

6  
WORLD  
8  
NATION



- Iran, US are at impasse ahead of Trump's China trip
- Philippines VP impeached by lawmakers over suspected wealth, threats
- No power can make India bow or yield to pressure: PM Modi
- Adhikari cabinet approves BSF land transfer for border fencing

# THE HILLS TIMES

www.thehillstimes.in

Voice of the hills people

Vol .No. XXVII

Issue No. 117

RNI-ASSENG/2000/12862

DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026

PAGES 12 PRICE ₹ 8



सत्यमेव जयते

Government of Assam

In august presence of

**Shri Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister

## Swearing-in Ceremony

of the

**Chief Minister**

and

**Council of Ministers of Assam**



12 May 2026



11 AM



College of Veterinary Science Playground, Khanapara, Guwahati

DIPR/D/HLT/3/12-May-26

# India has sufficient fuel stocks, no rationing planned, says oil ministry official

**NEW DELHI, May 11:** India has no plans to ration fuel supplies despite ongoing disruptions in global energy markets, a top oil ministry official said Monday, adding that the country has maintained adequate inventories of crude products and LPG while diversifying imports to manage supply risks.

"There is no need to panic. There are sufficient supplies. There is no rationing in place. It's not going to happen," Oil Secretary Neeraj Mittal said at CII's Annual Business Summit here, noting that India had maintained around 60 days of fuel stocks and about 45 days of LPG inventories during the past 67 days of market disruption.

The comments came a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged for fuel conservation and lower imports as surging global energy prices pressure India's foreign exchange reserves, while also calling for restraint in gold purchases to ease external vulnerabilities.

This was seen by some as preparation of ground for a possible fuel price hike.

Petrol and diesel continues to be sold at two-year-old rates despite international prices shooting up since the West Asia conflict started 10 weeks back. Holding prices despite over 50 per cent rise in input cost has led to oil companies losing ₹ 1,000 crore to ₹ 1,200 crore - a loss that is now threatening their financial viability.

A top government source however said, "default mode of the government is to keep the prices and supplies stable."

Mittal said the government had secured additional energy cargoes, increased procurement from existing suppliers and absorbed part of the price shock through fiscal measures, including excise duty cuts on petrol and diesel.



India, the world's third-largest oil importer and consumer, was also accelerating efforts to expand domestic exploration, strategic reserves and alternative energy programs including green hydrogen, ethanol blending and sustainable aviation fuel, he said.

"For a country like India which consumes 5 million barrels a day, to have a 90-day reserve would be putting a lot of money in a box without using it at all," he said, adding that the government was exploring "creative ways" to expand strategic reserves while generating returns on stored crude.

Mittal said the government had spent the past 67 days managing supply disruptions arising from geopolitical conflict and constraints in global energy shipments.

"The constraint has not changed at all. In fact, it is a shade worse," he said, adding that India had nevertheless managed to get its 14 ships out of the war-hit Strait of Hormuz during the period.

India has maintained around 60 days of fuel stocks and roughly 45 days of LPG inventories throughout the crisis, he said.

"We have procured from other sources. We have increased procurement from existing countries and that has kept us going in terms of supply management in the short run," he said.

The official said India's large refining base had helped cushion the impact of supply shocks, allowing the country not only to meet domestic demand but also continue exports of refined petroleum products.

He said the government had also undertaken calibrated demand-management measures, including prioritising LPG supplies for household cooking use and allowing 70 per cent industrial LPG supply after industry requests for easing restrictions.

Mittal said nearly 100 per cent digital delivery tracking of LPG cylinders had significantly reduced diversion and black-market sales.

"There is no need to panic. There's sufficient supplies. There is no rationing in place. It's not going to happen," he said.

On strategic reserves, Mittal said India was evaluating "creative ways" to expand stockpiles without locking up excessive capital, given the country's daily oil consumption of about 5 million barrels.

"For a country like India which consumes 5 million barrels a day, to have a 90-day reserve would be putting a lot of money in a box without using it at all," he said.

He added that the government was exploring commercial partnerships and trading models to ensure strategic crude inventories could also generate returns.

Mittal said the government had absorbed much of the price shock through fiscal measures, including excise duty cuts on petrol and diesel that created a revenue impact of around ₹ 1.6 lakh crore.

"Government uses all sorts of tools," he said, adding that India had remained "a relative oasis of calm" compared with countries that had imposed fuel rationing and stricter demand curbs. (PTI)

## Rungta Steel holds annual North East dealer meet in Guwahati

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 11:** Rungta Steel organised its Annual Dealer Meet for North East India in Guwahati recently in collaboration with its regional distributor Eskay Marketing.

The programme, held at a city hotel, was attended by more than 100 dealers from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura.

The event began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by Eskay Marketing directors Sanjay Kumar More and Aman More, along with Arvind Kumar and Madhav Prasad Upadhyaya.

Addressing the gathering, Sanjay Kumar More and Madhav Prasad Upadhyaya highlighted the importance of the North East market in the company's growth strategy.

Arvind Kumar later presented an overview of the company's operations, achievements and expansion plans. e said the company's production capacity has now reached 3.83 million tonnes per annum.

The presentation also covered the production capabilities of various product segments and the company's plans to strengthen its presence in the region.

The dealer meet served as a platform for interaction between company officials and dealers, focusing on market expansion and customer engagement strategies in the North East.

During the programme, Eskay Marketing felicitated top-performing dealers for excellence in market development and customer service.

## Bandhan Life reports sharp rise in women policyholders in Eastern India

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 11:** Bandhan Life Insurance has reported a significant increase in women policyholders across Eastern India, with participation rising from 12 per cent in FY23-24 to 35 per cent in FY25-26.

The company released the data as part of its Mother's Day initiatives, highlighting a growing trend of women actively participating in long-term financial planning and protection.

According to the company's internal report, Eastern India remains a key market for women policyholders, led by West Bengal, which accounts for 42.84 per cent of the total women customers in the region.

Bihar follows with 21.46 per cent, Odisha with 10.67 per cent, Jharkhand with 9.31 per cent and Assam with 8.54 per cent.

The company stated that endowment plans have witnessed particularly strong growth in the eastern region compared to other parts of the country, where protection-oriented insurance products continue to dominate.

Speaking on the trend, Satishwar B said more women are increasingly recognising life insurance as an important financial tool for protection, savings and long-term planning.

Bandhan Life also noted that women in the 46-55 and 56-65 age groups showed consistent growth in policy purchases during FY25-26, while participation among younger women in the 25-35 age group declined.

The company observed a growing preference among women customers for wealth-creation-oriented insurance products alongside protection benefits. Its flagship product, Income Wealth, accounted for nearly 40 per cent of total policies sold during FY25-26, the company said.

## Myntra to host seller onboarding event in Kolkata for eastern brands

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 11:** Myntra is expanding market access opportunities for emerging fashion and lifestyle brands from Kolkata and the eastern region through a dedicated seller onboarding and enablement programme.

As part of the initiative, the company will organise a seller onboarding event in Kolkata on May 15 at Southern Plaza Hotel near Gariahat Market and The Park Hotel on Park Street.

The company said the programme is aimed at helping regional brands and sellers enter the e-commerce marketplace through guided support and structured onboarding sessions.

Participants will receive insights into Myntra's marketplace ecosystem, including onboarding procedures, catalogue management, advertising tools and operational support systems.

