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'Government's future roadmap will be broader and more ambitious than 2021' New govt to intensify developmental push: Himanta

Staff Reporter.
GUWAHATI, May 15: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said the BJP-led alliance would take forward a bigger development agenda in the state after securing a massive mandate in the Assembly elections and winning 102 seats in the 126-member House.

Speaking to reporters in Nagaon, Sarma said the decisive public mandate has significantly increased the responsibility of the government towards the people of Assam.

"The more support people give us, the greater our responsibility becomes. During the last five years, we worked with dedication, but now we will work even harder

to accelerate Assam's development," the Chief Minister said.

The BJP-led NDA registered a commanding victory in the Assembly elections, decimating the opposition parties and retaining power in the northeastern state.

Sarma said the government's future roadmap would be broader and more ambitious compared to the commitments made during the 2021 Assembly elections, which were held in the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"In 2021, when we prepared our election manifesto, the Covid crisis was before us. Because of that situation, many of our commitments were limited in nature. This time, we are preparing a much larger vision for Assam's growth," he said.



The Chief Minister added that the government now has greater administrative experience and confidence after implementing several welfare schemes, infrastructure

projects, and investment initiatives over the last few years.

He asserted that the BJP-led alliance would focus on translating its promises into practical out-

comes and ensuring that development reaches every section of society.

"We have promised more work for the people compared to the previous term, and we are confident of implementing these commitments on the ground," Sarma said.

The Chief Minister also highlighted achievements in sectors such as roads, healthcare, education, industrial investment, and connectivity, claiming that Assam has witnessed rapid transformation under the present government.

The NDA government has consistently projected infrastructure expansion, welfare delivery, and improved law and order as among its major achievements during its tenure in Assam.

'Sankaradeva birthplace to be made global spiritual centre'

Himanta offers prayers at Batadroba Thaan, Batadroba Thaan Management Committee



HT Correspondent.

NAGAON, May 15: Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma today visited the birth place of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva, Sri Sri Batadroba Thaan, for the first time since taking oath as the Chief Minister for his second term. The visit, his first outside Guwahati post swearing-in, was marked by prayers, public address, and a review of development plans for the sacred site.

Arriving at the newly constructed Batadroba 'Aavirbhav Kshetra' by a special helicopter in the morning, the Chief Minister proceeded by road to the historic Batadroba Thaan Satra in Nagaon

district. Dressed in traditional Assamese attire, Dr Sarma first offered 'seva' at the Kirtanghar, where 'bhakats' and vaishnavite scholars blessed him to discharge his state duties smoothly.

"The advent of Jagatguru Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva has blessed the land of Assam. His immortal message of Naam Dharma, devotion, humanity, and unity has shown Assam the path of light for centuries," the Chief Minister said, adding that he prayed for Gurujana's ideals to continue to illuminate the entire Assamese society with peace, harmony, and spiritual consciousness. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

2 killed in wild elephant attacks in Nagaon dist Growing human-elephant conflict comes to light again

Staff Reporter.

GUWAHATI, May 15: Two persons lost their lives in separate incidents of wild elephant attacks in Assam's Nagaon district on Friday, once again highlighting the growing human-elephant conflict in several parts of the state, officials said.

According to local sources, the first incident took place at Bajiagoan in Samaguri where a wild elephant attacked a man identified as Shariful Islam while he was working in a vegetable field.

The elephant reportedly emerged from a nearby forested area and attacked the victim suddenly, leaving him critically injured. Local residents rushed him for medical assistance, but he succumbed to his injuries.

In another incident reported from the same Samaguri area, a youth identified as Pranab Das was seriously injured in a wild elephant attack. He was admitted to a hospital in critical condition but later died during treatment, officials said.

The incidents triggered panic among villagers in the region, with residents alleging that wild elephants frequently enter human habitations and agricultural fields in search of food.

Forest department officials reached the affected areas and launched efforts to monitor elephant movement. Authorities have also appealed to villagers to remain alert and avoid venturing alone into forest fringe areas during evening and early morning hours. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

A proud moment for Assam as we continue to protect every species: CM Country's 1st satellite-tagged Ganges softshell turtle released in KNP

GUWAHATI, May 15: The country's first satellite-tagged Ganges softshell turtle was released in Assam's Kaziranga National Park on Friday, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The release coincided with Endangered Species Day, Sarma said in a post on X.

"A first for India at Kaziranga! Marking #EndangeredSpeciesDay, the country's 1st satellite-tagged Ganges softshell turtle was released in @kaziranga, a major step for wildlife conservation,"

Sarma said.

"A proud moment for Assam as we continue to protect every species that calls our forests home," he added.

The Ganges softshell turtle is a freshwater reptile whose distribution is largely restricted to the Ganga, Indus and Mahanadi river systems in northern and eastern India.

The species is listed under Part II of Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and possession of the turtle is an offence under the law. (PTI)

UCC to ensure justice for every citizen: Himanta

GUWAHATI, May 15: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said the proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC) will ensure equal application of law for all citizens, with special emphasis on the rights of women and children.

He asserted that tribal communities will be kept out of the purview of the UCC to protect their traditions and customs.

"The Uniform Civil Code in Assam will ensure equal application of the rule of law for everyone and guarantee fair rights to all, especially women and children," Sarma said in a post on X.

"The Janjatiya Samaj of Assam will not be under the purview of #UCCAssam to protect their customs and traditions," he added, referring to the tribal communities.

The first cabinet meeting of the new government on Wednesday had approved the implementation of the UCC in the state, with tribals to be kept outside its purview, Sarma had said after the decision.

Sharing two slides on social media on the proposed UCC's objectives, the CM said it is about "one state, one law", which will ensure a single legal system for marriage, divorce and succession. Legal marriageable age will be

fixed at 18 years for women and 21 years for men, with mandatory reporting of all marriages and live-in relationships within 60 days.

"ST and Adivasi communities are fully exempted to preserve customs," Sarma added.

Maintaining that the UCC is to ensure "justice for every citizen", Sarma said it will entail that spouses, children and parents share equal inheritance.

The UCC will have explicit maintenance rights for women in marriages and live-in relationships, and guaranteed legitimacy for all children and mother-focussed custody for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Four-day Assembly session from May 21 Patowary takes oath as pro-tem Speaker

GUWAHATI, May 15: Senior-most MLA of the 16th Assam Assembly, Chandra Mohan Patowary, was on Friday sworn in as the pro-tem Speaker by Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya.

Acharya administered the oath to the BJP leader and former cabinet minister at a ceremony held at Lok Bhavan here.

"Today, at Lok Bhavan, Assam, I administered the oath of office as the Pro-tem Speaker of the newly constituted 16th Assam Legislative Assembly to Shri Chandra Mohan Patowary," the governor said in a post on X.

"I am confident that drawing upon his vast experience and commitment to democratic values, the initial proceedings of the Assembly will be conducted with complete constitutional dignity," Acharya added.

"Honoured to have taken oath as Pro-tem Speaker of 16th @AssamAssembly, administered by Hon'ble Governor of Assam Shri @Laxmanacharya54 Ji at Lok Bhavan

today," the seventh-time MLA said in a post on the social media site.

Patowary was first elected to the Assembly from Dharmapur constituency in 1985 as an Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) candidate. He represented the constituency six times, including twice as a BJP legislator since 2016.

He has been elected to the new Assembly from Tihu constituency, created during the 2023 delimitation exercise, which includes parts of the erstwhile Dharmapur seat. As pro-tem Speaker, Patowary will administer the oath to newly elected MLAs during the first session of the Assembly beginning on May 21. The four-day session will continue till May 26, with the legislators to be sworn-in on the first day, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said earlier.

The former cabinet minister will be responsible for the conduct of business till the election of the new Speaker.

The NDA had announced senior BJP legislator and ex-minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Drones, UAS like 'claws in the sky': IAF chief

NEW DELHI, May 15: IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal A P Singh on Friday said drones and other unmanned aerial systems are no more just eyes in the sky, rather they are now akin to "claws in the sky", being an extension of air power.

In his address at a defence seminar themed on unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and counter-UAS, he asserted that in any modern aerial threat, complete domain awareness is the key, and there should be "total coordination" among the three services which will be operat-

ing in the same air space.

"We have seen what happens... if you don't have domain awareness, you don't know where your people are and where others are. We've seen what happened to F-15s in Kuwait. The fratricide part. So we cannot afford to have things like that," the IAF chief said, referring to the incident on March 1 in which three US F-15E Strike Eagles went down over Kuwait due to an apparent friendly fire, according to the US CENTCOM. The seminar is being co-hosted by

NFR takes up safety measures for monsoon

GUWAHATI, May 15: The Northeast Frontier Railway on Friday said it has started installing automatic weather stations at vulnerable locations across its network to strengthen safety and disaster preparedness during the monsoon season.

The initiative aims to ensure accurate and real-time weather forecasting, enabling timely preventive measures during floods, landslides and adverse weather conditions, it said.

Three automatic weather stations (AWS) have already been successfully installed, while six more are currently under various stages of installation at identified vulnerable locations under the NFR jurisdiction, an NFR statement said.

These locations include the Lumding-Badarpur section in Assam, the Katakhal-Sairang section connecting Mizoram and the Jiribam-Khongsang route in Manipur.

These areas are prone to heavy rainfall, flooding and landslides during the monsoon season, making continuous weather monitoring essential for safe train operations, the statement said.

The six AWS are expected to be completed by the end of May, it said. The installation of these weather stations is being carried out in close coordination with the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The AWS network will provide precise and location-specific weather data, helping railway authorities to take timely and informed decisions during emergencies and adverse weather situations, the statement said.

This initiative is expected to significantly improve preparedness and response mechanisms, particularly in flood-prone and landslide-sensitive sections. These stations are equipped with advanced sensors capable of monitoring multiple weather parameters with high accuracy. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Cong leader Banashree Gogoi quits party

Staff Reporter.

GUWAHATI, May 15: Assam Senior Congress leader and All India Mahila Congress National Secretary Banashree Gogoi has resigned from all posts and the primary membership of the Indian National Congress, dealing a setback to the party in the state.

In her resignation letter addressed to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on May 14, Gogoi said she was stepping down from all responsibilities with immediate effect. "I hereby tender my resignation from all posts, responsibilities, and the Primary Membership of the Indian National Congress with immediate effect," she wrote (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Man gets 20-year RI under POC SO Ac

KOKRAJHAR, May 15: A court in Assam's Kokrajhar district on Friday sentenced a person to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment for sexually abusing a minor four years ago.

The court of Additional Sessions Judge-cum-Special Judge, Nurjamaal Haque, also imposed a fine of Rs 25,000 on the convict, failing to pay which he would have to undergo another six months of jail term. Officials said the accused, Mohar Ali, a resident of Kamalchhara village in Kokrajhar police station area, was convicted in the case registered under the Protection of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

No deals announced after Beijing meet

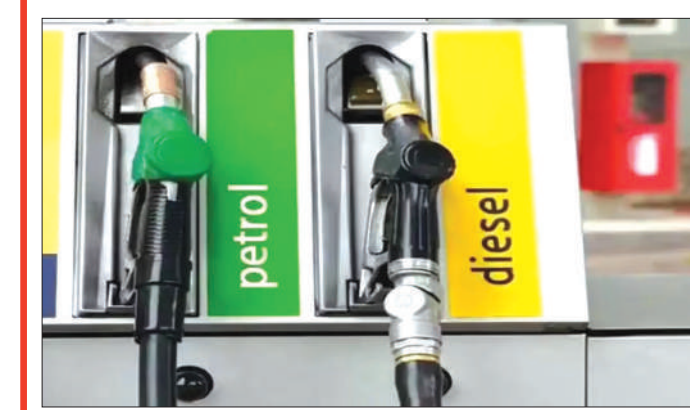
Trump, Xi conclude 'very successful' talks

BEIJING, May 15: Chinese President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart Donald Trump on Friday hailed their talks as "historic" and "landmark", as the American leader wrapped up his three-day visit on a high note, but no deals on any contentious issues were announced.

Both Presidents, who held several rounds of talks covering a range of global issues, including the Iran war and bilateral trade frictions, concluded their discussions with a private meeting at Zhongnanhai, the well-guarded compound in Beijing where top leaders reside.

Trump and Xi walked and talked

Petrol, diesel prices hiked by ₹ 3, CNG by ₹ 2



NEW DELHI, May 15: Petrol and diesel prices were raised by ₹ 3 per litre on Friday for the first time in more than four years, as surging global crude prices following the Iran war forced state-run fuel retailers to pass on part of their mounting losses after months of holding rates steady through key state elections.

The increase pushed petrol prices in New Delhi to ₹ 97.77 per litre from ₹ 94.77, while diesel rose to ₹ 90.67 from ₹ 87.67, according to industry sources. Rates vary across states due to differences in value-added tax. Compressed natural gas (CNG) prices were also raised by ₹ 2 per kg in cities including Delhi and Mumbai.

CNG in Delhi now costs ₹ 79.09 per kg, and in Mumbai it costs ₹ 84. However, prices of both natural gas piped into household kitchens for cooking, called piped natural gas, as well as domestic cooking gas LPG, remained unchanged.

Global crude prices have

surged more than 50 per cent since US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28 and Tehran's retaliation disrupted flows through the Strait of Hormuz, a key artery for global oil shipments.

Despite the surge, retail fuel rates were kept frozen at two-year-old rates as part of what the government said was an effort to shield price-sensitive consumers from higher global energy costs. But the opposition parties saw political motives behind the move as key states went to polls.

The increase in fuel prices followed the completion of elections and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) expanding its influence after winning three of five states, including West Bengal. After the increase, petrol and diesel prices are now the highest since May 2022. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi attacked the government over the hike, saying the public was being forced to pay for the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led administration's mistakes. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

IFAD delegation meets Assam CM

GUWAHATI, May 15: A high-level delegation of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on Friday met Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and discussed a proposed project aimed at strengthening rural livelihoods in the state.

The delegation was led by IFAD associate vice-president, department of country operations, Donal F Brown.

"A delegation led by Mr Donal F Brown, Associate Vice-President, Department of Country Operations of the IFAD, called upon HCM Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma today at Koinadhara," the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said in a post on X. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Stock markets close lower as weak rupee, inflation fears after fuel price hike weigh on sentiment

MUMBAI, May 15: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty surrendered early gains to close lower on Friday due to selling in metal, oil & gas and PSU bank shares and caution among investors amid surging crude oil prices.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 160.73 points, or 0.21 per cent, to settle at 75,237.99, after swinging between gains and losses during the session. The benchmark had rallied nearly 470 points in early trade before losing momentum.

The 50-share NSE Nifty settled lower by 46.10 points, or 0.19 per cent, at 23,643.50, snapping its two-day gaining streak.

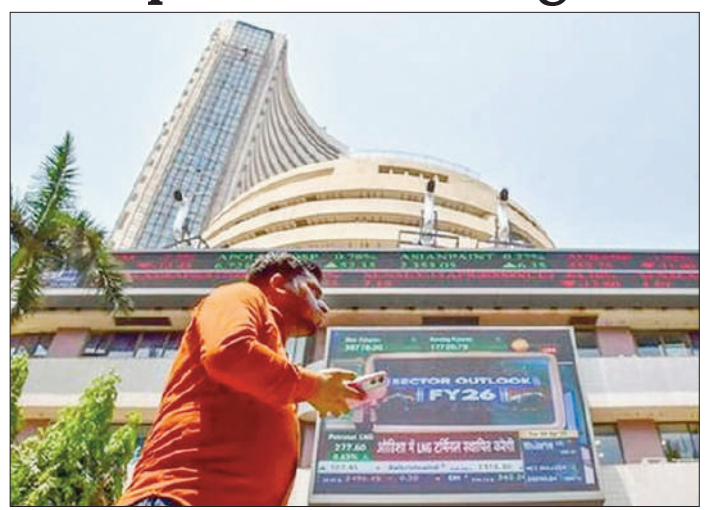
Tata Steel, State Bank of India, Eternal, Reliance Industries, UltraTech Cement, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Larsen & Toubro, Trent, Axis Bank and Asian Paints were the major laggards among Sensex stocks.

On the other hand, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, PowerGrid, Adani Ports, Maruti Suzuki India, Bharti Airtel, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Hindustan Unilever, and Sun Pharmaceuticals were major winners.

"Investors have turned cautious post the recent relief rally, with rising bond yields, a weaker rupee, and fresh fuel price hikes reviving inflation concerns," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

Favourable valuations and a solid Q4 earnings print are cushioning the downside. Focus has shifted to potential fiscal and monetary measures to defend the rupee and stabilise the Balance of Payment, he added.

"Globally, surging yields have paused the AI-led rally. Near-term direction is likely to be driven by



geopolitical developments -- specifically, any progress on reopening the Strait of Hormuz, with the Trump-Xi meeting positioned as the key catalyst," Nair said.

The rupee crashed below the 96 mark against the US dollar on Friday for the first time as elevated crude oil prices and inflation concerns weighed on the local unit. The local currency closed at a record low of 95.94 (provisional) against the US dollar later.

Oil marketing companies raised petrol and diesel prices by Rs 3 per litre each on Friday, to pass on part of the hit from surging global crude prices triggered by the Iran war. CNG prices in cities like Delhi and Mumbai were raised by Rs 2 per kg, raising fears of a spike in inflation.

The BSE MidCap Select Index fell 0.78 per cent and SmallCap Select Index slipped 0.06 per cent.

Among the sectoral indices, Metal declined the most by 1.98 per cent, followed by Realty (1.82 per cent), PSU Bank (1.80 per cent), Oil & Gas (1.79 per cent), Commodities (1.31 per cent), En-

ergy (1.13 per cent), and Capital Goods fell by 1 per cent.

On the other hand, Information Technology, Focused IT, FMCG, Healthcare, Telecommunication, and Services were among the gainers.

A total of 2,471 stocks declined, while 1,705 advanced and 169 remained unchanged on the BSE. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies fell by Rs 2.26 lakh crore to Rs 4,60,59,270.46 crore (USD 4.8 trillion).

