added.

Sri Lanka's main Tamil party, Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK), also congratulated the 51-year-old Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) founder-chief.

"Our heartfelt congratulations to Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Hon. C Joseph Vijay," ITAK general secretary M A Sumanthiran said in a social media post.

Tamils make up approximately 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's population, forming the largest ethnic minority in the island nation.

The population consists of two main groups, Sri Lankan Tamils (descendants of long-term residents who constitute approximately 13 per cent) and Indian Tamils (descendants of plantation workers brought by the British, who constitute about 5 per cent). They predominantly live in the Northern and Eastern provinces.

Vijay was sworn in as the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister on Sunday. Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar administered the oath of office and secrecy in a colourful ceremony held in Chennai. (PTI)

Fast-track post-Ditwah reconstruction aid, following high-level discussions in Colombo India, Sri Lanka agree to expedite Ditwah relief package

COLOMBO, May 10: India and Sri Lanka on Sunday agreed to expedite implementation of the post-Ditwah reconstruction package of USD 450 million that New Delhi offered after one of the worst natural disasters hit the island nation.

The issue was discussed when Indian High Commissioner in Colombo Santosh Jha met Sri Lanka's Labour Minister and Deputy Minister of Finance & Planning Anil Jayantha Fernando here.

"Agreed to expedite implementation of the post-Ditwah reconstruction package of USD 450 million," Jha said in a post on X.

On November 27 last year, Sri Lanka was hit by Cyclone Ditwah that affected over 3 million people, caused widespread flooding and landslides, and resulted in over 640



deaths.

India, as the first responder, launched 'Operation Sagar Bandhu' on November 28 to provide relief, recovery assistance and restore connectivity in Sri Lanka. That was in addition to the medi-

Former UK minister challenges PM Starmer's leadership

LONDON, May 10: Catherine West, a former Indo-Pacific minister in British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government, has given Labour ministers an ultimatum to unite behind a successor after the party's disastrous local election results. The Labour MP from north London on Saturday launched a 'stalking horse' leadership bid aimed at encouraging a stronger contender to emerge.

West said that Labour's poor performance in Thursday's elections for local councils across England and devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland was a "message from the working people" and the party must act to keep Reform UK leader Nigel Farage out of Downing Street.

"I was honoured to serve under Keir Starmer's leadership, both in Opposition and in Government. All of us in the Labour Party are thankful to Keir for the 2024 General Election and the good work since. I personally get on well with Keir," said West.

"But his approach is not cutting through, and the results over the past 48 hours are nothing short of disastrous. Unless things change, we risk Nigel Farage becoming prime minister. That's why, with regret and significant sadness, I firmly believe that Keir should outline his intention to resign as Prime Minister and oversee an orderly transition."

"The Labour Party need the chance to have an honest conversation about how we deliver the change we promised in 2024, and that requires new leadership which understands the urgent and real concerns of people across the UK," she said.

Starmer has indicated plans for a major speech on Monday to set out his strategy to revive the Labour government's electoral fortunes before a general election in 2029,

starting with the appointment of former Prime Minister Gordon Brown as advisor.

However, West has demanded that Starmer must use the speech to set out a timetable for his exit as party leader to make way for a new PM.

"Keir has demonstrated significant leadership on the world stage and is well placed to represent the UK's national interest while this process takes place and may even continue in an international role in the future but for now I know I speak for more Labour people than just myself in wanting him to step aside as our Leader," she added in a social media post.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, the former Foreign Office minister said that she will be forced to enter the race to trigger a leadership election unless ministers choose a credible successor.

"Once I've listened carefully to what he (Starmer) says (on Monday), I will be demanding a timetable for an orderly transition," West told reporters.

"What I want the Cabinet to do is to close themselves into a room today and come up with somebody who they can all get behind, which would mean we wouldn't have to have a leadership election," the Labour MP said.

"And if that can happen, then we can have a very quiet transition without upsetting anybody, without having to go to all of the members," she added.

Starmer has pledged to fight on despite the Labour's historic defeat, losing swathes of council seats across England to smaller parties led by anti-immigration Reform UK, with Greens and Liberal Democrats also picking up key councils. (PTI)



top leaders and assured Delhi's steadfast commitment to Colombo's rebuilding post-cyclone.