Myntra stated that Eastern India has emerged as a major centre for fashion innovation, combining contemporary design with rich textile traditions.

Contd. from Page 1...

## Himanta to take

As Khanapara gets its final touches, the ceremony will be more than an oath -- it will be BJP's statement of intent for Assam's next five years. Sarma had already stated that the new government would carry out development work and take Assam forward.

The massive election victory follows a campaign fought on "identity, land and security" -- including eviction drives and curbing illegal immigration.

Echoing this on Monday, he wrote in a post on X: "Assam's land, identity and future are non-negotiable. After freeing 1.5 lakh bighas land from encroachment, #NDA3.0 moves ahead with a firm resolve to reclaim 5 lakh more bighas for the people of Assam. Because for us, Jati, Mati, Bheti comes first." The Veterinary College Playground is abuzz with activity as workers erect a massive pandal, media galleries, and separate enclosures for VIPs, booth presidents and panchayat members.

"The choice of Khanapara -- used for major state functions -- signals the government's intent to host a large public gathering alongside the constitutional ceremony. With workers mobilised from all 126 constituencies, crowd size will be read as a measure of post-victory enthusiasm," BJP Assam media relations convener Dhruvrajyoti Maral told PTI.

He said workers from all 126 constituencies were being mobilised and more than one lakh people were expected to attend the event.

"There will be three stages at the venue. The swearing-in will take place at the main stage, where the PM, Union Home Minister, Governor, CM-elect and central ministers will sit. We are expecting at least six Union ministers, 20 CMs and 23 deputy CMs," a senior official told PTI.

In the second stage, Padma awardees, several ambassadors and high commissioners, leading industrialists and Satradhikars will be seated, while all MLAs and MPs will find a place on the third stage, she added.

Chief Secretary Ravi Kota chaired a high-level review with DGP Harmeet Singh to lock down arrangements, a senior police official told PTI.

"Security for PM and VIPs, traffic diversion on GS Road and NH-27, venue access control, protocol and inter-department coordination are being monitored closely. Multiple police battalions, CAPFs, SPG and NSG components are being deployed. Security agencies have been told to ensure that the event runs smoothly, securely and in a manner befitting the significance of the occasion," he added. After being unanimously elected leader of the BJP-led NDA's legislature party on Sunday, Sarma, along with alliance leaders, met the governor at Lok Bhavan and formally staked claim to form the government.

Union minister JP Nadda and Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini, who were appointed the BJP's central observer and co-observer, oversaw the election of Sarma as legislative leader of the NDA.

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

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

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

## Ministers' names to

among others, will also be present," he said. Among leaders outside the NDA fold, the chief minister of Mizoram will be attending it, Sarma added. Most of the dignitaries, including Modi and the Union ministers, will reach Guwahati on Monday night, he said.

Sarma said the government's routine work will commence on Wednesday, reflecting the party's commitments outlined in the election manifesto. The NDA had secured a two-thirds majority in the assembly polls. The BJP bagged 82 seats, while its allies Asom Gana Parishad and Bodoland People's Front won 10 each, in the 126-member House. (PTI)

## 3 held from UP

identities and movements. Investigators have been relying heavily on digital footprints, CCTV footage and technical evidence to find out the sequence of events," the officer said. The interrogation of the arrested persons is underway, he said.

Two days after the declaration of the fiercely fought West Bengal assembly poll results, Rath was shot dead in Madhyamgram. The SIT continued to conduct raids in multiple areas across West Bengal to trace the remaining suspects, the officer added. (PTI)

## Land, identity, future

"Building on the historic milestone of over 1.5 lakh appointments delivered in the first term under the leadership of Dr @himantabiswa, the roadmap for the upcoming tenure transitions toward a broader economic transformation," it added.

The mission for the new term targets two lakh permanent appointments and empowers 10 lakh youth through large-scale entrepreneurship, securing the foundation of a prosperous and progressive Assam, it said. The CMO further said, "Under the leadership of Dr. @himantabiswa, The rich civilisational legacy of Assam has found renewed strength through dedicated efforts to preserve and celebrate its timeless heritage." The 2026-31 vision takes this commitment further with landmark initiatives to safeguard sacred sites, amplify Assam's cultural pride and build world-class heritage infrastructure that reflects the soul of the state, it added.

In the healthcare sector, the CMO claimed that Assam's landscape underwent a major overhaul during the first term of Sarma, marked by a surge in medical infrastructure and services.

"The 2026-31 phase will further fortify the sector through additional medical colleges and specialised academic programs. This expansion ensures advanced clinical services and superior medical accessibility for every citizen," it added.

Talking about infrastructure development, the CMO asserted that the first tenure of Sarma saw a "historic expansion" of Assam's roads, bridges and aviation networks. "The next five years will prioritise mega-investments in high-impact infrastructure to build a stronger foundation for future generations and a #ViksitAssam," it added. With special emphasis for education in remote tea garden areas in the outgoing period, the next five years will build up on this momentum with 100 more tea garden model schools, the CMO said. (PTI)

## Cong to skip

results. From the very beginning, our focus will be on correcting our mistakes, taking our message to the grassroots and neutralising the BJP's misinformation. We discussed how to use our volunteers, well-wishers and supporters to counter the BJP's money-powered propaganda through the channels available to us," he said. "We have engaged in extensive discussions with our media cell, social media cell, and various organisational branches. We have already reached a decision. Our goal is to present a 'new Congress' to the people," Gogoi said. The NDA secured a two-thirds majority in last month's elections, with the BJP winning 82 seats and its allies, the Asom Gana Parishad and Bodoland People's Front, 10 each in the 126-member Assembly.

The Congress managed to win 19 seats, while its pre-poll ally Rajgor Dal secured two. The AIUDF bagged two seats and the Trinamool Congress one. (PTI)

## 2 women from

for medical examination after police reached the scene. A case has been registered at the Kalkaji police station under Sections 115 (2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 74 (assault of criminal force to against a woman with the intent to outrage her modesty), 126(2) (wrongful restraint), 351(2) (criminal intimidation), 78 (stalking) and 3(5) (common intentions) of the BNS on May 10 and investigation was taken up immediately," the officer said.

According to the FIR, the women told the police that they were having tea when two men first started catcalling them. "Then, their friends joined in and started poking us. The accused beat my friend and even tore her clothes. They used obscene language towards us," read the FIR. The women informed the police that they would be able to identify the accused if they were presented before them. As part of the probe, CCTV footage from nearby areas was scanned, and several witnesses and passersby present during the incident were identified and questioned. During the investigation, eight individuals, including witnesses and passersby, were rounded up and questioned, following which four main accused involved in the incident were identified, police said.

Multiple police teams were formed, and raids were conducted at locations linked to the accused to apprehend the rest of the accused. Several videos of the incident surfaced on social media, providing crucial leads to investigators.

"It appears the women recorded some of the videos during the altercation, clearly capturing the faces of several accused, which quickly aided the police in their identification process," a police officer privy to the investigation said.

According to police, one of the clips, around two minutes long, purportedly shows a group of men hurling abuses at the women while appearing to be under the influence of alcohol. The video also allegedly captures a tense exchange in which one of the accused is heard attempting to stop the recording. "In the footage, one of the men can be heard saying, 'Bhai ye toh video bana rahi hai, kya karey?' (She is making a video, what should I do?)" Following which, abusive language was used," the officer said.

The police have preserved the videos as key evidence and are examining them frame by frame to identify all individuals involved. Investigators continue to scan CCTV footage from nearby establishments and question eyewitnesses.

