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● Demographic changes in border districts most serious challenge: Amit Shah

● Seven Dalits injured in gang attacks in south TN



● 'Manipur can only progress when all 36 communities of state develop together'

● Nagaland reviews state's monsoon preparedness

India signs BrahMos deal with Vietnam; Indonesia pact in final stage

SINGAPORE, May 30: Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said on Saturday that he understood a BrahMos missile deal with Vietnam had already been signed, though it was probably yet to be publicly announced, while a similar pact involving Indonesia was in the final stages.

"My understanding is that with both Indonesia and with Vietnam, the deal is in the final stages that in fact, for Vietnam, I understand that it has already been signed, probably not publicly announced, but it's already been signed," Singh said in Singapore, while answering a question on potential buyers of the missile system at the

Shangri-La Dialogue. The Philippines, which signed a contract worth nearly \$ 375 million in 2022, was the first foreign buyer of the BrahMos missile system from India.

Indonesia said in March that it had entered into an agreement with India to procure the BrahMos missile system.

And, earlier this month, there were news reports that suggested Vietnam was close to signing a BrahMos missile deal with India. But Singh's comments on Saturday came as the first official word on this in public domain.

However, the values of the Vietnam and Indonesia deals have not been officially disclosed yet.

Referring to the broader issue of sharing advanced defence technologies, Singh said countries generally sold sophisticated weapons systems and platforms to nations they regarded as friendly partners. "Obviously you share technology with people you trust," he said. He further said that India has a strong commitment to the ASEAN nations, "and we treat all of you as 'friendly foreign countries' with whom we can share advanced defence technologies".

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) comprises 11 member states - Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia,

Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

Several ASEAN member states, including the Philippines and Vietnam, have overlapping maritime claims with China in the South China Sea one of the world's busiest trade routes. India's BrahMos exports to countries in the region have drawn attention as New Delhi expands defence ties with South-east Asian nations.

Singh told delegates at the Shangri-La Dialogue that India was ready to work with partners across the region and beyond to build resilient supply chains, trusted defence partnerships, secure maritime commons and innova-

tion cooperation. "Today, resilience has become one of the defining strategic requirements of our time." Drawing attention to geopolitical uncertainty, conflicts in Europe and West Asia, disruptions in maritime trade routes, supply chain vulnerabilities, technological disruptions and growing strategic competition, Singh said these factors were reshaping the global security landscape.

"The lessons from recent years are clear. Defence preparedness cannot depend upon fragile or overly concentrated supply chains. Nations today require resilient, trusted, diversified, and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Himanta meets Modi in Delhi Meeting focuses on key devp initiatives



GUWAHATI, May 30: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi and briefed him on the progress and priorities of the BJP-led NDA government in the state. Taking to X after the meeting, Sarma said he was "honoured" to call upon the Prime Minister and discuss Assam's development trajectory under the NDA 3.0 government.

"Honoured to call upon Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji in New Delhi today. I briefed him on the headstart we are making in the NDA 3.0 Govt in Assam, thanked him for his unstinted support and sought his continued blessings and guidance in the coming years," the Chief Minister posted on X.

According to sources, the meeting focused on key developmental initiatives being undertaken by the Assam government, infrastructure expansion, investment proposals and implementation of various welfare schemes in the state.

The Chief Minister is understood to have apprised the Prime Minister of the state government's efforts to accelerate economic growth, improve connectivity and strengthen social sector programmes in line with the Centre's vision of "Viksit Bharat".

The interaction also assumes significance as the BJP-led government in Assam has intensified its push for industrial investments, rural infrastructure and employment generation ahead of major policy initiatives expected in the coming months.

Sarma has repeatedly credited the Prime Minister's support for the rapid transformation witnessed in Assam over the last few years, particularly in sectors such as roads, railways, healthcare, education and semiconductor investments.

Under the NDA government, Assam has witnessed a series of infrastructure projects, including highway expansion, railway modernisation and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Nepali national among 8 arrested

Delhi Police cracks ISI-underworld network

NEW DELHI, May 30: The Delhi Police said on Saturday that they busted a Pakistan-backed ISI-underworld terror module and arrested eight suspected operatives, including a Nepali national, allegedly planning attacks on vital installations, security establishments and police personnel in Delhi and other cities.

The arrests were made in a coordinated multi-state operation that exposed a conspiracy allegedly orchestrated by Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), underworld operatives and gangster-turned-handler Shahzad Bhatti, with plans to target locations in Delhi, Mumbai, Punjab and Chandigarh, they said.

In Mumbai, the targets were railway stations, parks and bridges, police said.

Special Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Anil Shukla said at a press conference that four Pakistan-made hand grenades, two Glock pistols, 24 live cartridges, a stolen motorcycle and a stolen scooter were recovered from the accused.

The accused are Vijay alias Shooter (23) from Uttar Pradesh, Nitish Paswan (23) from Jharkhand, Taqueer Rizwan Ahmad Shaikh (27) and Sajid Mehbub Shaikh alias Arbaz Khan (27) from Maharashtra, Harvinder Singh (28), Gagandeep Singh (28) and Manjeet Singh (23) from Punjab, and Nepali national Anag Kami Lama (66).

A case under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

(BNS) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) has been registered at the Special Cell police station.

According to police, the operation was launched following inputs that operatives linked to Pakistan-based handlers and underworld networks were planning attacks on strategic targets and security personnel in several cities.

Police first arrested Vijay alias Shooter from Pune on May 14, and his associate Nitish Paswan from Sahibganj in Jharkhand on May 17.

Police said Vijay was allegedly in contact with members of Bhatti's network operating from Pakistan and Dubai and was tasked with recruiting youths to carry out terror-related activities across Delhi-NCR and several northern states. Police said these youths were promised lakhs of rupees after executing the terror attacks.

Interrogation of the two accused and technical analysis subsequently led investigators to Mumbai, where Taqueer and Sajid were arrested on May 27.

Officials said the two men allegedly worked under the direction of Pakistan-based handlers Yawar Khan and Munna Jhingada and were recruited through an absconding operative identified as Huzaifa. "They were tasked to carry out grenade attacks and firing incidents targeting vital installations, security establishments and police personnel in Delhi and Mumbai," a police officer said. Further (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Myanmar President Aung Hlaing begins India visit

NEW DELHI, May 30: Myanmar President U Min Aung Hlaing on Saturday began a five-day visit to India that will be focused on ramping up bilateral cooperation in trade, connectivity, border security and defence.

Aung Hlaing kicked off his trip by landing in Gaya to visit the Mahabodhi temple, ahead of his arrival in Delhi this evening.

"A warm welcome to President U Min Aung Hlaing of Myanmar on his arrival in Both Gaya," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on social media. "His visit reflects the strong spiritual, historical and people-to-

people ties that bind our two countries and the depth of our ongoing cooperation," he added.

The Myanmar president was received at the airport by Bihar Governor Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain (Retd). Aung Hlaing's visit to India comes less than two months after he became the president following Myanmar's parliamentary elections. The elections were held in December and January after years of protests against the ruling military junta that seized power in a coup on February 1, 2021, overthrowing the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

M'laya, IOA sign revised National Games 2027 agreement

HT Bureau
SHILLONG, May 30: Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports Dr Mansukh Mandaviya and Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Saturday inaugurated the Integrated Multipurpose Indoor Hall at the JN Sports Complex here, and presided over the signing of the Host State Agreement for the 39th National Games, Meghalaya 2027.

Welcoming the dignitaries, Waillardmiki Shylla described the day as "a proud moment for the people of Meghalaya and the sporting fraternity of the Northeast." The Hall is competition-ready to host Bas-



ketball and Kabaddi during the 39th National Games 2027.

Post-Games, it will house a High-Performance Sports Science Centre

offering "biomechanics, performance analytics, sports medicine, physiotherapy, nutrition, and sports psychology." (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Dilip Saikia bats for zero tolerance on graft

HT Correspondent
MANGALDAI, May 30: Dilip Saikia, MP from Darrang-Udalguri Lok Sabha constituency, presided over the first quarterly meeting of the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) for 2026-27 on Thursday. He strongly advocated for recognizing high-quality work by government officials while maintaining zero tolerance towards corruption.

Addressing the gathering, Saikia urged government officials, MLAs, and elected representatives of Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies to foster seamless coordination for the timely implementation and effective monitoring of central flagship schemes and other developmental programmes in the district.

He expressed deep disappointment that Darrang continues to carry the tag of an Aspirational District. "It is a matter of shame that we are still considered a backward district. If we want to shed this burden and transform Dar-



rang into a progressive district, we must work together unitedly and in true spirit," he said.

During the review of various central schemes — including MGNREGA, PMAY G, Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), PM Kisan Nidhi, PMGSY, Swachh Bharat Mission, flood and erosion protection works, and Women & Child Development programmes — the MP raised serious concern over large-scale embezzlement of public funds through 'ghost' beneficiaries, particularly (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'PRAGATI 2026' concludes at Umroi in Meghalaya Over 400 soldiers from 13 nations take part

UMROI (MEGHALAYA), May 30: Armies of 13 countries came together in Meghalaya's Umroi for the maiden multilateral military exercise 'PRAGATI 2026', which concluded on Saturday with a focus on countering insurgency and building mutual trust among the nations in the Indian Ocean region, officials said.

Over 400 soldiers, including around 20 women, from Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and India slithered down from helicopters, detected IEDs along routes and climbed down rocky walls during the two-week exercise, they said.

Vice-chief of the Indian Army, Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth, was present at the closing ceremony, which was attended by six vice-chiefs and more than 40

senior military officials from the participating nations.

Lt Gen Seth engaged in bilateral interactions aimed at strengthening defence cooperation and military-to-military relations.

Detailed discussions on how to incorporate niche technologies and the effect of these on the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) were held during the two-week-long programme.

"Pragati was a mega exercise in the serene environment of Umroi in Meghalaya. We conducted various specialised drills and procedures, including rock craft, special airborne operations, tactical situations," said Brig Mayur Shekatar, the chief coordinator for the programme.

Director of the exercise, Col Sandeep Poonia, said Pragati stands for 'Partnership of Regional Armies for Growth

and Transformation in the Indian Ocean Region'.

"The aim is to create synergy, interoperability, and enhance mutual trust among the friendly foreign nations. The last two weeks we trained together, during which focus was on counter-insurgency operations based in semi-mountainous and jungle terrain," he said.

Brig Shekatar emphasised that it provided a platform for building friendship and camaraderie among the participating nations, with the personnel coming closer by engaging themselves in sports and games as well as cultural activities.

The routine also enabled them to experience the calmness of Yoga, he said. "We hope to achieve the objectives of enhancing interoperability, building mutual trust and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

New Karnataka CM to take oath on June 3

BENGALURU, May 30: Karnataka state Congress President D K Shivakumar was elected leader of the legislature party on Saturday, paving the way for him to take over as the next chief minister of the state.

Senior leader Siddaramaiah, the outgoing chief minister, proposed Shivakumar's name as the new leader of the legislature party at the meeting held at Vidhan Soudha. The meeting was overseen by AICC general secretaries K C Venugopal and Randeep Singh Surjewala.

However, the CLP meeting to elect the new leader took a ten-minute break, and top leaders including Siddaramaiah, Venugopal and Surjewala, huddled in a separate room, according to sources. Announcing Shivakumar's election as CLP leader, Karnataka Congress said in a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Road mishap claims 2 lives on NH 39

HT Correspondent
Khatkhathi, May 30: A devastating road accident on the National Highway 39 claimed the lives of two young individuals on Friday afternoon, casting a profound pall of gloom over the entire Khatkhathi area under the Bokajan Subdivision of Karbi Anglong district.

The fatal collision occurred near the parking area of the Sagar Complex, falling under the jurisdiction of the Khatkhathi Police Station.

According to eyewitness accounts, a massive 16-wheeler truck laden with iron rods, bearing registration number NL 07 AA 4021, was in the process of reversing on the highway. At that moment, a scooter (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

New frog species discovered in Nagaland's Kiphire

SHILLONG, May 30: A team of researchers has discovered a new species of cascade-dwelling frog in Nagaland, highlighting the rich but unexplored biodiversity of the northeast, officials said on Saturday.

The newly discovered species belongs to the genus Amolops, a group of stream-dwelling frogs typically found in fast-flowing hill streams across Asia, they said.

The discovery was made by researchers from the Zoological Survey of India and collaborating institutions during field surveys in Nagaland.

Lead author Bhaskar Saikia said the species was named after the late Dr Kamal Choudhury, a zoologist and his former mentor.



The frog species was discovered in Singrep village of Nagaland's Kiphire district during surveys conducted in August 2024.

Detailed morphological examinations and molecular analyses confirmed that the specimens represented a distinct evolutionary lineage within the Amolops indoburmanensis species complex, he said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Maternal nutrition indicators also showed notable improvement: Survey 'Institutional deliveries in India up to over 90.6% in 2023-24'

NEW DELHI, May 30: Institutional deliveries in India have increased from 88.6 per cent in 2019-2021 to 90.6 per cent in 2023-24, moving closer towards universal coverage, according to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-6 released on Friday.

Institutional deliveries refer to the process of giving birth in a licensed healthcare facility under the supervision of professionals. This practice drastically reduces maternal and neonatal mortality by providing access to emergency obstetric care, hygienic conditions and specialised medical equipment.

According to NFHS-6 data for 2023-24, 95.9 per cent of pregnant women received antenatal care



(ANC), while those receiving ANC in the first trimester increased from 70 per cent to 76.2 per cent.

Mothers receiving at least four ANC visits also increased from 58.5 per cent to 65.2 per cent, re-

fecting stronger continuity of maternal healthcare services.

The NFHS-6 was conducted during 2023-24 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with the International Institute for Pop-

ulation Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai, as the nodal agency.

Covering nearly 6.79 lakh households across 715 districts, the survey provides vital evidence on population, health, nutrition and family welfare indicators, and supports evidence-based planning and programme implementation up to the district level.

Institutional deliveries increased from 88.6 per cent in 2019-2021 (NFHS-5) to 90.6 per cent in 2023-24, moving India closer towards universal coverage, the data showed. It also showed that caesarean deliveries increased from 21.5 per cent to 27.2 per cent. While C-section deliveries at private facilities (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Likely moderation in economic activity

Near-term growth outlook shows cautious resilience: FinMin

NEW DELHI, May 30: With forecasts pointing to a below-normal monsoon and a likely moderation in economic activity, overall consumption demand may face headwinds in the coming months, and the near-term outlook for the Indian economy is one of cautious resilience, the finance ministry said in a report on Saturday.

However, domestic fundamentals remain broadly intact, manufacturing and services PMIs are in expansionary territory, the labour market is stable, and foreign exchange reserves provide meaningful insulation against external shocks, the finance ministry said in its latest Monthly Economic Review.

At the same time, it said, the global environment has become materially more challenging since the onset of the West Asia conflict, with elevated crude prices, tightening financial conditions, and weakening growth momentum across major economies posing headwinds that India cannot fully insulate itself from. The West Asia conflict has emerged as a major shock to the already fragile global recovery, with its effects increasingly visible across energy markets, supply chains, trade routes and global financial conditions.

Elevated energy, transportation and logistics costs have revived inflationary pressures and renewed stagflation concerns across major economies, it said.



Confronted with these pressures, major central banks are expected to maintain restrictive monetary policy stances for longer than previously anticipated, pushing sovereign bond yields in advanced economies to multi-year highs, it said.

Across emerging markets, the impact remains uneven; energy-importing economies face mounting pressures from currency depreciation, capital outflows, and higher import bills, while commodity exporters remain relatively better positioned, it said.

The report said the Indian economy maintained its growth momentum in April 2026, with E-way bill generation, PMI indices and electricity consumption remaining in

expansionary territory. However, the moderation in the Eight Core Industries Index and fuel consumption signals that global headwinds are gradually finding their way into select segments of domestic activity, it said.

On the inflation outlook, the report said, it warrants vigilance.

The current divergence between retail inflation and wholesale prices signals that upstream cost pressures are building, and the pass-through to consumers, while limited so far, may not be far behind, it added.

The recent hike in petrol and diesel prices may activate direct and indirect transmission channels, and any further escalation in energy prices could narrow the existing

cushion more quickly than anticipated.

A deficient monsoon could add food price pressures on top of energy-driven ones. However, second-round effects and their persistence must be evident in the data for policy responses to be triggered, it said.

Looking ahead, the report said, the duration of the Strait of Hormuz disruption remains the single most consequential variable for India's external and price outlook.

Should normalisation occur soon, it said, the conditions for a broader-based recovery, supported by strong services exports and sustained investment commitments, are in place.