The assistance package included USD 350 million in concessional Lines of Credit and USD 100 million of grants.

Jha further added that he discussed other bilateral projects by reviewing their progress. "Briefed him on the progress on various bilateral projects."

Indian projects currently in Sri Lanka cover housing, health, water, infrastructure and technology in addition to the cultural sector.

The two sides also discussed and exchanged ideas on potential collaboration in domains of modern financial frameworks and cyber security, Jha added. (PTI)

Punjab Kings seek course correction against deflated Delhi Capitals

DHARAMSALA, May 10: Punjab Kings would be aiming to arrest their surprising slide towards the business end of the Indian Premier League when they host an out of sorts Delhi Capitals in the picturesque environment of Dharamsala here on Monday.

Finishing the home leg with three games at the HPCA Stadium till May 17, Punjab Kings would be eyeing an improvement in all departments following defeats in their last three league games.

There is no need to press the panic button for a team that was the only unbeaten side in the competition not so long ago but it really needs to get its basics right for the remainder of the league stage.

PBKs' catching was abysmal in Hyderabad, the pacers led by Arshdeep Singh have been leaking runs while the runs that were flowing from the opening duo of Priyansh Arya and Prabhsimran Singh have dried up.

Shreyas Iyer has led Punjab Kings from the front and with at least couple of wins still needed to make the play-offs, he wants his players to stick to the methods that brought them success in the first half of the tournament.

Momentum is key in a fickle format like the T20s and Punjab Kings would want that on their side as early as the next game.

"I feel we got a fairytale start in this tournament and everyone were in a great space and the mindset was top notch. I think it's important that we stick with the same mindset.

"It's easy to get diverted with talking negative about things. But definitely we got to go back, reflect on things that we didn't do well in the particular last three matches and see to it that we come back strong," said Iyer following the loss to Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Delhi Capitals, on the other hand, already



have one eye on the next season after losing five of their last six games, pushing them towards the bottom of the table. They have had a horror run at home and therefore would welcome a change of scenery for the game against Punjab

Kings. The batters have failed to adapt on slow and turning surfaces, exposing their vulnerabilities.

The ordinary run of premier spinner Kuldeep Yadav has compounded their woes while the arrival of Mitchell Starc may well be a case of too late. Like PBKS, fielding too has let them down.

"There's still a long journey ahead and next year will come too. So we'll think about what plans we can make for next year and what approach we should take. Based on that, we can also look at the players sitting on the bench and decide who can be given opportunities and what changes we can make," said captain Axar Patel after the loss to KKR.

Mathematically, DC are not out of the playoff race yet but it is highly unlikely that they would go advance in the tournament.

Squads:
Punjab Kings: Shreyas Iyer (c),

Priyansh Arya, Harnoor Singh, Prabhsimran Singh, Mitchell Owen, Vishnu Vinod, Nehal Wadhwa, Azmatullah Omarzai, Marco Jansen, Musheer Khan, Shashank Singh, Marcus Stoinis, Suryansh Shedge, Arshdeep Singh, Xavier Bartlett, Yuzvendra Chahal, Lockie Ferguson, Harpreet Brar, Vijaykumar Vishwak, Yash Thakur, Cooper Connolly, Ben Dwarshuis, Praveen Dube, Pyla Avinash, Vishal Nishad

Delhi Capitals: Abhishek Porel, KL Rahul, Nitish Rana, Sameer Rizvi, Tristan Stubbs, Axar Patel, Ashutosh Sharma, Dushmantha Chameera, Kuldeep Yadav, Mukesh Kumar, Vipraj Nigam, Mitchell Starc, Tripurana Vijay, David Miller, Auqib Nabi Dar, Pathum Nissanka, Lungi Ngidi, Prithvi Shaw, Kyle Jamieson, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Madhav Tiwari, Sahil Parakh, Karun Nair, T Natarajan.

Match starts 7.30 IST. (PTI)

Twisted my ankle while taking a run, but it settled down after half an hour: Gill

JAIPUR, May 10: Gujarat Titans captain Shubman Gill on Saturday said he twisted his ankle during his sublime knock of 84 off 44 balls but was able to continue his innings to help his side beat Rajasthan Royals by 77 runs in their Indian Premier League match here.