The officer added that multiple police teams have been deployed and raids are underway at several locations to apprehend the remaining accused. (PTI)

## India taking concrete

"Ministries and states must identify, in a coordinated manner, measures to institutionalise fuel efficiency, public awareness, and responsible consumption behaviour," said Singh. He urged the people to remain calm and avoid any kind of panic as all concrete steps are being taken to prevent shortages or disruptions in supply chains.

The defence minister emphasised that the primary focus for India during the current phase is to ensure that energy flows remain uninterrupted, economic stability is maintained, and maritime trade routes remain secure. He also directed all stakeholders to remain vigilant to deal with every situation. Singh underlined the need for India to accelerate the process of transforming its energy mix, rapidly expanding renewable-based alternative energy sources, identifying more reliable and diversified energy supplies, and increasing investment in energy efficiency technologies. He called for re-evaluation of strategic reserve requirements to tackle issues arising from supply chain disruptions, keeping future energy security in mind.

The defence minister asserted that the West Asia situation should not be viewed merely as a stand-alone event as any form of international crisis directly or indirectly affects all nations in today's interconnected global environment, the official readout said.

He stressed the need to focus on strategic crisis anticipation, early warning assessment, scenario planning, and timely whole-of-government preparedness, it said. (PTI)

## CEO Manoj Agarwal

the first time in the state after handing a stunning defeat to the Trinamool Congress. The saffron party secured 207 seats in the 294-member assembly, reducing the TMC to 80 seats. (PTI)

## From Congress bastion

while the NDA alliance ended up with 102 MLAs. Sarma, who took over from Sarbananda Sonowal to head the second NDA government in Assam, has been selected as the chief minister for the new government. After Prafulla Kumar Mahanta of the AGP, he will be the only non-Congress leader to sit on the chief minister's chair for a second term.

While Mahanta had a break of five years before returning to power, Sarma will be at the helm of government for the second consecutive time, a feat held only by Congress chief ministers till now. (PTI)

## Trains to dominate

tons of coal stored at power plants even in the month of May," Vaishnav said, adding that the normal stock level is 15-16 million tons. He stated that the last financial year was the safest in the 150-year history of Indian Railways, as accidents had been reduced by 90 per cent.

He informed that the Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC), whose last section up to JNPT Port was under construction, was completed on April 5, 2026. Its operationalisation has increased train frequency as well as reduced the travel time of freight trains.

He also expressed great satisfaction while announcing that India has started exporting the most complex part of a train -- the propulsion system -- to countries such as Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, and the US. (PTI)

**E-AUCTION FOR MULTI PURPOSE STALL OVER TINSUKIA DIVISION**

E-Auction is invited for MPS (Multi Purpose stall) at New Tinsukia & Furkating Jn. over Tinsukia Division. Auction Catalogue No.: MPS-TSK-06. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots) : At 11:00 hrs. on 21-05-2026.

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	MPS-TSK-NTSK-MPS-25-23-2 (MPS-Multi Purpose Stalls)	At PF-2, in between pillar 12 & 13 from Tinsukia end at New Tinsukia station, Size 8 feet X4 feet=32 sq. feet.
AA/2	MPS-TSK-NTSK-MPS-59-25-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	Stall no 8 (MPS) indicated in sketch plan, Size (11.3 ft X 9.5 ft).
AA/3	MPS-TSK-FKG-MPS-83-26-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	MPS stall no.5 (S5) at PF-1(indicated in Sketch plan of Furkating Jn.), Size : 8X4= 32 sq. feet.

**Auction end date: At 11:50 hrs. on 21-05-2026.** Initial Cooling off period is 30 minutes. Successive lots closing interval 10 minutes. Note : Prospective bidder are requested to visit e-Auction leasing module on IREPS website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for more details.

Divisional Railway Manager (C), Tinsukia

**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
Serving Customers With A Smile

No.GDB/15<sup>th</sup>-FC/201/2022-23/1051 Dated: 05/05/2026

**TENDER No-36, FOR BIDS (IFB)**

Selected tenders affixing Non-refundable court fee stamp of RS.8.25 (Rupees Eight & Twenty Five Paisa) only with at validity period of 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days which will subsequently be covered and drawn up in the printed F-2 form are invited from the intending Registered Contractors of all categories of the Assam PWD (Bldg. & Roads) for submitting tender for the work below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2:30 PM 05-05-2026 to 25-05-2026 and will be opened on the date 25-05-2026 at 2:30 PM.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Appox Estimated value of work	Tender Value	Earnest money 1% for ST/SC/OBC/MOBC & 2% for GNL	Cost of tender document	Time of completion
1	Const. Community toilet at No-1 Gerua Jame Masjid of No-5 Goreswar village, under 15 <sup>th</sup> -FC (tied Grant.) fund for the year 2024-25 ) during 2025-26	11,00,00.00	11,00,00.00	Rs 11,000/- & Rs. 22,000/-	Rs 300/-	3( Three month)
2	Const. of open auditorium hall for community activities at Dhepargaon village under 15 <sup>th</sup> -FC (untied Grant.) fund for the year 2 024-25 during 2025-26.	17,00,00.00	17,00,00.00	Rs 17,000/- & Rs. 34,000/-	Rs 510/-	3( Three month)

Detailed NIT may be seen in all working days in the Office of the undersigned. Tender 4paper will be issued to the contractor or their authorized agent up to 11:30 AM in all working days from PM 05-05-2026 to 25-05-2026 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Banker Cheque/Bank Draft/ Demand draft duly pledged in favour of the BDO, Goreswar Development Block. The Contractor should submit up-to- date copy of Registration Certificate, latest clearance certificate of Income Tax and GST along with the tender paper. In case the office is remain closed/bandh for any circumstances on tender receiving/ opening date, then the same will be received/opened in the next working days.

Sd/-  
Block Development Officer  
Goreswar Development Block, Goreswar

**IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/74**

# THE HILLS TIMES

27 YEARS OF DEDICATED JOURNALISM  
www.thehillstimes.in  
Voice of the hills people

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026

THE HILLS TIMES 3

## Ministers' names to be revealed today: Himanta

GUWAHATI, May 11: Chief Minister-designate Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that the names of ministers who will take oath with him will be finalised in consultation with BJP national president Nitin Nabin, who will reach here late in the evening.

The names will be revealed on Tuesday morning, a few hours before the swearing-in ceremony of the new government, he said.

Sarma said most of the top dignitaries attending the ceremony, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will reach Guwahati on Monday night.

Talking to reporters here, the CM-designate said, "Our party national president Nitin Nabin will be reaching Guwahati around 10 pm today, and I will discuss the new ministry with him to finalise it. I don't want to discuss it over the phone with him."

The list will be finalised as per the "general guidance of the BJP and Nabin" and those who are inducted will be informed around 7 am on Tuesday, he said.



"It won't take long to finalise the names. It should be done as I accompany him in the vehicle from the airport to the hotel," Sarma added.

The distance between the Guwahati airport and the hotel where Nabin would stay is about 15 kms.

Sarma, who will take over as the chief minister for the second consecutive term and lead the third suc-

cessive NDA government in the state, said the oath-taking ceremony is scheduled at 11 am on Tuesday.