"Policy will need to remain agile across monetary, fiscal, and structural dimensions to navigate this period of compounded uncertainty, external and climatic, while keeping medium-term growth objectives firmly in view," it said.

Overall, India's macroeconomic position in May 2026 reflects cautious resilience, it said, adding that strong services exports, adequate foreign exchange reserves and a stable labour market provide a firm foundation.

However, it said, the confluence of elevated global energy prices, a depreciating rupee, rising upstream cost pressures and the prospect of a below-normal monsoon calls for sustained policy vigilance. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

India signs BrahMos deal

technologically adaptive defence industrial ecosystems," he said at a session on "Building Defence Industrial Resilience". For India, resilience is not merely about self-reliance but also about building trusted partnerships, diversified manufacturing networks, innovation ecosystems and secure supply chains that contribute to regional and global stability, he said.

The defence secretary also

said India had undertaken major reforms in defence production, innovation and exports over the past decade. The country had opened the sector to greater private-sector participation, encouraged startups and small industries, strengthened indigenous design and manufacturing and expanded collaboration with global partners, he said. India was not only modernising its armed forces but was also emerging as a dependable defence manufacturing and maintenance hub, Singh said. (PTI)

Meeting focuses on key

new investments in the energy and technology sectors. Officials said that the meeting reflects close coordination between the Centre and the Assam government on developmental priorities and governance issues concerning the northeastern region. The Assam Chief Minister has been actively engaging with Union ministers and central agencies in recent weeks to push forward several strategic projects linked to the state's long-term economic roadmap.

Myanmar President Aung Hlaing

Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh had represented India at Aung Hlaing's inauguration as the president last month. He effectively ran Myanmar for the last five years, helming the military rule.

Myanmar is one of India's strategic neighbours and it shares a 1,640-km border with a number of northeastern states, including militancy-hit Nagaland and Manipur. The Myanmar leader is accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising several cabinet ministers, senior officials and business leaders.

Aung Hlaing was earlier scheduled to visit New Delhi to participate in the International Big Cat Alliance Summit on June 1, which has been deferred.

"President U Min Aung Hlaing will hold discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 1 on further strengthening the historical and civilisational ties between the two countries. He will also participate in a business forum," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

The Myanmar president will also travel to Mumbai on June 2 for business and industry interactions and site visits. Jaiswal, at his weekly media briefing, said on Friday that issues relating to border security and connectivity, among others, will be discussed during the Myanmar leader's trip to India.

"Regarding border security, connectivity and other issues, all matters that form part of the gamut of relations between India and Myanmar will come up for discussion. Our idea is to take our friendly, civilisational ties forward," he said. (PTI)

M'laya, IOA sign revised

At the same event, the government of Meghalaya and the Indian Olympic Association signed the host state agreement for the 39th National Games. The revised agreement strengthens the partnership between the State and the IOA by clearly defining the legal, financial, and operational responsibilities of each party in greater detail. The signing follows the conclusion of the 38th National Games in Uttarakhand in 2025 and the ceremonial handover of the Games flag to Meghalaya. The 2027 edition will coincide with Meghalaya's 55th Statehood year.

More than 10,000 athletes are expected to compete across three host cities — Shillong, Tura and Jowai — with the event estimated to generate over 5,400 employment opportunities for the people of the State.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya praised the State for "its remarkable efforts and preparedness for hosting the 39th National Games," noting that Meghalaya "has demonstrated exceptional capability in executing projects in a timely and efficient manner."

He said the upcoming Mawkhonu Football Stadium would be "a state-of-the-art facility capable of hosting national and international matches."

The Chief Minister reaffirmed Meghalaya's commitment to "establishing itself as a leading sporting hub in India." He said the development of "world-class infrastructure and the hosting of national and international events will transform the State's sports ecosystem and create new opportunities for its youth."

"Hosting the 39th National Games is just the beginning of a long-term vision to build a strong and lasting sports culture in Meghalaya," Sangma said, urging young athletes "to make the most of the historic opportunity to compete on home soil and bring glory to the State."

The ceremony was held in the presence of Minister of State for Youth Affairs & Sports Raksha Nikhil Khadse, Meghalaya Sports & Youth Affairs Minister Wailadmiki Shylla, and Indian Olympic Association President Dr PT Usha. Senior officials of the IOA, members of the Meghalaya State Olympic Association, and representatives from State Olympic Associations of other Northeastern states also attended.

Nepali national among

interrogation revealed that the same handlers directed another module from Punjab to execute similar attacks in the national capital. Acting on the inputs, Special Cell teams intercepted Harvinder Singh, Gagandeep Singh and Manjeet Singh on the Mehrauli-Badarpur Road around 1 am on Friday and recovered a cache of arms and ammunition from their possession, police said. (PTI)

Dilip Saikia bats for zero

under PM Kisan Nidhi. He directed the authorities to identify those involved in such organized corrupt practices and initiate strict legal action against them. Saikia also emphasized the urgent revival of defunct JIM schemes and the timely completion of ongoing piped water supply projects under the Urban Sewerage Board.

The meeting, moderated by Karabi Saikia Karan, CEO of Darrang Zilla Parishad, began with a welcome address by District Commissioner Ayushi Jain. It was attended by MLAs Nilima Devi (Mangaldai), Dr. Paramananda Rajbongshi (Sipajhar), and Mazibur Rahman (Dalgao), along with Chairperson of Darrang Zilla Parishad Sewali Goswami Kalita, nominated member Mayukh Goswami, and other officials.

Over 400 soldiers from 13

each other's capacities through the sharing of best practises. There is also the aspect of everlasting bonds of friendships, with the one objective of ensuring a stable and secure region," he added.

Col Poonia said detailed discussions were held on how to incorporate the latest and niche technology, and what the effect of these on operations in the TTPs.

The exercise also provided an opportunity for sharing key best practices in the engineering field.

"As part of the exercise, we have trained in tactical environments wherein key engineering tasks were done, and best practices were shared. For instance, counter IED drills were undertaken in a simulated combat environment," Major Susmita S Varier, engineering representative in the exercise, said.

She said operating in mixed groups with personnel from foreign nations has given valuable exposure to different tactical drills, equipment and operating procedures, which will enhance coordination.

The participating foreign nations expressed gratitude to the Indian Army for hosting such an exercise.

Lt Col Sangay Jantsho of the Royal Bhutan Army said, "We thank the Indian Army for organising this exercise, which has been a successful one. It has been an opportunity for us to interact with troops of other nations, learn and share our experience and expertise in counter-insurgency."

He said it was a valuable exposure to operating alongside different countries.

Lt Col.Louis Agathine harped on the historical ties between his country, Seychelles, and India, and said such exercises will enhance friendship across the Indian Ocean region. (PTI)

New Karnataka CM to take oath

statement that Siddaramaiah proposed Shivakumar's name for the top position, G Parameshwara seconded the proposal, and the meeting unanimously endorsed it. Party general secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal announced Shivakumar's election as the new CLP leader.

Earlier, at the beginning of the meeting, Surjewala, announced that the process of electing the new CLP leader would proceed based on a proposal from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, and formally initiated the proceedings, the statement said. (PTI)

New frog species discovered

The finding challenges the long-held view that the group comprised a single widespread species, and instead points to the existence of multiple cryptic lineages across northeast India and neighbouring Myanmar, the officials said. Commenting on the discovery, ZSI Director Dhriti Banerjee said sustained faunal exploration and scientific documentation are essential for understanding and conserving India's biodiversity.

"The discovery highlights the rich yet understudied faunal diversity of northeast India, and underscores the importance of long-term field surveys in biodiversity hotspots," she said.

Field expedition leader Bikramjit Sinha said the frog was encountered in a fast-flowing hill stream ecosystem, noting that the rugged landscapes and isolated watersheds of the region continue to harbour poorly known amphibian diversity. (PTI)

'Institutional deliveries in India

increased from 47.4 per cent in NFHS-5 to 54.1 per cent, those at public health facilities increased from 14.3 per cent to 16.9 per cent. Births attended by health personnel increased from 89.4 per cent to 91.3 per cent. Postnatal care for newborns by doctor, nurse, lady health visitor (LHV), auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM), midwife and other health personnel within two days of delivery improved from 79.1 per cent to 85.3 per cent, the data showed. Maternal nutrition indicators also showed notable improvement. (PTI)

Road mishap claims 2 lives

(AS-05-J-5265) travelling from Khatkhathi towards Bokajan rammed violently into the rear side of the truck. The impact of the collision was exceptionally severe, causing the scooter rider to tragically die on the spot.

Another youth riding pillion on the scooter sustained critical, life-threatening injuries. Onlookers and local residents rushed to render aid, immediately transporting him to the Khatkhathi Asha Multispecialty Hospital. Tragically, however, he succumbed to his injuries while en route to the medical facility.

The deceased have been identified by authorities as Sanju Shureng (22), son of Pitro Shureng, a resident of Jor Tokbi village, Khatkhathi, and Ganesh Hazarika (17), son of Dhiren Hazarika, a resident of Shaila Mandir Kachari village, Khatkhathi.

Upon receiving information about the tragedy, a team from the Khatkhathi Police Station rushed to the scene. Officers have seized both the 16-wheeler truck and the mangled scooter involved in the crash.

AI redefines jobs across industries: Indeed-Nasscom report

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 30: As AI becomes central to workforce strategy, Indian employers are prioritising practical, AI-ready skills across both general industries and the technology sector, according to the Indeed-Nasscom report, India's AI Talent Inflection Point: From Skill Gaps to Competitive Advantage.

The report finds that 86% of employers have seen AI impact job roles and responsibilities, while 35% report significant redefinition or transformation. Nearly all organisations expect their 2026 workforce strategy to centre around AI-related or AI-supported roles, with 40% expecting a major rejig.

Indeed India Managing Director Sashi Kumar said, "AI is no longer limited to specialist technology roles. It is changing how work is designed across industries, and employers are responding by hiring for

demonstrable skills, certifications and practical capability. The data shows that India's opportunity lies not only in building AI talent, but in making AI readiness broader, more accessible and more aligned to real workplace needs. For job seekers, the message is clear: continuous learning, hands-on experience and the ability to work with AI will matter more in 2026."

Ketaki Karnik said, "The findings of the Indeed-Nasscom report affirm the inflection point India's talent ecosystem is currently experiencing. As AI profoundly reshapes roles across industries, our collective focus must be on accelerating skilling initiatives to build a future-ready workforce and cement India's position as a global technology leader. Prioritizing demonstrable AI-ready skills is crucial for converting skill gaps into a competitive advantage."

DRI seizes over 24 kg of narcotic drugs in Kerala, arrests 5

NEW DELHI, May 30: The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence has seized over 24 kg of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in Kerala and arrested five individuals, the finance ministry said on Saturday.

The Cochin Unit of the DRI seized the contraband, including methaqualone, methamphetamine and hashish oil, at Kochi, Malappuram and Thiruvananthapuram under Operation Chakravayuh. They were intended for illicit distribution.

Five individuals, including key operatives involved in the trafficking networks, have been apprehended under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.

The contraband was detected in different modes of smuggling, including passenger baggage at Airport, concealment in courier consignment and outbound export cargo, the ministry added. (PTI)

Argentina rewrites the global playbook on Nicotine

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 30: In a striking policy reversal, Argentina formally lifted their bans on e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products in April-May 2026, joining a growing bloc of nations abandoning prohibition in favour of smart, evidence-based regulation. For India, still deliberating its own tobacco control framework, the signal is hard to ignore.

Argentina's case is the starkest. After 15 years of an outright ban, Buenos Aires acknowledged the uncomfortable truth: prohibition hadn't reduced consumption, it had simply driven it underground. With no quality controls, no age verification, and no traceability, the black market thrived. The government replaced the ban with comprehensive regulatory architecture: mandatory product registration, strict ingredient disclosure, and a traceability mechanism explicitly designed to block sales to minors. The message from Buenos Aires was blunt - bans don't work; accountability does.

Bangladesh followed suit, implementing parallel controls as it opened its market, signaling that even conservative regulatory environments are pivoting toward managed access over failed prohibition.

The intellectual backbone of this shift is the US Food and Drug Administration's risk-tiered regulatory framework, increasingly seen as the global gold standard over the WHO's blanket prevention approach. The FDA doesn't treat all nicotine products as equivalent. Instead, it differentiates by harm

level, subjecting each product to rigorous scientific scrutiny before market access is granted. Of roughly 26 million applications, only 34 smokeless tobacco products have received approval, hardly a free-for-all.

Starting late 2025, the FDA accelerated this framework for next-generation nicotine products, with the Trump administration explicitly backing faster approvals for non-combustible alternatives. White House spokesperson Kush Desai framed it plainly - decisions will be guided by the highest standard of scientific evidence. Marketing controls - biometric authentication, identity verification, Bluetooth-enabled age locks are baked into approved product categories.

The results on youth protection are striking. Between 2023 and 2024, FDA education campaigns prevented nearly 450,000 adolescents from initiating e-cigarette use. School-age users dropped from 5.38 million in 2019 to 1.63 million in 2024, a near 70% decline, the lowest in over a decade. Minimum purchase age was raised to 21 in 2019; ID checks for under-30s kicked in from 2024.

The divergence between the WHO's maximum-prevention doctrine and the FDA's calibrated harm-reduction model is more than academic - it has real trade and fiscal consequences. Countries that mechanically apply WHO guidance risk pushing persistent demand into informal channels, enlarging black markets, draining tax revenues, and paradoxically increasing youth exposure through

unregulated products. The WHO's recommendations remain non-binding. The question is whether rigid adherence serves public health goals or undermines them.

India sits at a crossroads familiar to Argentina not long ago. The 2019 ban on e-cigarettes addressed legitimate youth protection concerns, but enforcement gaps have allowed a shadow market to expand. As India constructs its next regulatory phase, the international evidence increasingly points in one direction: conditional, risk-stratified regulation outperforms prohibition on every measurable outcome - youth access, market transparency, smuggling control, and tax compliance.

"Harm reduction is not a new concept in public health, we use it in infectious disease, in substance use, and in occupational medicine. The question for nicotine policy is whether a risk-stratified regulatory model, with robust age-verification, product registration, and ingredient disclosure, produces better measurable outcomes than prohibition alone. The data from the United States, particularly the near 70% decline in school-age e-cigarette use between 2019 and 2024 under the FDA's structured framework, warrants serious academic attention in India. We should be guided by outcomes, not by the regulatory philosophy we started with," says Dr Chandrakant S Pandav, Former Professor and Head of the Centre for Community Medicine at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi.

LOST

I, Manisha Banik (Nandi) wife of Prabir Nandi resident of Lumding lost my original consolidated Grade sheet bearing Roll No UA 1713080385 and Reg No 17073011 some-where in Lumding of Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam.

AFFIDAVIT-CUM-DECLARATION

I, Chow Cholani Munglang (34), S/o Tulia Munglang, a permanent resident of Momong village, PO: Chowkham, PS: Chowkham, district Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare on oath via an affidavit before the Notary Public at Namsai on this day of 29th May, 2026 that in my Class-X, Class- XII, Bachelor's Degree Certificate, etc. my name has been recorded as Cholani Munglang, but in my Aadhar Card, Driving License, Pan Card, Election Card, SBI Bank Passbook etc. my name has been inadvertently recorded and entered as Cholani Munglang instead of Chow Cholani Munglang.

CESS IMPROVEMENT WORK AT LUMDING DIV.

Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/39 of 2026 (Item No 1 & 2). Works tenders through "E" Tendering system for and on behalf of the president of India are invited for the works as detailed below:-
SN.1 Brief Description of Item: Jamunamukh-Langcholiect-Cess Improvement work under ADENI/Lumding. Tender Value: ₹1,30,55,818.80/- Earnest Money: ₹2,61,100/-
SN.2 Brief Description of Item: Panikhiati-Kampur-Cess Improvement work under ADENI/Jagiroad. Tender Value: ₹1,84,47,962.26/- Earnest Money: ₹3,69,000/-
Date & time of closing tender: At 15.00 hrs. on 22-06-2026 & opening at 15.00 hrs. of 23-06-2026
The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15.00 hrs. on 22-06-2026 in the website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (W), Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

Administration to prepare officials for digital-first house listing and housing operations

Karbi Anglong to begin three-day training for Census 2027 Phase-I



HT Bureau
DIPHU, May 30: The Karbi Anglong District Administration is set to launch a crucial three-day training programme on Monday, June 1, to prepare for the upcoming first phase of Census 2027. The intensive training, which will run through June 3, will be held at the Conference Hall of the Circuit House in Diphu. It is specifically designed for District Census Officers, Charge Census Officers, Clerical Assistants and Technical Assistants. The core focus will be on House-listing and Housing Operations (HLO), Phase

heavily leverage digital technology to ensure faster, more accurate and highly secure data processing. For the first time, field enumerators will use a dedicated mobile application for real-time data entry. Additionally, the government is introducing a self-enumeration facility, which will allow households to securely log in online and submit their details before official personnel visit their homes. The administration has issued a direct advisory to the general public to keep basic household information handy. However, in a move to ease public anxiety, the government has explicitly clarified that citizens will not be required to submit or show any physical documents to enumerators. All data will be captured strictly through direct interviews and digital data-entry systems. Emphasising that the accuracy of the census determines the future developmental blueprint of the region, the Karbi Anglong District Administration has appealed to all local residents to cooperate fully with authorised census personnel and participate actively in the process.