Gill's knock, studded with nine fours and three sixes, was a masterclass in timing and strokeplay as he mixed elegance with aggression despite struggling briefly with discomfort in his left foot before reaching his fourth IPL fifty this season.

He shared a commanding 118-run opening stand with Sudharsan (55 off 36 balls) to take GT to 229 for 4 after being asked to bat first.

Chasing 230, RR were bowled out for 152 in 16.3 overs with veteran leg spinner Rashid Khan returning with impressive figures of 4/33 while Jason Holder took 3/12.

"While taking run, I think I twisted my ankle a little bit. It was painful. But I think after half an hour or so, it settled down," Gill said at the post-match presentation.

"Very happy (for the win). Next game is at home and hopefully we will have another good match."

He said it was a near perfect match for his side.

"Yeah, definitely (perfect match). Even before this match, we had a conversation that till now I

don't think we had a perfect match. I think this was a clean win for us. We got 10-15 extra, it was not easy to hit sixes or boundaries (against the spinners).

"Always knew if we got a couple of wickets in the powerplay, we would have a good game."

On pacers Mohammed Siraj and Kagiso Rabada bowling three overs each in the powerplay, Gill said, "We believe it is important to hold fort up front. If we take wickets, it gives the bowlers more chance to attack through the middle.

"You have to keep taking wickets - there is no other way."

Star leg-spinner Rashid, who was named Player of the Match, said this season was more about enjoying his craft.

"Quite happy. It was something unusual for me (in last two seasons). This season, more about enjoying myself and hitting the right areas consistently. Happy with that (so far).

"When I had that surgery, I took only two months to get back. That time, I made a huge mistake (of coming back soon). Last year, when IPL was over, I had 2-3 months off and tried to work on my fitness. The rhythm I bowl through the crease - it was something I was missing. Had a good 'Hundred' competition and then kept on." (PTI)

Man City closes gap on Arsenal and Liverpool fans boo more dropped points in Chelsea draw



MANCHESTER, May 10: Manchester City kept the pressure on Arsenal at the top of the Premier League after beating Brentford 3-0.

Cheers rang around Etihad Stadium after second half goals from Jeremy Doku, Erling Haaland and Omar Marmouh helped second-placed City close the gap on leader Arsenal to two points.

It was a different atmosphere at Anfield where Liverpool fans jeered as the defending champion dropped more points in a 1-1 draw with Chelsea.

Third-placed Manchester United drew at Sunderland 0-0 while there were wins for Champions Bournemouth and Brighton.

City keeps title hopes alive

Another big goal from Doku settled City nerves and kept manager Pep Guardiola in contention for a seventh Premier League title.

"I love it. I love to be here again," Guardiola said, adding he feels no tension in the heat of the title race.

A well-organized Brentford managed to frustrate City until Doku came up with a moment of magic on the hour — curling a right-footed shot into the far corner.

It was a near-carbon copy of his late equalizer against Everton that salvaged a 3-3 draw for Guardiola's team on Monday.

That draw put the title race in Arsenal's hands, but victory against Brentford ensured the pressure remained on the Gunners to get a win at West Ham on Sunday.

"Come on you Irons!" Guardiola said at the end of his post-game news conference in reference to West Ham's nickname.

Haaland bundled the ball over the line in the 75th for City's second and his 50th of the season for his club and national team Norway.

Substitute Marmouh got the third in added time.

Jeers for Liverpool

The draw with Chelsea at Anfield saw Liverpool move a step closer to guaranteed Champions League qualification — fourth in the table with two rounds left — but another unconvincing performance sparked a frustrated reaction from the crowd.

There were boos at the final whistle to mark growing unrest from Liverpool supporters in a season that has seen the team tamely surrender the title despite spending around \$570 million in the transfer market.

There has been speculation about the job of coach Arne Slot, who insists there will be improvements next term. (AP)

Kane's Bundesliga penalty streak ends with miss and Leipzig back in Champions League

MUNICH, May 10: Harry Kane's remarkable penalty conversion streak in the Bundesliga has ended at 24 as the Bayern Munich striker missed a spot kick for the first time, while Leipzig secured a return to the Champions League.