"The PM, Defence minister, Union Home and Finance ministers, chief ministers and deputy CMs of NDA-ruled states will be present on the occasion. Some industrialists, foreign envoys, Satradhikars (heads of Vaishnavite monasteries), party workers, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## PM, top NDA leaders start arriving to attend event Preparations for swearing-in ceremony going on in full swing

# Himanta to take oath as CM for 2<sup>nd</sup> term today

GUWAHATI, May 11: The stage is set for Himanta Biswa Sarma to take oath as Assam chief minister for a second consecutive term on Tuesday, marking the start of the BJP-led NDA government's third straight tenure in the state.

The swearing-in ceremony at the Veterinary College Field in Khanapara is expected to witness the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Finance Minister Nirjala Sitharaman, Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal and BJP national president Nitin Nabin, along with over 40 NDA chief ministers and deputy chief ministers.

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, who on Sunday appointed Sarma as the chief minister, will administer the oath of



office and secrecy to the BJP leader and members of the new Council of Ministers at 11:40 am.

Sarma, who first became chief minister in 2021, will be the first

non-Congress leader in Assam to serve two consecutive terms as CM.

This will be the NDA's third consecutive term in the state since

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

The NDA, comprising the BJP, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF), secured a sweeping mandate in the assembly polls, winning a record 102 seats in the 126-member House. The BJP alone bagged 82, its first single-party majority in the state, while AGP and BPF won 10 seats each.

A new council of ministers is also likely to be sworn in alongside Sarma, with representation expected from all alliance partners.

Following the ceremony, Sarma is expected to outline the new government's priorities for the first 100 days, including commitments relating to land rights and eviction drives. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Cong to skip oath-taking ceremony today: Gogoi



GUWAHATI, May 11: The Congress will not attend the swearing-in ceremony of the third BJP-led NDA government in Assam, as the occasion was being turned into a "political" spectacle, state party president Gaurav Gogoi said on Monday.

He said the party was focusing to building a "new Congress" to reach out to the people, while analysing the reasons behind its dismal performance in the assembly elections.

"No Congress representative will attend the swearing-in ceremony of the new government tomorrow. We cannot take lightly the fact that a constitutional ceremony is being turned into an expensive, political and election-style rally," Gogoi told reporters here.

The third NDA government in Assam, to be led by Himanta Biswa Sarma as the CM for the second consecutive term, will take oath on May 12, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several Union ministers, chief ministers of NDA-ruled states, industrialists and other dignitaries set to attend.

The programme will be held at the Khanapara Veterinary College field with elaborate arrangements for accommodating thousands of people, with separate dais also being erected for different set of dignitaries.

Gogoi said that in-depth discussions with the media and communication, social media, and legal cells and war room members were held.

They analysed the party's standing among the people from the polling phase to the counting stage, the performance of various campaign-related wings, and the nature of the public's response, he said.

Gogoi said the party has begun preparations to build a "new Congress" to create a 'Bor Asom' (greater Assam).

"The people of Assam are finding it difficult to believe these election (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 3 held from UP, Bihar in killing of Bengal CM's aide

KOLKATA, May 11: The West Bengal Police on Monday arrested three persons from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in connection with the killing of Chandranath Rath, an aide of Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, after investigators pursued leads from a UPI transaction made at a toll plaza by one of the suspects.

Investigators described the development as a "breakthrough".

The three accused were remanded to 13-day police custody after they were brought to West Bengal and produced before a court in North 24 Parganas district, an officer said.

The three accused were detained on Sunday and arrested this morning by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted to probe the murder that occurred in North 24 Parganas district's Madhyamgram area on the night of May 6.

"This is a breakthrough. The investigation indicated that the assailants were from outside West Bengal. Based on technical surveillance, digital tracking and other inputs, members of the SIT were sent to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They arrested the three persons from UP

and Bihar. They have been brought to West Bengal on transit remand," the officer told PTI.

Investigators traced "digital clues and interstate links" in the case, he said.

During the probe, it emerged that a car, suspected to have been used by the attackers, had crossed the Bally toll plaza before the murder, said the officer, adding that one of the occupants allegedly paid the toll through a UPI transaction.

"That digital payment helped investigators identify a mobile number and establish the identity of one of the suspects. The trail eventually led our team to the accused," the officer said.

The SIT sleuths were matching the identities of the arrested men with CCTV footage and images of the vehicle and its occupants captured at the toll plaza, he said.

"The three were produced before the Barasat court in North 24 Parganas district, and were remanded to 13-day police custody," the officer said.

The court asked the police to produce them again on May 24, he said.

## 2 women from Assam, Bihar assaulted, molested in Delhi

NEW DELHI, May 11: Two women, one from Assam and the other from Bihar, were allegedly molested, assaulted, and subjected to racist remarks by a group of men outside a hotel in southeast Delhi's Nehru Place, with police identifying four suspects and detaining two of them.

"Out of the two women, one is from Assam, and the other is from Bihar. Two out of the four identified accused have been detained, and interrogation is going on," a senior police officer said, assuring that others will be apprehended soon.

The incident occurred around 6.30 am on May 10, near a tea stall outside the hotel. A call regarding women in distress was received by the Kalkaji Police Station at around 7 am, prompting local police teams to rush to the scene, where they found the two women.

"Preliminary enquiry revealed that the women were allegedly

subjected to derogatory remarks and abuses by a group of men, which later escalated into a physical altercation," a senior police officer said.

According to the women, they were having tea outside the hotel when two men started catcalling them. Soon, several others allegedly joined in, leading to an argument that later turned violent.

"One of the complainants alleged that she was molested during the incident and that her clothes were torn. The women also alleged that racist remarks were passed against them by the accused," the officer said.

Additionally, one of the women claimed she was attacked with a bamboo stick while they were trying to leave the area. The accused allegedly blocked their path and threatened them with consequences if they reported the incident. "Both women were rushed to AIIMS (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) prayed for two weeks' police custody of the accused, he said.

The three were charged with murder, possession of illegal arms, criminal conspiracy, and suppression of evidence under various sections of BNS, he said.

"Two accused - Mayank Raj Mishra and Vicky Maurya - were detained from Buxar in Bihar, while the third one, Raj Singh, was detained from Ballia (Uttar Pradesh) on Sunday. After interrogation, all three were arrested this morning," a senior police officer said.

Earlier, the police had wrongly identified Vicky Maurya as Vishal Srivastava, and also claimed that all three were arrested from Uttar Pradesh.

At least eight people were involved in the conspiracy and execution of the murder, he said.

The police believe that the attackers had carried out detailed reconnaissance before targeting Rath, he said.

"The murder was executed with meticulous planning. The assailants had taken several measures to conceal their (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

GUWAHATI, May 11: Ahead of starting his second innings as Chief Minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday asserted that the state's "land, identity and future are non-negotiable" and his administration will free five lakh bighas (over 1.65 lakh acres) of land from encroachment in the next five years.

In a series of posts on X, Sarma listed out several poll promises and said the new BJP government will fulfil all those assurances in the coming period.

The stage is set for Sarma to make history by taking the oath as Assam's chief minister for a second straight term on Tuesday, marking a formal start of an NDA government in the state for the third time in a row.

"Assam's land, identity and future are non-negotiable. After freeing 1.5 lakh bighas of land from encroachment, #NDA3.0 moves ahead with a firm resolve to reclaim 5 lakh more bighas for the people of Assam," he said.

For the BJP-led NDA government, 'Jati, Mati, Bheti' (community, land, foundation) comes first, he added.