Baksa completes three-day District-Level Training for Census 2027 Phase-I



HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, May 30: The three-day District-Level Training Programme on Houselisting and Housing Census Operations (HLO) under Census 2027 (Phase-I) concluded successfully on Saturday at the Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office in Mushalpur. District Commissioner of Baksa, Kimnei Changsan, IAS,

attended the final day of the training programme and reviewed the proceedings. The programme was organised to strengthen the preparedness of officials and field functionaries for the effective implementation of the upcoming Census exercise. The training covered various aspects of Houselisting and Housing Census operations, including houselisting procedures, enumeration protocols, data collection methodologies, coordination mechanisms and digital components associated with census activities. Interactive sessions were also conducted, allowing participants to clarify doubts and discuss practical challenges related to census implementation. Additional District Commissioners, Circle Officers, district-level officials and technical personnel from different departments actively participated in the programme. The training sessions were conducted by Dr K S Singh, former Joint Director of the Directorate of Census Operations, Assam and Siddharth Kumar, Statistical Investigator. They provided detailed guidance on census procedures and operational requirements. Officials stated that the training programme was aimed at enhancing the capacity of field-level personnel and ensuring the smooth execution of Houselisting and Housing Census activities across Baksa district. With the successful conclusion of the three-day programme, Phase-I training activities under Census 2027 have been completed in the district.

Five injured in road accident in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, May 30: At least five persons were injured in a road accident near Ultapani along the Bishmuri-Saralpara road in the Sikhna Jwhlwao National Park area of Kokrajhar district. According to reports, a Bolero vehicle bearing registration number AS 01 FB 3867 was travelling from Goalpara towards Saralpara picnic spot when the accident occurred. Sources said the vehicle was allegedly moving at a high speed when the driver lost control, causing it to skid off the road and plunge into a roadside ditch. All five youths in the vehicle sustained injuries in the accident. The accident has once again highlighted concerns over rash and negligent driving on roads passing through the national park area. The injured were rushed to the local hospital for treatment. Road mishaps are reportedly increasing day by day along the Sikhna Jwhlwao National Park in Kokrajhar district.

Arms and drug seizures in Jorhat; several arrested

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, May 30: A 7.65 mm pistol was recovered by a Jorhat police team from the possession of three persons in the Mariani co-district of Jorhat district on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday and the trio were sent to judicial custody on Saturday. According to sources, the accused are from Katonipar village and necessary legal action has been initiated against them. Investigation is on in the case. Meanwhile, police nabbed a youth from the Nazirani Bari locality of Jorhat town on Friday and suspected narcotic substances were found in his possession. The accused has been identified as Bapon Dey from the Rajamaidam area of the town and necessary legal action has been taken against him. Earlier this month, two people were nabbed at Titabar Chariali in the Titabar co-district and about 19 kg of suspected cannabis (ganja) was recovered from them. The duo had reportedly brought the narcotic substance on the Silchar-Tinsukia Barak-Brahmaputra Express from which they alighted at Titabar Railway Station. In the same month, two women were arrested by Jorhat Police from the town in separate incidents on charges of drug peddling.

Police nab five suspects with sharp tools for alleged dacoity

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, May 30: Acting on secret tip off, Nagaon police conducted naka checking at Borghat bypass in front of Bypass Dhaba today and apprehended five persons suspected of planning a dacoity at Nagaon. During the operation, a white Maruti Alto bearing registration number AS-02-AF-4458 was intercepted while proceeding towards Nagaon. The vehicle was searched in the presence of local witnesses. Police recovered several items from the vehicle, including: one yellow iron hydraulic cutter, one small cutter, one knife, one V-shaped iron rod, one iron rod, two black masks, one hacksaw with blade, one plastic rope and two black helmets. The five occupants of the vehicle have been identified as Sahidul Islam (43) Narjul Islam (28), Fajul Haque (24) of Rangolu Kolbari in Nagaon district, Ismail Ali (24) of Rangolu Sutargaon and Abdul Khalil (25) of Doboka in Hojai district. Based on preliminary enquiry and the nature of the recovered articles, police suspect the group was heading towards Nagaon with the intention of committing dacoity. All recovered items along with the vehicle have been seized in the presence of witnesses. The apprehended persons were taken to Borghat Outpost for further legal action. An investigation is underway.

Tekelangjun TGC felicitates HSLC and HS 1st division students

HT Correspondent
HOWRAGHAT, May 30: A grand meet-cum-felicitation programme was organised on Saturday by the Tekelangjun Teachers' Gathering Centre (TGC) at the premises of Tekelangjun Higher Secondary School. The event was held to honour and appreciate the students who passed the recent HSLC and Higher Secondary (HS) examinations with first-division marks. The programme witnessed the presence of several notable personalities and local residents. The key attendees included Chief Guest Jiban Chandra Bhuyan, Principal of Tekelangjun Higher Secondary School; Special Guests Rupasingh Bey, retired teacher; Borsing Teron, founding president of Tekelangjun TGC; Semsing Ingti, secretary of Dokmoka Press Club and Dhani Tokbi, Mandal of Phuloni Revenue Circle. During the ceremony, the meritorious students were felicitated for their academic achievements and encouraged to strive for greater success in their future endeavours. Speaking on the occasion, the guest speakers highlighted the critical importance of education. They urged the students to continue working hard and to contribute meaningfully to the development of society and the nation. Addressing the gathering, Joysing Kro, president of Tekelangjun TGC and Robinson Rongpi, secretary of the organisation, stated that the centre remains deeply committed to upgrading the educational landscape of the region. They assured the public that the TGC will continue to organise similar felicitation programmes in the coming years to encourage and support bright minds.

Choked drains near Thana Chariali ROB raise waterlogging fears

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, May 30: With the monsoon season fast approaching, residents living near the Road Over Bridge (ROB) at Thana Chariali on Mancotta Road in Dibrugarh are growing increasingly anxious over the deplorable condition of the roadside drains on either side of the bridge, which have remained unattended for a prolonged period. The drains running along both sides of the ROB, from the railway line to Mancotta Road have become completely non-functional. Accumulated mud, silt and overgrown vegetation have choked the drainage channels to the extent that water can no longer flow freely, raising serious concerns about waterlogging and flooding once the rains set in. Residents have appealed to the Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation to take immediate cognisance of the issue and undertake urgent desilting and cleaning of the drains before the rains arrive in full force.

Food, consumer affairs dept continues intensive operation

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, May 30: The Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs Department of Sivasagar district has been conducting strict surveillance by regularly inspecting markets, fair price shops etc to ensure that there is no artificial shortage of essential commodities and no retailers or wholesalers charge unreasonable prices from the general public. At the same time, the officers have also been inspecting the MS, HSD sales centers as well as LPG distribution centers in the district. In the course of its campaign, the department seized 180 liters of illegally stored diesel and 80 liters of petrol from a tea shop in Gauri Sagar on Friday. The department also requests the public to immediately inform the Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs Branch if they notice any illegal activities or allegations of unreasonable prices being charged by any retailer for essential commodities.

Bal Sabha held at Biswanath

HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, May 30: The SANKALP: Hub for Empowerment of Women, under the Women and Child Development Department, Biswanath, organised a Mahila Sabha and Bal Sabha on Saturday at Monabari Panchayat to strengthen the participation of women and children in local governance and community development. The meeting focused on important issues such as menstrual hygiene management, health and sanitation, child protection and the challenges faced by women and adolescent girls. Participants actively identified key concerns and shared suggestions for improving the well-being and empowerment of women and children in the community. The resolutions and recommendations emerging from the Sabha will be placed before the Gram Panchayat for necessary action. The programme was attended by the Panchayat President, PRI members, supervisors, ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, mother groups, SHG members and adolescent girls.

SMTPA demands modern DC office complex at Rupohi Pathar

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, May 28: The Sivasagar Municipality Tax Payers' Association (SMTPA) in an emergent executive meeting held at Amolapaty, discussed in detail the situation arising out of a baseless rumour that the Sivasagar District Commissioner's Office would be shifted to a new complex somewhere near Bokota, presently under Demow LAC, after the delimitation. Some public organisations even held a meeting in Rang-piriyoti Club to express public anger against such a move. However, Sivasagar District Commissioner Bidul Yadav and Additional DC Lukumoni Bora on Friday categorically denied any such move from the government and appealed to the public not to resort to protests based on unfounded information. The SMTPA meeting, presided over by Manoj Kr Borthakur, unanimously decided to move the government through a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam, seeking implementation of an earlier project for a modern District Commissioner's Office Complex at Rupohi Pathar in Jaysagar in the interest of the expansion and modernisation of historic Sivasagar town. The SMTPA believes the new DC Office at Rupohi Pathar will be easily accessible to people across the district. Earlier on Thursday, Additional DC Lukumoni Bora told media that the original project site at Rupohi Pathar would be a boost to the tourism potential of the historic township and would significantly ease traffic congestion inside the present small township. The members, including Dilip Saikia, executive president, vice presidents Rajani Changkakoti, Surjya Das, Dr Mani Pathak and Arabinda Baruah, secretary of SMTPA, put forward suggestions to the administration that the present DC Office complex near the Devi-doul is quite spacious, especially after the Judiciary Section shifted to a new building at Jenganikotia and hence there is no urgent need to shift the DC Office to another location. However, they stated that it urgently needs some modification, proper utilisation of space for parking and beautification. The meeting opined that the body would urge the state government to provide sufficient budgetary funds for the new DC Office complex so that it can also become a historical milestone.

Scheduled power shutdown announced in Diphu

HT Bureau
DIPHU, May 30: The Assam Power Distribution Company Limited (APDCL) and Assam Electricity Grid Corporation Limited (AEGCL) have announced scheduled power supply disruptions in Diphu town and its adjoining areas on June 1 and June 3, 2026 to facilitate essential maintenance and repair works. According to an official release from the Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD), Karbi Anglong, the shutdowns will occur in two separate phases under different sub-divisions. **Phase 1: June 1 (Monday)** The Sub-Divisional Engineer of Diphu Electrical Sub-Division-II, APDCL (CAR), informed that a power shutdown has been scheduled on June 1, 2026 from 6:00 AM to 9:00 AM. This temporary disruption is necessary to carry out urgent maintenance and repair works at the 33/11 kV Diphu Sub-Station. Officials noted that if the technical work concludes ahead of time, power supply will be restored earlier than scheduled. **Phase 2: June 3 (Wednesday)** A second planned shutdown will take place on June 3, 2026 from 5:30 AM to 8:00 AM. As per the Sub-Divisional Engineer of Diphu Electrical Sub-Division-I, APDCL (CAR), this outage is required for preventive maintenance at the 132 kV Grid Sub-Station, AEGCL, Diphu. During this window, the 33 kV Main Bus at the Grid Sub-Station will be shut down, which is expected to affect all 11 kV feeders. Consequently, electricity supply across Diphu town and neighbouring localities will remain interrupted. Similar to the first phase, supply may be restored prior to 8:00 AM depending on the progress of the maintenance team. Electricity consumers in the affected zones are requested to take note of these timings and plan their daily routines and water storage arrangements accordingly. The power utility authorities have expressed regret for the inevitable inconvenience this may cause to the public and have requested the cooperation and patience of citizens during these necessary infrastructure maintenance periods.

Demow Nityalaya to launch silver jubilee celebrations

HT Correspondent
DEMOW, May 30: Demow Nityalaya, an institution dedicated to imparting training in Sattriya dance has completed a glorious 25 years of its journey. To mark the occasion, the institution will organise the opening programme of its silver jubilee year celebrations on July 11, 2026. Renowned classical dancer and Padma Bhushan awardee Jatin Goswami will attend the programme as a distinguished guest. A celebration committee was constituted with Sushanta Borgohain, MLA of 95 No Demow Constituency, as Chief Patron, Kushal Dutta as president, Umesh Chetia as working president and Hindu Jyoti Gogoi as secretary.

Morigaon DRSC reviews road safety directions

HT Correspondent
MORIGAON, May 30: A meeting of the District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) was held on Saturday at the conference hall of the District Commissioner's Office, Morigaon, under the chairmanship of District Commissioner Anamika Tewari. The meeting was attended by Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Kumari Aarti, ADC Nitisha Bora, ASP Anita Hazarika, Assistant Commissioner Santosh Buragohain, Member Secretary of DRSC Jinnat Ahmed and representatives of various stakeholder departments. At the outset, the Member Secretary apprised the committee of the compliance status of decisions taken in the previous DRSC meeting. Members also reviewed the ongoing road safety initiatives being undertaken across the district. A major focus of the meeting was the recent directions issued by the Supreme Court of India aimed at enhancing safety on National Highways and reducing road fatalities. Addressing the meeting, the Secretary of DLSA elaborated on the directives and emphasised the need for strict compliance by all concerned departments and agencies. The committee discussed the Court's prohibition on the parking of heavy and commercial vehicles on National Highway carriageways and paved shoulders, except at designated parking bays, lay-bys and wayside amenities. The Supreme Court has also directed authorities to strengthen surveillance and enforcement through Advanced Traffic Management Systems (ATMS), GPS-enabled monitoring, e-challan generation and regular patrolling. The meeting further deliberated on the directives relating to the removal of encroachments and unauthorised commercial establishments within the Right of Way (ROW) of National Highways. The Court has directed district administrations and highway authorities to identify and remove such encroachments and ensure that no licence, NOC or trade approval is granted without the required clearance from highway authorities.

New English anthology highlights Assam's culture, history and literary engagement

Joyashri Saikia's 'sparks of Peace and Love' released

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, May 30: Vice Chancellor of JB University Dr Jyoti Prasad Saikia on Saturday released 'Sparks of Peace and Love' authored by Joyashri Saikia at a function organised at the Jorhat Press Club. 'Sparks of Peace and Love' is the ninth book written by Joyashri Saikia and the first one in English. The book, published by Shabdo Prakashan, is a compilation of 19 articles and essays which tell the tales of Assam's culture and history, as well as personal experiences of the author and experiences of other people narrated to Saikia. Narrating snippets of information regarding the background of some of the articles like Raas Mahotsav, mask making in the satras, Muga silk and Zubeen Garg's dreams, Joyashri Saikia said that when she was working in ONGC, her co-workers had asked her to write in English so that they too could read what she was writing. "I wrote in English not only for them but also so that the book reaches a wider audience and people come to know about our rich culture and heritage," she said. Joyashri has earlier written seven books of poetry and stories in Assamese and one in



Hindi and English. VC Dr Saikia, who himself is a figure of renown in the literary firmament of the state, said that a book should be able to engage its readers to the extent that it becomes not just a form of acceptance but a topic of discussion and analysis. He said writers must remember that they are writing for the new generation. Even though for the writer it might be his

thoughts, views and imagination being penned, it might be accepted or rejected by new readers. Keeping this generation in mind, the author must draw them into their creations and make them part of the narrative. He said a writer should be able to make poetry, novels or drama an immersive experience for the reader. Quoting several experts, Dr Saikia said that writers and readers should co-relate mu-

tually without realising it and the relationship should be reciprocal and symbiotic. "With changing times, writers should address the present generation as they have evolved in today's age, so that it stirs intellectual excitement and becomes a topic of analysis and discussion, creating an impact that lasts like that of novels such as 'Of Human Bondage'. A writer also creates his or her own set of readers or readership," he said. Dr Saikia, however, denied that the present generation was no longer interested in reading books, noting that one of his books had been translated into seven languages and several of his books had been sold out at book fairs, indicating that there are still many readers in the present generation who buy and read books. Earlier, a shradhdhanjali was offered to poet Junmoni Das and legendary singer Zubeen Garg. Among those who addressed the meeting were Biswajit Das, Director, All India Radio, Jorhat Centre, Diganta Phukan, Principal, Nabin Bordoloi College, Shabdo Prakashan publisher and senior journalists Diganta Buragohain and Jogesh Ojha.