Shares of most of the Adani group companies ended lower, with Adani Green Energy and Ambuja Cements declining nearly 3 per cent, in line with a bearish trend in equities.

Billionaire Gautam Adani is nearing a sweeping resolution of multiple US legal investigations, with the Securities and Exchange Commission settling its civil case and the Justice Department and Treasury Department expected to conclude parallel probes in the coming days, according to people familiar with the matter.

On a weekly basis, the 30-share

BSE Sensex plunged 2,090.2 points, or 2.7 per cent, while the 50-share NSE Nifty declined 532.65 points, or 2.2 per cent.

Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said that investor sentiment remained cautious amid elevated crude oil prices, persistent geopolitical uncertainty surrounding the US-Iran situation, and continued foreign institutional outflows, he added.

"Adding to the pressure, the government announced a hike of around Rs 3 per litre in petrol and diesel prices. The move raised concerns over inflationary pressures, transportation costs, and the demand outlook for crude-sensitive sectors such as aviation, paints, and logistics.

Brent crude climbed more than 3 per cent to USD 109.23 per barrel.

Meanwhile, the country's exports in April rose by 13.78 per cent to USD 43.56 billion despite global challenges, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said. Imports grew by 10 per cent year-on-year to USD 71.94 billion in April. Trade deficit during the month stood at USD 28.38 billion.

Asian markets ended broadly lower, with South Korea's Kospi tumbling over 6 per cent. Markets in Europe were trading lower. US markets ended higher on Thursday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 187.46 crore on Thursday, and Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) purchased stocks for Rs 684.33 crore, according to exchange data.

On Thursday, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 789.74 points to close at 75,398.72. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 277 points to finish at 23,689.60. (PTI)

Gold imports jump 82 pc to USD 5.62 bn in April; silver by 157 pc

NEW DELHI, May 15: India's gold imports surged 81.69 per cent year-on-year to USD 5.62 billion in April, driven by high prices of the precious metal, though imports may decline in the coming months following the government's sharp increase in customs duty on the yellow metal.

According to the commerce ministry data, silver imports jumped 157.16 per cent to USD 411 million during the month under review.

Gold imports rose 24 per cent to hit an all-time high of USD 71.98 billion in 2025-26. In volume terms, however, the imports dipped 4.76 per cent to 721.03 tonnes.

The government has increased import duty on precious metals from 6 per cent to 15 per cent effective May 13.

"With the higher import duty on gold and silver, there will definitely be some impact in terms of lower

imports during the year. We need to wait and watch how much it will be," Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal told reporters here.

However, in the case of silver, the impact of a higher duty may be relatively lower due to its extensive industrial usage.

"But definitely the consumption-based requirement of gold and silver should go down based on this duty rise," Agrawal said.

On gold import from the UAE, he said it fell both in value and volume despite the higher unit value in 2025-26, leading to a significant drop in the UAE's share of India's overall gold imports.

Under the India-UAE comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA), a Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) mechanism was put in place for the import of gold bullion at a concessional rate of duty (a 1 per cent concession over the prevailing customs duty).

The pact came into force on May 1, 2022.

According to the data, total gold imports stood at 795 tonnes in 2023-24 and 757 tonnes in 2024-25. The share of imports under the TRQ mechanism was only about 5 per cent (40 tonnes) and 18 per cent (about 140 tonnes), respectively, the official said.

In 2025-26, the allocated quantity under the mechanism was 8.58 tonnes. India has imported 721 tonnes in the last fiscal.

"I would like to clarify that the tariff rate quota concession on gold under the UAE CEPA agreement has not had any major consequence on our gold imports for the year 2025-26," Agrawal said.

He added that the total TRQ that was issued during 2025-26 for gold import under the pact was only USD 8 billion (about 8 tonnes) and that the TRQ is valid till June 2026. (PTI)

I-T department enables online filing of ITR-1, ITR-4

NEW DELHI, May 15: The Income Tax department on Friday enabled online filing of ITR-1 and ITR-4, which are filed by small and medium taxpayers, for the assessment year 2026-27.

"The Excel utility and Online filing for ITR-1 and ITR-4 for AY 2026-27 has been enabled and is now available for taxpayers on the e-filing portal," the I-T department said in a post on X.

These forms for filing ITRs for income earned in the 2025-26 fiscal year were notified on March 30. With the online filing and excel utility now enabled, assesses can now start filing tax returns.

The last date for filing tax returns by individual taxpayers in ITR - 1 is July 31, while for non-audit taxpayers filing ITR-4, the deadline is August 31. (PTI)

Exports clock 5-month high growth of 13.48 pc in April; trade deficit widens to three-month high

NEW DELHI, May 15: Exports rose by 13.78 per cent to USD 43.56 billion in April, the highest monthly outbound shipments in more than four years, driven by petroleum products amid a surge in crude oil prices, but trade deficit widened to a three-month high of USD 28.38 billion due to an uptick in imports.

Imports grew by 10 per cent year-on-year to a six-month high of USD 71.94 billion in April, inflating the trade deficit. The gap between imports and exports, or trade deficit, was USD 27.1 billion in April 2025 and USD 20.67 billion in March 2026.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said that despite global geopolitical tensions,

the country's exports are registering healthy growth. Exports grew at the fastest pace in five months in April.

"The positive growth in value may also have some contribution from the price because prices of many things are going up so that may have some positive impact," he told reporters here.

The key drivers of exports include electronic goods (40.31 per cent), meat and dairy (48 per cent), petroleum products (34.66 per cent), engineering items (8.76 per cent), and pharmaceuticals (7.12 per cent).

Electronic exports rose to USD 5.17 billion, while shipments of petroleum products were worth USD 9.6 billion in April. Brent crude oil prices have risen by USD 11.47, or nearly 12 per cent, to USD 107.51 per barrel on May 15 from USD 96.04 per barrel on March 16, 2026. At its peak, Brent crude had surged by USD 30.37, or about 32 per cent, to USD 126.41 per barrel on April 30 compared with the March 16 level.

Diversification of exports in new

markets has also helped shipments record the highest growth rate in five months in April. Healthy growth has been registered in destinations such as Singapore, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Australia, and Vietnam.

However, the country's merchandise exports to the West Asian region declined 28 per cent to USD 4.16 billion last month against USD 5.78 billion in April 2025.

Imports from the region also declined by 31.64 per cent to USD 10.47 billion in April from USD 15.32 billion in the year-ago period. The ongoing US-Iran conflict has severely impacted the movement of ships carrying cargoes in international waters, particularly through the Strait of Hormuz.

As per the commerce ministry data, gold and silver imports rose 81.69 per cent to USD 5.62 billion and 157.16 per cent to USD 411 million, respectively, during the month under review.

Crude oil imports, however, dipped 10 per cent to USD 18.7 billion.

The data also showed that services exports for April are estimated at USD 37.24 billion, compared with USD 32.85 billion in April 2025. The imports were USD 16.66 billion, compared with USD 16.91 billion in April 2025.

When asked about impact of depreciating rupee of exports, the secretary said "till now it has been showing positive trajectory and I think the early signs from May also look at me being in positive".

The government is also suggesting industry to settle international for the last few years in the domestic currency. However, the movement is still at a very nascent stage, he added. (PTI)

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UCC to ensure justice for

kids under the age of five years. There will be provision for strict penalties for false statements to ensure legal records integrity, Sarma added.

The draft of the UCC Bill will be laid in the Assembly on May 26, Sarma said on Wednesday. The UCC will primarily cover the four subjects -- minimum age of marriage, prohibition of polygamy, equal rights for daughters in parents' property and matters relating to live-in relationships.

It will also deal with succession, marriage, live-in relationships and compulsory registration of marriage and divorce, he had added. (PTI)

Petrol, diesel prices hiked

"Ghalti Modi sarkaar ki, keemat janta chukayegi (The public will pay the price for the Modi government's mistake)," Gandhi said in a post on X. "The ₹ 3 shock has already arrived, the rest of the 'vasooli' (recovery) will be done in instalments."

BJP, however, defended the decision, saying the government had shielded consumers from the global oil shock for more than two months and implemented only a "limited and calibrated" increase of 3.2-3.4 per cent. Prices have remained on freeze since April 2022, but for a one-off reduction by ₹ 2 a litre each on petrol and diesel in March 2024, just before Lok Sabha elections. Rates were last hiked in April 2022.

Petrol in Mumbai now costs ₹ 106.68 a litre and diesel comes for ₹ 93.14 per litre. In Kolkata, petrol now costs ₹ 108.74 per litre and diesel ₹ 95.13, while in Chennai, prices increased to ₹ 103.67 for petrol and Rs 95.25 for diesel. Industry sources said the price hike is modest relative to the rise in crude prices and still leaves retailers absorbing significant losses. (PTI)

Growing human-elephant

Assam has witnessed a sharp rise in man-elephant conflict over the years due to habitat loss, deforestation, shrinking forest corridors, and increasing human encroachment near elephant habitats.

Several districts including Nagaon, Goalpara, Sonitpur, Udalguri, Golaghat, and Baksa regularly report incidents of crop damage, attacks on villagers, and elephant deaths.

Environmental experts have repeatedly stressed the need for scientific management of elephant corridors and better coordination between forest officials and local communities to minimise such conflicts.

According to forest department data, both human casualties and elephant deaths linked to conflict situations remain a major concern in Assam. During paddy cultivation and harvesting seasons, incidents of elephants entering villages tend to rise significantly. Meanwhile, local residents in Samaguri demanded stronger preventive measures from the authorities, including regular patrolling and installation of barriers in vulnerable areas to prevent further loss of lives.

Four-day Assembly session

as its candidate for the Speaker's post, a position held by him initially when the first saffron party-led government had come to power in the state in 2016. The NDA retained power for a third consecutive term with a two-thirds majority in the recently concluded Assembly polls. The BJP won 82 seats, while its allies AGP and Bodoland People's Front (BPF) secured 10 seats each in the 126-member House. (PTI)

NFR takes up safety

The rain gauge sensors can record precipitation intensity up to 900 mm per hour, while other sensors can measure temperatures ranging from minus 40 degree Celsius to plus 75 degree Celsius. Wind monitoring sensors can record wind speeds up to 80 metres per second. In addition, the stations are equipped with humidity sensors covering a range from 0 to 100 per cent, and devices capable of measuring atmospheric pressure up to 1200 hPa. "The deployment of these advanced weather monitoring systems reflects NFR's continued commitment towards enhancing operational safety, adopting modern technology and ensuring uninterrupted rail connectivity in challenging geographical regions during the monsoon season," the statement added. (PTI)

Drones, UAS like 'claws

The air chief marshal underlined that the UAS is an "extension of air power". "So all the rules of air power will apply when you use the UAS, just remember that. And, there are no more eyes in the sky. They are like claws in the sky now. This, we've seen in the recent conflicts that have taken place. And we also realised that during Operation Sindoor, this part cannot be forgotten," he asserted.

"And, when it comes to counter-UAS, it is like a cat and mouse game. You develop technology in one field; the counter technology has to develop along with it. Because that is how the game can be played, otherwise, one side will have total advantage," the IAF chief said.

"You can't always have force versus force. It has to be force versus defence and others."

Singh recalled the key role of the Indian Air Force during Operation Sindoor, the decisive military action by India during May last year.

"I think we've done reasonably well in Op Sindoor. And why that happened, because there was coordination. Without coordination, without a central agency coordinating it. Without having that IACCS (Integrated Air Command and Control System) becoming a nerve centre, whether it is counter-UAS or counter-weapon or counter-aircraft, it wouldn't have been possible," he said. (PTI)

'Sankaradeva birthplace to be

Following the prayers, a felicitation programme was held at the Natghar of Batadroba Thaan. The Batadroba Thaan Management Committee, led by President Amlan Jyoti Deva Goswami, Vice President Jogendra Narayan Deva Mahanta, Working President Gobin Chandra Das, General Secretary Lachit Bordoloi, and other office bearers, honored the Chief Minister. He was presented with 'Dharma bastra', 'Patar Seleng Churia', 'Kumbhilaor kath' handicrafts, 'Saraa' and a symbolic portrait of the Thaan. Representatives from Narowa Kuji Satra, Narowa Balisatra Management Committee, Batadrava's 'Moulik Kuhlita' artisans, Batadroba Mini Primary Health Centre, Srimanta Sankaradeva Higher Secondary School, and several local organizations also felicitated him. Addressing the 'Bhakat-Vaishnava' and devotees, Dr Sarma announced his government's commitment to develop Batadroba Thaan into a 'world religious heritage site'. "We will work to transform Batadroba Thaan into a global centre of spirituality and tourism. We must build the Assam that Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva envisioned," Dr Sarma said.

Referring to the inspiration by Gurujana's ideals, he also promised that his government must work to protect the national interest of Assam and the Assamese people too.

The Chief Minister also reiterated that the Satra Commission would continue its work to reclaim encroached satra lands across Assam. "I will remain in constant touch with the Satra Commission," he told reporters.

During a meeting with the Batadroba Thaan Management Committee at its office, several local issues were raised. These included traffic congestion due to narrow roads connecting Shalaguri Satra and Narowa Satra, drinking water shortage, drainage problems, and the need for development of Douh Mandir and Sati Radhika Smriti Kshetra. Requests were also made for construction of a 'Bhoral Ghar', 'Naibedy Griba' and a boundary wall for the Thaan campus. Responding to the demands, Dr Sarma assured that work on resolving all issues and initiating development projects would begin soon. He also interacted with 'Bhakat - Vaishnava' and 'Aimatri' of Batadroba during the visit. The visit underscores the state government's focus on cultural and spiritual heritage alongside infrastructure development, with Batadroba Thaan positioned as a key pilgrimage and tourism destination in the coming years.

Man gets 20-year RI

Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act in 2022. Ali, in his twenties, had sexually abused a 15-year-old girl in a jute field on the banks of Gaurang River at Kathalguri village that year. The parents of the victim had lodged an FIR at the Kokrajhar police station, which led to his apprehension. (PTI)

IFAD delegation meets

"The discussions centred on a proposed IFAD-funded project aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity and strengthening rural livelihoods across Assam," it added. The IFAD is an international financial institution and a specialised agency of the United Nations, exclusively dedicated to transforming agriculture productivity and poverty and hunger in developing countries. (PTI)

Cong leader Banashree Gogoi

in the letter. Gogoi, who served as National Secretary of the All India Mahila Congress, expressed gratitude to the party leadership for the opportunities she received during her association with the Congress.

"I am grateful for the opportunities and experiences I received during my association with the Party. I will continue to work for the people of Assam and the nation in my personal capacity," the letter stated.

She also requested the party leadership to accept her resignation and relieve her from all organisational duties at the earliest. Copies of the resignation letter were also marked to All India Mahila Congress president Alka Lamba and Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi.

The resignation has triggered fresh political speculation in Assam after the BJP swept the assembly poll and Congress reduced to only 19 seats--the worst performance of the party in the state. Recently, former Assam Congress president Bhupen Kumar Borah launched a sharp attack on his erstwhile party, saying the Congress was now "reaping what it had sown" after suffering a crushing defeat in the Assam Assembly elections.

Borah, who switched from the Congress to the BJP ahead of the Assembly polls, won the Bihpuria Assembly constituency on a BJP ticket. Addressing reporters on Wednesday, he credited Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for the BJP's sweeping electoral success and said the people had endorsed the government's development agenda. "I must admit that under the leadership of Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam has witnessed unprecedented political success. The people have once again placed their faith in his leadership," Borah said. The BJP-led NDA secured a resounding victory in the Assam Assembly elections, with the alliance won 102 seats in 126 member assembly.

No deals announced

two sides had set a "new vision" of building a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability. "We had reached important common understandings on maintaining stable economic and trade ties, expanding practical cooperation in various fields, and properly addressing each other's concerns," Xi said.

The two sides also agreed to strengthen communication and coordination on international and regional issues, Xi said. The visit is conducive to enhancing mutual understanding, deepening mutual trust and improving the well-being of the two peoples, Xi said.

"While President Trump hopes to make America great again, I am dedicated to leading the Chinese people toward national rejuvenation," Xi said, stressing that the two countries can advance their respective development and revitalisation by strengthening cooperation, official media reported. (PTI)

NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from Nazir Ahmed to Nazir Hussain by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar, Hojai (Assam)

Nazir Hussain
S/o- Late Ala Uddin
Vill-Kapashbari,
PO-Kapashbari,
PS-Murajhar,
Dist-Hojai (Assam)

CONSTRUCTION OF MULTI STORIED HOSTEL

E-Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/32 of 2026. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Name of Work: Construction of Multi storied Hostel for MDDTI Rest house near Children park under ADEN/II/Lumding. Tender Value: ₹2,43,24,231.20/- Earnest Money: ₹4,86,500/- Date & time of closing of tender: At 15.00 hrs. on 08-06-2026 & opening at 15.00 hrs. on 09-06-2026. The complete information with tender documents of above e-Tender will be available upto 15.00 hrs. on 08-06-2026 in www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (W), Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

ELECTRICAL WORKS IN TINSUKIA DIVISION

Tender Notice No.: TSK/Elect/236, Dated: 12-05-2026; E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: SN-1; Tender No.: LV-T-14-TSK-940; Brief Description of Item : Provision of Air-conditioning system at SM/Indoor, SS Chamber, Booking, PRS & parcel Office at stations over Tinsukia Division. Tender Value: ₹1,62,66,544/- Earnest Money: ₹3,25,300/- SN-2; Tender No.: LV-T-14-TSK-924-R-1; Brief Description of Item : Provision of Earthing and RCCB in Electrical Installation & APFC Panels in Identified Load Centres. Tender Value: ₹1,40,68,185/- Earnest Money: ₹2,81,400/- Date & time of closing of both tenders at 13:00 hrs. and opening at 15:00 hrs. on 02-06-2026. Complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 13:00 hrs. on 02-06-2026 in the website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (Elect), Tinsukia
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

E-AUCTION FOR PAY & USE TOILET CONTRACT

E-auction for Pay & Use Toilet Contract over Tinsukia Division. Details are as under: Auction Catalogue No.: Pnu-TSK-Toi-04; Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots) : 11:00 hrs. on 28-05-2026; Auction Close Date & Time : 11:30 hrs. on 28-05-2026; Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee; Trips/Days: 1096.