Sarma further said that for the last 10 years, the NDA government has worked for the holistic development of Assam's tea garden workers, who are the backbone of the state's 200-year-old tea legacy.

"In #NDA3.0, we will further strengthen the lives and livelihoods of every Cha Shramiks with a phased wage increase to Rs 500," he added.

From April 1, the daily wages of tea garden workers were increased by Rs 30. Following this decision, wages in the Brahmaputra valley rose to Rs 280, and to Rs 258 in the Barak valley.

Sarma said 'Housing for All' has been a promise of the 'Double-Engine' government, which has "walked miles" in this direction.

"The coming 5 years will be no different; over 15 lakh people will

get PMAY homes and be proud home owners in Viksit Assam. That's the commitment of NDA 3.0," he added.

The CM-designate said Assam's farmers have always remained at the heart of the NDA government's development journey.

"With enhanced support for marginal farmers, additional MSP backing and major assistance for modern farm infrastructure, the next five years will further strengthen the backbone of our annadatas," he added.

Sarma also said that the NDA 3.0 will fuel 'Atmanirbhar Assam' with Rs 5 lakh entrepreneurship support to 10 lakh youths, leading to more jobs, stronger local growth and unstoppable support for dreamers and job creators.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister's Office also posted a series of updates on social media highlighting the outgoing government's activities and outlining the roadmap ahead. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## India taking concrete measures to shield supply chains amid West Asia crisis: Rajnath



NEW DELHI, May 11: India has implemented concrete measures to shield supply chains and ensure uninterrupted energy flows amid the escalating West Asia crisis, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Monday.

Singh, while chairing a high-level meeting of the Informal Group of Ministers (IGoM) set-up to monitor the situation in West Asia, emphasised that the government is prioritising maritime security and economic stability to offset global volatility.

The defence minister directed officials to take concrete steps to implement the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal that included cutting fuel consumption as part of efforts to help conserve India's foreign exchange reserves.

The meeting was attended by Chemicals and Fertilisers Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Rail-

ways and Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu, and Ports and Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, among others.

The IGoM was informed that the country is secure, and there is no shortage of any petroleum product, even as most other nations have taken emergency measures to dramatically reduce domestic fuel consumption, the defence ministry said.

"India has 60 days of crude oil, 60 days of natural gas and 45 days

of LPG rolling stock. The foreign exchange reserves stand at a comfortable USD 703 billion," it said.

"India is the world's third largest oil refiner and fourth largest exporter of petroleum products, exporting to over 150 countries and is meeting domestic demand in full. But there is a huge cost being borne by the nation as international crude prices are continuing at very high levels," it said.

The ministry said fuel conservation can ease this "burden".

It said PM Modi's appeal to the people to help the country deal with global economic disruptions, supply chain challenges and rising prices emphasised prudence in usage of petroleum products and reducing wasteful consumption so that the fiscal burden is reduced.

The defence minister directed the officials to take concrete steps to implement the prime minister's appeal. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CEO Manoj Agarwal to take charge as chief secy of Suwendu-led govt

KOLKATA, May 11: West Bengal's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Manoj Agarwal was appointed the chief secretary of the Suwendu Adhikari-led BJP government in the state, according to an official order issued on Monday.

Agarwal, a 1990-batch IAS officer of the West Bengal cadre, helmed the EC-mandated SIR exercise in the state in the run-up to the assembly polls in which around 91 lakh voters were removed from the electoral rolls.

Incumbent Chief Secretary Dushyant Nariwala was named Principal Resident Commissioner in New Delhi, the order stated.

Nariwala, a 1993-batch IAS, was named the chief secretary of West Bengal by the poll body, removing Nandini Chakravorty from the position of the state's top bureaucrat. The BJP came to power for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Trains to dominate flights in new corridors: Vaishnaw

NEW DELHI, May 11: Indian Railways utilised 98 per cent of its budget for FY26, reflecting the pace of execution of projects, and in the days to come, trains will dominate flights on several upcoming corridors across the country, Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Monday.

"In the last financial year, the entire capex was spent practically by the 1st week of March itself. Practically by the last week of February, it was like 98 points some percentage. Then we had to, in a sense, stop that because we have to complete the entire year," Vaishnaw said.

He said 49,000 kilometres of railway tracks across the country have been electrified, which is more than the entire network of Germany, and 36,000 kilometres of new tracks have been added, which



is about six times the size of Switzerland in the Indian railway network.

The minister said that on many of these routes, travel time will be significantly reduced, and people will prefer trains to air travel.

Vaishnaw said the government is working on new corridors from Mumbai to Pune, where travel time will come down to just 28 minutes. Pune to Hyderabad will be one hour and 55 minutes, and Hyderabad to Bengaluru will be around

2 hours.

"So nobody will fly. These sectors will be out for airlines. I'm reminding right away for those who want to invest in airlines. These sectors will be 99 per cent dominated by railways," Vaishnaw said.

He said Bengaluru to Chennai will become two cities combined into one city, with travel time between them reduced to 78 minutes.

"Delhi to Varanasi will be 3 hours and 50 minutes. Delhi to Lucknow will be significantly lesser, just about 2 hours," Vaishnaw added.

Talking about the efficient and adequate transportation of coal through freight operations, Vaishnaw said that while coal shortages at power plants were once a major problem, today these plants have abundant coal supplies. "We have 54 million (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## From Congress bastion to BJP fortress: NDA set for historic third term in Assam

GUWAHATI, May 11: The BJP-led NDA that is set to assume power in Assam on Tuesday will become the only non-Congress dispensation to rule the state for a third consecutive term.

Chief Minister-designate Himanta Biswa Sarma will also etch his name in the political record books by being the first non-Congress CM to take oath for the second straight term.

The northeastern state has witnessed a significant political shift from being a Congress stronghold to a BJP bastion. The regional Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), which was the only party to lead two non-Congress governments before the BJP, is now a part of the NDA.

The NDA came to power for the third straight term with a stupen-

dous two-thirds majority, with the BJP alone securing 82 seats. Its allies, AGP and Bodoland People's Front (BPF), bagged 10 seats each in the 126-member Assembly. The Congress, on the other hand, could win just 19 seats.

The grand old party had been the dominant force in the state till 1978, when it was ousted from power for the first time by the Janata Party.

The Janata Party government, however, could not complete its term.

The politically volatile period from 1979 to 1985 witnessed the anti-infiltration Assam Agitation, with power oscillating between the Congress and the President's Rule. The AGP, formed out of the agitation, grabbed power in its maiden outing in 1985 and again in 1996.

The Congress returned to form government in 2001 and went on to consolidate its position by retaining power for the third straight term in the 2011 elections, securing 78 seats on its own.

The BJP, which had just five legislators in the Assembly during the Congress' last term, saw a meteoric rise in its poll fortunes in 2016, bagging 60 seats and leading its alliance with AGP and BPF to a total of 86.

The saffron party's tally remained unchanged at 60 in the 2021 polls, and with the NDA securing 75 seats.