Marfot - A Forgotten Tune

AUTHOR
By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The central theme and narrative of the film raise a deep, logical and realistic question in the minds of the audience, compelling them to reconsider the true definition and limitations of human relationships determined by society. The story begins against the backdrop of a silent and peaceful town where two elderly individuals, burdened by age, accidentally develop an unimaginable and unexpected relationship. This new and unforeseen bond rekindles long-buried desires and aspirations hidden deep within their hearts, forcing them to question the way of life they had accepted for so long

The process of short film making in the contemporary Assamese film industry has been able to initiate a new, systematic and intellectual stream that has provided a distinct and profound dimension to the thought process of the audience. Generally, a short film carries within it the serious responsibility of delivering a specific, clear and powerful message to the audience within a very limited span of time, which is considered a far more difficult and challenging task than a feature-length film. This is because the director requires an extremely sharp perspective to establish character development, narrative presentation and proper analysis of the central theme within a short duration. It is within such a backdrop that a remarkable and realistic Assamese short film titled 'Marfot (A Forgotten Tune)' has been created. Directed and written jointly by Arindam Baruah and Indraneel Gayon, this dramatic film has presented an extremely deep psychological and social issue in a very direct manner within a brief duration of merely eleven minutes and thirty-five seconds. Produced by Rita Baruah under the banner of Panchoi Productions of Duliajan, the primary language of the film is Assamese, although beautifully arranged English subtitles have also been provided for audiences outside the state. The directors have analysed with exceptional sharpness the continuous conflict between the rigid rules of society and individual freedom. Indraneel Gayon's original story along with the joint screen-

play by Indraneel Gayon, Arindam Baruah and Plabita Gogoi has provided a strong and weighty foundation in establishing the narrative of the film. Veteran Assamese actors Arun Nath and Mridula Baruah have portrayed the lead characters in the film. Presenting the psychology of two individuals who have reached the twilight of life in such a simple, direct and logical manner has truly been identified as a bold and fearless step from the perspective of film direction.

The central theme and narrative of the film raise a deep, logical and realistic question in the minds of the audience, compelling them to reconsider the true definition and limitations of human relationships determined by society. The story begins



compels the audience to contemplate through reason. This is not merely an ordinary narrative film; rather, it is a psychological evaluation of old age, loneliness and people trapped within the rigid

conflict, helplessness and suppressed desires of their characters in an extremely precise, profound and natural manner. Through these two characters, the directors have reflected a cruel reality of soci-

taken by human beings. The two characters do not desperately cry out for the right to live for themselves; rather, they merely attempt to reach a logical understanding with their circumstances. The director has brought this entire process before the camera in an extremely detached and neutral manner, where instead of proving any character right or wrong, emphasis has been placed upon a powerful analysis of the situation itself.

An evaluation of the technical aspects of filmmaking reveals that every department of 'Marfot' has performed its responsibility in an extremely professional, skilful and disciplined manner. Technically, Gunjan Mahanta's cinematography, editing and colour grading have emerged as some of the strongest and most significant aspects of the film. His camera frames realistically capture the psychological state of the two characters, the emotional distance between them and the silence surrounding them, while the editing maintains the rhythm of the narrative and creates a continuous flow throughout the film. The use of light and shadow in cinematography symbolically represents the darkness and illumination within the minds of the characters. On the other hand, the sound design and mixing by Blossom Hazarika along with the background score by Dorjay Tamang have greatly enhanced the gravity of the film's subject matter. The precise, restrained and realistic use of sound has given a distinct meaning even to the silences between dialogues, which was extremely essential for such a heavy psychological film. As assistant director and production controller, Indrajit Kalita has efficiently supervised the production process, while Prakashree Laskar's production stills and Kunal Bora's poster design have provided the external presentation of the film with an attractive and meaningful form that remains consistent with its central theme. Owing to its high standard and impartial presentation, the film has already earned recognition at several prestigious film festivals. Its honourable screenings at the Eleventh Bengal International Short Film Festival in Kolkata, the Athvikvaruni International Film Festival in Tamil Nadu, the North-east International Documentary and Film Festival in Guwahati and the Ninth South Asian Short Film Festival establish the universal significance of its subject matter. This success firmly establishes a major argument—that a well-planned film created with an impartial and realistic narrative can earn appreciation across the world rather than remaining confined to a particular society. The greatest achievement of 'Marfot' lies in exposing the naked realities of society through an emotionless analysis without forcefully imposing any specific message upon the audience, thereby enabling the film to attain a dignified and intellectual position in the history of contemporary cinema.



against the backdrop of a silent and peaceful town where two elderly individuals, burdened by age, accidentally develop an unimaginable and unexpected relationship. This new and unforeseen bond rekindles long-buried desires and aspirations hidden deep within their hearts, forcing them to question the way of life they had accepted for so long. While expressing the depth of the story, the director very clearly states that seasons come and go, yet we continue to hold tightly onto certain fleeting moments. We carefully preserve the small fragments of life, but what the actual meaning of this existence is becomes a ruthless question that the film

boundaries of society. After spending an entire lifetime merely fulfilling duties and adhering to social norms, when old memories slowly begin to return to the mind, they are forced to confront the reassessment of the difficult decisions once determined by duty and social expectations. On one hand lies the sweetness of companionship discovered in the final phase of life, and on the other stands the fear of severe social criticism—caught between these two realities, the two characters are compelled to engage in an intense psychological struggle. Whether they will openly embrace this newly discovered freedom and self-satisfaction or once again remain confined within familiar and predetermined boundaries out of fear of society emerges as an extremely important and complex question. This psychological conflict has been presented in an exceptionally logical, direct and realistic manner without any unnecessary melodrama or emotional excess, exposing the hypocrisy hidden behind every decision shaped by society.

From the perspective of performance and character portrayal, veteran actors Arun Nath and Mridula Baruah have expressed the psychological

ety where the wishes and emotions of elderly individuals are generally given no importance. In the eyes of society, old age seemingly signifies the end of every personal desire and aspiration, and against such an unwritten rule, the silent rebellion initiated internally by the two characters has been portrayed with remarkable fluidity through the skilful performances of the actors. Their eyes, body language and subtle facial expressions often communicate far more than spoken dialogue, thereby strengthening the realistic dimension of the film even further. According to the directors, the film narrates the story of two elderly people while continuously questioning and contemplating their choices, self-satisfaction and desires within the limitations imposed by society. When socially determined rules deprive individuals of personal peace, the film offers a sharp and impartial analysis of how people are compelled to endure silent mental suffering. Rather than emotionally manipulating or blackmailing the audience, the narrative confronts them with a ruthless reality where fear, hesitation and an unnecessary sense of obligation toward society remain hidden behind every step

Sentimental Value: The tender weight of what remains

By: Indranil Gayan

There is a particular silence in the cinema of Joachim Trier—a silence that does not signify absence, but accumulation. It gathers between words, lingers in gestures, and settles into spaces where emotions have long outlived their articulation. In Sentimental Value (2025), Trier refines this silence into something almost tactile. The film does not merely tell a story; it listens—to memory, to distance, to the quiet erosion of intimacy over time.

At its surface, the narrative is disarmingly simple: two daughters reunite with their estranged father, a once-acclaimed filmmaker seeking both artistic revival and personal reconciliation. Yet Trier is uninterested in the mechanics of plot. What draws him, instead, is the fragile afterlife of relationships—the way they persist, distort, and haunt long after their apparent dissolution.

The house in which the film unfolds becomes its central metaphor. It is not just a location but a repository of emotional sediment. Walls absorb voices; objects retain touch; empty rooms echo with what has been withheld. Trier frames these interiors with a patient gaze, allowing the viewer to feel the density of time itself. One senses that the characters are not simply inhabiting space, but negotiating with it—each step a quiet confrontation with memory.

In this sense, Sentimental Value belongs to a lineage of cinema that treats memory not as recollection but as presence. Trier resists the conventional grammar of flash-

backs. The past does not appear in neatly framed sequences; it seeps into the present, unannounced and unresolved. A hesitation before speaking, a glance toward an object—these become portals through which history re-enters the frame.

The title itself carries an understated irony. Sentimental value is often associated with triviality, with the excess of feeling attached to ordinary things. Trier, however, reclaims the term, stripping it of condescension. Here, sentiment is not weakness but evidence—proof that something has mattered, perhaps too much. The film asks: what is the cost of carrying emotional value over time? And who bears it?

This question crystallizes in the figure of the father, Gustav, whose attempt to create a film about his own life introduces a subtle but persistent tension. His project is both confession and construction, an effort to transform lived experience into narrative coherence. Yet in doing so, he risks reconfiguring the memories of others—particularly those of his daughters.

Trier handles this conflict with remarkable restraint. There are no dramatic ruptures, no cathartic confrontations. Instead, discomfort accumulates gradually, almost imperceptibly. The daughters' resistance is not loud but steady, a quiet refusal to allow their lives to be appropriated into a story that may not be theirs.

In this reflexive gesture, Sentimental Value becomes a film about cinema itself. It interrogates the ethics of representation—the un-

easy boundary between documentation and invention. To what extent can art claim truth? And at what point does it begin to overwrite it? Trier offers no definitive answers, only a lingering ambiguity that deepens the film's emotional resonance.

The performances anchor this delicate structure with extraordinary precision. Renate Reinsve embodies a restrained intensity, her silences as expressive as any line of dialogue. Opposite her, Stellan Skarsgård presents a man caught between self-awareness and self-deception, his gestures oscillating between vulnerability and control. Their interactions unfold in half-tones, where meaning resides not in what is spoken, but in what remains withheld.

There are moments in the film

that recall the austere emotional landscapes of Ingmar Bergman, yet Trier's sensibility remains distinctly contemporary. Where Bergman often confronts silence with existential severity, Trier approaches it with a gentler, though no less penetrating, attentiveness. His cinema does not seek to expose; it seeks to understand.

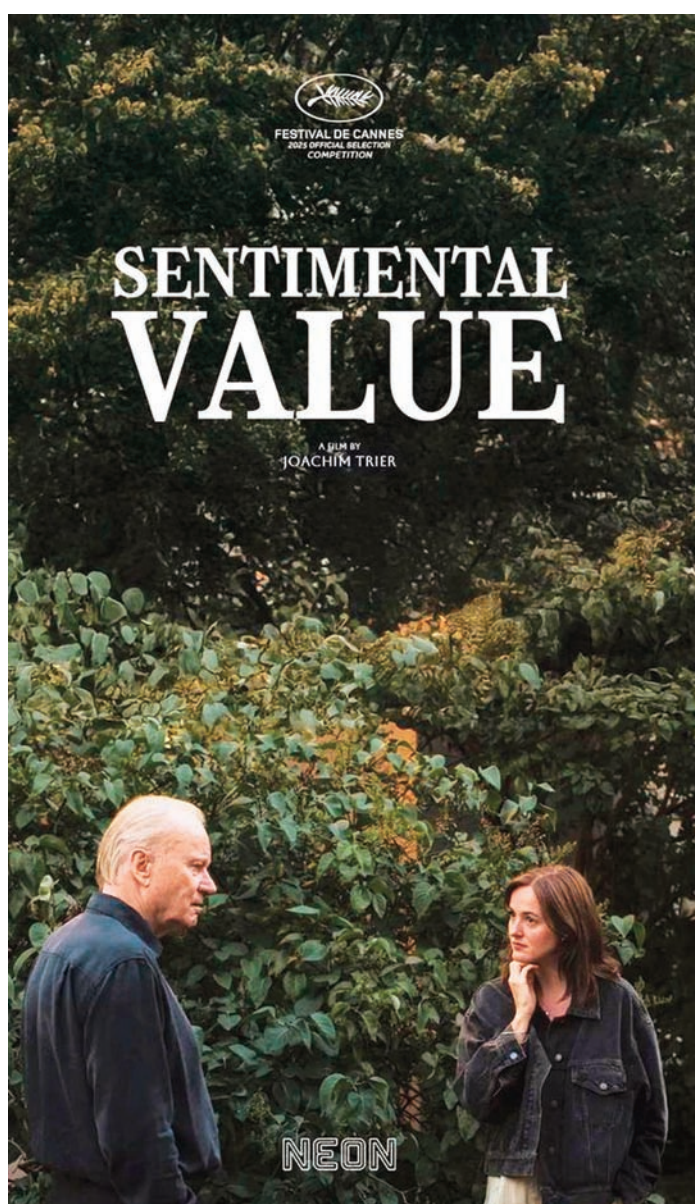
What ultimately defines Sentimental Value is its refusal of resolution. The film does not offer reconciliation as a final gesture. Instead, it presents it as a fragile, ongoing process—one that may never fully arrive. The past cannot be undone; it can only be carried, reinterpreted, and, at times, quietly endured.

In this way, Trier's film becomes an exploration of emotional inheritance. The characters do not sim-

ply remember; they inherit memories that shape their perceptions, their silences, their distances from one another. The "value" of the title thus acquires a deeper resonance—not as nostalgia, but as weight.

To watch Sentimental Value is to engage with a cinema that trusts in stillness, that believes in the expressive power of what is left unsaid. It is a film that lingers—not through spectacle, but through recognition. One leaves it not with answers, but with a heightened awareness of the fragile threads that bind memory to identity.

In the end, Trier offers no resolution, only a space: a quiet, resonant space where the past continues to breathe, and where the value of feeling—however unresolved—remains undeniable.



The significance of the 103rd death anniversary of Sadagar Bholanath Barua and Commerce Day

By: Dr Manoj Kumar Hazarika

Bholanath Barua stands as a guiding inspiration for the entrepreneurial spirit of Assam's younger generation. The life journey of the great merchant, philanthropist, and business pioneer Bholanath Barua is one of the finest success stories of trade and commerce during colonial India. He was the first Assamese entrepreneur to gain fame in India through business activities conducted abroad. Such was his charm and wit that he could captivate even the celebrated literary figure Lakshminath Bezbaroa with his humour and lively conversation. Jnanadabhiram Barua once remarked, "Businessmen are calculative in wealth, not in words," and recognized Bholanath Barua as a true "Hero of Commerce." Indeed, he truly deserved that title.

During British colonial rule, there was hardly any place in India where he had not established business interests. His commercial empire even extended overseas. Later, he became equally renowned as a philanthropist because he donated a vast portion of his legally earned wealth for the welfare of society. Wherever he conducted business, he generously contributed to educational and social institutions. In today's terms, when corporate organizations are required to contribute to social welfare under CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), Bholanath Barua voluntarily practiced such principles in the nineteenth century itself.

No nation can hold its head high if it remains indifferent to trade and commerce. For example, the British established global dominance primarily through trade and business. Likewise, in India too, communities that advanced in commerce gained influence and prominence in different regions. As early as 1860, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan observed that one of the main reasons behind the backwardness of Assamese society was its lack of interest in business and commerce. Language, literature, and culture alone are not sufficient for the survival and growth of a nation; economic strength is equally essential. Merely increasing the number of salaried employees cannot make a community self-reliant.

After the spread of opium cultivation in Assam, Assamese people were falsely stereotyped as an opium-consuming community. This allegation is unfounded because, besides Bholanath Barua, Assamese entrepreneurs such as Maniram Dewan, Manik Chandra Barua, Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Jagannath Barua, and Anandaram Phukan had already earned significant positions in the business world. However, from the 1980s onward, many among the younger generation began preferring easier means of livelihood, causing some stagnation in Assamese entrepreneurship. Fortunately, this trend is now changing. Even student leaders have started entering business and trade, which is indeed a positive sign for the community.

Compared to the present time, Assamese society in the post-independence era was more actively engaged in commerce. Ignoring attractive jobs offered by the British administration, many educated Assamese youths of the nineteenth century chose business as their profession. Among them were personalities like Manik Chandra Barua, Jagannath Barua, and Anandaram Phukan. Anandaram Phukan, son of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, and Manik Chandra Barua, cousin of Bholanath Barua, jointly established Assam's first company known as the "Barua-Phukan Brothers Company." Within a short period, the company became famous in the business world. It even owned a steamer and published a newspaper.

Bholanath Barua, before becoming a celebrated merchant himself, worked in this company for a salary of thirty rupees per month. Bholanath Barua was born in October 1853 in the renowned Kharangi Barua family of Puranigudam. Although his fa-

ther, Ghanshyam Barua, was the Mouzadar of Chatiyal Mouza, the young Bholanath faced severe financial difficulties after his father's death. He had to walk nearly eight miles daily to attend school in Nagoan. Perhaps because of these hardships, he later donated much of his wealth to the cause of education. Though he continued his studies while staying

was compelled to end his formal education after the Entrance Examination. Though his institutional education was limited, his education through life experience was immense.