Kane stepped up to the penalty spot at 0-0 against Wolfsburg after teammate Michael Olise was fouled by defender Konstantinos Koulierakis.

Kane seemed to slip slightly as he approached the ball and his shot went wide of the right-hand post.

Bayern still got a 1-0 win in its second-to-last Bundesliga game of the season but it needed a spectacular curling goal off the underside of the crossbar by Olise, and Wolfsburg's Mattias Svanberg hitting the bar in the 89th minute with only the goalkeeper to beat.

Kane hadn't missed a penalty in the Bundesliga since he joined Bayern in 2023, with 10 of his 24 scored this season alone.

Across all competitions, Kane has failed to convert three penalties for Bayern this season. One was saved by third-division Wehen Wiesbaden's Florian Stritzel in the German Cup and Kane hit the crossbar against Union Saint-Gilloise in the Champions League.

Relegation scenarios

Wolfsburg stayed 16th and in danger of relegation. It last played outside the top division in 1997. American midfielder Kevin Paredes and Algerian striker Mohamed Amoura were "not in the squad for disciplinary reasons," Wolfsburg said without giving further details.

The bottom three teams — Wolfsburg, St. Pauli and Heidenheim — are battling to avoid ending next week in the bottom two and being relegated. Their only chance is to finish 16th and reach a promotion-relegation playoff against a second-division team.

Wolfsburg visits 17th-placed St. Pauli next Saturday in the final round of regular season games. Wolfsburg will be relegated with a loss but could survive with a draw. St. Pauli must win.

Last-placed Heidenheim has two

games to play and could yet overhaul both Wolfsburg and St. Pauli, but needs to avoid defeat against Cologne on Sunday first.

Leipzig's Champions League return

Leipzig survived a late scare to secure a Champions League return for next season and a 2-1 win over St. Pauli made sure of third place in the Bundesliga.

Leipzig was leading 2-0 with both goals from corners after Xaver Schlager bundled in a loose ball just before halftime and Willi Orban headed in shortly after the break.

Relegation-threatened St. Pauli showed late signs of life through Abdoulaye Ceesay's 86th-minute goal off an unusual long-range header assist by Jackson Irvine.

It's a much better season for Leipzig after placing seventh last year, its worst top-flight finish, and also losing seven of eight Champions League games.

St. Pauli was 17th in the 18-team league following its ninth winless game in a row.

Stuttgart nears Champions League

Deniz Undav's 19th league goal of the season capped a 3-1 comeback win for Stuttgart over Bayer Leverkusen to leave Stuttgart in the fourth Champions League spot.

Leverkusen stunned with Alex Garcia's goal 34 seconds into the game on the counter, but Ermedin Demirovic leveled for Stuttgart in the fifth minute and won a penalty that Maximilian Mittelstädt converted to take the lead just before halftime.

Undav, the second highest scorer in the league after Kane, added a third off Jamie Leweling's cross.

Leverkusen was sixth with only a slim chance of a Champions League spot.

Hoffenheim was level on points with Stuttgart in fifth after its 1-0 win over Werder Bremen was made easier by a fifth-minute red card for Bremen's Yukinari Sugawara for a reckless studs-up challenge. Bazoumana Toure scored the only goal from a quickly taken corner. (AP)

Wouldn't mind watching in all three formats for India: Ashwin

JAIPUR, May 10: India spin great R Ashwin wants to see teen sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi play all three formats for the national team.

Opening for the Rajasthan Royals, the Sooryavanshi has continued to carve a fearless reputation, taking on the best with remarkable ease in the ongoing IPL season.

"He is taking every bowler down. I wouldn't mind watching him in a Test match, and I wouldn't mind watching him in all three formats of the game. Get him onto cricket grounds, get people coming along, because he is going to entertain you.

"He is leaving no stone unturned, putting every ounce of force he can into the cricket ball. The way he played, even in the U-19 World Cup final, putting everything together, he is looking like a box-office player.

"There are very few windows in your cricketing career where you can absolutely enjoy your cricket, and he is only 15 years old. I think we should just let him be," Ashwin said on JioStar.

Rajasthan Royals should let him be and allow him to play the way he has been, said Ashwin referring to the 15 year old. The southpaw has maintained his sensational ball striking in the tournament, showing no fear against the likes of Jasprit Bumrah, Josh Hazlewood and most recently Mohammed Siraj.