It, however, saw a phenomenal rise in the number of seats in this election. The BJP won 82 seats, the highest-ever by a party, barring the Congress, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

Defeat may serve as well as victory to shake the soul and let the glory out. -Edwin Markham

## New labour codes on wages

With the publication of the final rules under the Code on Wages, 2019 and Industrial Relations Code, 2020 on May 8 last, the Union Government of India has fully operationalized them. Apart from these, the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment has also notified the Model Standing Orders, 2026, for the mining, manufacturing and services sectors. The final rules on the other two new labour codes – the Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 will also be published soon, according to the officials in the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment. All the four controversial labour codes were notified on November 21, 2025, just after BJP's spectacular win in Bihar Legislative Assembly election. However, the codes were not implemented due to stiff opposition by the joint platform of the 10 Central Trade Unions (CTUs) in the country which threatened an all India strike if implemented. Thereafter, the Union Ministry of Labour announced that the full implementation of the labour codes will be rolled out from April 1, 2026 with the beginning of the new financial year 2026-27. The Ministry said that they needed further feedback from the stakeholder on the final rules.

Consequently, the final draft central rules were published on December 30, 2025 for stakeholders' feedback. The government gave a 30-days feedback period for the Industrial Relations Code, while for other three codes the given feedback period was 45-days. In the meantime, on February 12 last, the joint platform of the CTUs, farmers unions, scheme workers, bank associations and other sectoral unions organized an all India strike against the labour codes demanding their immediate withdrawal. It was the largest ever workers' strike in India. They also threatened that if the government went ahead with roll out of the final rules for full implementation of the codes, they would organize an unprecedented level of protest and strike action, which will include multi-days general strike of the workforce in the country.

The government has now published the final rules on two of the codes after the spectacular win in West Bengal. It is worth recalling that West Bengal is the only state that has not published its own rules under the Central Labour Codes, which was legally required for their implementation because labour is in the Concurrent List of the Constitution of India. Now a BJP government is in power in West Bengal, and therefore, there will be no problem for the Centre to get the rules framed and published by the state under the new labour codes. It will pave the way for full implementation of the labour rules across the states in the country.

## India operationalises new labour codes on wages and Industrial relations

By: Dr Gyan Pathak

With the publication of the final rules under the Code on Wages, 2019 and Industrial Relations Code, 2020 on Friday, May 8, 2026, the Union Government of India has fully operationalised them. Apart from these, the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment has also notified the Model Standing Orders, 2026, for the mining, manufacturing and services sectors.

The final rules on the other two new labour codes – the Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Occupational Safety, Health and working Conditions Code, 2020 will also be published soon, according to the officials in the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment. All the four controversial labour codes were notified on November 21, 2025, just after BJP's spectacular win in Bihar Legislative Assembly election. However, the codes were not implemented due to stiff opposition by the joint platform of the 10 Central Trade Unions (CTUs) in the country which threatened all India strike if implemented.

Thereafter, the Union Ministry of Labour announced that the full implementation of the labour codes will be rolled out from April 1, 2026 with the beginning of the new financial year 2026-27. The Ministry said that they needed further feedback from the stakeholder on the final rules. Consequently, the final draft central rules were published on December 30, 2025 for stakeholders' feedback. The government gave a 30-days feedback period for the Industrial Relations Code, while for other three codes the given feedback period was 45-days.

In the meantime, on February 12, 2026, the joint platform of the CTUs, farmers unions, scheme workers, bank associations and other sectoral unions organized an all India strike against the labour codes demanding their immediate withdrawal. It was the largest ever workers' strike in India. They also threatened that if the government went ahead with roll out of the final rules for full implementation of the codes, they would organize an unprecedented level of protest and strike action, which will include multi-days general strike of the workforce in the country.

The government has now published the final rules on two of the codes after the spectacular win in the West Bengal. It is worth recalling that West Bengal is the only state that has not published its own rules under the Central Labour Codes, which was legally required for their implementation because labour is in the Concurrent List of the Constitution of India. Now a BJP government is in power in West Bengal, and therefore, there will be no problem for the Centre to get the rules framed and published by the state under the new labour codes. It will pave the way for full implementation of the labour rules across the states in the country. The Code of Wages subsumes 4 laws – on Minimum Wages, Payment of Wages, Payment of Bonus, and Equal Remuneration. The Industrial Relations Code subsumes 3 laws – on Industrial Disputes, Industrial Employment (Standing Orders), and Trade Unions. Final rules were published on these two codes.

The Code on Social Security subsumes 9 laws which included EPF, ESIC, Maternity Benefit and Gratuity. The Occupations Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code subsumes 13 laws which included Factories Act, Mines Act, and Contract Labour. Official sources said that final rules regarding these will be published soon for fully operationalizing all the four labour codes. As for now, old rules will remain in force until final publications of the new rules relating to these codes.

With the final publication of central rules on Wages and Industrial Relations, these will be implemented immediately on the sectors and units under the central government. However, the state governments are supposed to publish their rules as soon as possible as per the central rules.

Official sources say that the publication of final rules were delayed chiefly because certain definitions and provisions needed explanations. With the publication of the final rules, that hurdle has been removed. Publication of final rules was necessary for making the new codes fully operational. Now these can be enforced in the country.

The rules under the Code on Wages empowers the Union

# Irresistibly Energetic Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma

The results of the Assam Legislative Assembly election have conveyed a new and clear message in the political landscape of the state — that at the present moment, there is no alternative to Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma in Assam politics. The ruling party's massive victory in this electoral battle is, in reality, a reflection of the united support of the people towards the immensely hardworking Chief Minister's strong leadership, far-sighted vision, and tireless dedication. Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is set to take

Yet Dr. Sarma has accomplished this impossible feat through his magical communication skills and his ability to connect with everyone. His understanding of the demographic composition and local issues of every constituency is so deep that he controls every aspect, from candidate selection to campaign narratives, with exceptional precision. This micro-management system constantly keeps party workers alert at the grassroots level. Furthermore, the extraordinary political game through which he brings dissatisfied leaders from the opposition camp



### DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

into his own fold and weakens the opposition's foundation reflects his sharp political intellect. The successful application of this strategy was visible once again in the 2026 election, where many influential leaders of opposition parties joined the ruling party long before the election itself, mentally defeating the opposition in advance. Although these strategies may sometimes appear harsh and ruthless, they have proven one hundred percent effective in political calculations. There is no place for emotion in his

political decisions; rather, every step is based on deep logic and future possibilities. It is difficult to find another leader in Assam's political history who can simultaneously formulate strategies like a Chanakya and work among the masses like an ordinary party worker. This dual identity has made him unstoppable in present-day politics, and the results of the 2026 election have formally sealed this reality. A neutral assessment of Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma's first tenure from 2021 to 2026 shows that this period witnessed revolutionary transformation in Assam's administrative and infrastructural sectors. During these five years, the state attained a new momentum of development, something no previous government had achieved with such speed. Particularly, the flyovers constructed in Guwahati and different parts of the state, the new bridges being built over the Brahmaputra, and the improved national highways have brought a fundamental change to the transportation system of the state. The ambitious project he undertook of establishing one medical college in every district is not merely infrastructural development, but a far-reaching step for the future of Assam's healthcare sector.

Simultaneously, through ambitious schemes like Orunodoi, he succeeded in creating a massive positive impact on the rural economy by providing monthly financial assistance to lakhs of poor women across the state. This scheme has not only emphasized women's empowerment, but has also helped the ruling party build a dependable and stable vote bank. In the administrative sphere too, Dr Sarma adopted a strict and uncompromising attitude. Bringing transparency into the Assam Public Service Commission examination system, ensuring merit-based appointments in government jobs, and taking stringent action against corrupt officials have created deep trust among ordinary citizens and especially the youth towards the government.