Initially, he worked in the "Barua-Phukan Timber Company" in the Garo Hills for thirty rupees a month. When the company shut down due to a kala-azar epidemic and other difficulties, he once again faced economic hardship. In 1880, with a capital of five hundred rupees provided by his sister-in-law, he established a timber business in Kolkata under the name "B. Brothers." Since he had prior experience in the timber trade, he slowly began achieving success despite repeated failures, illness, and financial struggles.

During this period in Kolkata, he came into contact with Lakshminath Bezbaroa. His energetic personality, intelligence, and foresight deeply impressed Bezbaroa. Initially, Bezbaroa worked in Bholanath Barua's company, and later became his business partner. At one stage, Sadagar Bholanath Barua and Lakshminath Bezbaroa became inseparable companions. Jnanadabhiram Barua called him a "Hero of Commerce" mainly because doing business under British rule was extremely difficult for Indians. Whenever Indian businessmen became competitive, British companies imposed new rules and restrictions upon them. Even Maniram Dewan suffered under such circumstances. However, Bholanath Barua was exceptionally clever and diplomatic. He knew how to impress British officials—sometimes through gifts and sometimes through tactful be-

haviour. He lived with great style and sophistication, almost like a British gentleman.

In 1894, Bholanath Barua acquired a forest in the Singhbhum district, which became the foundation of his growing success. Eventually, the "B. Barua Company" became so influential that many European and Indian companies regarded it as a formidable competitor. Known in Bengal as the "Timber Prince" and in Odisha as the "Jute Merchant," he was involved in diverse businesses such as tea, coal, and railway sleeper supply. For the railway sleeper business, he personally travelled to England to obtain permission from the British Crown. This perhaps justified his recognition as a commerce hero.

As a philanthropist, he donated his hard-earned wealth not only across Assam but throughout India. Today, when we think of great philanthropists, names like Ratan Tata or Bill Gates come to mind, but Bholanath Barua was no less remarkable. In 1920 itself, he created a trust of one lakh rupees for technical education—an amount equivalent to nearly one hundred crore rupees today. He donated enormous wealth to the Assam Government for the development of primary education. In 1922, he donated one lakh rupees to establish the "Prince of Wales Technical School" in Jorhat. He also contributed thirty-five thousand rupees to King George Hospital in Visakhapatnam, ten thousand rupees for a technical dispensary in Jharsuguda, and five thousand rupees for a girls' high school in Kolkata. He donated his residential houses in Shimla and Murshidabad to educational institutions there.

He also established a trust of one lakh twenty thousand rupees at Banaras Hindu University for scholarships to Assamese students, later known as the "B. Barua Scholarship." Before his death, through his will, he donated almost his entire wealth to the Assam Government for the development of primary education.

In 1914, he financed the publication of Lakshminath Bezbaroa's books "Sankardev" and "Madhavdev." At the request of Ashutosh Mukherjee, Hemchandra Goswami prepared the monumental work "Asamiya Sahityar Chaneki" from 1918 onward. Bholanath Barua funded the publication of all seven volumes and donated ten thousand rupees to establish the Assamese Department at University of Calcutta. Without this fi-

ancial support, the work might never have been published, and Assamese language may not have received recognition as an Indian regional and classical language.

Sadly, many among the younger generation today may not even have heard the name of Sadagar Bholanath Barua. Even students of B. Borooah College, established in 1943 in his memory, may know little about him. The phrase "Commerce brings prosperity" still remains inadequately understood by a section of Assamese youth. Otherwise, why would commerce graduates continue chasing only salaried jobs?

As early as the nineteenth century, this true Assamese son upheld the entrepreneurial dignity of the Assamese community. Long before the rise of industrial giants like Tata, Birla, or Reliance, Bholanath Barua had already built a business empire across India. Just as language and culture are essential for the survival of a nation, economic strength is equally important. Dreams of protecting one's community merely through agitation and slogans remain incomplete. A community can truly be protected only when it becomes economically empowered through commerce and enterprise.

This great Assamese businessman and philanthropist passed away on 30 May 1923 at Howrah in Kolkata. To honour this great commerce hero, the Tezpur Axomiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha first observed his death anniversary as "Commerce Day" on 30 May 2019, and the tradition continues today. Following its initiative, organizations such as the Tezpur Axomiya Byabasayi Unnayan Parishad, the Commerce Departments of Darrang College and Tezpur College, Gauhati Commerce College, and many other institutions across Assam have also begun observing 30 May as Commerce Day. This year, for the first time, the Commerce Department of Tezpur University organized a lecture programme on Sadagar Bholanath Barua on 23 May 2026. The distinguished Assamese writer, thinker, and critic Mayur Bora attended the event as the keynote speaker.

On this occasion, I appeal to the Government of Assam to officially celebrate 30 May every year as "Commerce Day," so that the younger generation may be inspired toward business and entrepreneurship, while also paying tribute to this great Assamese philanthropist and commerce pioneer.



tives in Guwahati, he did not wish to remain dependent on others for long and

Sweating it out: The invisible heat divide on India's streets

By: Satyabrata Borah

The sun over India has been unforgiving lately, and if you happen to spend even a few minutes outside during the peak summer months, you feel it instantly. It is not just the usual sticky, heavy heat that we have grown up with. It feels different now, sharper and far more aggressive. When a place like Sri Ganganagar in Rajasthan hits forty-eight degrees Celsius, it stops being just a weather update on our phones. It becomes a survival challenge. We often look at the sky and blame the delayed monsoon or talk about global warming as this distant, abstract thing happening somewhere high up in the atmosphere. But if we take a closer look at our surroundings, we notice that the real enemy is much closer to home. It is right under our feet, in the walls around us, and in the choices we make every single day while building our lives and our cities.

We have trapped ourselves in a cage of our own making, and we can call this condition a concrete fever. For decades, our response to development has been to pour cement over everything that breathes. We cut down trees that stood for generations, we pave over ponds, and we replace patches of grass with smooth, black asphalt that absorbs heat like a giant sponge.

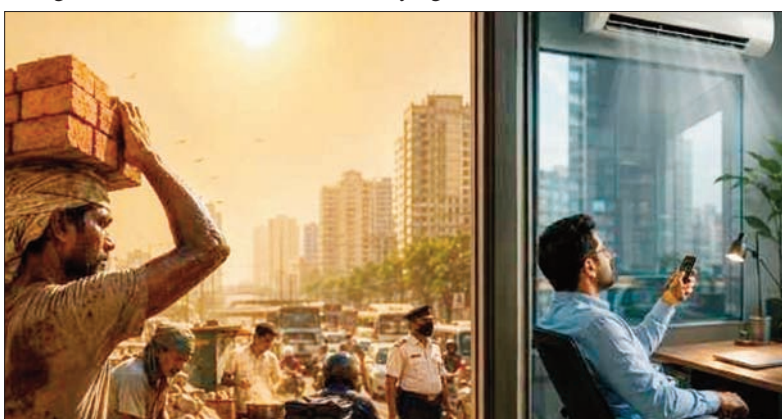
When the sun beats down on these hard surfaces all day long, they do not just reflect the light, they store the heat deep inside their bellies. Then, long after the sun goes down, when the earth is supposed to cool down and breathe, these concrete structures start releasing that trapped heat back into the air. This is why our nights in the city do not bring the relief they used to. This is why a city can feel ten degrees hotter than a village just a short drive away. We have built giant heat magnets and now we are wondering why we are burning.

The way we live and work in these environments shows a deep divide in our society. If you are fortunate enough to work in an office with glass windows and a steady power supply, your immediate reaction to this oppressive heat is simple. You reach for the remote and turn down the temperature on the air conditioner. It feels like a triumph of human intelligence over nature. You create a tiny, perfect bubble of winter inside your room while the world outside is melting. This feels like the perfect technological fix, a quick and easy solution that money can buy. But this comfort is an illusion built on a terrible mathematical trade.

An air conditioner does not actually destroy heat, because physics does not work that way. It simply takes the heat from inside your room and pumps it outside. It uses an immense

amount of electricity to do this, which usually comes from burning coal, adding more gases to the atmosphere. Then it blows hot, dry air directly into the faces of the people standing on the street. For every wealthy person sitting in a cool room, there are dozens of people outside who are paying the price. The thousands of cooling units hanging from the sides of our apartment buildings and offices are acting like tiny flamethrowers, making the shared air of the city warmer for everyone else. The machine you bought to save yourself is actively making the world outside worse for your neighbors.

The people who bear the brunt of this choices are the ones who keep our society running but have the least power to change it. Think of the construction workers carrying bricks on their



heads under a midday sun, the street vendors standing next to boiling pots of oil on the asphalt, the delivery riders rushing through traffic on hot metal bikes, and the traffic police officers breathing in hot exhaust fumes. They do not have the luxury of an indoor job. They cannot simply choose to stay inside when the weather report issues a warning. For them, the heat is not an inconvenience, it is a physical assault.

When the humidity rises, as it has done drastically in places like Delhi over the last decade, the human body loses its ability to cool itself down through sweat. The air becomes so heavy with moisture that our natural defense mechanism stops working. Working in that kind of weather is a gamble with life. We have laws on paper that say employers must stop outdoor work when the temperature crosses a dangerous threshold. These rules are meant to protect human physiology from snapping under the strain. In reality, these laws are ignored because deadlines must be met, profits must be made, and the lives of informal workers are often treated as expendable.

We need to start having an honest, unglamorous conversation about how we design our habitats. We cannot rely on individual gadgets to save us from a collective disaster. We need to look at our building codes and rewrite them

for a world that has already changed. We need to mandate that our structures use reflective materials. It sounds simple, but painting roofs white or using specialized tiles that bounce sunlight back into space can drop indoor temperatures significantly. If a building does not absorb the heat in the first place, it does not need a massive air conditioner to cool it down later. This is the kind of slow, deliberate work that does not make for exciting headlines, but it changes the baseline of how a city experiences a summer.

Alongside reflective surfaces, we need to bring back the green cover we so carelessly destroyed. Trees are not just decorations to make a colony look pretty. They are active infrastructure. A mature tree acts like a natural cooling tower, throwing shade on the ground so the asphalt does not bake, and releasing moisture into the air through its leaves. When you walk under a canopy of trees on a hot day, you feel an instant drop in temperature that no artificial fan can replicate. We need to make sure that our urban planning laws require a certain percentage of every neighborhood to be left wild and green. We need to stop seeing patches of earth as wasted real estate waiting to be covered in tiles.

This requires a shift in how we spend our public money. We have budgets for roads, flyovers, metro lines, and airports. We do not have a dedicated national conversation about a budget for heat management. We treat heatwaves like a temporary bad mood of nature that we just have to endure until the clouds arrive. We need to start treating extreme heat as a public health emergency and a structural disaster, much like a flood or an earthquake. This means investing in public cooling shelters, ensuring water stations are available every few hundred meters, and restructuring our working hours so that no one is forced to risk their life under a burning sky. The path ahead is politically difficult because it requires us to slow down and think about the collective good. It requires us to tell developers that they cannot build glass boxes that act like greenhouses in a tropical country. It requires us to enforce labor laws and penalize those who put workers in harm's way. It requires us to look at our lifestyle choices and realize that our personal comfort cannot come at the expense of the person standing on the pavement. The concrete fever is a warning sign from our environment that our current way of building and living is hitting a wall. We can either listen to this warning and change our design, or we can keep turning up the air conditioning until the system collapses underneath us.

Book review

The clouds i ate...

By: Kash Shell

There are books you read. And then there are books that read you...

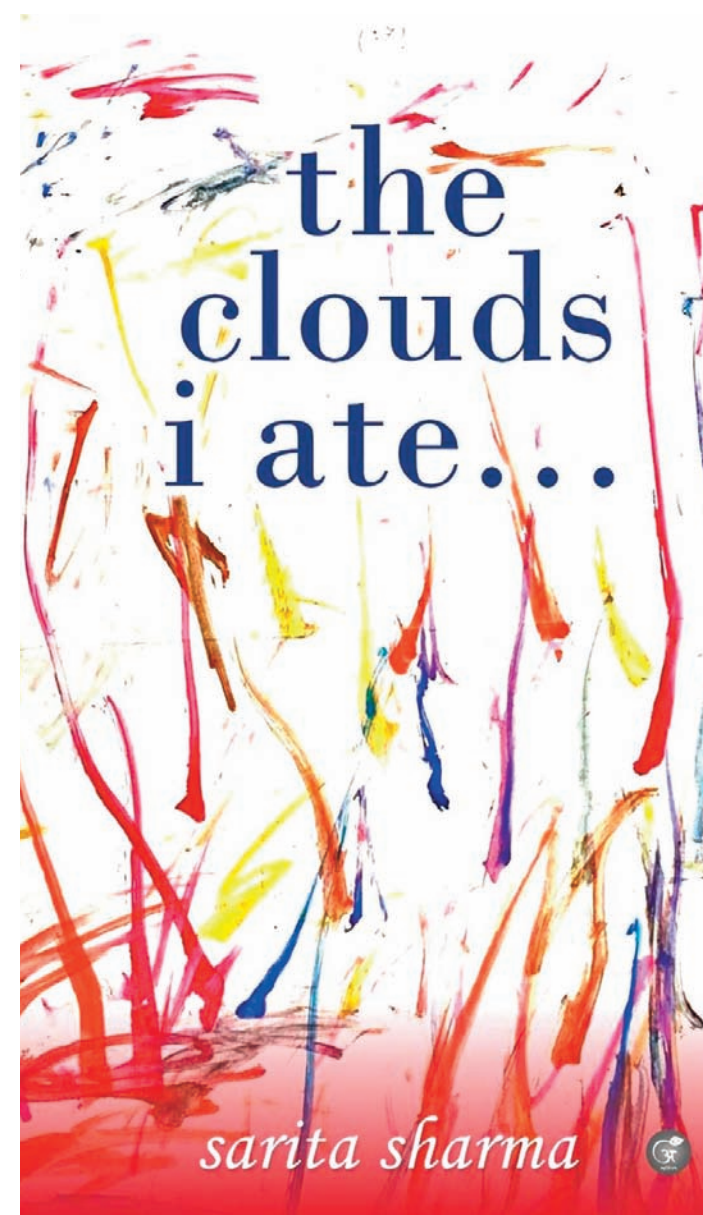
the clouds i ate... does something almost alarmingly simple: it picks up the ordinary and holds it to the light until you can't look away. The dank of a narrow lane. A mother stooping before dawn to collect parijat blossoms before footsteps can crush them. A father's five-minute phone call, the TV murmuring behind him. Sarita writes these things not to preserve them, but to make you feel the precise, tender ache of knowing they won't last.

the clouds i ate... is one of the recent poetry offerings from the fresh vales of Tezpur, Assam. Penned by Sarita Sharma, a well known name in the field of English literature, this book is her second poetry collection after the debut collection titled 'days f.i.v.e.'. One thing, amongst many others, which instantly draws attention is her exclusive use of the lower case. This is not only refreshingly interesting but also gets one to think if the poet is trying to make a point here, by departing from the norm.

The range of poems catches you off-guard. She moves between the intimate and the geopolitical with unsettling ease – from the palash-strewn earth of Assam to Kathmandu guest houses to the stone streets of Madrid. Geography here is never backdrop. It is a state of feeling. The late poems – of mother, of truths, of unamanda – land like a hand placed gently on your shoulder in a crowded room. The final lines on the Brahmaputra

"unamanda rises out of the brahmaputra like a whispered name half-island, half-dream" are among the most quietly beautiful I've read in a long time...

Reading this collection does something strange to the air around you. It sharpens it. The smell of rain, the clatter of a street, the ordinary hum of a life near a river – these feel suddenly worth paying attention to, as though Sarita has turned up the volume on the world just a notch. If you've ever been far from a place you love and felt its ghost settle around you without



warning, this book will find you.

What lingers most, perhaps, is the emotional honesty of the collection. There is no performance of profundity here, no desperate reaching for grandeur. The poems trust silence as much as language. They understand that grief rarely arrives dramatically; it settles instead in prames, in missed calls, in train stations, in rivers remembered from another city. Even joy appears fleeting and human – never triumphant, always touched by transience.