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	PnU-TSK-FKG-Toi-1-26-1 (Pay and Use - Toilets)	Pay and Use Toilet Contract at Furkating Junction Railway Station for a period of 3 (Three) Years.

The e-auction catalogue has already been uploaded on 13-05-2026 through IREPS website.

Divisional Commercial Manager (IC), Tinsukia

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Party reaffirms demand for Autonomous State under Article 244(A) ASDC to celebrate 41st foundation day tomorrow

HT Bureau

DIPHU, May 15: The Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) will celebrate its 41st foundation day on May 17 at the Sarsing Teron (Langkung Habe) Memorial Town Hall here, reaffirming its demand for an Autonomous State.

Addressing a press conference at the ASDC central committee office on Friday, ASDC president Sonasing Terang said the organisation was formed on May 17, 1986, bringing together various social, student and unemployed organisations with the sole objective of demanding an Autonomous State under Article 244(A) of the Indian Constitution, comprising the three hill districts of Assam — Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao.

Terang said the ASDC had launched a mass movement to pressure both the Central and State governments to fulfil its demand. He added that the sustained movement led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Central and State governments on April 1, 1995, following which the powers of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) were expanded to include 30 departments.



As part of the foundation day programme, the ASDC flag will be hoisted at 9 am at the party's central committee office, followed by a public meeting at the memorial town hall. Chief Executive Member (CEM) of KAAC, Dr Tuliram Ronghang, will attend as the chief guest, while MP Amarsing Tisso will be the guest of honour.

Karbi traditional king Longsing Ronghang, along with newly elected MLAs Surjyo Rongphar, Lunsing Teron, Niso Terangi and Dr Habbey Teron, have also been invited to the programme, Terang informed.

Terang further said that in the re-

cently concluded State Assembly elections, official ASDC candidates withdrew from the contest after receiving a written assurance from the State government that talks on the Autonomous State issue would resume after the elections. He stated that the ASDC had extended conditional support to the BJP solely for the purpose of achieving Autonomous State status.

"Although the demand for Autonomous State has not yet been fulfilled, the party remains committed to continuing the mass movement until the goal is achieved," Terang said. He added

that Dr Ronghang, being one of the five elected MLAs, would address the people on May 17 regarding the State government's assurance and future plans on the issue.

Expressing optimism, Terang said the party had high hopes that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma would honour his commitment to fulfil the aspirations of the hill people.

Apart from elected representatives, leaders of several organisations, including the Karbi Cultural Society, Karbi Lammet Amai, APHLC (James Hanse group), KSA, Karbi Nimsong Chingthor Asong, Tiwa Students Union, ABSU and KSU, have also been invited to attend the programme.

Around 1,500 party workers and supporters from Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong are expected to participate in the meeting, Terang said.

ASDC president Jotsom Bey also spoke on the issue, saying that the demand for an Autonomous State reflected the will of the people. "The provision already exists in the Constitution, but people must collectively demand it. If everyone works together on the same issue instead of pursuing separate approaches, the goal can be achieved," Bey stated.

NFR to observe World Environment Day 2026 with climate change focus



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 15: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) will observe World Environment Day through a series of awareness programmes and environmental protection activities across all its divisions and units from May 15 to June 5, 2026.

The theme for this year's observance will be "Climate Change", highlighting the importance of environmental conservation, sustainable practices and collective responsibility towards protecting the planet for future generations.

The observance aims to promote environmental sustainability, cleanliness and conservation awareness among railway employees, passengers and the general public. Various programmes, including plantation drives, cleanliness campaigns, awareness rallies, seminars and eco-friendly initiatives, will be organised throughout the NFR network during the period.

Special emphasis will be laid on reducing plastic usage, maintaining cleanliness at railway stations and colonies, water conservation and promoting green practices in railway operations. Railway officials, staff members, students and social organisations are expected to actively participate in the campaign.

As part of the celebrations, mass tree plantation drives will be conducted at stations, railway colonies, offices, workshops and other railway premises to enhance green cover and encourage environmental responsibility.

The Northeast Frontier Railway has consistently undertaken various eco-friendly measures and remains committed to sustainable and environment-friendly railway operations in the Northeast region.

The observance will culminate on World Environment Day on June 5, 2026, with special programmes, awareness activities and the administration of an environmental pledge across all divisions of NFR.

DC stresses sustainable farming, organic practices at Diphu

HT Bureau

DIPHU, May 15: District Commissioner of Karbi Anglong Aranyak Saikia stressed that sustainable agricultural practices and scientific soil management are essential for ensuring long-term environmental balance and improving the quality of agricultural production. He emphasised that awareness and adoption of organic farming methods at the

grassroots level would contribute significantly towards a healthier and more sustainable future.

The District Commissioner made the remarks while attending a training programme on Soil Organic Carbon Detection using soil testing kits and their distribution held at Krishi Vigyan Kendra on Friday.

The programme was organised by IIT Guwahati in collaboration

with ICAR-ATARI Zone VI, KVK Dima Hasao and KVK Karbi Anglong as part of the continuous efforts of the Research and Development wing of the Agriculture Department towards promoting organic practices, sustainable farming and the use of organic products at the household level for a healthier and environmentally conscious future.



nisms involving the State Disaster Response Force, Fire and Emergency Services, Civil Defence teams, the Army, Air Force, central agencies and volunteer organisations.

Capacity-building initiatives such as mock drills, emergency response training programmes and improved emergency preparedness also figured in the meeting.

Further, the meeting discussed communication and information-sharing systems aimed at ensuring the safety and security of foreign

nationals visiting or residing in Jorhat during any future emergency situation.

Agnes Verma, another official who looks after American Citizens Services at the US Consulate General, Kolkata was also part of the US delegation.

Jorhat SSP Subhrajyoti Bora, officials from the Health Department, District Disaster Management Authority, Fire and Emergency Services, Civil Defence branch and Water Resources Department attended the meeting.

Meeting focuses on emergency response coordination, safety of foreign nationals

US Consulate team reviews disaster preparedness with Jorhat administration

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, May 15: A team led by Consular Officer, Consulate General of the USA, Kolkata, Matthew Weitz, on Friday held a meeting with Jorhat district administration officials led by District Commissioner Jay Shivani at the DC office complex on several important issues.

A district administration official informed that the discussion centred on disaster management preparedness, emergency response coordination and the safety and security of foreign nationals visiting the district. The district administration presented the US delegation with an overview of Jorhat district, including its geographical profile, vulnerable areas, disaster-prone zones and other measures undertaken to tackle any kind of disaster situation through coordinated preparedness.

The discussions also focused on inter-agency coordination mecha-

St. Mary's School, Demow celebrates silver jubilee

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, May 15: St. Mary's School situated at Raisai, Demow has reached its silver jubilee and completed 25 glorious years. The opening ceremony was held at St. Mary's School on Friday.

Father Andreas Indwar, Principal of St. Mary's School, gave the welcome address. Pooja Dey, assistant teacher of St. Mary's School, anchored the programme. Rt. Rev. Father Albert Hemrom, Bishop of the Diocese of Dibrugarh was present as the chief guest in the programme.

On the occasion, the principal and teachers felicitated the dignitaries with a phulam gamosa and chelleng chadar as a token of love. Rt. Rev. Father Albert Hemrom lit the ceremonial lamp in the programme. Homages were paid to Debananda Konwar, former MLA of Thowra constituency and Heartthrob Zubeen Garg. Father Andreas Indwar hoisted the flag. Rt. Rev. Father Albert Hemrom delivered his valuable speech. Students sang songs and performed Bihu and Husori in the cultural programme.

Bathou delegation meets BTC officials, seeks inclusion of Bathouism in Census 2027

Delegation urges proper recognition of Bathou followers in the upcoming census

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 15: A delegation from the Bathou Traditional & Cultural Centre met officials of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) on Friday at the BTC Secretariat, Bodofa Nwgrw in Kokrajhar and discussed the inclusion of Bathouism in the religion column of the upcoming General Census 2027.

The delegation was led by president Mahim Chandra Basumatary along with members of the Kokrajhar District Bathou Committee. It included Sandendra Basumatary, Abhiram Basumatary, Bipin Narzary, Phame Narzary and Padumi Basumatary. They met BTC officials, including Pranjit Kr Wary and Karmadev Brahma, at their office chamber and held detailed discussions on the issue.

During the meeting, the delegation requested the BTC authorities to ensure that Bathouism is properly included in the religion column of the General Census 2027. They also urged the officials to instruct census enumerators so that

followers of Bathouism are correctly recorded under their religion during the census process.

The members of the delegation said proper awareness and clear instructions are necessary to avoid

confusion during the census and to ensure accurate religious representation of Bathou followers.

BTC officials assured the delegation of their full support on the matter. They stated that discussions would be held with the District Commissioners of all BTC districts in the coming days to spread awareness and ensure proper implementation of the General Census 2027. Officials also expressed hope that the issue would be handled properly for the benefit of the Bathou community.

During the mock drill, sirens

may be sounded and movement of emergency response personnel and vehicles may be noticed in and around the exercise area. The public has been informed that the entire activity is only a mock exercise and there is no cause for panic.

Officials from Civil Defence, Police, Fire and Emergency Services, the Health Department and other concerned agencies will participate in the exercise.

LABF condemns Manipur ambush incident

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 15: The Lower Assam Baptist Fellowship (LABF) has expressed profound grief and deep sorrow over the tragic ambush attack that took place in Kangpokpi district of Manipur on Wednesday, May 13, 2026, in which Rev. Dr Vumthang Sithoum, Pastor Kaigoulun Lhouvum and Pastor Paogoulun Sithoum lost their lives, while five others sustained serious injuries.

In a press statement issued to the media on Thursday, Joel Rabha and Wington Marak, president and secretary of the fellowship respectively, strongly condemned the incident and demanded immediate action against the senseless act of violence that

led to the untimely deaths of the religious leaders and left several others seriously injured.

"We strongly condemn this senseless act of violence against innocent citizens and religious leaders. The untimely death of Rev. Dr Vumthang Sithoum and the others is not only a great loss to the Christian community but also to society at large, as they were devoted to peace, service and the welfare of humanity," the leaders stated.

"At this painful moment, the Lower Assam Baptist Fellowship extends heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prays that Almighty God may grant them comfort, strength and peace during this difficult time. We also pray for

the speedy recovery of those who are seriously injured," the statement added.

The fellowship earnestly appealed to all sections of society, civil society organisations, student bodies, religious groups and community leaders to maintain peace, communal harmony, mutual respect and restraint. It stated that violence and hatred can never bring lasting solutions and that only dialogue, understanding, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence can restore normalcy and healing in society.

The fellowship further urged the concerned authorities to take immediate and impartial action to ensure justice, strengthen security and prevent such tragic incidents from recurring in the future.

New Napam Gaon Panchayat wins National Award for Best Gaon Panchayat

Panchayat receives Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar-2025 with ₹ 1.5 crore cash prize

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 15: The New Napam Gaon Panchayat, under the Gabharu Development Block in the Tezpur Legislative Assembly constituency has been awarded the National Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar-2025 by the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development. The panchayat has received the award for Best Gaon Panchayat along with a cash prize of ₹ 1.5 crore.

Sonitpur district administration felicitated several officials associated with the panchayat, including Panchayat Secretary Basudev Hazarika, engineer Deepak Das and Gaon Panchayat Coordinator Mithun Dev Nath, at a programme held at the office of the District Commissioner in Tezpur to mark the achievement. Speaking on the occasion, District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das urged the officials and staff members to continue working with sincerity, integrity and dedication in the days ahead.

According to officials, the award was conferred after a detailed evaluation and field verification conducted by representatives of the Union Ministry. The assessment covered multiple parameters, including poverty-free and enhanced livelihoods, healthy panchayat practices, child-friendly governance, water sufficiency, cleanliness and environmental sustainability, self-reliant infrastructure, socially just and secure adminis-



tration, good governance and women-friendly initiatives.

Engineer Deepak Das and his associates expressed happiness over the recognition and said the achievement reflected the collective efforts of the panchayat team. Sources said that after the submission of detailed reports and documentation regarding the functioning and developmental activities of the panchayat, a central inspection team visited the area and carried out on-ground verification before recommending the award.

Meanwhile, local residents and community leaders have appealed to the authorities to ensure transparent and proper utilisation of the ₹ 1.5-crore award amount. They urged the administration and concerned authorities to maintain strict oversight so that the implementation of future schemes and utilisation of the award funds remains free from corruption and mismanagement.

Panic grips commuters on Dibrugarh-Tinsukia bypass

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, May 15: Fear is fast turning into fury among commuters travelling along the Dibrugarh-Tinsukia bypass, especially near the Chabua stretch, where alarming allegations of robbery attempts, stone pelting, extortion and dangerous vehicle chases have reportedly created an atmosphere of terror during night and early morning hours.

According to several travellers and transporters, groups of unidentified youths allegedly target vehicles moving through isolated portions of the bypass when traffic remains thin. Drivers claim the miscreants attempt to forcibly stop vehicles, demand money and in some cases, even hurl stones at moving cars and trucks to compel them to halt.

The incidents have reportedly triggered panic among daily commuters, commercial transporters and vegetable traders who regularly use the bypass route. Many motorists alleged that the attacks

become more frequent during late-night and pre-dawn hours when police visibility remains minimal and vehicle movement is sparse.

Particularly affected are vegetable traders travelling from Sadiya to Dibrugarh markets. Traders stated that they leave Sadiya around 3 AM carrying fresh produce and pass through the bypass before sunrise. Many alleged that they often encounter suspicious groups attempting to block their vehicles and extort money.

"We travel with fear every week. Sometimes stones are thrown at vehicles and sometimes groups suddenly appear on the road asking us to stop," alleged one trader, expressing concern over the worsening law and order situation along the route.

Several commuters also claimed that the stone-pelting incidents have nearly caused serious road accidents, endangering

Civil Defence mock drill at Donbosco College

HT Bureau

DIPHU, May 15: A Civil Defence blackout mock drill and rescue exercise will be conducted at Donbosco College, Diphu on May 16, from 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM as part of emergency preparedness measures.

The mock exercise is being organised to assess preparedness for emergency situations, evaluate the effectiveness of air raid early warning systems and blackout measures, test evacuation and rescue mechanisms, enhance coordination among various agencies and create awareness among the public.

The exercise will simulate air raid warning systems, blackout measures, evacuation and sheltering, search and rescue operations, medical response and casualty evacuation.

During the mock drill, sirens may be sounded and movement of emergency response personnel and vehicles may be noticed in and around the exercise area. The public has been informed that the entire activity is only a mock exercise and there is no cause for panic.

Officials from Civil Defence, Police, Fire and Emergency Services, the Health Department and other concerned agencies will participate in the exercise.

Cattle theft sparks panic in Kheroni

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, May 15: A wave of panic has gripped residents of West Karbi Anglong following a daring cattle theft in the Kheroni area late on Thursday night.

The incident took place in Matikhola village and targeted the household of a local farmer identified as Munna Chauhan. According to reports, a gang of cattle lifters stole two cows from Chauhan's shed under the cover of darkness while the family was asleep.

The theft was discovered early on Friday morning when the family went to tend to their livestock. Finding the shed empty, the impoverished farmer was left devastated. For many in the region, cattle are essential for agricultural activities and tilling the land and are often the only liquid asset for rural families.

"We woke up to find our livelihood gone. We are now left helpless with no way to continue our farm work," a family member said.

The incident has triggered concern and sensation throughout the Kheroni locality. Villagers have expressed growing fears over the recurring activities of organised cattle-lifting syndicates in the district. Local residents are now urging the police and authorities to intensify night patrolling to prevent further such incidents and apprehend the culprits involved in the case.

Obituary

Rupak Bezbor, noted guitarist and musician died on Friday afternoon at his Choldadhora residence in Jorhat of prolonged ailments.

Bezbor, who retired as a scientist from Assam Agricultural University, Directorate of Research, was well known as lead guitarist in various musical performances.

He was also a founder member of the orchestra group, The Rainbow.

Bezbor, who was 77, leaves behind his wife, the famous singer Leena Bezbor.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

'We either make ourselves miserable, or happy and strong. The amount of work is the same.'
—Francesca Reigler

Preparing public for economic stress

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's warning about restraint was meant to prepare the public for economic stress, but its immediate effect was to expose how fragile India's external position has become when oil, gold and West Asia move against it at the same time. What sounded at first like a call for voluntary austerity has begun to look less like political theatre and more like an admission that the economy faces a squeeze that cannot be handled only through routine fiscal and monetary tools. The Prime Minister's appeal to curb fuel use, postpone non-essential gold purchases, reduce foreign travel and revive work-from-home practices carried the memory of the pandemic years because it borrowed the language of restraint from a period of emergency. That is why it unsettled households, businesses and markets. For trade and industry, the fear was not merely that consumers would spend less, but that the government was preparing the ground for administrative controls if external pressures worsened. Ministers and officials moved quickly to soften the message, stressing that no lockdown-style restrictions were being planned and that energy supplies remained manageable. Yet the very need for such reassurance showed that the warning had landed with unusual force.

The underlying concern is straightforward. India remains heavily dependent on imported crude oil, while gold continues to absorb large quantities of foreign exchange. When both prices rise together, the country's import bill expands, the rupee comes under pressure, inflation risks return, and the current account deficit widens. This is not a theoretical chain. It is the same external vulnerability that has forced policymakers in the past to choose between protecting consumers, defending the currency and preserving fiscal space. Oil is the sharper danger because it moves through the entire economy. Higher crude prices raise the landed cost of petrol, diesel, aviation fuel, LPG, fertilisers, plastics, chemicals and freight. Even when retail fuel prices are not immediately raised, the burden shifts somewhere else: to state-owned oil marketing companies, the Budget, or downstream producers. If the government absorbs the shock, fiscal stress increases. If companies absorb it, balance sheets weaken. If consumers absorb it, inflation and demand pressures follow. There is no painless route.