The strict measures taken against child marriage and the eviction drives against encroachers initially generated some controversy, but from a long-term perspective, these actions have conveyed a positive social message. In the field of crime control, the complete freedom given to the police and the policy of zero toler-

ance towards criminals have considerably reduced the crime rate in the state. However, amidst all these developmental activities, issues such as inflation and unemployment continue to remain challenges. Yet the impact of the Chief Minister's positive works has been so overwhelming that the opposition failed to create any significant influence among the people using these weaknesses. His previous tenure stood as an example of extraordinary speed in decision-making and rapid implementation of projects, which built a strong foundation for the subsequent election.

The reason why Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma is described as an "energetic" or immensely hardworking Chief Minister becomes evident upon observing his daily schedule and administrative style. He has completely transformed the traditional slow-working culture of government offices and infused a new pace into governance. Working tirelessly from dawn till midnight, visiting roads and ongoing projects in Guwahati during late-night hours for inspections, and travelling to every district to conduct review meetings — these have become routine parts of his working life. His active style has pushed the entire bureaucracy into a state of constant responsibility, as a result of which the red-tapism surrounding government files has considerably diminished. The innovative tradition he introduced of holding cabinet meetings in various districts of the state instead of confining them only to Dispur has enabled ordinary people to feel the government close to them. This system has not only decentralized administration but has also opened pathways for the rapid resolution of local problems. His sharpness of mind and ability to take instant decisions in any situation distinguish him from other leaders. Through the use of information technology and social media, he maintains direct communication with the public and responds immediately to grievances and complaints. His work ethic has strongly attracted the younger generation because they desire a leader who not only issues instructions but personally leads from the front and gets work accomplished. This relentless work style of the Chief Minister often leaves opposition parties frustrated because before they can raise an issue against the government, he already finds a solution to it. Keeping the administrative machinery constantly active in such a manner is not an easy task, but Dr Sarma has made it possible through his indomitable energy and determination. His dynamism has established a new benchmark in Assam politics, one that will be extremely difficult for future leaders to surpass.

At this moment of assuming responsibility for a second term, the expectations of the people of Assam from Dr Sarma have now increased manifold. People are no longer satisfied merely with infrastructural development or government assistance; they have begun dreaming of an economically self-reliant and industrially developed Assam. The period from 2026 to 2031 will be considered an extremely important phase in shaping the future of the state. The greatest challenge before the government now is to find a permanent and effective solution to unemployment. Government jobs have a fixed limit, and therefore it has become essential to create an environment conducive to large-scale private investment and industrialization in the state. Through his capabilities, Dr Sarma will need to attract domestic and international investors to Assam and initiate an industrial revolution so that lakhs of educated youths of the state do not have to

migrate to other states for employment. Simultaneously, there is a pressing need for strong measures to address Assam's recurring problems of floods and erosion through scientific and permanent methods. Every year, the economic losses caused by floods slow down the pace of the state's development; therefore, the government must devise new technical strategies to tackle this issue with national-level seriousness. Modernization of the agricultural sector and opening international markets for Assam's indigenous products should also become important agendas for the future. On the other hand, issues relating to the land rights, language, and cultural protection of indigenous people will gain increasing significance in the coming days. Although the political dominance of indigenous communities has been secured after delimitation, there remains a need for greater empowerment in the economic and social spheres. The trust of the people in Dr Sarma is so deep that they believe solutions to all these complex issues are possible only under his leadership. Therefore, during this second tenure, the government must move beyond politics centred solely around beneficiaries and focus entirely on building a productive and self-reliant economy. The future blueprint of Assam will depend on how successfully the government transforms these challenges into opportunities.

Overall, the results of the 2026 election and Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma's second term as Chief Minister have brought deep stability and continuity to Assam politics. From a political perspective, the state currently appears to be moving towards a virtually opposition-less situation, which can simultaneously carry both positive and negative implications for democracy. While the absence of a strong opposition allows the government to implement developmental projects smoothly, it also creates a lack of healthy criticism necessary to prevent authoritarian tendencies. In such circumstances, the responsibility upon the Chief Minister increases manifold because he himself must become the strictest critic and observer of his government. Remaining grounded among ordinary people even while at the peak of power will be his greatest test.

Certainly, Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma's sharp political intellect fully understands that public support is never permanent; it must be sustained continuously through work and transparency. In a state like Assam, where despite an abundance of natural resources economic backwardness had burdened people for decades, a new awakening has now emerged. Under Dr Sarma's leadership, the dream the people have seen of Assam becoming not only a leading state in the Northeast but also among the foremost states in the country can now become reality, because he possesses both sufficient time and overwhelming public support. If his immense energy and future-oriented vision are properly utilized for the development of the state's human and natural resources, then the coming decade will undoubtedly be marked as a golden chapter in Assam's history. Alongside solving the complex equations of politics, if his efforts to improve the standard of living of every section of society continue, then Assam's future image will certainly emerge as that of a strong and self-reliant state. With this expectation, on the auspicious occasion of the formation of the new government, heartfelt congratulations and best wishes are extended to the architect of Assam's new era, Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma.

## The Saffron sweep and the Sub-regional shift

By: Satyabrata Borah

The electoral shift in West Bengal during the 2026 assembly elections represents more than a mere change in domestic administration; it signifies a structural realignment that could fundamentally alter the geopolitical and economic architecture of South Asia. For decades, the relationship between New Delhi and Dhaka has been a complex dance of high-level diplomatic ambition often tripped up by the friction of state-level politics in Kolkata. The emergence of a political alignment between the central government and the state leadership offers a rare moment of synchronicity, providing a double engine that has the potential to propel the connectivity agenda from a collection of theoretical blueprints into a tangible reality.

This political convergence is not just about partisan synergy but about the removal of the historical veto power that West Bengal's leadership often exercised over India's neighborhood policy, particularly regarding water sharing, land boundary disputes, and trade concessions. By harmonizing the objectives of the state and the center, India now possesses a unique window of opportunity to integrate the eastern sub-region into a cohesive economic block that links the landlocked Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal and Bhutan with the maritime gateways of the Bay of Bengal and the burgeoning markets of Bangladesh.

To understand the scale of this potential reset, one must look at the geographic and historical centrality of West Bengal. The state is the natural pivot point for what planners call the East South Asia region. For too long, the border between West Bengal and Bangladesh was viewed primarily through the lens of security, partition trauma, and the contentious issue of undocumented migration. While these are valid concerns that require sophisticated management, they have frequently overshadowed the immense economic potential of the region. The 2026 mandate allows for a pivot toward a growth-oriented mo-

bility agenda. This involves reimaging the border not as a barrier but as a bridge. If the new administration in Kolkata can successfully decouple the inflammatory rhetoric of immigration from the pragmatic necessity of economic transit, it can unlock a level of prosperity that has eluded the region since the mid twentieth century. This requires a shift in mindset where the state government views itself as a primary stakeholder in India's Act East policy rather than a cautious or obstructionist observer.

The first major pillar of this transformation must be the elevation of West Bengal as a world class maritime and economic transit hub. Currently, the logistics of moving goods between India's Northeast and the rest of the country are inefficient, relying on the narrow Siliguri Corridor. By deepening cooperation with Bangladesh, West Bengal can facilitate a massive expansion of transit and transshipment rights. This would allow Indian goods to move through Bangladesh ports like Chittagong and Mongla, while simultaneously allowing Bangladeshi goods easier access to the Indian heartland and the markets of Nepal and Bhutan. The integration of the Port of Kolkata and the Port of Haldia with the multimodal transport networks of Bangladesh would create a regional logistics ecosystem that reduces costs and time for every player involved. This is not a zero sum game; a more efficient Bangladesh makes for a more prosperous West Bengal, and vice versa. The development of integrated check posts and the modernization of border infrastructure are essential, but they must be matched by a regulatory environment that favors the ease of doing business across the frontier.