There are lines in this book that do not announce themselves im-

mediately but return hours later with startling clarity, the way certain smells or fragments of songs do. Sarita writes with the attentiveness of someone who understands that memory is less an archive than a weather system: sudden, shifting, impossible to contain. The poems do not ask to be admired. They ask to be inhabited.

And perhaps that is why 'the clouds i ate...' feels so intimate. By the end, it no longer reads like a collection of poems but like a quiet conversation you somehow needed to have – with a place, with loss, with time itself.

Demographic changes in border districts most serious challenge: Amit Shah

AHMEDABAD, May 30: Union Home Minister Amit Shah has termed the demographic changes in border districts as "the most serious challenge" before the country, and called for strict monitoring and reporting of these developments. Shah, who chaired a security review meeting at Bhuj in Gujarat's Kutch district located along the India-Pakistan border on Friday, also stated that administrations of border districts should formulate SOPs to ensure identification of existing infiltrators and the tracking of threats related to drones and narcotics, said an official release.

Demographic changes in the border districts pose the most serious challenge, and district magistrates should ensure strict monitoring and regular reporting of such developments, Shah was quoted as saying in the release issued on Saturday.

Notably, earlier this week the Union home minister announced the formation of a high-level committee to assess demographic changes across India due to "illegal immigration and other unnatural causes" and suggest measures to deal with the issue.

At the review meeting, Shah empha-



sised the need to adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards unauthorised encroachment within the 0 to 15 km belt along the international border and to maintain a close watch on centres of radicalisation in border areas.

Friday's meeting was attended by Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and Deputy CM Harsh Sanghavi, senior officials as well as District Magistrates and Superintendents of Police of Kutch, Vav-Tharad and Patan districts.

Shah called reverse migration happening in border areas due to the establishment of industrial units a welcome development and said that everyone,

from police stations to patwaris (village revenue officials), should work in unison to ensure deportation of the existing illegal infiltrators, stated the release.

He also called for the need to form Security Coordination Groups in every such district, comprising the BSF, Coast Guard, Income Tax Department, Enforcement Directorate (ED), and the managers of leading banks in the area.

The responsibility for the effective enforcement of Income Tax, anti-money laundering and Customs laws should rest with the District Magistrate, Superintendent of Police and Inspector General (IG), Border Range, said the Union min-

ister.

He also highlighted the need to maintain strict vigil over hawala transactions, financial dealings, mule accounts, shell companies, suspicious vehicles and GST collections in border districts.

Agencies dealing with financial crimes must be kept apprised regarding border areas, and the Income Tax Department, in collaboration with the RBI, should conduct extensive survey campaigns, Shah said.

He also called for the need to prioritise coastal security and ensure effective co-ordination with the Indian Coast Guard, given Kutch's proximity to the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).

Alongside the 'Vibrant Villages' initiative, 100 percent saturation of every scheme, both of the Central and State government, must be ensured in border villages, Shah said.

Border fencing, maritime border security and strong political will of the state government have brought about a significant transformation in Gujarat's security landscape, resulting in the complete cessation of infiltration and smuggling on the border, he noted. (PTI)

Seven Dalits injured in gang attacks in south TN



CHENNAI, May 30: Seven Dalits were injured after being allegedly attacked by masked men in Tamil Nadu's Tenkasi and Tirunelveli districts, police said on Saturday.

A nine-member masked gang came to Nettur village in Tenkasi district on two-wheeled and attacked the people indiscriminately with sickles. One person was injured in a similar attack in Tirunelveli district.

The assailants fled the spot immediately after the assaults. A total of seven people were injured and admitted to the government hospital.

A case has been registered, and investigation is on, police said.

Expressing shock over the attack on Dalits, PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss on Saturday alleged that the Tamil Nadu government has "failed to prevent" such violence.

"These incidents have left the southern districts in a prolonged state of fear", he said, adding "Such an incident must not be allowed to recur."

He demanded that the district administrations take immediate steps to restore normalcy in the affected villages.

The Tamil Nadu State Executive Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) also strongly condemned the attack on Dalits in southern districts.

CPI(M) Tamil Nadu State Secretary P Shanmugam, in a statement, said, "It is deeply shocking that a brutal, murderous assault was unleashed against Dalit youths in Tenkasi district, leaving seven individuals severely injured".

He alleged that eight incidents have occurred against the Dalit community in the district over the past five months.

"In Thursday's incident, the police has failed to take any action, opting instead to resolve the issue temporarily through their customary method of mediation," he added. (PTI)

Want to bring back Tatas to Singur, send signal Bengal is investor-friendly: Samik Bhattacharya



KOLKATA, May 30: Seeking to recast the political and industrial legacy of Singur, West Bengal BJP president Samik Bhattacharya said the state government wants the Tata Group to return to the Hooghly township, describing it as both an economic necessity and a powerful signal that the state is again open for business.

In an interview with PTI on the BJP government's industrial vision after the party's victory in the state, Bhattacharya said bringing the Tatas back to Singur would help erase what he called the "wrong message" sent to investors after the Nano project was forced out of the state nearly two decades ago.

"We want the Tatas to come back, and that too in Singur. We want to send a message to the entire country and the world that West Bengal is investor-friendly and is ready to welcome investments," Bhattacharya said on Friday.

The remarks come at a time when the newly installed BJP government is preparing a fresh land policy that it believes will form the backbone of a renewed industrialisation drive in a state that was once India's manufacturing powerhouse but has steadily lost ground over decades.

Referring to the controversy surrounding the Nano

project's exit from Singur in 2008 following the anti-land acquisition movement spearheaded by Mamata Banerjee, Bhattacharya said the dismantling of the Tata Motors plant had become a defining image of Bengal's hostility towards industry.

"The scene of Tata leaving Bengal and the infrastructure being dismantled sent a very wrong message -- that industries were unwelcome in Bengal. Subsequently, the cut-money culture, syndicate raj and institutionalised corruption worsened the situation. We want to correct that perception," he said.

Asked whether a Tata return to Singur would amount to a "prayaschitta" (atonement) for what he described as the mistakes of the previous regime, Bhattacharya said the departure of Tata Motors had inflicted lasting damage on the state's investment climate.

"We want Tatas to return to Singur or Bengal in any form, be it automobile or any other sector. They are one of the oldest and most respected and trusted groups of our country," he said.

The choice of Singur is politically loaded. If the movement against Tata Motors helped TMC chief Mamata Banerjee capture power and eventually end the Left Front's 34-year rule, it also came to symbolise Bengal's industrial retreat in the eyes of many investors.

The departure of the Nano project in 2008 and the subsequent dismantling of the near-complete factory sent shockwaves through corporate India, creating an enduring perception of policy uncertainty and resistance to large-scale industrial projects in the state.

Nearly two decades later, the BJP is seeking to recast the same site from a symbol of industry's exit into a showcase of its return.

The BJP leader argued that industrial revival in Bengal cannot take place without a fundamental overhaul of land acquisition policies. (PTI)

Nausena Shaurya Vatika to inspire youths: UP CM Adityanath

LUCKNOW, May 30: Chief minister Yogi Adityanath said on Saturday that the newly inaugurated 'Nausena Shaurya Vatika' in Lucknow would inspire youth, strengthen patriotic values, and offer visitors a chance to understand the Indian Navy's role, sacrifices and technological capabilities.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating the facility along with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Adityanath said the Naval-themed memorial and open-air museum was jointly developed by the Indian Navy and the Uttar Pradesh government and would become a significant attraction in the state capital.

Welcoming Singh to his parliamentary constituency, the chief minister thanked Indian Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi and his team for completing the project within the stipulated timeframe in collaboration with the state government.

Adityanath said visitors coming to Lucknow would now witness not only India's cultural heritage and traditions but also a centre showcasing the country's defence capabilities.

Referring to the warship INS Gomati, the museum's centrepiece, he said the vessel safeguarded India's maritime interests for years before being decommissioned in 2022 and now inspires future generations on the banks of the Gomti River. (PTI)

Bengal CID serves summons to Abhishek in 'fake signature' probe

KOLKATA, May 30: The West Bengal CID on Saturday served a notice to TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, asking him to appear before it in connection with a probe into the alleged use of forged signatures of party legislators in a communication submitted to the Assembly Secretariat endorsing Shobhandeb Chattopadhyay as the Leader of the Opposition.

The notice -- described by CID sources as a summons directing him to appear for questioning at the agency's Bhaban Bhavan headquarters at noon on Monday -- was served personally to Banerjee at his Kalighat Road residence.

The delivery, however, came only after a dramatic sequence of events that unfolded on the streets of Kolkata, drawing considerable public attention and extending for nearly an hour and a half.

It began after a team of five state CID officers landed up at Banerjee's residence, named Shantiniketan, on 188A, Harish Mukherjee Road in south Kolkata, at around 1.25 pm, but failed to gain access to the house on account of the leader's absence at the property.

The officers were heard telling an on-duty staff member at Banerjee's residence that they were there to serve a notice to the owner and stayed put at the spot for nearly 30 minutes.

The team was then directed to the leader's alternative



and adjacent residence on Kalighat Road, where the officers were made to wait outside for about another 10 minutes following their refusal to hand over the summons to Banerjee's office staff.

The officers delivered the notice to the TMC MP, who acknowledged its receipt before the CID team finally left at around 2.50 pm.

"I am yet to see the content of the notice. I will consult with my lawyers and make an appropriate response. I will surely cooperate with the probe in whatever manner possible," Banerjee told reporters after the departure of the probe team. (PTI)

CBSE OSM row: Congress seeks CBI probe into 'emerging scandal', Pradhan's resignation

NEW DELHI, May 30: The Congress on Saturday alleged an "astounding mix of incompetence, corruption, and callousness" marked the CBSE's planning and implementation of the Class 12 Board exams, reiterating its demand for Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation and a full CBI probe into the "emerging scandal".

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh flagged two investigations -- one by CBSE Class 12 student Sarthak Sidhant and another by a newspaper -- and said they had raised fresh questions over the CBSE's intent and preparedness in introducing the On-Screen Marking System (OSM) for the Class 12 Board exam.

In a post on X, Ramesh referred to media reports and posted 10 questions, saying parents and students were seeking answers from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "who is, according to the Solicitor General, personally supervising this mess". Why was the CBSE so insistent on intro-

ducing OSM that it rushed the process within 74 days before the board exams, Ramesh asked.

Pointing out that the CBSE had flagged at least 36 technical, operational, and evaluation-related concerns from the OSM dry run it conducted in five Delhi schools, he asked why these concerns were not acted upon before the exams.

"The CBSE issued three RFPs to award the contract for the OSM system. Why was the proviso that disqualified bidders with a past record of poor performance removed in the third RFP? Was this done to favour COEMPT, which had previously been blacklisted in Telangana?" Ramesh asked.

Why was the proviso, which prohibited bidders who were previously blacklisted, watered down to exclude only bidders who were currently blacklisted, he further asked.

"Was the minimum company turnover for the bidder specifically set

at ₹ 50 crore to enable COEMPT (which had a three-year average turnover of 50.86 crores) to qualify for the contract?" Ramesh said. He also questioned the dilution of the Capability Maturity Model Integration level for contractors from Level 5 to Level 3. Why was the project criteria changed to favour vendors who have smaller, fragmented university contracts over vendors having experience with large student counts, Ramesh asked.

"Why were the RFP provisions changed from favouring contractors having their own data centres to those having MeitY empanelled data centres? Was this done to systematically favour COEMPT, which used AWS (MeitY empanelled) over TCS (which has its own data centers)?"

Why did the CBSE give up its right to blacklist the contractors in case the contractors made mistakes?" the Congress general secretary in charge of communications said. (PTI)

Bengal set to implement National Health Mission: Suwendu

'Centre sanctioned ₹ 2,103 cr for scheme'

KOLKATA, May 30: West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Saturday said the state is set to implement the National Health Mission, and the Centre has sanctioned ₹ 2,103 crore for the scheme.

Addressing a programme of the health department in Kolkata, Adhikari also said that over 1.36 crore families will be covered under the Ayushman Bharat scheme in Bengal.

"This will ensure that a large section of the population in the state receives quality healthcare support," he said.

"West Bengal will implement the National Health Mission. The Centre has sanctioned ₹ 2,103 crore for the scheme, out of which we have already received ₹ 527 crore. These funds will help improve healthcare delivery across the state," Adhikari said.

The CM, who also holds the health portfolio, said beneficiaries under the Ayushman Bharat scheme would receive health insurance coverage of up to ₹ 5 lakh at designated government hospitals. Migrant worker employed in other parts of India would also be able to avail benefits of the scheme, he said.

"State government hospitals will now be known as 'Ayushman Mandirs'. If a patient spends ₹ 1,000 a month on medicines, the same medicines will be available in these hospitals for ₹ 100," Adhikari said.

He said that 467 Pradhan Mantri Janashakti Kendras would be operational in the state, and medicines for serious ailments, including cancer, would soon be made available at a 30 per cent subsidy.

The CM also announced the setting up of medical colleges in Alipurduar, Kalimpong, Dakshin Dinajpur and Paschim Bardhaman districts.

"No district should be deprived of the benefits of a medical college. That is why the government has taken this initiative," he said. Adhikari also said control rooms are being set up to oversee and monitor district hospitals across the state.

Asserting that the health department would adopt a "zero-tolerance" policy against alleged middlemen in hospitals and unnecessary referrals of patients, he said a central control room is being established at "Swasthya Bhavan" for round-the-clock monitoring of district hospitals and medical colleges. (PTI)

Modern contraceptives use declines; experts say reliance on traditional methods concerning

NEW DELHI, May 30: The use of modern contraceptive methods among married women in India has marginally declined over the past few years, while reliance on traditional methods of family planning has seen an increase, according to findings from the National Family Health Survey-6 (NFHS-6). The survey showed that the proportion of currently married women aged 15-49 years using any modern method of family planning fell to 52.7 per cent in 2023-24 from 56.4 per cent in NFHS-5 (2019-21).

At the same time, the use of traditional methods rose from 10.3 per cent to 16.4 per cent, indicating a shift in contraceptive behaviour among couples.

According to experts, modern contraceptive choices are important not only for population stabilisation but also for maternal health, women's autonomy and economic empowerment, and the reliance on traditional methods is concerning as it increases the risk of unintended pregnancies.

Overall contraceptive use, including both modern and traditional methods, increased from 66.7 per cent in NFHS-5 to 69.1 per cent in NFHS-6, suggesting that more couples are adopting family planning measures even as a growing number of them are moving away from modern methods such as sterilisation, pills, condoms and intrauterine devices and increasingly relying on rhythm and with-



drawal methods, they said.

The survey also recorded a marginal decline in female sterilisation, the most widely used family planning method in the country, from 37.9 per cent to 36.5 per cent. Male sterilisation continued to remain extremely low at 0.5 per cent, compared with 0.3 per cent in the previous survey.

The total unmet need for family planning among currently married women declined from 9.4 per cent to 8.5 per cent.

Public health experts said the findings indicate the need to strengthen awareness, counselling and access to a wider basket of modern contraceptive choices.

Poonam Mutreja, Executive Director of Population Foundation of India, said the shift

reflects gaps in counselling, fears around side effects, limited access to spacing methods and social norms that continue to place the burden of contraception on women.

"The NFHS-6 should be read as a warning that access alone is not enough. Modern contraceptive use among currently married women has declined from 56.4 per cent to 52.7 per cent, while traditional method use has risen sharply from 10.3 per cent to 16.4 per cent. This is not just a service-delivery issue; it is about women's agency," she said.

"Empowerment may mean services are available, but agency means women can actually choose and use a method that suits them," she said. Family planning must become rights-based, women-centred, and grounded in informed choice, male engagement and trust, she said.

Dr Yamini Sarwal, Senior Chief Medical Officer and the head of Family Planning Division, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at VMMC and Safdarjung Hospital, said greater dependence on traditional methods could increase the risk of unintended pregnancies if not accompanied by proper counselling and reproductive health services.

"Modern contraceptive choices are important not only for population stabilisation but also for maternal health, women's autonomy and economic empowerment. Due to their high effectiveness and safety, women should

be encouraged to adopt a suitable method of modern contraception from the "basket of choices", Dr Sarwal said.

Speaking in the same vein, Dr Neelam Suri, Senior Consultant, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, Delhi, said the growing reliance on traditional family planning methods, such as the withdrawal method, is concerning.

Several factors may be contributing to a more relaxed approach towards contraception among some couples, including the easy availability of emergency contraceptive pills, personal preferences or reservations regarding contraceptive use and the fact that intimacy is often unplanned.