Siraj eventually dismissed Sooryavanshi on Saturday night with a short ball but it was not before being belted for a six. (PTI)

GT have got apex predators at the top of the order, we are clicking as a unit: Hayden

JAIPUR, May 10: Gujarat Titans batting coach Matthew Hayden believes they possess a destructive bowling attack and are loaded with "apex predators" at the top of the order, with the side beginning to peak at the right time in the Indian Premier League.

The Titans have won four matches on the trot, including a 77-run victory over Rajasthan Royals here on Saturday, to move into second spot as the race for playoff intensifies.

"It is a very good team. It is a dangerous bowling side, and that is what we have seen tonight. It can be a very destructive bowling side.

"We have just got so many apex predators at the top of the batting order, that one, two, three is such a solid unit," Hayden said at the post-match press conference.

The Titans' also boast of a varied bowling attack that includes the likes of Kagiso Rabada, Mohammed Siraj, Rashid Khan, Jason Holder, Prasad Krishna, Washington Sundar and Sai Kishore.

"We did not even play Prasad Krishna, another international player. We have got versatility as a side, and saw tonight with Sai Kishore. And we are starting to play with

great confidence."

"Tonight was actually the first game as a coach that I thought like we put all of those departments together really nicely so this win away from home was an important win for us," he added.

In the era of brutal power-hitting, GT have charted their own formula for success, relying on their top three of skipper Shubman Gill, Sai Sudharsan and Jos Buttler to do the heavy lifting.

"Gujarat Titans have gone about this tournament their own way. They have constructed a line-up that revolves around consistency. Not exactly going to set the world on fire with star power."

Against RR, openers Sudharsan and Gill laid the platform for a huge total of 229/4 with a 118-run opening stand before Rahul Tewatia blazed his way to 14 off four balls.

The Australian batting great feels teams chasing targets in excess of 200 need to bat deeper, which the GT top 3 have managed to do.

"Well, tonight was a good example, right, of an exciting young talent in Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. He batted, got 30 runs at a strike rate of 300. (PTI)

Yuvraj Sandhu has late stumble to drop out of top 20

BARCELONA, May 10: Yuvraj Sandhu carded a round of even par 72 after being well placed around the turn in the third round at the Estrella Damm Catalunya Championship on the third day here.

He dropped a double bogey and a bogey on the back nine to finish at 72. With a total score of 4-under par (68-72-72) Sandhu is placed T-46.

Earlier Shubhankar Sharma and Veer Ahlawat had missed the cut.

Sandhu began the week with a strong opening round of 4-under 68 and followed it with a difficult second day where he carded an even par 72.

In his third round Sandhu began strong and had made four birdies and one bogey in the first 10 holes and looked poised to finish the third day inside the top 20.

However, a double bogey on the 15th hole followed by a late bogey on the 18th saw Sandhu drop three shots in four holes and drop down to T-46 on the leaderboard. (PTI)

Deepika leads women's recurve team to dramatic World Cup gold; India finish with two medals

SHANGHAI, May 10: The Indian trio of Deepika Kumari, Anika Bhakat and teenager Kumkum Mohod held their nerve in a tense shoot-off to beat home favourites China and clinch the women's recurve team gold medal at the Archery World Cup Stage 2 here on Sunday.

In a final marked by fluctuating fortunes, India edged out the home side 5-4 (28-26) in the shoot-off after the four-set regulation ended 4-4.

There was however heartbreak for Simranjeet Kaur who lost to World No. 1 and eventual champion Kang Chaeyoung of South Korea in straight sets in the semifinal, before going down to another Korean, Jang Minhee, in the playoff for the bronze medal.

India thus ended their campaign with two medals -- one gold and bronze that came through Sahil Jadhav in the men's individual compound section on Saturday.

Led by four-time Olympian Deepika, India were inconsistent and almost let it slip after taking the first set.

Trailing 2-4, India were on the verge of defeat but the relatively-inexperienced Chinese side comprising two 21-year-olds in Zhu



Jingyi, Huang Yuwei and teenager Yu Qi failed to wrap it up in the fourth set.