West Asia has made that equation more troubling. The conflict involving Iran, Israel and the United States has turned the Strait of Hormuz and adjoining shipping routes into a live risk for import-dependent economies. India's exposure is especially high because a large share of crude oil and liquefied petroleum gas flows from, or through, the region. Any disruption in shipping, insurance, tanker availability or payment channels can raise costs even before physical shortages appear. A jump in bunker fuel and freight costs would also make non-oil imports more expensive, feeding into manufacturing and consumer prices.

Direction of Assam politics

By: Arup Saikia

The BJP led NDA got a landslide victory in the recent election of Assam. This is one of the clean sweeps by a single party in the political history of Assam. Undoubtedly a stable government is formed. Now a question arises about the nature and developmental projects of the new government. The BJP is a right wing political party. Nobody can deny that the voters are polarized. This may be the result of the long time appeasement politics of Congress or some other allied parties. Assam has the highest number of Muslim population after Jammu and Kashmir. This is in the context of percentage. But Assam was also disastrously victimized during partition along with Punjab and Bengal. The BJP government in Assam was almost unimaginable a few years ago.

The BJP has not only gained power or majority in Assam assembly, but also increasing its vote share in every consecutive elections. This became possible for religious polarization. It's clearly reflected in geographical locations and demography. Religious appeasement and polarization, both words don't sound well in democratic environment. But it's an alarm bell for so-called secularists also. A healthy country can't sustain this kind of sectarian voting pattern for a long time. Inclusivity is the touchstone of governance. Notwithstanding, the Himanta Sarma govt is doing some commendable jobs. The reformative measures in Muslim areas including, abolition of child marriage, polygamy are really praiseworthy.

Moreover the eviction from forest and other government land is essential to save public property from illegal occupation. These positive actions wouldn't have been possible under pro minority Congress governments. A government cannot be pro minority or majority. The popularity of the BJP feeds on bitter appeasement politics of Congress, Samajbadi, left front, JD etc. Going with strict socio-economic reformative measures, the government has to accord equal status to the people of Assam those who settled before 24th March, 1971. The absolute majority is not the test examination of a government. Whether the government is efficient or not? How will we examine it? To sustain peace and harmony, launch income generating schemes, fair job selection and equal development are key to a successful state. The present Assam government is fairly fulfilling the expectation of job seekers. We hope to continue this trend in the upcoming new government also. The Assam government should be welfare oriented instead of beneficiary oriented. No developed country in the world depends on government beneficiary. Once oil rich bankrupt Venezuela is a good example of it. The government of Venezuela had unnecessarily recruited many citizens in the public oil sector. They are also another kind of beneficiary. This is the first election after constituency delimitation. It is obvious that constituencies are organised in favour of the ruling establishment. Some Muslim populated seats are reserved for Hindu lower castes (St/Sc). Therefore few seats of Muslim were reduced. The system of Himanta Biswa Sarma government is presidential unlike chief ministerial. Power is almost centralized. All the major decisions of the department are taken by the chief minister. Sometimes the departmental ministers look like titular heads. This has both good and bad effects also. But the common people of Assam are happy for having direct access to the head of the government. The deportation and eviction of the alleged Bangladeshi illegal migrants has been the burning issue of the state for a long time. The future of Assam will depend on successful handling of the issue. We hope the new government will reconsider the criteria of the beneficiaries. That we can save our public treasury to contain price rising. Finally the Assam government has to create a workaholic culture for Assamese youths to sustain the real development.

Artificial Intelligence and the Future World

Artificial Intelligence, or simply AI, is no longer just an ordinary technological innovation in the present era; rather, it has emerged as a powerful instrument capable of fundamentally transforming our daily lives, economy, and social structures. The rapid advancement of machine learning, neural networks, and large language models over the past few years has proved that the ability of machines to think and make decisions is no longer confined to the realm of science fiction. In today's world, computers and smartphones not only follow our commands but are also capable of analyzing vast amounts of information and generating new knowledge on their own. This mechanical intelligence has challenged the very scope of human thought. From industries and education to healthcare and agriculture, the application of artificial intelligence has initiated an unprecedented transformation. Tasks that once required human intellect and considerable time can now be executed by machines within moments with remarkable precision. This transformation has placed humanity at the threshold of a new age where information and technology will become the most valuable resources. However, alongside this technological rise, several practical and rational questions have also emerged. Are we moving toward a world where the necessity of human beings will gradually diminish? How secure will our privacy, safety, and rights remain in the hands of machines? While seeking answers to these questions, we must adopt a completely realistic and rational perspective instead of an emotional one. Although artificial intelligence has made our lifestyle easier, we must also carefully analyze the commercial and political motives hidden behind it. A handful of leading technology corporations across the world are currently controlling the global reservoir of information through artificial intelligence. Their technical systems and algorithms determine what we see, what we read, and what we believe. In such a situation, the role of artificial intelligence in the future world and the manner in which humanity adapts itself to it have become deeply significant concerns. The rapid spread of this technology has compelled us to remain conscious of both its advantages and disadvantages. Moreover, this has become a major challenge for governments and policymakers as well. How can an appropriate legal framework be developed that does not hinder technological progress while simultaneously safeguarding the rights of ordinary citizens? Within the present international context, where a fierce competition for technological superiority is underway, artificial intelligence has emerged as the most crucial weapon. Therefore, the entire process must be viewed from a broader economic and geopolitical perspective. It is no longer merely a subject of computer science; it has now become a central issue in economics, sociology, and political science as well.



DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The most direct and profound impact of artificial intelligence has been witnessed in the global economy and employment sector. Every new technology destroys old jobs while creating new opportunities, but in the case of artificial intelligence, the pace and scale of this transformation are far greater than those of any previous industrial revolution. Earlier, machines only replaced physical labor, but now artificial intelligence has begun to perform intellectual tasks as well. Activities such as banking calculations, legal document analysis, news writing, and even computer coding can now be carried

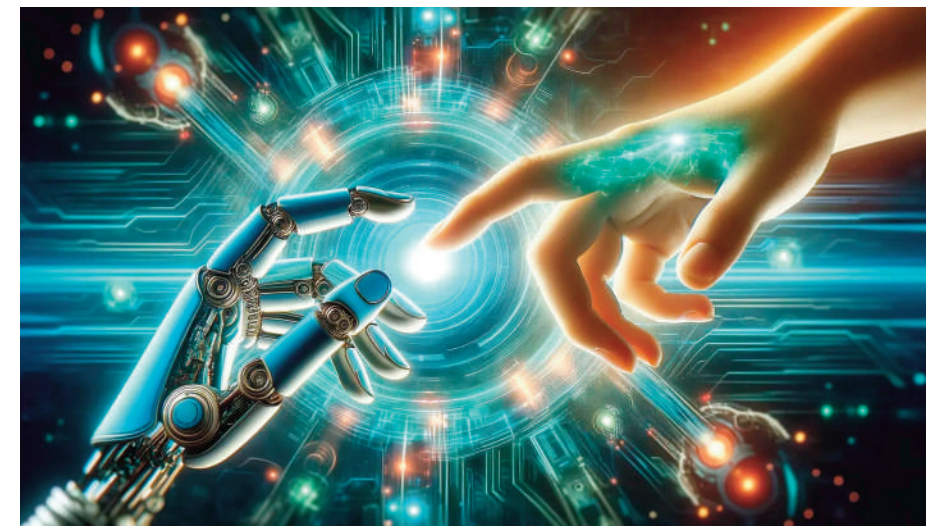
out by artificial intelligence far more quickly and accurately than humans. The direct implication of this is that jobs involving repetitive work within fixed patterns are likely to disappear entirely in the near future. Corporate companies will inevitably adopt AI in place of human labor to maximize profits and reduce operational costs. This may create a massive unemployment crisis among the middle class. On the other hand, new sectors such as data analytics, robotics, and machine learning engineering will emerge, offering highly paid employment opportunities. However, the challenge lies in the fact that those who lose their traditional jobs may not easily adapt themselves to these new technologies and secure new employment immediately. This transition will require lengthy and expensive training. Such a situation is likely to widen economic inequality within society. Those possessing capital and technological knowledge will benefit more, while those lacking these resources will gradually fall behind. In such circumstances, governments and educational institutions will have to play an extremely significant role. Our present education system, which emphasizes rote learning and outdated curricula, will become entirely obsolete for the future world. We need an education system that can equip students with creativity, complex problem-solving abilities, and the capacity to adapt rapidly to changing environments. Simultaneously, concepts such as Universal Basic Income must be seriously discussed from now onward in order to prevent the social instability that may arise from unemployment. Rather than viewing artificial intelligence merely as a commercial tool, the greatest demand of the present time is to formulate a concrete framework through which it can be utilized for the overall welfare of society.

The impact of artificial intelligence on society and politics is even more complex and sensitive. Data has become the most valuable resource of the modern age, and artificial intelligence runs primarily on this data. Everything we search on the internet, what we buy, whom we communicate with, and even our location—technology companies are continuously collecting all this information. With the help of artificial intelligence, these enormous datasets are analyzed to create precise maps of our preferences, dislikes, and psychological tendencies. As a result, personal privacy has almost vanished completely. Major corporations and governments can use this technology to carry out extensive surveillance over the public. Through facial recognition technology, monitoring the movements of individuals in public spaces has become remarkably easy. At the same time, AI-driven algorithms possess the ability to shape or manipulate public opinion through fake news and deepfake videos. During elections, influencing voters or establishing specific political agendas has now become more effective through artificial intelligence than through force or money. The posts and information we encounter on social media are selectively determined by algorithms according to our existing beliefs and interests. This has created "echo chambers" within society, where individuals are exposed only to viewpoints that support their own opinions, making them increasingly intolerant toward differing perspectives. Such circumstances weaken the very foundation of democratic systems. Furthermore, bias within artificial intelligence programming is another alarming issue. Since these machines are trained using historical data, social prejudices re-

turns are under pressure and the rupee continues to weaken, an appeal for moderation in gold purchases becomes highly relevant from an economic perspective. This is not an attack on traditions, but a step toward strengthening the nation's economy. Similarly, restraint in fuel consumption has become a pressing necessity. India depends heavily on imported oil to meet its energy needs. Ongoing wars and instability in Gulf countries continue to push oil prices upward, directly affecting petrol, diesel, transportation, industries, and inflation. If citizens reduce unnecessary fuel consumption, make greater use of public transportation, and adopt energy conservation as part of their lifestyle, it would not only ease pressure on the economy but also contribute significantly to environmental protection. Restraint does not merely mean sacrifice; it also signifies foresight and responsibility. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal appears to be inspired by this very sense of responsibility. Importantly, he has not spoken of coercion or restrictions, but has instead sought voluntary cooperation from citizens—an essential hallmark of democratic leadership.

The duty of a responsible Prime Minister is not only to respond after a crisis arrives, but also to recognize warning signs in advance and prepare the nation accordingly. At a time when many countries are facing severe inflation, unemployment, and social unrest due to economic instability, India remains comparatively stable. This stability is not accidental; it is the result of economic policies adopted under Prime Minister Modi's leadership over the past

several years, including infrastructure expansion, the growth of the digital economy, the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (Self-Reliant India) initiative, and India's strengthening position on the global stage. It is also noteworthy that despite worldwide crises, India has prevented excessive economic burdens from falling upon its citizens. From the pandemic to war-driven global disruptions, the government has consistently implemented relief measures, provided free ration to the poor, extended support to farmers and the middle class, and taken numerous steps to maintain economic stability. Even amid global recessionary trends and conflict-ridden circumstances, India continues to remain among the world's fastest-growing economies. This stands as evidence of Prime Minister Modi's capable leadership and visionary approach. What is unfortunate is that even issues concerning national interest are not spared from narrow political calculations. In a democracy, criticism is everyone's right, but weighing every issue solely in terms of political gain and loss runs contrary to the national interest. If the Prime Minister appeals to citizens for restraint, the opposition should also encourage public awareness instead of creating fear and confusion. Politics remains healthy only so long as it stays connected to national welfare. But when politics degenerates into opposition merely for the sake of opposition, and national crises are treated as political opportunities, democracy itself is weakened. Today, the need of the hour is for the nation to think and act like one family, placing national interest above all else. During times of cri-



lated to race, ethnicity, or gender often become reflected in their decisions. For instance, AI software used in recruitment or crime control has frequently been found to discriminate against certain communities. Therefore, the development and application of artificial intelligence must be accompanied by strong ethical standards and impartial regulatory mechanisms. Government agencies, technologists, and social scientists must collectively formulate laws and guidelines that ensure algorithmic transparency while holding technology corporations accountable for their creations. Otherwise, society may eventually become a puppet in the hands of a few technology companies.

The revolutionary changes brought by artificial intelligence in science and healthcare are extremely positive and promising for humanity as a whole. In medical science, diagnosing diseases and discovering new medicines used to be lengthy and expensive processes. But now, with the help of artificial intelligence, millions of chemical compounds can be analyzed within just a few days, generating new hope for finding cures for severe diseases such as cancer. By thoroughly analyzing a patient's genetic structure, medical history, and present physical condition, AI can recommend personalized treatment methods specifically designed for individual patients. Even in interpreting X-rays, MRIs, or CT scans, machines can often detect subtle irregularities more accurately than human doctors. Similarly, in complex scientific processes such as space research, climate modeling, and enhancing agricultural productivity, the application of AI has achieved unimaginable success. Forecasting weather conditions, testing soil quality, and providing appropriate fertilizers and irrigation through intelligent systems can transform agriculture into a more profitable enterprise. All these developments prove that if artificial intelligence is guided in the right direction, it can dramatically improve the quality of human life. Yet, at this point, a crucial question arises—how far should we allow these machines to function independently? Presently, AI remains limited to specific tasks. However, leading scientists across the world are continuously working toward the creation of Artificial General Intelligence, or AGI, meaning machines possessing human-like intelligence across all domains. If such machines are eventually developed, capable of creating new machines through their own intelligence and operating beyond human control, what would the consequences be? There is no need for emotional fearmongering regarding this issue, but from a rational perspective, it is natural that every technology possesses destructive possibilities as well. The use of autonomous weapons in military operations has already become a terrifying threat to global peace. Machines possess neither morality nor human values; they merely function according to the commands and al-

gorithms provided to them. Therefore, if decisions regarding whom to kill and whom to spare in warfare are left entirely to machines, human rights will lose all meaning. These arguments make it evident that alongside technological progress, human responsibility and regulatory capacity must also grow equally stronger. Humanity cannot surrender its future entirely to machines; rather, machines must remain instruments through which human objectives are achieved.

A comprehensive analysis reveals that the relationship between artificial intelligence and the future world cannot be explained through any simplistic framework. It is an extremely complex, multidimensional, and evolving process. Blind acceptance of this technology is inappropriate, yet escaping from it out of fear is equally impossible. Artificial intelligence has provided humanity with unprecedented power, through which many longstanding global problems such as poverty, disease, and climate change may potentially be solved. At the same time, however, this very power may also push humanity toward destruction if it is not managed properly. The future shape of the world will not be determined by machines; it will be determined by human beings. Alongside technological advancement, human society itself requires intellectual and institutional evolution. Our present political and economic systems are not sufficiently equipped to confront the challenges of this new age. Governments must actively formulate new policies instead of attempting to regulate new technologies solely through outdated laws. Without global understanding and cooperation among nations, controlling the dangerous aspects of this technology will remain impossible. Furthermore, ordinary citizens must also become technologically educated and aware. Rather than allowing machines to make the most important decisions of our lives, we must learn to use machines in order to make more informed and rational decisions ourselves. In the age of artificial intelligence, humanity's greatest strengths will remain our moral values, ethics, and creativity—qualities that machines can never truly replicate. Therefore, in the coming years, while giving importance to technology, we must simultaneously focus on sharpening our distinct human qualities. Instead of treating artificial intelligence as a rival, our primary objective should be to establish it as a powerful supporting force for the advancement of humankind. Achieving this goal will require foresight, strict regulations, and an uncompromising commitment to human welfare. A world where technology and humanity maintain a harmonious balance will be the truly advanced and secure world of the future. In this rapidly changing era, only reason, scientific thinking, and deep analysis—not emotional slogans or blind opposition—can guide humanity toward the correct path ahead.

National responsibility above politics understanding Modi's call for restraint

By: Lalit Garg

Today, the entire world is passing through a phase marked by war, economic instability, energy crises, and uncertainty in global markets, all of which have pushed humanity into a new era of challenges. The prolonged conflicts and wars in the Gulf region have deeply impacted the global economy. Continuous increases in crude oil prices, disruptions in supply chains, weakening currencies against the dollar, and imbalances in international trade have affected the economic systems of almost every nation. India, too, cannot remain untouched by these circumstances. Since India imports a major portion of its energy requirements and is among the world's largest consumers of gold, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to citizens for restrained fuel consumption and moderation in gold purchases is not merely economic advice, but a far-sighted call made in the larger national interest.

Unfortunately, instead of collectively reflecting on the Prime Minister's appeal for austerity and restraint, the issue has been turned into a political controversy. Some opposition parties described the appeal as an attempt to spread fear among the public, while others termed it a cover-up for governmental failures. In reality, however, the appeal is intended to alert the nation to possible future challenges and encourage self-discipline before circumstances become difficult. This is not a matter of politics; it is a matter of national responsibility. At a time when even the world's major economies are struggling with economic uncertainty, the Prime Minister's

call for restraint and moderation should be viewed through the lens of national interest, not partisan politics. This is not the first time Prime Minister Modi has urged citizens to adopt discipline and prudence for the nation's long-term prosperity.

India's cultural ethos has always been rooted in the principle of restraint. In Indian philosophy, moderation is not merely considered a personal virtue but one of life's greatest strengths. Our sages, saints, and great thinkers consistently taught the difference between necessity and extravagance. Great personalities such as Mahavira, Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi, and Vinoba Bhave regarded sacrifice and self-restraint as humanity's greatest strengths. Indian culture teaches that one should consume only as much as is truly necessary, because limitless consumption ultimately leads to crisis. This is one of the reasons why Indian civilization remained balanced and sustainable for thousands of years. Today, when the world is suffering from the consequences of unchecked consumerism, India's culture of restraint can offer a meaningful path forward.