The availability of abortifacient pills and legal access to MTP services may also lead some individuals to view pregnancy termination as a fallback option following contraceptive failure or non-use.

"Modern contraceptive choices are important not only for population stabilisation but also for maternal health, women's autonomy and economic empowerment," Dr Suri told PTI.

"As healthcare professionals, we strongly recommend the use of reliable and appropriate contraceptive methods rather than relying on termination of unintended pregnancies, as informed contraceptive choices remain the safest and most effective approach to reproductive health." (PTI)

Singh stresses inclusive growth, peace and educational support for tribal students

Manipur can only progress when all 36 communities of state develop together: CM

IMPHAL, May 30: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Saturday said the state can progress only when all 36 communities living in the hills and valley develop together, stressing the need for inclusive and balanced growth.

Speaking at a special interactive session with beneficiaries of the post-matric scholarship (ST) scheme organised by the department of tribal affairs and hills under Janjatiya Garima Utsav 2026 in Imphal, Singh said the scholarship programme aims to promote equality and uplift all communities.

Expressing concern over reports that some students had not received scholarship payments for the past four months, the chief minister said the funds had already been released and that delays in certain cases were due to issues related to Aadhaar and bank account linkage.

The CM said education plays a crucial role in shaping the future of young people and reiterated that the government remains committed



to addressing genuine difficulties faced by students and ensuring that welfare schemes reach the intended beneficiaries.

Singh also emphasised that Manipur can progress only when all 36 communities living in the hills and valley develop together and stressed the need for inclusive and balanced development across the state.

Highlighting the importance of peace, Singh said development can take place only in a peaceful and conducive environment.

He noted that students and daily wage earners are among those most affected during periods of unrest and emphasised that peace through dialogue is the only solution.

He also appealed to students to contribute towards strengthening harmony and understanding among different communities.

Speaking on the occasion via video conferencing, Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen said the programme highlighted the importance of education in empowering tribal youth and shaping a better future.

He also said the government of Manipur remains committed to supporting students in their educational journey.

Students from Churachandpur and Kangpokpi districts also participated in the interaction via video conferencing and shared their concerns and challenges. (PTI)

Nagaland reviews state's monsoon preparedness

CM Rio directs coordinated action to ensure safety, infrastructure readiness

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, May 30: The Nagaland government reviewed the state's readiness for the ensuing monsoon season at a meeting under the chairmanship of CM Neiphiu Rio at the chief minister's residential complex in Kohima on Friday.

Rio emphasised the importance of a coordinated and proactive approach among all departments to address monsoon-related challenges effectively.

He stressed the need for timely intervention, seamless communication and collective responsibility to safeguard lives and critical infrastructure.

He directed all concerned departments to ensure that necessary machinery, equipment and response systems are strategically positioned and maintained in full operational readiness to respond to any exigency, reaffirming the government's commitment to ensuring public safety and minimising disruptions during the monsoon season. The meeting discussed the monsoon forecast based on meteorological inputs presented by the Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority, highlighting likely rainfall patterns and potential risk areas across the state.

Departments, including PWD (R&B) and NHIDCL, briefed on the preparedness of road infrastructure, including ongoing maintenance works, identification of vulnerable stretches and measures to address possible landslides and disruptions.



Home guards, civil defence and SDRF outlined their emergency operation plans, resource deployment and response mechanisms to ensure prompt action during any eventuality.

The health & family welfare department apprised on healthcare preparedness, including readiness of medical personnel, availability of essential medicines, and contingency measures for emergency situations.

The food & civil supplies department, along with agri and allied departments, briefed on the availability, stocking and distribution of essential commodities to ensure uninterrupted supply during the monsoon period.

In view of the vulnerability of national highways, particularly NH-29 (Dimapur-Kohima) and NH-2 (Kohima-Mao), the meeting deliberated on measures to address landslides and road disruptions during the monsoon season.

Newly appointed Manipur Police chief to take charge tomorrow

IMPHAL, May 30: Newly appointed Manipur Police DGP Mukesh Singh arrived in Imphal on Saturday afternoon and will take charge from June 1, officials said.

Singh was received by senior police officers at Imphal airport after he landed from New Delhi.

Outgoing DGP Rajiv Singh, a 1993-batch IPS officer, took charge of Manipur Police chief at the height of ethnic conflict in June 2023.

Following his completion of the tenure in the state, he has been transferred by the Centre to serve as the secretary (security) in the Cabinet Secretariat in New Delhi.

Singh, the 1996-batch IPS officer, had previously served as the police chief in Ladakh.

The Centre had recently cleared the appointment of Singh on inter-cadre deputation from the AGMUT (Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram-Union Territories) of the Manipur cadre for a tenure of three years.

The order was issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT). (PTI)

Rajya Sabha poll in Meghalaya on June 18

Counting to be held the same evening; nomination process begins tomorrow

SHILLONG, May 30: Meghalaya will elect its Rajya Sabha member on June 18, with counting scheduled for the same evening. Chief Electoral Officer BDR Tiwari announced on Friday after briefing political parties on the biennial election process.

The poll is being held to fill the seat falling vacant on June 21.

"We had a meeting with the political parties with respect to the conduct of the biennial Rajya Sabha election in the state of Meghalaya. As the present tenure of the Rajya Sabha MP is due to end on June 21, the election has to be held by June 20 at the latest," Tiwari told reporters.

Laying out the timeline set by the Election Commission of India, he said the notification will be issued on June 1.

"The last date for making nominations is June 8. Scrutiny of nominations will be held on June 9 and the last date for withdrawal of candidates is June 11, 2026," he said.

"The date of the poll is fixed on June 18 from 9 AM to 4 PM. Counting of votes will be held on the same day from 5 PM onwards, and the process will be completed before June 20, 2026," Tiwari



added. Election officials inspected the polling venue at the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly this morning.

"We visited the venue along with officials from the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly and everything was found satisfactory as per the norms, schedule and layout provided by the Election Commission of India," he said.

The CEO detailed the paperwork required from candidates.

"We briefed the entire process to the political parties regarding the filing of nominations, including the submission of Form 2C, affidavit in Form 26, security deposit, author affirmation, Form A and

1951, have also been briefed to the political parties."

He clarified the rules for showing ballots.

"Members belonging to a political party are required to show their marked ballot paper only to the authorised agent of their own political party and not to any other party agent on the day of the poll. Independent MLAs are prohibited from showing their ballot paper to any agent."

"We also briefed them on the method of recording preferences, validity of ballot papers and the procedure for counting votes and ascertaining the quota," he added.

Tiwari said the meeting addressed all concerns. "We had a good interaction and all queries related to the biennial Rajya Sabha election have already been addressed. Our preparations are complete, and we are fully ready for the conduct of the biennial Rajya Sabha election in the state of Meghalaya."

While notices were sent to all political parties, some could not attend.

"We tried to reach them even over the phone, but due to prior engagements, they were unable to attend," he said. (NNN)

Five militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, May 30: Security forces arrested five militants, belonging to two proscribed outfits, in Manipur's Imphal West and East districts, police said on Saturday.

Two active members, including a woman, of the banned People's Liberation Army were held from the two districts on Thursday.

"They were allegedly involved in the collection of extortion money from clinics and pharmacies located within Imphal West district," a police statement said.

Another active cadre of the outfit was apprehended from his residence at Sanjenbam Maning Leikai in Imphal West district, it said. Two active members of the outlawed Kangleipak Communist Party (PWG) were arrested from their residences on Wednesday, the police said.

Three hand grenades, a red tin box containing seven detonators, and one demand letter were also recovered from their possession, the statement said. (PTI)

Arunachal minister urges Centre to boost seed funding, organic farming



ITANAGAR, May 30: Arunachal Pradesh has urged the Centre to strengthen support for the agriculture and horticulture sector in the northeast, with special focus on timely seed funding and expansion of organic farming initiatives, officials said.

Participating at the two-day national conference on Agriculture for Kharif Campaign 2026 in New Delhi on Friday, state minister

Gabriel D Wangsu said quality seeds remain the most critical input for improving farm productivity and ensuring food security.

He called for timely allocation and release of funds under seed-related programmes, and sought the development of more certified seed varieties suited to the agro-climatic conditions of the northeast, an official statement said on Saturday.

Wangsu, the state's Agriculture and Horticulture Minister, also stressed the need to recognise and promote locally adapted indigenous germplasm, saying such varieties often perform better under local conditions than externally introduced seeds.

He suggested encouraging and empanelling local and regional companies to produce seeds tailored to the region's unique agro-climatic conditions.

Highlighting the challenges faced by farmers in remote areas, Wangsu sought enhanced support under the Seed Village Programme and the Sub-Mission on Seed and Planting Material (SMSP) for infrastructure, farmer training and distribution.

The minister also sought higher financial assistance, citing the high cost of certified seeds and the limited purchasing capacity of farmers in the northeastern states. (PTI)

Mizoram gov launches taxi app to enforce govt-approved fares

AIZAWL, May 30: In a move to curb overcharging, the Mizoram government has announced the launch of 'MizoTaxi,' a mobile application for public transport services designed to ensure passengers pay government-approved fares, officials said.

The app will initially be rolled out in Aizawl city and is set to become operational from July 1, an official release stated.

It is designed to help people using taxis, two-wheeler taxis, and auto-rickshaws verify and pay the correct fares approved by the government.

All four-wheeler taxis, two-wheeler taxis, and auto-rickshaws operating within the state capital have been asked to complete registration on the 'MizoTaxi' platform in June, the release said. (PTI)

Army showcases homegrown defence equipment to foreign delegations

Multilateral military exercise opportunity to boost indigenous defence industry: Official

UMROI, May 30: The Indian Army is utilising the opportunity of multilateral military exercises with friendly nations to showcase its indigenously-built defence equipment and boost exports, an official said on Saturday.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines at the conclusion of a 13-nation military exercise here, Army Design Bureau's Additional Director General Maj. Gen. CS Mann said, "The Indian defence industry is growing at a very exponential pace because of the push for being 'amanirbhar' (self-reliant), the government making enabling provisions, and focus by all the three services, especially the Army."

The country's defence equipment industry is getting a lot of opportunities domestically, but the local market is not enough, he maintained.

"We need to capture the export market. Therefore, in an endeavour to promote exports, we hold exhibitions when we have exercises with friendly nations," he said.

Maj. Gen. Mann pointed out that such exhibitions provide the industry a platform to interact with foreign delegates and pitch for equipment.

In line with it, an exhibition of defence



equipment and systems by 51 industry partners was organised as part of 'Exercise Pragati', in which 12 foreign countries took part at the Umroi Military Station in Meghalaya, he said.

The vice-chief of the Indian Army, as well as vice-chief level delegations of all the foreign nations, attended the closing ceremony and viewed the exhibition, Maj. Gen. Mann added.

He said systems engaged in perimeter security, surveillance equipment, armament, ammunition, drones, radars and all-terrain vehicles, among others, were on display.

"This time, we requested the delegations to express their interest, and accordingly, we invited the industries, so that it is meaningful and the industry gets more traction and increased export," the top defence official added. (PTI)

Strict monitoring to be undertaken for timely completion of highway projects: Nagaland MP



KOHIMA, May 30: Nagaland's lone Lok Sabha MP, S Spongmeren Jamir, on Saturday said strict monitoring would be undertaken over the next four months to ensure the timely completion of national highway projects in the state, warning that contractors failing to meet deadlines would face action.

Addressing a press conference at Congress Bhavan here, Jamir, also the Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (NPCC) president, said he inspected work on national highway stretches from Dimapur to Kohima and Kohima to Jesami on May 28 and 29, to assess implementation, maintenance and safety standards of road projects executed by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).

He said that while Nagaland's difficult terrain and unpredictable monsoon posed natural challenges, contractors and executing agencies must be adequately prepared to deliver projects on schedule.

Jamir said the inspection, conducted along with district administrations, NHIDCL officials and contractors, focused particularly on road safety measures, drainage maintenance and construction quality.

He pointed out that road safety

infrastructure from the Assam border to Kohima, including signage and dividers was found to be below NHIDCL standards. He said NHIDCL had been asked to strictly enforce its guidelines and ensure that contractors maintain the same standards as seen in other states.

On maintenance issues, he said blocked drainage systems and neglect after road construction had contributed to road damage, and contractors had been directed to clear such areas within stipulated timelines. Referring to the Dimapur-Kohima stretch, Jamir expressed concern over poorly planned road dividers, saying some had been constructed without proper approval and adequate safety assessment, contributing to accidents. He said any road divider or access opening must be approved by competent NHIDCL authorities with proper signage.

Jamir said that most highway stretches under NHIDCL are expected to be completed this year, except the Kohima bypass road, which may take another two years due to bridge construction requirements and land disputes.

The MP raised concern over theft of aluminium crash barriers and road signage, terming it a serious threat to public safety. He also noted that illegal mining activities had blocked roads at over 35 locations.

During his visit to Phek district on Friday, Jamir inspected the BSF Camp to Chakhabama stretch and said repair and maintenance works had been assured within 20 days.

Jamir said weekly monitoring would be undertaken over the next four months in coordination with district administrations to ensure that contractors fulfil their commitments. (PTI)

Truckers hold protest against killing of driver in Manipur, suspend transport of goods

IMPHAL, May 30: Truck drivers held a demonstration and suspended transport of goods in Manipur's Imphal West district on Saturday, demanding action against those involved in the killing of a commercial vehicle driver a day ago, police said.

They held the protest at Keithelmanbi and asserted that the movement of trucks along the National Highway 37, connecting Imphal with Jiribam, would remain suspended till appropriate security measures are taken, a senior officer said. A truck driver from West Bengal was killed, and a police constable was injured when suspected militants fired at a convoy of goods vehicles in Ukhrul district on Friday.

Security forces have launched search operations and area domination in the area to arrest the perpetrators, the Manipur Police said. (PTI)

No.DDB/15FC/T/40/2026-27/140 Date :- 26/05/2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Block Development Officer, Dotma Dev. Block, Dotma, BTC Kokrajhar, invites sealed bids affixing non-refundable Court Fee Stamp of Rs.8.25(Rupees Eight and Twenty-five Paise) only from the approved and eligible contractor of Class-I (A,B,C), Class II or Class II categories registered with Assam PWD (Roads & Buildings)/Irrigation Deptt. for the following work under P&RD Deptt. under 15th FC(Tied) and 6th ASFC for the year 2020-21 and 2024-25 during the year 2025-26. The tender Form will be issued from the undersigned from 13/06/2026 at 11.00AM up to 16/06/2026 at 4.00PM. The submission of tender will start from 11.00AM on 13/06/2026 and continue up to 2.00PM on 17/06/2026 in the Office of Block Development Officer, Dotma Dev. Block, Dotma. The tender box will be opened on 17/06/2026 at 3.00 PM. The tender fee shall be submitted in the form of DD/Banker Cheque in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC and the Bid Security shall be submitted in the form of DD/Banker Cheque/FD in favour of the Block Development Officer, Dotm Dev. Block, Dotma. The TIA reserves the right to accept or reject any bid/tender and to cancel the bidding process and reject all bids at any time prior to contract award.

Sl. No.	Name of Activity	Estimated value (in Rs.)	EMD/Bid Security (in Rs.1% ST, SC & 2% Others)	Tender Fees (in Rs.)
1	Const. of Community Toilet at Jharbari Kali Mandir. (15th FC Tied).	Rs. 11,00,000.00	1% for reserve category & 2% for unreserve.	Rs. 350.00
2	Const. of Community Toilet at Brahma & Bathou Mandir village East Genduruni(Marupara). (15th FC Tied).	Rs. 11,00,000.00	1% for reserve category & 2% for unreserve.	Rs. 350.00
3	Const. of Community Toilet at Hasraobari LP School. (15th FC Tied).	Rs. 11,00,000.00	1% for reserve category & 2% for unreserve.	Rs. 350.00
4	Const. of Community Toilet at Naigaon Gala Bazar. (15th FC Tied).	Rs. 11,00,000.00	1% for reserve category & 2% for unreserve.	Rs. 350.00
5	Const. of Community Toilet at No.569 Umanagar LP School. (15th FC Tied).	Rs. 11,00,000.00	1% for reserve category & 2% for unreserve.	Rs. 350.00
6	Const. of Water bottling at Saralpara Gorai Bazar. (6th ASFC).	Rs. 5,00,000.00	1% for reserve category & 2% for unreserve.	Rs. 150.00
7	Const. of Water bottling at Mahendrapur LP School. (6th ASFC).	Rs. 5,00,000.00	1% for reserve category & 2% for unreserve.	Rs. 150.00

Sd/-
Block Development Officer,
Dotma Dev. Block, Dotma

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/394

Aggressive RCB look to tame solid GT in search of second title in a row



AHMEDABAD, May 30: In a fascinating battle of ideologies, the well-balanced and bold Royal Challengers Bengaluru will have to subdue a phlegmatic Gujarat Titans to lift their second consecutive IPL title here on Sunday.