Needing a nine in the final arrow, the 18-year-old Yu Qi slipped to 8-ring, giving Indians a lucky escape as the trio peaked well to win the ensuing shoot-off by two points.

The 17-year-old Kumkum, who made her World Cup debut in Puebla last month, shot a splendid 10, after Anika started off with a 9, while Deepika calmed her nerves to seal the gold with a 9 in the final arrow of the shoot-off.

Against a young Chinese side comprising

The victory was especially sweeter as India had earlier stunned record 10-time Olympic champions South Korea in the semifinals en route to their first World Cup women's team gold since 2021.

Deepika, who was also part of India's World Cup-winning teams in Guatemala City and Paris in 2021, now has seven World Cup team gold medals to her name since 2010.

It was also the Indian women recurve team's first World Cup medal in three years, its previous podium finish coming in Stage 4 in Paris in 2023, where Anika was a member of the winning team.

Travelling without a full-time national coach amid the impasse over appointments, it was the vastly experienced Deepika who led from the front, constantly motivating her teammates during breaks and changeovers.

Prafull Dange, who was the designated women's recurve coach after his ward Kumkum topped the national trials, largely remained in the background as Deepika guided the side through the pressure moments against a hostile home crowd and vocal Chinese support staff.

Against a young Chinese side comprising

Zhu Jingyi, Huang Yuwei and teenager archer Yu Qi, who all made their World Cup debuts only last year, India looked in control initially but nearly let the match slip after taking the opening set (54-53).

Shooting last in the Indian order, Deepika set the tone with successive 10s as India took the first set despite Anika (8-8) and 17-year-old Kumkum (10-8) putting up an inconsistent show.

Deepika continued her fine rhythm in the second set with another perfect 10 as India briefly held a one-point advantage (28-27) midway through the end. But China responded strongly with two 9s and a 10 in their final three arrows of the second set to post 55.

Anika replied with a 9, but Kumkum managed only an 8, leaving Deepika needing a 10 to level the set.

The four-time Olympian, however, slipped to a 7 as India lost the set 52-55 and China drew level at 2-2.

The hosts then moved ahead in the third set. The teams were initially tied at 56, but a review upgraded China's final arrow from 8 to 9, handing them the set 57-56 and a 4-2 lead. (PTI)

Super Rapid and Blitz: Gukesh ends sixth; Niemann wins

WARSAW, May 10: World champion D Gukesh had to be content with a sixth-place finish while Hans Moke Niemann of the United States kept his nerves towards the end to win the Super rapid and blitz, a part of the Grand Chess Tour.

Gukesh ended his stint with 17 points out of a possible 36 that included 9 rapid and 18 blitz games. With each rapid game win worth two and blitz one point, Gukesh scored nine points in rapid and eight points in blitz.

Things could have been worse but Gukesh won the last round against Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland to finish around the middle bracket.

It may be recalled that Gukesh had withdrawn from the main events of GCT and will only be playing the rapid and blitz this year. The youngest ever world champion is also slated to play his match against Javokhir Sindarov of United States later this year apart from the Norway chess tournament.

Gukesh's three victories on the last day came against Wesley So of United States, Niemann and Duda while most notable of his four losses was against Sindarov who won the personal battle against the Indian by 2-1 margin out of the three games played between them here.

Meanwhile, Hans Niemann showed his steely nerves and won the last two rounds to finish on 22.5 points that was enough to clinch the trophy as well as the first prize of 50000 USD.

In the final round, Niemann defeated Radoslaw Wojtaszek of Poland.

Fabiano Caruana of United States finished second on 22 points, a full point ahead of Wesley, Vladimir Fedoseev of Slovenia ended fourth on 18 while Firouzja Alireza of France was fifth ahead of Gukesh.

The Grand Chess tournament caravan now moves to Romania capital Bucharest for Super Classic and the lone Indian in the fray is R Praggnanandhaa.

Final Standings: 1. Hans Moke Niemann (Usa, 22.5); 2. Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 22); 3. Wesley So (Usa, 21); 4. Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 18); 5. Firouzja Alireza (Fra, 17.5); 6. D Gukesh (Ind, 17); 7-9. Duda Jan-Krzysztof (Pol), Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) 16.5 each 10. Radoslaw Wojtaszek (Pol, 12.5). (PTI)