India's fascination with gold has deep historical and cultural roots. Gold occupies a special place in marriages, family celebrations, religious traditions, and social prestige. Yet, it is also a harsh reality that most of India's gold is imported. Every year, billions of dollars in foreign exchange reserves are spent on gold imports. Instead of contributing to production or industrial growth, much of this gold remains locked away in homes and bank lockers, lying economically inactive. At a time when foreign exchange re-

serves are under pressure and the rupee continues to weaken, an appeal for moderation in gold purchases becomes highly relevant from an economic perspective. This is not an attack on traditions, but a step toward strengthening the nation's economy.

Similarly, restraint in fuel consumption has become a pressing necessity. India depends heavily on imported oil to meet its energy needs. Ongoing wars and instability in Gulf countries continue to push oil prices upward, directly affecting petrol, diesel, transportation, industries, and inflation. If citizens reduce unnecessary fuel consumption, make greater use of public transportation, and adopt energy conservation as part of their lifestyle, it would not only ease pressure on the economy but also contribute significantly to environmental protection. Restraint does not merely mean sacrifice; it also signifies foresight and responsibility. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal appears to be inspired by this very sense of responsibility. Importantly, he has not spoken of coercion or restrictions, but has instead sought voluntary cooperation from citizens—an essential hallmark of democratic leadership.

The duty of a responsible Prime Minister is not only to respond after a crisis arrives, but also to recognize warning signs in advance and prepare the nation accordingly. At a time when many countries are facing severe inflation, unemployment, and social unrest due to economic instability, India remains comparatively stable. This stability is not accidental; it is the result of economic policies adopted under Prime Minister Modi's leadership over the past

several years, including infrastructure expansion, the growth of the digital economy, the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (Self-Reliant India) initiative, and India's strengthening position on the global stage.

It is also noteworthy that despite worldwide crises, India has prevented excessive economic burdens from falling upon its citizens. From the pandemic to war-driven global disruptions, the government has consistently implemented relief measures, provided free ration to the poor, extended support to farmers and the middle class, and taken numerous steps to maintain economic stability. Even amid global recessionary trends and conflict-ridden circumstances, India continues to remain among the world's fastest-growing economies. This stands as evidence of Prime Minister Modi's capable leadership and visionary approach.

What is unfortunate is that even issues concerning national interest are not spared from narrow political calculations. In a democracy, criticism is everyone's right, but weighing every issue solely in terms of political gain and loss runs contrary to the national interest. If the Prime Minister appeals to citizens for restraint, the opposition should also encourage public awareness instead of creating fear and confusion. Politics remains healthy only so long as it stays connected to national welfare. But when politics degenerates into opposition merely for the sake of opposition, and national crises are treated as political opportunities, democracy itself is weakened. Today, the need of the hour is for the nation to think and act like one family, placing national interest above all else. During times of cri-

sis, restraint, discipline, and cooperation become a nation's greatest strengths. History has repeatedly shown that whenever India has faced challenges, its people have demonstrated extraordinary unity and sacrifice. From the freedom movement to times of war, Indians have repeatedly risen above personal interests to prioritize the nation. Once again, we must understand that unnecessary consumption, showmanship, and unchecked luxury ultimately weaken the economic foundations of the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal must therefore be understood in this broader context. It is not merely a call to reduce gold purchases or conserve fuel; it is a message of self-restraint, self-discipline, and national responsibility. The foundational spirit of Indian culture has always emphasized that individuals strengthen society and the nation through their conduct. If restraint becomes an integral part of our lives, many economic, social, and environmental problems can naturally find solutions.

At a time when the world is passing through uncertainty and crisis, India stands comparatively strong. The credit belongs not only to the resilience of its people but also to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. What the nation needs today is not political blame games, but unity and constructive thinking. Restraint is not merely an economic policy—it is the foundation of nation-building. If we truly understand this spirit, we will not only overcome present challenges but also build a stronger and more self-reliant India for future generations.

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Career Opportunities in the Medical Devices Sector

By: Dr Bujitt Buragohain

The Medical Devices industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors that combines healthcare, technology, and engineering. Medical devices are instruments, equipment, and technologies used in treatment, diagnosis, monitoring, rehabilitation, and various healthcare services. Examples include MRI machines, ECG monitors, ventilators, surgical instruments, artificial organs etc. In India, the increasing demand for healthcare services, the "Make in India" initiative, advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), medical technology, and digital healthcare systems have created numerous new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in this field.

At present, the medical devices sector offers many modern and promising career opportunities. Biomedical engineers are responsible for the design, development, and maintenance of imaging systems, artificial organs, and diagnostic devices. Medical device design engineers use CAD software, electronics, and mechanical technologies to innovate and develop new medical devices. Clinical engineers are responsible for the installation, calibration, and maintenance of medical equipment such as MRI machines, CT scanners, ventilators, and monitors in hospitals and healthcare institutions. Regulatory affairs specialists ensure that medical devices comply with government regulations and safety standards, while quality assurance engineers test and control the quality of manufactured devices.

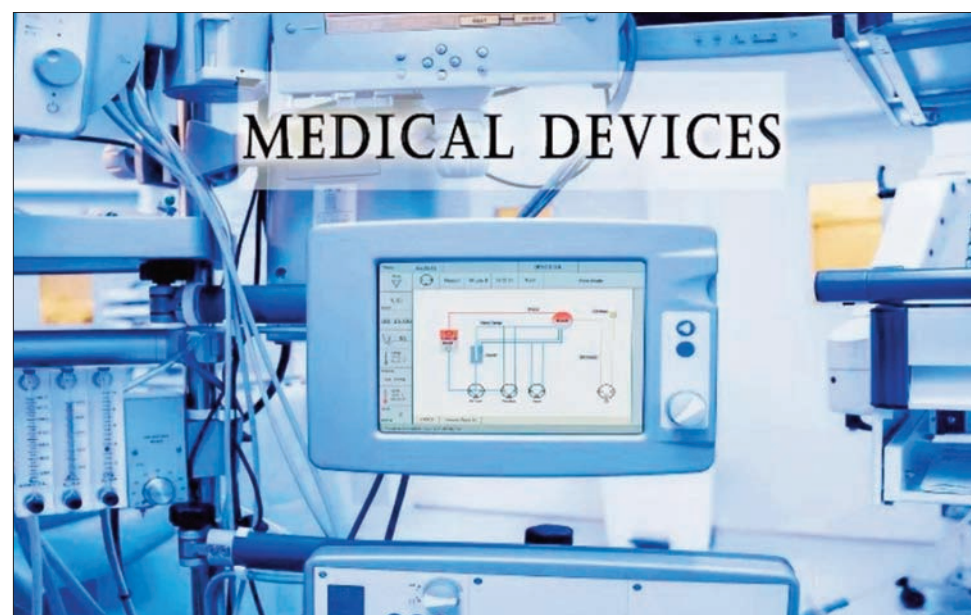
In the Research and Development (R&D) sector, engineers work on advanced technologies such as AI-based diagnostics, robotic surgery devices, smart sensors, and biosensors. In addition, medical device sales and application specialists demonstrate new devices and provide technical

support to doctors, hospitals, and diagnostic centres. Service and maintenance engineers handle the repair and routine maintenance of medical equipment. Today, digital health and AI specialists are also playing a vital role in this industry by using AI, the Internet of Things (IoT), data analytics, and wearable technologies to open new dimensions in healthcare services.

After Higher Secondary education, students from the science stream (Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics/Biology) can pursue various professional courses in medical devices and biomedical technology. These include B.Tech programs in Biomedical Engineering, Medical Electronics, Biotechnology, Electronics and Instrumentation, and related disciplines. Students who wish to acquire technical knowledge in a shorter duration can opt for diploma courses in Biomedical Engineering. For students interested in medical science and research-oriented subjects, a B.Sc. in Biomedical Science is also an excellent option. These courses provide opportunities to build careers in modern medical technology, medical device design, research, and healthcare sectors.

After completing graduation, students can pursue postgraduate programs to gain specialization in medical devices and healthcare technology. They may opt for M.Tech programs in Biomedical Engineering or Medical Device Technology, where in-depth knowledge about medical device design, advanced technologies, research, and innovation is provided.

Furthermore, postgraduate diploma programs in Medical Devices help students develop skills in device management, maintenance, and technical expertise. Students interested in healthcare administration and management can pursue an MBA in Healthcare Management, which focuses on hospital administration, healthcare policy, marketing,



and medical industry management. These postgraduate courses open opportunities for high-level careers in research organizations, industries, hospitals, healthcare technology companies, and multinational corporations.

Apart from various institutions across the country, Assam also offers educational opportunities in the field of Medical Devices. The National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER) Guwahati offers M.Tech, Ph.D., and postgraduate diploma programs in this field. Interested students may visit the website (<https://www.niperguwahati.ac.in>) for detailed in-

formation about the courses.

To build a successful career in the medical devices and healthcare technology sector, certain important skills are essential. A strong understanding of electronics and instrumentation is highly important because many medical devices are based on these technologies. CAD and product design skills help in the design and development of new medical equipment. Knowledge of AI and data analytics has also become highly valuable today, enabling better analysis of healthcare data and improved medical decision-making. Programming and embedded sys-

tems skills support the development of smart and automated medical devices. Problem-solving skills help in addressing practical challenges effectively. Communication skills are equally important for maintaining coordination among doctors, engineers, and team members. Teamwork and an innovative mindset also play significant roles in developing new technologies and successfully implementing projects.

Many Indian and international companies offer employment opportunities in the medical devices and healthcare technology sector. Companies such as Medtronic, Johnson & Johnson MedTech, Siemens Healthineers, GE Healthcare India, Philips Healthcare India, Abbott India, Boston Scientific, Meril Life Sciences, Poly Micro, Transasia Bio-Medicals Ltd., Nureca Limited, Triviron Healthcare, BPL Medical Technologies etc. recruit engineers, researchers, and technical specialists for various positions. Besides these, many startups and research laboratories in India are increasingly creating job opportunities in innovation and research, making this sector more dynamic and promising.

The future of India's medical devices industry is extremely bright. Modernization of healthcare services, digital healthcare systems, AI-based diagnostics, and the growth of domestic manufacturing are creating enormous opportunities in this field. In the coming years, this sector is expected to generate numerous new jobs, business ventures, and research opportunities.

For students who are interested in science, healthcare, technology, and innovation, the medical devices sector is an excellent career option. This field offers opportunities to become successful professionals in hospitals, research institutions, manufacturing industries, startups, and multinational companies.

RRB ALP Recruitment 2026 – 11127 Assistant Loco Pilot Posts, Online Apply

Railway Recruitment Board (RRB), Ministry of Railways, Govt. of India has released an employment notification of Centralized Employment Notification (CEN) 01/2026 for the recruitment of 11127 Assistant Loco Pilot posts in various RRBs. The online application process for RRB ALP Vacancy 2026 starts from 15th May 2026 to 14th June 2026.

Interested and eligible candidates may read the advertisement and apply online here. Candidates can choose only one RRB and indicate their preference for Railway Zones notified under that chosen RRB only.

Name of post: Assistant Loco Pilot (ALP)
No of posts: 11127 posts
No of posts under RRB Guwahati: 676 posts
Pay scale: Level 02 of 7th CPC Pay Matrix with initial pay of Rs 19900/- plus other allowances as admissible.

The RRB-wise vacancy details are as follows:

- Ahmedabad: 147
- Ajmer: 718
- Prayagraj: 610
- Bengaluru: 20
- Bhopal: 453
- Bhubaneswar: 801
- Bilaspur: 522
- Chandigarh: 187
- Chennai: 186
- Gorakhpur: 105
- Guwahati (NFR): 676
- Jammu-Srinagar: 400
- Kolkata: 841
- Malda: 559
- Mumbai: 1,193
- Muzaffarpur: 42
- Patna: 103
- Ranchi: 1,300
- Secunderabad: 1,420
- Siliguri: 600
- Thiruvananthapuram: 64
- Age Limit: Candidates age must be between 18 to 30 years as on 1st July 2026.
- Age Relaxation: The relaxation of upper age limit for reserved categories are as follows:

Category	Age Relaxation
OBC-NCL	3 years
SC/ST	5 years

- Educational Qualification:
 - A) Matriculation / SSLC plus ITI from recognised institutions of NCVT/SCVT in the trades of Fitter, Electrician, Instrument Mechanic, Millwright/Maintenance Mechanic, Mechanic (Radio & TV), Electronics Mechanic, Mechanic (Motor Vehicle), Wireman, Tractor Mechanic, Armature & Coil Winder, Mechanic (Diesel), Heat Engine, Turner, Machinist, Refrigeration & Air-Conditioning Mechanic.

- (OR)
 - Matriculation / SSLC plus Course Completed Act Apprenticeship in the trades mentioned above

- (OR)
 - B) Matriculation / SSLC plus three years Diploma in Mechanical / Electrical / Electronics / Automobile Engineering (OR) combination of various streams of these Engineering disciplines from a recognised Institution in lieu of ITI.

Note: Degree in the Engineering disciplines as above will also be acceptable in lieu of Diploma in Engineering.

- Candidates waiting for final results of prescribed educational /technical qualifications are not eligible to apply.

Physical and Medical Standard of the candidates for RRB Assistant Loco Pilot posts must be as mentioned below.

Category	Requirement
Medical Standard	A1
Physical Standard	Physically Fit in All Standards
Vision Standard	Distant Vision: 6/6, 6/6 Without glasses with fogging test (must not accept +2D)

- Near Vision: Sn: 0.6, 0.6 Without glasses
- Must Pass test for Color Vision, Binocular Vision, Field of Vision, Night Vision, Mesopic Vision, etc.

Following helplines are released for any queries related to technical issues.

Phone 0172-565-3333 and 9592001188

Email rrb.help@csc.gov.in

Time 10 AM to 5 PM

Application Fee: Candidates have to pay an application fee as mentioned below:

Category	Fee
SC / ST / Ex-Serviceman / PWDs / Female / Transgender / Minorities / Economically backward class.	Rs. 250

(The fee for these categories shall be refunded after deducting bank charges as applicable, on appearing in First Stage CBT.)

Others
(Out of this fee of Rs 500/-, an amount of Rs 400/- shall be refunded duly deducting bank charges, on appearing in 1st Stage CBT.)

Rs. 500
Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these posts by visiting the official portal of RRB. They may follow below mentioned steps .

- Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .
- Click on Online Application Form link .
- A new webpage will be opened .
- Enter all your personal and educational details as required .
- Upload your passport sized photograph and signature and other required documents.
- Pay the examination fee as per your category and at the end click on submit button.
- Don't forget to take a print of submitted application form.
- Starting date of submission of online application: 15th May 2026
- Last date of submission of online application: 14th June 2026

CSIR NEIST Jorhat Recruitment 2026 – 10 MTS & Driver Posts, Online Apply

CSIR-North East Institute of Science and Technology (CSIR-NEIST) Jorhat has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 10 Multi Tasking Staff (MTS) and Driver (Non- Technical) posts in CSIR-NEIST, Jorhat. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here .

CSIR-North East Institute of Science and Technology, Jorhat, is a premier institute under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), an Autonomous Body of Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Govt. of India. It is involved in multidisciplinary R&D programmes of both basic and applied nature across various scientific disciplines for economic, environmental and societal benefits for the people of India.

1. Multi Tasking Staff (MTS)

No of posts: 09 posts

Category-wise vacancy:

UR: 04
EWS: 01
OBC(NCL): 02
SC: 01
ST: 01

Upper Age Limit: Must be maximum age of 25 years.

Pay Matrix: Level 1

Essential Qualification: Candidates must be Matriculation or equivalent exam pass.

Desirable Qualification: It is desirable to be Intermediate (12th class) pass.

2. Driver (Non- Technical)

No of posts: 01 post (UR)

Upper Age Limit: Must be maximum age of 27 years.

Pay Matrix: Level 2

Essential Qualification: Candidates must be Matriculation or equivalent exam pass.

Professional Qualification:

- I. Possession of valid driving license for LMV and HMV.
 - II. Knowledge of motor mechanism (The candidate should be able to remove minor defects in vehicle)
 - III. Experience of driving a motor car for at least 3 years.
- Citizenship: The applicant must be a citizen of India.

Age Relaxation: The category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

SC/ST: 5 years
OBC: 3 years
PwD (Unreserved): 10 years
PwD (OBC): 13 years
PwD (SC/ST): 15 years
Category-wise application fee is as under.

Category	Amount
General/ OBC/ EWS	Rs 500/-
SC/ ST/ PwBD	Nil
ESM/ Women/ CSIR Employee	Nil

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy through online mode by visiting official CSIR NEIST Recruitment Portal. Candidates may follow below mentioned steps to apply for NEIST MTS Recruitment.

- Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .
 - Click on the "Online Application Form" and complete the registration process.
 - In the next stage, click on "Online Application Form" Link and Login.
 - Fill your all personal and educational details and upload necessary documents.
 - Make payment of application fee as per your category and submit the form.
 - At the end, take a print out of the application form.
- Following documents are required to be uploaded as a PDF during online application:

- SSC/10th certificate & Mark sheet (reflecting Date of Birth).
- Intermediate/10+2/Diploma Certificate & Mark sheet (wherever applicable).
- ITI certificate (wherever applicable).
- Latest Caste/Category certificate etc. in the prescribed Government of India format
- signed by the specific authority, wherever applicable.
- Driving Licence (wherever applicable).
- No Objection Certificate with vigilance clearance (wherever applicable).
- Certificate (s) related to higher qualification, if any.
- State Bank Collect payment receipt.
- Certificate related to PwBD/ Women seeking age relaxation etc. (wherever applicable) in the prescribed format.
- Birth Certificate issued by the Registrar of Births and Deaths or the Municipal Corporation or any other prescribed authority, whosever has been empowered under the Registration of Birth and Deaths Act, 1969 to register the birth of a child born in India (only if DOB not mentioned in Secondary or Senior Secondary School Certificate).
- Any other relevant certificate/ document.