On the paper, the reigning champions are the overwhelming favourites against the 2022 winners because of the fearless, high-risk game that they have been playing in this tournament so far.

It had landed them in trouble occasionally but Virat Kohli, Devdutt Padikkal, Tim David, skipper Rajat Patidar, Phil Salt, when available, and Venkatesh Iyer have relentlessly

pounded the opposition with single-gear batting.

The nature of pitches or oppositions' bowling strategies have had little effect on their battering ram approach, and no other team has managed to go past 200 as often as they did in this edition of the IPL.

Patidar's calm approach to captaincy too has added to Royal Challengers' stability as a team across the last two seasons.

He is not as evocative as former leaders Kohli or Faf du Plessis but there is a certain assuredness about the way the 32-year-old does his job, keeping both the superstars

and greenhorns in side at ease.

The RCB also have a stingy bowling unit, stifling the rival batters from the power play phase. But the Bhuvneshwar Kumar-led attack will have to be at their absolute best against the in-form Gujarat top-order.

In a tournament where the batters made optimum use of power play scoring over 11 or 12 runs an over, GT openers — skipper Shubman Gill and Sai Sudharsan — have been happy to maintain a run-rate just above 9.

This linear build-up might be a conventional approach to Power Play, but it is partially because GT

have a rather soft middle-order and the top three — Gill, Sudharsan and Jos Buttler need to do the heavy lifting.

To their credit, Gill (722, strike-rate: 163), Sudharsan (710, SR: 159) and Buttler (507, SR: 157) have delivered almost consistently.

They will have to do the job once again in the match that matters the most, and GT's home record this season — five wins in seven matches — offers a crumb of comfort as well.

It will be easier said than done as Bhuvneshwar, second in the Purple Cap list with 26 wickets, Josh Hazlewood (13 wickets), Rasikh Salam (16 wickets) and Krunal Pandya (13 wickets) have formed a wily and varied bowling attack for RCB. Not to forget, Pandya senior has also been very handy with the willow.

But in that department the Titans have a slight upper hand.

The Royal Challengers' batting order gives them an undeniable edge because of its depth and the presence of range-hitters throughout.

But GT's bowling line-up has the wherewithal to stop the marauding RCB batters, particularly if the Ahmedabad pitch offers grip to them.

Kagiso Rabada, the current leader in the Purple Cap race with 28 wickets, Mohammad Siraj, Rashid Khan, Jason Holder, and Prasad Krishna have given the South African strong support. (PTI)

Vinesh loses in semifinals at Asian Games trials



NEW DELHI, May 30: Vinesh Phogat was knocked out of the Asian Games selection trials here on Saturday after losing to Meenakshi Goyat 4-6 in a tense semifinal bout of the women's 53kg event.

The loss will dash Vinesh's hopes of a comeback and her chances of securing a berth at the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan later this year.

Earlier, Vinesh had summoned her years of experience to prevail in a fiercely fought bout against a super aggressive Nishu to reach the semifinals.

After a rather easy 7-1 win against Jyoti, Vinesh had to contend with a technically sound Nishu, who opened up a massive 5-0 lead and almost pinned the star grappler in the first period after a sensational four-point throw, but she survived.

The bout was emotionally charged but was littered with challenges and technical failures of the screens. The resultant long breaks gave Vinesh much needed breathers. She remains technically skilled, but time away from the mat has certainly taken a toll on her endurance.

Nishu used the half head locks effectively to keep Vinesh under check for a large part but Vinesh needed that one move to turn the tables and she found that in the second period — a powerful four-pointer as she threw Nishu on mat. Vinesh had Nishu in her grip as she went

for a pin.

Sitting in her coach corner, her husband Sombir Rathi and supporters charged on the net, demanding a pin. Eventually, a challenge was sought.

It was ruled that the referee gave 'wrong whistle' but Vinesh was not given the 'pin' result. Nishu was put on the ground position, though she could not take advantage.

Another two-pointer put Vinesh ahead 6-5. It soon became 6-6, putting Vinesh ahead on criteria. Nishu attempted a take down but was not given points. Nishu's coach challenged the decision but lost as Vinesh left the mat relieved.

Stunned, Nishu refused to share hands with the referee and Vinesh and stood on mat for a long time, crying.

She will now fight it out with Meenakshi Goyat, who had shocked Antim Pangal in the Asian Championship trials.

Meanwhile, Antim Pangal needed only 34 seconds to make a winning start as she defeated Tannu by technical superiority. In no time, Antim had her rival locked in a 'fitley' move and rolled Tannu five times to finish the bout in a jiffy.

She later beat Mansi to make the semis, staying on course for a final against Vinesh.

Earlier in the day, two-time world championships medalist Vinesh was allowed to compete in the women's 53kg category after the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) reversed its earlier stand of restricting her participation to the 50kg division.

The dramatic turn of events came during the official weigh-in on Saturday morning when Vinesh was informed that she would be permitted to compete only in the 50kg category, citing her participation in that weight class in her last four international events, including the Paris Olympics.

The wrestler strongly objected to the decision and accused the federation of discriminating against her by denying her the opportunity to compete in a category of her choice.

Sources present at the venue said the matter escalated before WFI president Sanjay Singh intervened and decided to allow Vinesh to enter the 53kg trials as well. (PTI)

Akshay Bhatia shoots 65, moves into Top 10 at Charles Schwab Challenge

FORT WORTH (USA), May 30: Indian origin golfer Akshay Bhatia charged up the field with a 5-under 65 to gain 26 positions and occupy Tied-6th spot at the Charles Schwab Challenge on the PGA Tour here.

Bhatia, who was 3-under in the first round, now has a total of 8-under par after two rounds and is two strokes behind the leader Jordan Smith (65-65), who shot a second straight 65.

Another Indian origin player, Sahith Theegala, did not have as promising a second day as Bhatia. Theegala, who carded 3-under 67 like Bhatia on the first day, struggled by comparison. He carded even par 70 to drop down to T-47.

Sudarshan Yellamaraju (71-70) missed the cut.

Bhatia began his second round on the back nine and made an early birdie on the 11th hole before gaining strokes on the 13th and 16th holes as well to be 3-under par at the turn.

On the front nine, he was able to gain another three strokes with birdies on the first, fourth and fifth holes. A late bogey on the ninth hole limited the score to 5-under 65 for the day.

"I played nice. I think I did a great job with how I didn't let anything bother me. I missed a good amount of fairways, but just took it as it was. Yeah, all in all it was a really nice day, I just need to drive it a little better, that's the biggest thing for me, or at least what it feels like internally," Bhatia said.

"But again, the more and more I can just see the ball in the fairway, the more chances I'll have, I feel like, with my iron play and how I feel like I am with the putter right now."

On his liking for this course, he said, "You have to be creative a little bit. You can hit some good tee balls that you're behind trees, or the pins can get very tight in corners. I think just, it's short, it's simple, and yet it always plays hard. It's never 18-, 19-under winning, it's 10-, 11-, 12-under. And that's what makes great golf courses."

Theegala's second round included three birdies and three bogeys, but he did ensure weekend action as he was 3-under and the cut

was set at 2-under par. He will now be able to play the rest of the week.

The 24-year-old Yellamaraju missed the cut after carding a second round of 2-under 68. He began the second round on the back nine and was even par at the turn, having made a birdie on the 14th hole and dropping a stroke on the 18th. On the front nine Yellamaraju made a bogey on the first hole before making three consecutive birdies on the second, third and fourth holes.

Yellamaraju picked up shots on the 16th and 17th holes as well. He seemed on way to making the cut, when he dropped a double bogey on his closing hole, the ninth, and missed the cut by one.

He missed the cut for only the second time this season. The only other time he has missed the cut in 2026 was at The American Express back in January.

Jordan Smith, the leader at the halfway mark carded a second consecutive round of 5-under 65 to become the sole leader.

Smith, 33, qualified for PGA Tour through the DP World Tour and had his best finish at third in the Valspar Championship.

He was in tied second place after the first round and one shot behind the leaders.

Smith began his second round with an eagle on the first hole and a birdie on the second to set himself up for a strong day two. He went on the birdie the seventh, 12th and 16th hole as well. His only bogey of the round was on the 14th hole.

Hideki Matsuyama, the 2021 Masters champion with 10 other TOUR victories, and Michael Thorbjornsen had matching 65s. They were at 9 under with Ryan Gerard (67) and 2023 The Open champion Brian Harman (66).

Spaun was joined by Bhatia (65), Russell Henley (66), Brice Garnett (66) and Alex Smalley (67).

AJ Ewart had the second hole in two days at the 195-yard, par-3 16th — Brandt Snedeker aced it in the opening round — and followed an opening 70 with a career-best 63, the low round of the day. He was at 7 under with Michael Brennan (66) and Mackenzie Hughes (67). (PTI)

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi has got fast hands, picks lengths early: Kagiso Rabada

MULLANPUR, May 30: South Africa and Gujarat Titans' pace ace Kagiso Rabada observed that Rajasthan Royals' 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi has been able to dominate the bowlers in this Indian Premier League due to his fast hands and ability to pick the lengths early.

Sooryavanshi changed gears in from the Eliminator to Qualifier 2 producing scores of 97 and 96 but RR failed to advance to the final, losing to GT in Qualifier 2 by 7 wickets here.

Rabada, who denied Sooryavanshi a century in their clash on Friday, told JioHotstar, "He just keeps amazing everyone who watches the game. He's got such fast hands, and he picks length quickly. He's got so much energy."

"When you're young, you have so much energy and no fear, and that's exactly what he's shown, no fear and just a natural instinct for the game that allows him to perform the way he is performing."

"At this stage, you throw age out of the window; it doesn't matter how old he is. It's amazing what he's doing," he added.

Rabada played a key role in GT bowlers stifling the RR batters in the first half of the game returning 4-0-35-2, but said his team's bowlers also missed their marks quite often.

"The plan was to back our strengths, as we normally do, and hopefully get early wickets. We did get two early wickets, but then they fought back, and we missed our mark by bowling a few too many short balls, where we probably wanted to challenge them a bit more upfront," Rabada said.

"They got away from us a little, but we knew we weren't completely out of it because we knew we could still get wickets. We had the game under control until the 19th over."

"It was pretty tough for Rashid (Khan) to come on and bowl on this



wicket as a spinner against some genuine power hitters. We probably felt that 180-190 was what we should have restricted them to, barring the dropped catch (of Sooryavanshi)," he added.

Talking about his bowling partnership with Mohammed Siraj, Rabada said the Indian seamer increases the chances of him taking wickets.

"Siraj's my partner this season. We've just been trying to operate as a partnership. If he's putting pressure on from the other end, then hopefully I can do the same, and that's how we get wickets," the South African pacer said.

"Everyone knows him. He's got a lot of heart, and he's got a lot of skill too. It's lovely to be bowling with him (as) it just increases your chances of getting a wicket because someone at the other end is applying just as much pressure, if not more," Rabada added.

Meanwhile, former India captain and head coach Anil Kumble termed Shubman Gill's 53-ball 104 as a "chanceless" innings.

Shubman Gill's batting has just been phenomenal: Vikram Solanki

MULLANPUR, May 30: Gujarat Titans director of cricket Vikram Solanki has been blown away by the form and consistency his captain Shubman Gill has shown in the Indian Premier League.

Gill has totalled 722 runs this season, scoring the bulk of the runs for his team alongside opening partner Sai Sudharsan (710). Both are operating at a healthy strike rate of 160.

Gill gave a batting masterclass in his team's chase of 215 on Friday, steering the Titans to their third final in five seasons.

Gill, the Test and ODI captain for India, was dropped from the T20 side ahead of the World Cup earlier this year. Considering his appetite for runs in the shortest format, Gill seems determined for a national comeback.

"It is on the back of a lot of hard work. I can only imagine all of the work that Shubman has put in throughout his career to get to where he is as far as batting is concerned. He's an exceptional young man, and sometimes you have to realise he is still a young man. To be playing the cricket that he is, to be batting the way he is, is just phenomenal," said Solanki.

"... and Sai is no less so. He might be a little younger in his journey, but you can see that he takes a fine example from Shubman and understands that actually his skills are what you and I might view as batsmanship — the sort of traditional form of batting — but there is no doubt in my mind that if a situation, a circumstance requires them to up their run rate, and that wicket actually suits them playing that way, then they can adapt."

Did Gill come into this IPL with a different mindset following his exclusion from the T20 World Cup squad?

"He was preparing exactly as he has done before. He's a wonderful talent. T20 cricket is a format that you have to ride in different times as much as work hard when you're not playing well. He has played so much cricket. He's so experienced for somebody so young. He knows how to deal with all of those matters."

"Success, (or) failure, professional sports is about dealing with exactly that. He was very measured when he arrived in our camp. His preparation has been on point as it always is. Regardless of what jersey he's wearing, his preparation is on point and that's exactly how he arrived this year," said Solanki.

When asked for a response on rival teams and experts branding the Titans as a predictable unit, Solanki did not have much to say. (PTI)

'Neeraj bhai's advice during Para Worlds helped me break my own record'

NEW DELHI, May 30: Legendary Neeraj Chopra's priceless advice during the World Para Championship last year resulted in his world record-obliterating effort of 74.82m, said two-time Paralympic gold medalist Sumit Antil. Antil shattered his own world record of 73.29m by an incredible 1.53 metres in the men's javelin F64, to claim the gold at the 8th Indian Open Para Athletics International Championship in Bengaluru on Wednesday. The silver medalist — Maharashtra's Sandip Sargar with 62.88m was almost 12 metres short of him. "Neeraj bhai guides me from time to time. He came to see my throw at the Para World Championship in New Delhi last year. He pointed out a few shortcomings to me. So, I am benefiting from that here," Antil told PTI in an exclusive Zoom interview from his hometown in Sonapat on Saturday.

"My coach and Neeraj bhai are good friends, and they talk to each other about my technique. So, all of us together are breaking the world records again and again. And 75 metres for a para-athlete is a very long throw," Antil added. (PTI)

No Suryakumar or Shubman in BCCI's longlist

NEW DELHI, May 30: India's current T20 skipper Suryakumar Yadav, along with Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill, are the two prominent names missing, while teen sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi has been inducted into the 30-strong longlist of men's probables that the BCCI has submitted to the IOA for the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya from September 19 to October 4.

It has been pre-decided that the BCCI will need to select two separate T20 teams as India's home white-ball series against the West Indies overlaps partly with the quadrennial extravaganza.

The West Indies series comprises eight white-ball games — three ODIs and five T20Is — between September 27 to October 17. Since Gill is expected to lead the team in ODIs, he hasn't been picked for the Asian Games.

While some players are common in both ODIs and T20Is, men's cricket event at the Asian Games will take place between September 24 to October 3, forcing the select-



tors to create a bigger pool to pick two teams.

It is understood that Suryakumar is no longer in the larger scheme of things as far as 2028 Olympic Games and the next T20 World Cup is concerned, and his name not featuring in the Asian Games longlist is a no-brainer.

The captaincy candidates in that Asian Games list would be Shreyas Iyer, Sanju Samson and Tilak Varma.

The list of bowlers has Jasprit Bumrah's name in it although ODIs could be his priority at that point in time taking the 2027 World Cup into account.

Harshit Rana is expected to be fit by

then and has been kept in the long-list along with Prasad Krishna and Arshdeep Singh.

Among spinners, the frontline slow bowlers Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar and Harsh Dubey have made it to the list, but only two of the four are expected to be picked. The other two will play the Windies series.

Surprisingly, the only prominent non-performer to make the list is gold medal-winning skipper from the Hangzhou edition — Rituraj Gaikwad.

Longlist to IOA: Yashasvi Jaiswal, Abhishek Sharma, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Ishan Kishan, Sanju Samson (wk), Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant (wk), Hardik Pandya, Rinku Singh, Tilak Varma, Jasprit Bumrah, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Prasad Krishna, Varun Chakravarthy, Anukul Roy, Ayush Badoni, Harsh Dubey, Dhruv Jurel, Khaleel Ahmed, Rituraj Gaikwad, Ravi Bishnoi, Shahbaz Ahmed, Shivam Dube, Vipraj Nigam, Nigam, Harshit Rana, Yash Thakur, Washington Sundar. (PTI)