Starting Date of online application submission: 5th May 2026

Last Date of online application submission: 4th June 2026 up to 5 PM.

CRPF Recruitment 2026 – 9195 Constable (Technical/ Tradesmen & Pioneer) Posts

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 9195 Constable (Technical & Tradesmen and Pioneer) Posts in Central Reserve Police Force. Minimum educational qualification for this post is 10th pass. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here till 19th May 2026.

Name of post: Constable (Technical & Tradesmen) and Constable (Pioneer)

No of posts: 9195 posts

No of posts @ Assam: 288 posts

Pay scale: Pay Level-3 (₹21,700 – ₹69,100)

Name of organisation: Central Reserve Police Force

Mode of application: Online

State-wise vacancy breakdown for Constable (Technical & Tradesmen) is as under.

Trade	No of vacancy
Driver	3,176
Bugler	1,274
Cook	1,426
Motor Mechanic Vehicle	739
Safai Karamchhari	547
Water Carrier	529
Washerman	363
Barber	231
Tailor	197
Brass Band	175
Mali (Gardener)	142
Carpenter	123
Cobbler	118
Pipe Band	99
Painter	33
Hair Dresser	3
Total	9,175

Citizenship: Candidates must be a citizen of India.

Age Limit:

Constable (Driver): Candidates age must be between 21 to 27 years as on 1st August 2026. Candidates should not have been born earlier than 02/08/1999 and later than 01/08/2005.

Other posts: Candidates age must be between 18 to 23 years as on 1st August 2026. Candidates should not have been born earlier than 02/08/2003 and later than 01/08/2008.

Age Relaxation: The category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

SC/ST: 5 years
OBC/ MOBC: 3 years

Educational Qualification: Candidates must have passed 10th exam or equivalent exam from a recognized Board/ University.

Technical Qualification:

Driver: Should possess Heavy Transport Vehicle Driving License and should pass the driving test at the time of recruitment.

Mechanic Motor Vehicle: Possessing 02 years Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) certificate in Mechanic Motor Vehicle recognized by National or State Council for Vocational training or any other recognized institution and one-year practical experience in the field of concerned trade.

OR

National or State apprenticeship certificate in Mechanic Motor Vehicle trade of three-year duration from a recognized institution and one-year practical experience in the field of concerned Trade.

Pioneer Wing:

- a) One-year experience in respective trades like Masonry or Electrician.
- b) Preference will be given to those having certificate of trade from recognized Industrial Training Institute.

Other Tradesmen posts: Must be proficient and worked in respective trades.

Candidates have to pay an application fee as mentioned below:

Category	Amount
UR/ EWS/ OBC	Rs 100/-
SC/ ST	Nil
Female/ Ex-servicemen	Nil

Payment Mode: Fee can be paid online.

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy by visiting official CRPF Recruitment Portal. Candidates may follow below mentioned steps to apply online.

Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section.

Click on the "Online Application Form" and complete the registration process by clicking "New Registration".

In the next stage, click on "Online Application Form" Link and Login.

Fill your all personal and educational details and upload necessary documents.

At the end, pay the application fee and submit the form.

Don't forget to take a print out of the application form.

Starting Date of online application submission: 20 April 2026

Last Date of online application submission: 19th May 2026

Unemployed 'youngsters like cockroaches' become media, activists: CJI

NEW DELHI, May 15: Likening some unemployed youngsters to cockroaches, Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant on Friday said they go on to "become" media, social media and RTI activists and start attacking the system.

The comments came while a bench of CJI Kant and Justice Joyymalya Bagchi was pulling up a lawyer for "pursuing" a senior advocate designation. It said there were already "parasites" in society who attack the system and asked the petitioner whether he wanted to join hands with them.

"The entire world may be eligible to become

senior (advocate), but at least you are not entitled," the bench told the petitioner lawyer.

A visibly anguished CJI observed that if the Delhi High Court would confer senior advocate designation upon the petitioner, the apex court would set that aside seeing his professional conduct.

The CJI also referred to the kind of language used by the petitioner on Facebook.

"There are already parasites of society who attack the system and you want to join hands with them?" he said.

"There are youngsters like cockroaches, who

don't get any employment or have any place in profession. Some of them become media, some of them become social media, RTI activists and other activists and they start attacking everyone," he said.

The bench also asked the petitioner whether he did not have any other litigation.

"Is this the conduct of a person who seeks to be designated as a senior advocate?" the bench asked.

It said senior advocate designation is something that is conferred on a person and is not to be pursued.

"You are pursuing it. Does it look proper?" the

top court said, asking whether a senior advocate designation was a status symbol to be kept ornamentally.

It also observed that it wanted to ask the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to verify the degrees of many of those who were wearing black robes as there were serious doubts over the genuineness of their degrees.

It said the Bar Council of India would never do anything on this issue as they "need their votes".

The petitioner apologised to the bench and sought permission to withdraw the petition. The bench allowed the withdrawal of the petition. (PTI)



NEET paper leak: Delhi court sends Lokhande to 6-day CBI custody

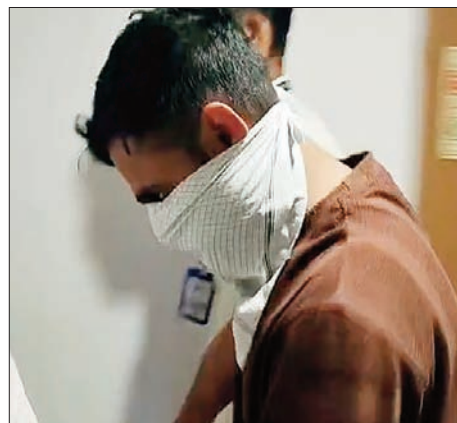
NEW DELHI, May 15: A Delhi court on Friday sent NEET paper leak case accused Dhananjay Nivrutti Lokhande to six days' CBI custody, saying the agency needed to unearth the entire conspiracy, identify and arrest others, recover evidence and prevent tampering of evidence.

Special CBI judge Ajay Gupta was hearing the federal agency's plea seeking six days' custodial interrogation of Lokhande, who had been arrested from Ahilyanagar in Maharashtra, and brought to the court on a transit remand.

"Allegedly, there is a larger conspiracy angle present in this case; the investigation is at its very initial stage, and the custody of the accused Dhananjay Nivrutti Lokhande has been sought to unearth the entire conspiracy as well as arrest all the other active members of this organised paper leak gang and also for the recovery of all the relevant incriminating material," Judge Gupta said.

He noted that, according to Special Public Prosecutor Neetu Singh, Lokhande's custody was required to prevent further tampering with the evidence, as some of the accused persons had already deleted the incriminating data from their mobile phones. "Therefore... the CBI seeking six days' police custody remand of the accused is hereby allowed, and he is remanded to police custody for six days, subject to his medical examination," the judge said.

Five more accused, Yash Yadav, Mangilal Khatik, Vikash Biwal, Dinesh Biwal and Shub-



ham Khairnar, were earlier remanded to CBI custody on Thursday till May 20.

The court cited CBI's submission that the NEET 2026 exam was conducted on May 3, but before the scheduled date, a paper containing a substantial number of questions, which also appeared in the exam, was leaked and circulated in an organised manner for monetary gain.

It said that a fact-finding inquiry was conducted by the Special Operations Group (SOG), Rajasthan, which reportedly confirmed the authenticity of certain leaked questions.

"It has been submitted that until now, six accused persons, namely, Yash Yadav, Mangilal Khatik, Vikash Biwal, Dinesh Biwal, Shubham

Madhukar Khairnar and Dhananjay Nivrutti Lokhande, have been arrested and, allegedly, they are part of the organised gang who, in conspiracy with each other, leaked and circulated the confidential NEET examination paper 2026 for monetary gain," the court said.

On Lokhande's role, the court noted that according to the probe, he was known to Shubham.

It said that after receiving the material from another accused, he transmitted it to Shubham, and that there had been banking transactions of around Rs 6 lakh between them.

"Allegedly, as per the CBI investigation, it has come to light that accused Shubham Madhukar Khairnar had obtained the said paper from accused Dhananjay, who had obtained the same from co-accused Manisha Waghmare (a resident of Pune)," the court said.

It said that Shubham allegedly helped facilitate Yash Yadav (of Gurugram) with the distribution of the leaked paper, and on April 29, Yadav got the PDF files of the question papers through the Telegram app.

Files containing the question paper of Physics, Chemistry and Biology have been recovered, it said.

"Allegedly, after accused Yash Yadav received the leaked question paper, he struck a deal with (other) co-accused persons, and he, as well as other co-accused persons, further circulated the same for monetary gain," the court said. (PTI)

Shiv Sena row: SC irked over irresponsible statements by politicians

NEW DELHI, May 15: The Supreme Court on Friday expressed strong displeasure over "irresponsible statements" of some politicians alleging non-hearing of the Shiv Sena symbol row case in the top court, and cautioned that they should be careful as such conduct can't be accepted.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joyymalya Bagchi observed that parties before it had sought dates in the matter and then statements were being made that the apex court was not deciding the case.

"We will fix the date but first you stop your people from going to the media and making irresponsible statements saying that the Supreme Court is not deciding," an visibly anguished CJI told the counsel appearing for the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction.

"You seek dates here and then say that the court is not deciding the matter. We are issuing a warning. Be careful in using your words. I am not a person who will accept this conduct," the CJI said.

The bench, which said it expects cooperation from both the sides, questioned why some politicians were making such statements.

Senior advocate Mukul Ro-

hatgi, appearing for the Eknath Shinde-led faction, said litigants don't have the right to make such statements against the court.

"We know how much pressure is there on the courts. Our side has not said so. It should not be said by any side," he said, adding that the court has always shown patience to all litigants.

The CJI observed, "We are sitting here till 4 PM and if somebody thinks that we are sitting idle, we can't understand that."

Senior advocate Devadatt Kamat, appearing for the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction, said lawyers would never support any such statements and they were ready to argue the matter as per the court's convenience.

The bench posted the matter for hearing on July 30.

The court was hearing two pleas, including the one filed by the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction of the Shiv Sena against the Election Commission's order allotting the 'bow and arrow' symbol to Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led faction.

The top court had earlier said that after hearing the Shiv Sena matter, it would hear arguments on a similar dispute concerning the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)

as there are several overlapping issues involved in both cases.

The Uddhav faction has challenged the February 17, 2023 order of the Election Commission which has allotted the name 'Shiv Sena' and its poll symbol 'bow and arrow' to the group led by Shinde.

The Thackeray faction has also questioned the Maharashtra Speaker's decision to hand over the party's name and symbol to the opposite faction based on the legislative majority saying it was contrary to a constitution bench verdict of the top court.

In January 2024, Speaker Rahul Narvekar rejected Shiv Sena-UBT's plea to disqualify 16 MLAs including Shinde of the ruling camp.

Challenging the orders passed by the Speaker in the apex court, the Thackeray faction claimed they were "patently unlawful and perverse" and instead of punishing the act of defection, they rewarded the defectors by holding that they comprised the real political party.

The Speaker, the plea claimed, erred in holding that the majority of the Shiv Sena legislators represented the will of the Shiv Sena party. (PTI)

'Not suicide, but murder by the system': Rahul on NEET aspirant's death

NEW DELHI, May 15: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Friday that a NEET aspirant's suicide in Uttar Pradesh was a "murder by the system" and asked how many more such deaths would it take for the government to be held accountable.

Ritik Mishra, 21, of Lakhimpur Kheri allegedly hanged himself on Thursday as he was distressed by the cancellation of the NEET-UG exam over paper leak allegations, his family said, adding that the student was confident that his attempt went well in his third shot at the entrance test.

In a post on X in Hindi, Gandhi vowed to fight the battle against exam corruption and promised the youth that he stood with them and those stealing their future would have to answer.

"No more competitive exams now." These were the last words of 21-year-old Ritik Mishra from Lakhimpur Kheri. This child, appearing for NEET for the third time, broke down the moment the exam was cancelled.

"In Goa too, a NEET aspirant took his own life. These children didn't lose to the exams — they were killed by a corrupt system. This isn't suicide — it's murder by the system," Gandhi said.

"Modi ji — how many Ritiks will it take to awaken your accountability?" the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha asked, addressing Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Assuring the youth that he stood with them in getting justice, he said, "My young friends, your pain is my pain. Your hard work is my hard work. Those who steal your future will have to answer. No matter how long it takes, no one will be spared — this is my promise. We will fight this battle together — and we will win." (PTI)

PM's plea on gold buying 'death warrant' for jewellery sector, says Congress

NEW DELHI, May 15: The Congress on Friday termed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to defer gold buying for a year a "death warrant" for the jewellery sector and demanded from the Centre an economic package for 3.5 crore people linked to the sector.

Addressing a press conference here, Congress general secretary Ran-deep Surjewala accused the Modi government of pushing the jewellery sector towards an "undeclared lock-

down" with the appeal and the subsequent increase in import duty on gold and silver. He said the sector contributes largely to the exports of the country, and feared the rise in duty from 6 per cent to 15 per cent on gold imports would lead to smuggling and illegal trade.

Surjewala termed the prime minister's appeal an attack on India's cultural heritage, social customs and religious traditions, as gold forms an integral part of them, and also serves

as a safety net for millions of women. He said that over 90 per cent of India's jewellery trade operates through MSMEs and small jewellers, and nearly 3.5 crore people are dependent on the sector, including goldsmiths, traders, artisans and workers.

The Congress leader called the advisory "disastrous" and an attack on the livelihoods of backward communities and traditional artisans linked to the manufacture and trade of jewellery. (PTI)

'Don't fall for opposition's 'negative' politics, stand with PM'

MAHARAJGANJ (UP), May 15: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday urged people not to fall victim to "the opposition's negative politics and narrative", asking them to stand with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his appeal for moderating fuel use and other expenses.

He was speaking at the inauguration and foundation-laying ceremony for various public welfare projects worth over Rs 208 crore in Maharajganj district.

He said, "The conflict between the United States and Iran in West Asia has impacted oil supplies. The supply of diesel, petrol and LPG — the volume that was previously available — has been significantly affected. The government is incurring losses amounting to thousands of crores every single day.

"This loss belongs to the nation, and by 'nation', we mean the people. (PTI)

Unnao rape case: SC sets aside order suspending Sengar's life term

NEW DELHI, May 15: The Supreme Court on Friday set aside a Delhi High Court order suspending the life sentence of former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the 2017 Unnao rape case and asked it to decide the plea afresh.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joyymalya Bagchi also asked the high court to make endeavours to decide the main plea of Sengar against his conviction and life imprisonment in the case within two months.

It also said that if it was not possible for the high court to decide the main plea expeditiously, it should pass an order on a plea of Sengar seeking the suspension of his life term before the start of the summer vacation.

The bench, which had earlier set aside the high court order granting bail to Sengar after a huge public uproar over the issue, said that it did not express any opinion on the merits of the case and the high court could proceed with it afresh and hear all parties, including the victim.

It asked the parties not to seek adjournment of the hearing on the appeal of Sengar before the high court.

The top court was hearing a CBI appeal challenging the suspension of the former lawmaker's life imprisonment by the high court in the case.

It noted that prima facie, the high court dealt with several issues while deciding Sengar's plea for suspension of sentence.

"It emerges that there are several other issues to consider... Without expressing any opinion on merits,



we allow the appeal (of the CBI) and set aside the impugned order," the bench said, adding, "The high court shall make an endeavour to decide the main appeal (against conviction and the life term) within two months."

Observing that it has not expressed any opinion on the merits of the case, the bench asked the high court to decide afresh the plea for suspension of sentence without being influenced by the order of this court.

The CJI also asked the high court to decide afresh issues like whether an MLA can be treated as a public servant for being prosecuted under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

During the hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, said the high court was wrong in taking a view that a lawmaker was not a "public servant" within the meaning of the POCSO Act.

Justice Bagchi prima facie agreed to the submissions, saying, "We are not endorsing the hyper-technical view taken by the high court", and highlighted that the POCSO Act was enacted to protect children.

The solicitor general said that an MLA would be in a dominant position in such cases where the victim is a minor.

Senior advocate N Hariharan, appearing for Sengar, said it can be established that the prosecutrix was not a minor at the time of the alleged incident.

The law officer opposed the submission and assailed the findings of the high court, saying the lawmaker was in a dominant position.

Earlier, the top court had deferred to the first week of May the hearing on the petition filed by the CBI challenging the suspension of Sengar's life imprisonment.

On December 29 last year, the top court stayed the Delhi High Court order suspending Sengar's life sentence and said he shall not be released from custody.

In its December 23 order, the Delhi High Court had said that Sengar has been convicted under Section 5 (C) (aggravated penetrative sexual assault by a public servant) of the POCSO Act, but an elected representative does not fit the definition of a "public servant" under Section 21 of the IPC.

The high court had suspended the jail term of Sengar, who was serving life imprisonment in the Unnao rape case, till the pendency of his appeal, saying he had already served seven years and five months in prison.

The high court order sparked criticism from a section, triggering protests by the victim, her family and activists.

Sengar had challenged a December 2019 trial court verdict in the case. (PTI)

Karnataka electoral roll SIR exercise to begin from June 20

BENGALURU, May 15: Karnataka will begin SIR of electoral rolls from June 20 as part of a nationwide exercise covering 16 states and three Union Territories, CEO Anbu Kumar said on Friday. The drive will cover more than 5.5 crore electors in the state, he said.

As per the schedule notified by the Election Commission (EC), preparation, training and printing activities will be carried out from June 20 to June 29 and Booth Level Officers (BLOs) will conduct house-to-house visits from June 30 to July 29.

The rationalisation of polling stations is scheduled to be completed by July 29. The draft electoral roll will be published on August 5, following which claims and objections can be filed between August 5 and September 4. The notice phase and disposal of claims and objections will continue from August 5 to October 3, and the final electoral roll will be published on October 7, it said.

Addressing a press conference here, CEO Kumar said that in Karnataka, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer is fully prepared to proceed with the SIR of electoral rolls. As part of this exercise, we have successfully mapped 86.46 per cent of our voters, he said.

"The primary objective of this entire exercise is to ensure that every eligible voter is enrolled, while simultaneously ensuring that no ineligible individuals are included in the voter list. Therefore, I seek the support and cooperation of all the voters of Karnataka, all political parties, and our friends from the media," he added. (PTI)

HC declares Bhojshala site as temple, scraps ASI namaz order

INDORE, May 15: In a huge win for the Hindu side, the Madhya Pradesh High Court on Friday declared that the disputed Bhojshala complex in Dhar district is a temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, and the Centre and ASI can decide on its administration and management.

The HC's Indore bench also quashed the April 7, 2003, order of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) that allowed Muslims to offer namaz inside the Bhojshala complex every Friday.

The bench, which was hearing the case, also said the Muslim community, which called the 11th century, ASI-protected monument Kamal Maula Mosque, may approach the state government for allotment of separate land in the district for construction of a mosque.

In its much-awaited verdict in the Bhojshala Temple-Kamal Maula Mosque complex dispute, the court observed that there were indications of a Sanskrit teaching centre and a temple of Goddess Saraswati existing in Bhojshala.

The HC accepted two public interest litigations (PILs) filed by the Hindu community and established the religious nature of the medieval-era monument as a temple



dedicated to Goddess Saraswati.

"The religious character of the disputed complex of Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque is established as a temple of Goddess Saraswati," declared a division bench of Justices Vijay Kumar Shukla and Alok Awasthi.

The court, citing the ASI's scientific survey report on the disputed monument and other documents on record, stated that the structure was associated with King Bhoj of the Parmar dynasty, a Rajput kingdom that ruled the Malwa region of present-day central India between the 9th and 14th centuries.

The HC stated that if the Maulana Kamaluddin Welfare Society, a party to the

case from the Muslim side, applies for land allotment for the construction of a mosque in Dhar district, the state government can consider it in accordance with legal provisions.

The bench delivered the verdict on five petitions and one writ appeal related to the matter. It began regular hearing in the Bhojshala case on April 6 and reserved its decision on May 12 after submission of arguments from all concerned parties.

The HC heard the sensitive case against the backdrop of differing religious beliefs, historical claims, complexities of legal provisions, and thousands of documents related to the disputed monument.

During the hearing, petitioners from Hindu, Muslim, and Jain communities presented detailed arguments and sought exclusive worship rights for their communities at the monument.

After controversy arose over Bhojshala, the ASI issued an order on April 7, 2003, allowing Hindus to worship at the complex every Tuesday and permitting Muslims to offer namaz at the site every Friday. This was also challenged in the court by the Hindu side, which sought exclusive rights to worship at the complex. (PTI)

No.EE/KOJP/WD(R)/TEN/23/160/2025-26/15

Dated Kokrajhar, the 14-05-2026

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tender subsequently to be drawn in F-2 form affixing Non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25p (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only are invited from the Registered PWD Contractor's under Class-I (A, B, C) of Assam PWD (Rural Roads), Class-II Roads and Class-III Roads category will be received for the following works up to 2-00 P.M 28-05-2026 in the office of the Executive Engineer, PWRD Kokrajhar Rural Roads Division, Kokrajhar which will be opened on the same date, place at 2.15 P.M in presence of the tenderers or their authorized agent.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Tender Amount (in Rs.) (Including 12% G.ST&1% L.W.C)	Earmst Money (in Rs.) (ST, SC, OBC -%&GEN-2%)	Cost of Tender Paper (in Rs.)	Time for completion in months
1	Construction of box culvert at Anthaibari village with approach road under Labainapur VCDC in Kokrajhar District, Assam under MPLAD Scheme (L/S) for the year 2025-26.	19,99,999.00	1%-Rs. 20,000/-2%-Rs. 40,000/-	Rs. 1000/-	6(six) months
2	Construction of Road at Bolamjhorna village under Kachugaon Dev. Block under MPLADS for the year 2025-26	15,00,000.00	1%-Rs. 15,000/-2%-Rs. 30,000/-	Rs. 1000/-	6(six) months
3	Construction of road at 14 No. Bishmuri under Bishmuri VCDC in Kokrajhar District, Assam under MPLAD Scheme (L/S) for the year 2025-26.	14,99,999.00	1%-Rs. 15,000/-2%-Rs. 30,000/-	Rs. 1000/-	6(six) months

Details NTT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent up to 12.00 Noon on all working days from 21-05-2026 to 26-05-2026 in the office of the undersigned on payment of cost of tender paper in the form of Banker Cheque/Demand draft of any nationalized Bank (Preferable SB1) duly pledged to the Empowered Officer, Assam State Road Board.

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/168

Sd/- Executive Engineer, PWD, Kokrajhar Rural Roads Division

Singh says adequate security arrangements will be made for rehabilitation Manipur CM assures safe return of IDPs to their homes

IMPHAL, May 15: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Thursday assured the safe return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their respective homes and said adequate security arrangements would be provided for their rehabilitation.

Singh made the remarks during a visit to Kangchup Chingkhong, a foothill village in Imphal West district, where he interacted with IDPs.

"A pucca house to shelter security personnel will be constructed in the area soon," he said. The chief minister said the trust deficit between communities would be bridged through dialogue, citing the example of Jiribam district, where communities are now living in harmony.

He also said the government would examine grievances raised by IDPs regarding the enhance-



ment of monetary assistance for reconstruction of houses damaged during violence.

Singh said ₹ 1.2 crore had been sanctioned for strengthening the Inter Village Road (IVR) and ₹

1.94 crore for a water supply scheme in the area.

During the interaction, a young IDP said he was moved by a recent comment of the chief minister comparing global conflicts and peace processes, which encouraged him to think beyond communal lines.

The villagers said it was the first time the chief minister had visited Kangchup Chingkhong, a village that bore the brunt of ethnic violence.

Earlier, Singh distributed a one-time grant of ₹ 10,000 to 754 IDP college students under the Chief Minister's College Students Rehabilitation Scheme (CMCSRS) at Imphal College.

He also said that his government was trying to rehabilitate all IDPs and job opportunities would be considered for students on completion of skill development training. (PTI)

Centre sanctions ₹ 273 cr for expansion of Agartala medical college: Tripura CM

Fund to help increase MBBS and postgraduate seats from academic year 2026-27

AGARTALA, May 15: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Friday said the Centre has sanctioned over Rs 273 crore for the expansion of facilities at Agartala Government Medical College here.

The fund allocation will help the authorities concerned to increase 100 MBBS seats and 83 in the post-graduation course.

"The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare sanctions Rs 273.46 crore for expansion of Agartala Government Medical College. I would like to thank Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi Ji and Hon'ble Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Shri @JPNadda Ji for sanctioning Rs 273.46 crore for infrastructure development of Agartala Government Medical College," the CM said on X.

It will help the state government in "increasing 100 MBBS seats and 83 Post Graduation seats in 19 critical and speciality disciplines from the academic year 2026-27", he said.

Tripura will have 550 MBBS seats and 196 Post Graduate seats, a record increase in the last four years, said Saha, who also holds the health portfolio.

"We are committed to improve the health services for citizens as well as medical education for the young aspirants in the state," the chief minister said.

Later, talking to the reporters, Saha said the Centre



has been providing funds to push development on a fast track.

"Whenever we seek something, the Centre takes it seriously," he added. (PTI)

30,000 detonators seized from car in Meghalaya, 2 from Assam held

SHILLONG, May 15: Two persons from Assam were arrested after 30,000 detonators were allegedly found in their car in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district, police said on Thursday.

During a vehicle checking drive at Umkiani in the early hours of Wednesday, a car on the way to Silchar was intercepted. Superintendent of Police Pankaj Kumar Rasingia said.

"A thorough search of the vehicle led to the recovery of 30,000 detonators. The detonators were concealed inside two boxes and a bag," he said. The two occupants of the vehicle, identified as Kamrul Ali Laskar and Ibrahim Uddin Laskar, were arrested, he added.

"A case was lodged at the Lumshong police station under the Explosive Substances Act. An investigation is underway to trace the source of the detonators and identify the intended recipients," the SP said. (PTI)

No act of hostility can intimidate Nagas: NSF

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, May 15: Disturbed over the recent killings and abduction of some Naga civilians in some districts of Manipur, the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) on Friday said, "No act of hostility can intimidate the Nagas."

Condemning what it called "outrageous" and "inhuman ambush" on the church leaders of the Thadou Baptist Association between Kotzin and Kotler in Manipur's Kangpokpi district on May 13, it said three church leaders were killed and five others grievously injured in the ambush while they were returning from Churachandpur.

The federation also strongly condemned the deadly ambush on innocent Chiru Naga civilians in Jangtek area in Noney district of Manipur on May 13, in which Wilson Thanga was mercilessly killed on the spot while his wife sustained critical injuries.

It further condemned the alleged abduction of two innocent church brothers - Bro. Peter Kileisie Poji from the Pochury Naga community and Bro. Aching Paul from the Rongmei Naga community - at Saparmeina in Manipur's Senapati district on the night of 13, while they were coming from Don Bosco Imphal to Don Bosco Maran.

The federation also said it was utterly disturbed with the reports of nearly 18 innocent Nagas from Konsakhul village held hostage by some individuals from Leilon Vaiphei village.

Stating that while the two church brothers and 12 women hostages were reportedly released, the NSF



said the atrocities perpetrated upon the Nagas remain unresolved.

It demanded unconditional and immediate release of all the Naga hostages unharmed by the "perpetrators".

It said while peace remains as a core concern for the Nagas, the indiscriminate incidents of killings and abduction by the aggressors upon innocent civilians have liquidated all sense of humanity.

It questioned the continued inaction by the Manipur and central government despite recurring attacks that continue to claim innocent lives.

"While the Naga people do not condone violence, neither shall we kneel as silent spectators while injustice burns before our eyes," the NSF stated, adding any provocation or attack against one Naga will be understood as an attack against all Nagas.

Over 38 people of Kuki, Naga communities held hostage by various groups: Manipur home minister

IMPHAL, May 15: Manipur Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam on Thursday said more than 38 people belonging to Naga and Kuki communities were held hostage by various groups in the state.

Fresh violence gripped Manipur on Wednesday, as suspected militants shot dead three church leaders and injured four others in Kangpokpi district, while a civilian was gunned down and his wife wounded in Noney district. On Thursday, Konhoujam said, "More than 38 people from both the communities (Naga and Kuki) were detained by different groups. We are actively holding discussions with civil society groups and political leaders to secure their release."

Konhoujam made the remarks while visiting the family of the civilian killed in the attack near Jozangtek in Noney district. He was accompanied by three Naga legislators during the visit to JNIMS hospital in Imphal East district, where the body was kept for post-mortem.

"We have apprised the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, and efforts are underway to secure their release. We suspect that some people don't

want peace to return to Manipur," Konhoujam said.

On Wednesday evening, Taphou Kuki village chairman L Chongloi had lodged a written complaint at the Senapati police station, claiming that 23 villagers travelling in seven trucks and a car were detained by unknown persons.

Several people from the Kuki and Naga communities held separate sit-ins to protest the alleged abductions. At Konsakhul village in Kangpokpi district, Naga women held a sit-in, while claiming that at least 20 locals were being held hostage by suspected militants. They raised slogans demanding the safe release of the villagers. Konsakhul Village Authority claimed the locals were abducted from Leilon Vaiphei area, a Kuki Zo village in Kangpokpi district, on Wednesday morning.

"We are deeply disappointed with the government. Eighteen villagers from Konsakhul and three from other areas have been abducted and held hostage by Kuki militants. We have no knowledge where they are kept or whether they are alive or dead," said Wirangjinliu Chawang, the co-convenor of Koubru Range Liangmai Women's Union.

At Taphou Kuki village in Kangpokpi district, locals held a demonstration to protest the alleged abduction of 23 locals.

Meanwhile, normal life was paralysed on Thursday in at least three districts of Manipur - Kangpokpi, Churachandpur and Chandel - by shutdowns called by the Kuki Zo and Naga communities against the killing of the three church leaders and a civilian. (PTI)

No-confidence motion moved against Dimapur Municipal Council chairman

DIMAPUR, May 15: A no-confidence motion has been moved against Dimapur Municipal Council chairperson Hukheto Yephthomi. The motion, endorsed by 12 members, including the deputy chairperson, of the 23 elected members of the civic body was jointly moved by two DMC members.

Dimapur Deputy Commissioner Tinjongshi Chang, in an official notification issued on Thursday, said that a written notice expressing the intention to move the motion was received on May 11 in line with Section 15 of the Nagaland Municipal Act, 2023.

In this, the deputy commissioner has convened a special meeting of the elected members of the Dimapur Municipal Council, excluding the ex officio members and the nominated members, on May 22 at the DMC office to deliberate and decide on the motion of no confidence. (PTI)

31 Naga, Kuki hostages released in Manipur



IMPHAL, May 15: Thirty-one of the 38 people belonging to the Kuki and Naga communities, who were held hostage by armed groups in Manipur's Kangpokpi and Senapati districts, were released, police said on Friday.

These people were taken to unknown areas after suspected militants shot dead three church leaders and injured four others in Kangpokpi on Wednesday, while a civilian was gunned down and his wife was wounded in Noney

district. "Twelve Naga women from Konsakhul village, who were held captive by armed militants, were released at Makhan village," a senior officer said.

Four men and ten women of the Kuki community, who were held in captivity in Senapati district, were handed over to security forces late Thursday night, he said.

The officer also said, "Two Saleian brothers of Don Bosco, in-

cluding one from Nagaland, were also released by armed groups at separate locations."

On Thursday evening, three persons, including an 18-year-old woman, belonging to the Kuki community, were handed over to the police teams in Senapati district, another officer said.

"We were blindfolded and our hands tied up. We did not know the exact locations where we were taken to. I could sense that we were taken to hilly areas. No one has assaulted us," said a woman who was released in Kangpokpi district.

Manipur Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam had on Thursday said the government was actively holding discussions with civil society groups and political leaders to secure the release of these people.

People from the Kuki and Naga communities had on Thursday held separate sit-ins in the Kangpokpi district to protest against the alleged abductions. (PTI)

Army inaugurates transit facility for troops in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, May 15: The Indian Army on Friday inaugurated a transit facility for troops at the Sigar Military Station in Arunachal Pradesh's East Siang district, aimed at enhancing operational preparedness and troop welfare in forward areas.

The facility has been developed by the Spearhead Gunners under the aegis of the Spearhead Division to provide a comfortable and efficient transit halt for soldiers moving to and from remote operational locations, a statement said.

The facility, named 'Ashiyana', is equipped with essential amenities intended to improve convenience, morale and overall well-being of personnel deployed in strategically significant frontier regions, it said.

The initiative reflects the force's continued emphasis on welfare-oriented infrastructure alongside operational readiness in difficult environments, it added. (PTI)

Jyotiraditya Scindia reviews key development projects in Sikkim's Namchi

GANGTOK, May 15: Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), Jyotiraditya M Scindia, reviewed several key initiatives on education, tourism, tea production and sports development in Sikkim's Namchi district on Friday.

Scindia has been on a three-day visit to the northeastern state since Thursday, according to an official statement.

The minister was accorded a Guard of Honour by the India Reserve Battalion at Temi Bungalow before he proceeded to Sikkim State University.

During his visit to the University, Scindia inspected infrastructure developed under the North Eastern Council (NEC).

Superintending Engineer (Education), Kamlesh Pradhan, briefed him on the facilities established within the campus, including the gymnasium and sports infrastructure.

The minister emphasised the importance of preserving greenery and maintaining the natural environment within the varsity premises, the statement said.

Scindia also visited Temi Tea Estate, where he interacted with women tea pluckers and estate workers during his visit to the



plantations and tea processing facilities.

He visited the Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure and Eco-Tourism at Chemchey and was informed about various training programmes being offered in the field of adventure tourism.

The minister also reviewed the facilities

and activities being developed at IHCAE, including rock climbing, ice climbing, cycling, mountaineering and guided eco-tourism initiatives.

Scindia also briefly attended the semi-final match of the ongoing Sikkim Premier League between Yangthang United and Sin-

gling FC at Bhaichung Stadium.

Addressing the gathering, he stated that the Ministry of DoNER has been instrumental in creating infrastructure aimed at nurturing and developing athletes and sportspersons across the region.

He said that the ministry has established a high-level task force focused on the development of sports in the North Eastern Region through capital investment and skill development initiatives.

The minister also visited Tathagata Tsal, also known as the Buddha Park, at Ravangla, where he was briefed on the various schools of Buddhism and the significance of Tibetan and Gandhara artistic traditions.

He also inspected the ongoing construction of the Bhaley Dhunga Skywalk project at Yangang. Upon completion, the 240-metre-long circular glass skywalk, proposed at an altitude of 3,200 metres, is envisioned to become the world's highest such facility.

The minister travelled via the Bhuley-dunga Ropeway and reviewed the progress of implementation while examining the various infrastructure components associated with the project, the statement said. (PTI)

With difficult terrain and low population, Arunachal needs special focus at national level: Governor

ITANAGAR, May 15: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik on Friday said development parameters meant for plains and other states should not be applied uniformly to hill states like Arunachal Pradesh, citing the state's difficult terrain, sparse population, strategic importance, and rich cultural diversity.

The governor made the remarks during a meeting with NITI Aayog member from the state, Dr Joram Aniya, at Lok Bhavan here, according to an official statement.

Highlighting Arunachal Pradesh's immense potential in hydropower, tourism, environmental conservation, and cultural heritage, Parnaik said the state deserves special focus and priority in national planning and development initiatives.

He also congratulated Dr Aniya on her appointment to NITI Aayog, the apex public policy think-tank of the Centre, and expressed confidence that she would contribute significantly towards the economic development of both the country and the state through inclusive and people-centric policymaking.

The governor emphasised that Arunachal Pradesh faces unique developmental challenges owing to its geographical conditions and demographic characteristics, which require tailored policy approaches and greater national support. (PTI)



If I've to prove my worth and value, that place is not for me: Kohli



NEW DELHI, May 15: Virat Kohli still loves the game enough to be focussed on playing next year's World Cup but the star India batter also makes it clear that if his worth is constantly called into question in a certain "environment", he would accept that the "place is not meant" for him.

Speaking on his IPL franchise Royal Challengers Bengaluru's podcast, the 37-year-old superstar said he detests constant change of positions as far as the judgement on his value is concerned.

"I am always ready because that's my daily life. You know, I work out, we eat well at home. It is because I like living that way. It is not only to play cricket. So that is where I am. I mean, this 27 (2027 World Cup) chat and all that...I've been asked so many times, 'do you want to play 27?'" he said.

"I know the answer. Like, why would I leave my home, you know, get my stuff over and be like, I don't know what I want. Of course, if I'm playing, I want to play cricket. I want to carry on. Playing a World Cup for India is amazing. But as I said, the value has to be two sides," he asserted.

"My perspective is very clear. If I can add value to the environment that I am part of, and the environment feels that I can add value, I will be seen. If I am made to feel like I need to prove my worth and my value, I am not in that space," said

Kohli, who is counted among the greats of the game.

Kohli only plays the ODI format now after quitting T20 Internationals in 2024 and Tests in 2025. With ODI schedule shrinking considerably in the past few years, Kohli's India appearances are now scarce.

The next series he is likely to feature in is the away three-match assignment against England from July 14 to July 19. Despite his desire to be a part of the team, India head coach Gautam Gambhir has been largely non-committal on what the future holds for both Kohli and another ODI great Rohit Sharma.

Kohli said he would be around till he is wanted in the set-up.

"I am being honest to my preparations, I am being honest to how I approach the game. I put my head down, I work hard. When I arrive to play, I work as hard if not harder than anyone else and I play the game in the right way," he added.

Giving an insight into his approach towards the game, Kohli said he is always prepared for the

grind even as a fielder expected to "run boundary to boundary for 40 overs".

"I will do that because I prepare accordingly. I am prepared that I will field 50 overs. After operating in this way, if I have to prove my worth and value, that place is not meant to be for me," he said.

Kohli cited his return to Vijay Hazare Trophy after two decades during the 2025-26 season. He turned up in two games for Delhi and smacked a hundred in one of them besides becoming the fastest to reach 16,000 List A runs.

"I was very clear in my head that I am not going out there to prove anything to anyone. I am going there to play because I love playing the game. That's how I played Vijay Hazare as well. It was amazing.

"I thought I have played for so long, do I have the motivation? But the moment my intention switched to 'I want to play because I love the game', I just loved batting. I felt like a child again. I was like this is not about anyone, this is about me and the game," he explained.

Considered among the greatest ODI batters of all time, Kohli has 14,797 runs in 311 matches at an average of 58.71. He has amassed 54 centuries and 77 fifties during his ODI journey and has earned the moniker "chase master" for his ability to deliver under pressure.

'Don't complicate things'

Kohli said he finds his joy in playing but not in an environment where questions are raised after selection.

"The moment I feel like people are trying to complicate it for me and be like 'oh this and that'. Either be clear and honest and upfront or be quiet and let me play. If you go to a workplace and people say we believe in your abilities and a week later they start questioning the way you operate, it's like why?" he elaborated.

"Either tell me on day one that I am not good enough or I am not needed but if you have said that I am good enough and that we are not thinking otherwise, then be quiet. If you start operating up and down because of results, you can never have a consistent stance," he said. (PTI)

Inconsistent KKR fight to stay alive as GT eye top-two finish

KOLKATA, May 15: Back home after nearly a month on the road and with their campaign hanging by a thread, Kolkata Knight Riders will look to stay alive in the IPL when they face a rampaging Gujarat Titans side chasing a top-two finish, here on Saturday.

It has been another inconsistent and underwhelming season for KKR under veteran Ajinkya Rahane, whose appointment as captain itself had raised questions after the franchise finished a disappointing eighth under him last year.

KKR had to wait till their seventh match (halfway stage) of the season to register their first win and have looked far from a settled side throughout the campaign, with questionable team selections and batting-order hurting their rhythm.

Their brief revival, which brought four consecutive wins starting with the victory over Rajasthan Royals in their last home match on April 19, ended with a defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru after sloppy fielding and a batting masterclass by Virat Kohli.

"We're always excited to go back (home). We have our fans there, and we're looking to make sure when Varun comes back in the next game, we get our strong bowling side back together and use home conditions to our advantage," Nayar had said after the six-wicket defeat to RCB.

KKR's batting has lacked consistency all season and even former captain Sourav Ganguly publicly questioned the team management's handling of Rinku, saying at an event that the left-hander bats "too low".

Youngster Angkrish Raghuvanshi has been one of the few bright spots with 340 runs, including four fifties, at a strike rate of 139.44, while Rinku has scored 286 runs at 148.95 with two half-centuries.

The duo will have key roles to play in KKR's remaining home fixtures against Gu-



jarat Titans, Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals.

In contrast, the Shubman Gill-led Gujarat Titans have looked like one of the most complete teams this season, winning five matches in a row to draw level on points with table-toppers Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

GT's surge has been driven largely by a bowling attack that has clicked at the right time. Kagiso Rabada has produced two Player-of-the-Match performances during the streak, Jason Holder has earned two awards himself, while Rashid Khan appears to have rediscovered his old magic.

Their bowling has blended perfectly with a strong top-order led by Gill and Sai Sudharsan.

Sudharsan has once again been among the

most prolific batters of the season. After winning the Orange Cap last year with 759 runs, the left-hander has already amassed 501 runs this season and trails current leader Heinrich Klaasen by just seven runs. He has struck five fifties in his last six innings, including a century.

Gill, too, has looked in sublime touch, while Washington Sundar has quietly anchored the middle-order effectively.

GT also hope England star Jos Buttler rediscovers his rhythm after a relatively quiet season by his standards.

With league matches against KKR and Chennai Super Kings remaining, Gujarat Titans will be keen to seal a top-two finish and secure the safety net that comes with it in the playoffs.

Eden Gardens has offered assistance to bowlers this season and KKR's hopes could rest heavily on Narine, Chakravarty and Green making early breakthroughs against GT's formidable top order.

Teams:

Kolkata Knight Riders: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Manish Pandey, Rovman Powell, Rahul Tripathi, Finn Allen, Tejasvi Singh, Tim Seiferth, Sunil Narine, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Cameron Green, Sarthak Ranjan, Daksh Kamra, Rachin Ravindra, Navdeep Saini, Vaibhav Arora, Umran Malik, Math-eesha Pathirana, Kartik Tyagi, Aksh Deep, Varun Chakaravathy, Prashant Solanki.

Gujarat Titans: Shubman Gill (c), Anuj Rawat, Arshad Khan, Ashok Sharma, Jos Buttler, Connor Esterhuizen, Gurnoor Brar, Jason Holder, Kulwant Khejroliya, Kumar Kushagra, Mohammed Siraj, Glenn Phillips, Prasad Krishna, Kagiso Rabada, Rashid Khan, Sai Kishore, Sai Sudharsan, Shahrulkh Khan, Ishant Sharma, Nishant Sindhu, Manav Suthar, Rahul Tewatia, Washington Sundar, Luke Wood, Jayant Yadav.

Match starts: 7.30pm IST. (PTI)

Hardik injured, training in Mumbai and expected to be back for KKR game: Shardul

DHARAMSALA, May 15: Mumbai Indians all-rounder Shardul Thakur clarified that skipper Hardik Pandya's absence in the last three matches was due to injury, adding that he could return for their next game against Kolkata Knight Riders while dismissing speculation over the star's future with the franchise.

Pandya did not travel to Dharamsala for MI's six-wicket win over Punjab Kings, where Jasprit Bumrah became the team's third captain this season after Suryakumar Yadav also missed the game following the birth of his child.

"Hardik is injured, so he couldn't travel for a couple of games," Thakur said at the post-match media interaction on Thursday.

Down with back spasm, Pandya first missed MI's home game against Lucknow Super Giants on May 4 and then sat out the clash against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in Raipur despite travelling with the squad.

"He went to Raipur (for the RCB match on May 10), but couldn't play. He is training in Mumbai now and I expect him to be back in Kolkata and play (at Eden Gardens on May 20). Players like them, we always miss the quality," Thakur added.

Mumbai Indians and Lucknow Super Giants were the first two teams to be eliminated from play-off contention this season, with three league games to go.

Pandya has endured a disappointing campaign both as captain and player.

In eight innings, he has scored 146 runs at an average of 20.85 and a strike rate of 136.44, with a highest score of 40. With the ball, he has managed only four wickets at an average of 61.50 and an economy rate of nearly 11.90 from 20.4 overs. The underwhelming season also fuelled social media speculation, linking Pandya with possible moves to franchises such as Chennai Super Kings and Delhi Capitals, but Thakur brushed aside the rumours.

"There are a lot of discussions going on in social media, some are right, some are wrong... but this is also a management decision (of not travelling to Dharamsala)," he said.

With Pandya unavailable since the clash against arch-rivals Chen-



nai Super Kings, Bumrah led the five-time champions for the first time and guided them to only their fourth win of the season.

Thakur started with figures of 4/39, while Tilak Varma anchored the 201-run chase with an unbeaten 75 from 33 balls on a surface that demanded restraint as much as strokeplay.

"I think I have my comfort level with him (Bumrah). We had a lot of discussions rather, and I don't know much about the other bowlers, but of course he's never shy of sharing his ideas," Thakur said.

Asked to compare MI's three captains this season, Thakur said each brought a different approach and perspective to leadership.

"It's difficult to rate, because all three of them have different set of ideas, like a particular individual, like you and me also, we would have different set of ideas, and there is no set mantra in cricket that it's going to give you success."

"Players are the ones who make captain look good, so as players you have to be proactive, you need to read the game situations, put in your effort, and need to keep the team always above you, and give your best."

"They bring in a lot of experience, all of them have been match winner for the Indian team, for this franchise also, and you see there would be at least two or three games every season that they would win individually on their individual skills, so that's the kind of ability which we see."

"And like I have played cricket for quite a few years now, but any youngster seeing them, if they follow them closely, they will see that these guys have amazing ability of winning the game single-handedly, so that motivates the other players, and it also brings in new perspective to their respective games." (PTI)

Shastri backs Samson for future India T20I captaincy

DUBAI, May 15: India's T20 World Cup title-winning star Sanju Samson would be a strong contender for national team captaincy in the shortest format in the next two-three years, says former head coach Ravji Shastri.

Suryakumar Yadav led India to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup title at home two months ago, where the 31-year-old Samson was named Player of the Tournament.

Shastri said India may have to look beyond Suryakumar by the time the next T20 World Cup comes around in 2028, when the current skipper will be 37.

"India, come the next (T20) World Cup (in 2028), might be looking for a new captain, depending on how Surya goes over the next couple of years," Shastri was quoted as saying by 'The ICC Review'. (PTI)

Tough pill to swallow, says Shreyas as Punjab slip to fifth defeat in a row

DHARAMSALA, May 15: Calling the fifth straight loss a "tough pill to swallow", captain Shreyas Iyer admitted that Punjab Kings were outplayed by Tilak Varma, whose mature 75-run unbeaten knock guided Mumbai Indians to a six-wicket win in a crucial IPL clash here on Thursday.

"Well, absolutely a tough pill to swallow, but I don't want to pinpoint at any situation over here because it was a great game of cricket. Well fought game," Iyer said after the defeat severely dented Punjab's playoff hopes.

Praising Tilak's match-winning effort, the Punjab skipper said, "He played amazing, he was selecting his shots pretty well, and he maneuvered the field nicely, so credit to him."

Iyer also credited Azmatullah Omarzai (38 off 17 balls) for reviving Punjab's innings after a sluggish start.

"Certainly, at a point, we were looking at around 170 to 180, and from there on, he simply changed the momentum towards us. Getting those scoops of sixes, and from 16th or 17th over, from there on, we gained the momentum and getting to 200 was a commendable performance for him," he said.

Despite the setback, Iyer remained optimistic ahead of Punjab's

remaining matches.

"Definitely excited for the next opportunity. It's an afternoon game, and we've got to win two out of two. It's going to be an exciting two games. Can't wait to play them," he added, referring to the upcoming clash against Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Sunday at the same venue.

Player of the Match Tilak said his international exposure has helped him improve his finishing abilities in pressure chases.

"To be honest, I do like to finish games, but having played the WC and some international games, I've come to know how to finish the games," he said.

The left-hander admitted the pitch was trickier than expected. "We didn't expect the wicket to be like this, the ball was slow and low, it wasn't easy to play shots. We saw how PBKS struggled in the first 15 overs, then Azamatullah and Vishnu Vinod took them to a good score." Tilak said he consciously planned to take the chase deep before accelerating.

"I thought I would take the game deep. I spoke to the coach at the second break; I just needed one big over and I could finish the game." (PTI)

India's Olympic bid comes up for discussion during Ministry's CWG review meeting

NEW DELHI, May 15: It was a meeting to review India's Commonwealth Games preparations but a discussion on how to take the country's 2036 Olympic bid forward also took place as Gujarat's Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi joined online for a stock-taking session by Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya here.

The meeting took place on Thursday and was attended in person by top officials of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA). Sanghavi, who is also Gujarat's Sports, Youth Affairs and Cultural Activities Minister, was flanked by some state government representatives during the discussion.

"They were there to mainly discuss the 2026 CWG closing ceremony during which the baton would be passed to Ahmedabad as the host of the 2030 edition. But during the course of the discussion, the Olympic bid also came up and there was a discussion on how to take the bid forward once the process restarts," an IOA source told PTI.

"No big decision was taken but just a conversation on how the process will proceed." The International Olympic Committee (IOC) had frozen the host selection process last year to reconsider its criteria but it is expected to pick up pace by the end of this year or early next year.

India were in the "Continuous Dialogue" phase of the halted bidding process, after submitting the 'Expression of Interest' to host the Games in Ahmedabad in October 2024.

Apart from this, Mandaviya reviewed the preparations for the Commonwealth Games to be held in Glasgow in July-August.

"The meeting focused on ensuring seamless coordination among all stakeholders and strengthening support system for Indian athletes preparing for CWG 2026," read a media statement from the Sports Ministry.

An India House is expected to be set up during the Games to support the athletes. The meeting also reviewed the progress of inter-ministerial coordination efforts being undertaken by the Secretary (Sports) with representatives of various Ministries and departments regarding the "operational and logistical preparations" for Glasgow 2026.

"Coordination with Ministry of External Affairs, departments of culture and tourism are all a significant part of the effort to ensure smooth operations for athletes," said a source. (PTI)

Discipline and consistency need of the hour: Indian women's hockey team coach Marijne

NEW DELHI, May 15: Following an impressive outing against Argentina, Indian women's hockey team chief coach Sjoerd Marijne wants his players to maintain discipline to produce consistent performance in the upcoming tournaments.

The Indian team drew 2-2 against world no. 2 Argentina in a four-match series. After losing the first two games, India staged a strong comeback, winning the final two matches (including a shootout) to level the series.

India will next tour Australia for a four-match series from May 21 to June 3 as part of its preparations for next month's FIH Nations Cup in New Zealand, which is a pathway to the elite FIH Pro League.

The Nations Cup is scheduled to be held from June 15 to 21 in Auckland. India will play all the four matches against Australia at the Perth Hockey Stadium. India need to win the tournament to regain entry into the Pro League after being relegated last year.

Marijne, who guided India to a historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics, took charge of the



side for a second term earlier this year, and said fitness was his biggest criteria.

"When I took charge in January my first step was to get off a lot of injuries. We had almost 14 and then the qualification for the World Cup was important, so there was no time for development, no time for managing the load and after that we had a really good tour to Argentina."

"Argentina is No. 2 in the world and we could get to know the benchmark of world hockey," the Dutchman said in an online interaction organised by Sports Authority of India on Friday.

"The benchmark was very important from there on we had more time to work on the fitness in the camp. And now we will head to Australia where we will have practice matches there and see them play a different style than Argentina."

"In the last two matches in Argentina tour we played really well, where we won and played a draw and that's where I saw the behaviour I always wanted to see. The main thing which I want to achieve in Australia tour and the Nations Cup is to continue the good habits, continuity in behaviour."

"If we get more consistency in our game, our level goes much higher and higher."

Marijne said all these tours and tournaments are crucial to India's preparations for this year's two big-ticket events -- the World Cup and the Asian Games.

"We will not only play matches, we also have training there and from there on we move to the Nations Cup. All these tournaments, all these matches must lead to be a good preparation for the Asian Games," he said.

He said injuries continued to haunt his side as two players are out for an indefinite period.

"Unfortunately two players are out with ACL -- Sangita (Kumari) and Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke -- but the rest of the players are fit. Vaishnavi had her operation a few days back and that's similar with Sangeeta. Normally for an ACL injury it takes nine months to a year to recover," he said.

He also stressed on discipline and team culture to prosper at the world stage.

"The game awareness is also important. I like discipline that's one of the most important thing for me. We also need to focus on the team culture."

India captain Salima Tete too said discipline is first and foremost in achieving success at the world stage.

"The girls are really working hard in terms of fitness, everyone knows the importance of fitness. If we are fit we can beat any team."

"Discipline can beat any team. Australia tour will be a very good preparation for us and we will give our best," she said. (PTI)

Pakistan docked WTC points for slow over-rate in Mirpur Test against Bangladesh

MIRPUR (BANGLADESH), May 15: Pakistan have been fined 40 per cent of their match fee and penalised eight points in the ongoing ICC World Test Championship 2025-27 cycle for maintaining a slow over-rate during their defeat in the opening Test against Bangladesh.

The visitors were ruled eight overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into account, the ICC said in a statement on Friday. With this sanction, Pakistan are now on four points in the WTC standings, placing them eighth, just above West Indies.

"Under Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which deals with minimum over-rate offences, players are fined five per cent of their match fee for every over their side fails to bowl within the allotted time," said the ICC statement.

"Per Article 16.11.2 of the World Test Championship playing conditions, teams lose one championship point for each over short, resulting in Pakistan being docked eight crucial points in the WTC standings." (PTI)