Economic integration is further dependent on the successful negotiation and implementation of a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between India and Bangladesh. While the framework for such an agreement has been discussed at the national level for years, its success has always been contingent on the willingness of the border states to cooperate. West Bengal, as

the primary gateway, has historically harbored protectionist instincts, fearing that local industries might be overwhelmed by Bangladeshi competition or that non-tariff barriers would not be reciprocated. However, the current political alignment offers a chance to dismantle these protectionist walls. If the state government and local industries can be incentivized to drop these barriers, it will allow Bangladeshi exporters greater market access, which in turn creates a more stable and balanced trade relationship. This reciprocity is vital for Dhaka, as it seeks to diversify its economy and reduce its trade deficit with India. A successful trade agreement would turn the entire border region into a manufacturing and processing zone, where raw materials from the Northeast are processed in West Bengal or Bangladesh and then exported to global markets.

Another critical dimension of this reset involves the restoration and expansion of people to people mobility. Before the disruptions of recent years, Kolkata was the undisputed center for Bangladeshi citizens seeking high quality healthcare, education, and tourism. In 2024, the scale of this engagement was massive, with over two million visas being issued to Bangladeshi nationals. The economic impact on Kolkata's service sector was profound; hospitals, hotels, universities, and retail markets thrived on this cross border influx. However, political tensions and tightened visa regimes have stifled this flow, causing significant revenue losses for Bengal's middle class and service providers.

The new political landscape provides the cover necessary to streamline visa processes and create dedicated corridors for medical and educational travel. By treating this as a high value service export, West Bengal can revitalize its urban economy. Smart governance solutions, such as electronic visas and biometric border management, can ensure that security concerns are addressed without sacrificing the economic benefits that come from being a regional hub for human capital.

Energy connectivity represents the most futuristic and perhaps most transformative aspect of this sub-regional cooperation. The 2024 operationalization of the first trilateral power transaction, which saw hydroelectric power from Nepal flowing to Bangladesh through the Indian grid, was a landmark achievement. It proved that the technical and political hurdles to a regional energy grid could be overcome. West Bengal sits at the heart of this grid. To sustain and scale this momentum, the state needs to become a corridor for clean energy transmission. This involves massive investment in high voltage transmission lines and grid stabilization technology.

Furthermore, the region's potential for natural gas pipelines and integrated electricity markets could turn Eastern India into an energy surplus zone. By facilitating the flow of power between the water rich Himalayan regions and the power hungry industrial centers of Bangladesh and West Bengal, the region can achieve a level of energy security that was previously unthinkable. This also aligns with global climate goals, as it promotes the use of renewable hydroelectricity over coal dependent power generation. The success of this entire vision hinges on the sequencing of investments and the ability to attract global capital. Upgrading the physical infrastructure requires billions of dollars in funding. This is where the double engine of the state and center becomes crucial. When New Delhi and Kolkata speak with one voice, they send a powerful signal to international financial institutions and private investors that the region is stable and open for business.

The development of economic growth corridors, such as the proposed links between Kolkata and Dhaka or the connections between the ports of Bengal and the landlocked Northeast, can attract the kind of large scale manufacturing investment that creates millions of jobs. This is the ultimate prize for the new government in West Bengal: the ability to deliver industrial revitalization to a state that has long felt bypassed

by India's economic boom.

However, many obstacles remain, and it would be naive to ignore the deeply entrenched challenges that could derail this progress. Bureaucratic red tape is a persistent issue on both sides of the border. There are also deep seated historical anxieties that can be easily exploited by political actors who benefit from friction rather than cooperation. The issue of water sharing, particularly regarding the Teesta River, remains a sensitive point for Dhaka and a domestic political lightning rod in Bengal. While the current political alignment makes a deal more likely, it will still require delicate negotiation and a commitment to equitable resource management. Furthermore, the security situation in the broader region, including the complexities of the internal dynamics within Myanmar, adds a layer of unpredictability to any regional connectivity strategy.

Despite these hurdles, the 2026 election results have created a platform for a radical departure from the status quo. The possibility of a Delhi Kolkata Dhaka triad that focuses on shared prosperity rather than shared grievances is now within reach. This is not just about diplomacy; it is about the daily lives of millions of people who live in this densely populated corner of the world. For the farmer in northern Bangladesh looking for a market, the student in Sylhet looking for a world class university in Kolkata, or the industrialist in Durgapur looking for a way to ship goods to Southeast Asia, this reset offers a path to a better future. The selection and sequencing of these connectivity measures will require rigorous cost benefit assessments and a commitment to transparency, but the fundamental logic of the strategy is sound. By leveraging its geographic position and its new political coherence, West Bengal can once again become the engine of growth for Eastern India and a vital partner for a rising Bangladesh. The window of opportunity is open, and for the first time in a generation, all the players are standing on the same side of the door.

# KAWACH programme launched in Nagaon

## Initiative aims to strengthen child protection systems through coordinated action and community engagement

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, May 11:** KAWACH – Safe Childhoods for a Thriving India was launched in Nagaon district under the aegis of the district administration at an event organised by the North East Centre for Equity Action on Integrated Development (NEAID) in partnership with the British Asian India Foundation on Monday.

The programme marked a significant step towards strengthening convergence and coordination among departments and stakeholders working on child protection and welfare in the district.

Aligned with Mission Vatsalya, the centrally sponsored scheme of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, the consultation brought together district-level officials to collectively deliberate on strengthening preventive and responsive child safeguarding systems in Nagaon.



The programme was attended by Devashish Sharma, District Commissioner, Nagaon and Kamal Jeet Sharma, ADC, Social Welfare & Health, along with officials from the District Social Welfare Department, Education Department, Police administration, District

Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), Panchayati Raj Institutions and other allied departments. Officials underscored that child

protection is a shared responsibility requiring active ownership across departments. District Commissioner of Nagaon, Devashish Sharma, highlighted the need for co-ordinated action at the district, block and community levels to build safer and child-friendly environments.

KAWACH is a long-term system-strengthening initiative aimed at creating protective ecosystems for children through prevention-oriented strategies, institutional coordination, community engagement and capacity building of frontline stakeholders.

The ceremonial launch of the programme concluded with a collective commitment from participating departments and stakeholders to strengthen collaboration and build a more responsive and sustainable child safeguarding ecosystem in the district in the days to come.

# Railway Board member inspects Kamakhya coaching depot



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 11:** Member (Traction and Rolling Stock), Railway Board, R Rajagopal conducted a comprehensive inspection of important operational and maintenance facilities at Kamakhya Coaching Depot under the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) on Sunday, with emphasis on crew welfare, rolling stock maintenance, safety improvements and the adoption of advanced technologies.

The inspection was attended by senior railway officials led by General Manager of Northeast Frontier Railway, Chetan Kumar

Shrivastava. During the inspection, the MTRS visited the running room and crew lobby at Kamakhya, where the resting facilities and amenities provided to train crew members of the Vande Bharat Sleeper and other premium trains were reviewed. Stress was laid on maintaining high standards of comfort and operational readiness for railway staff.

At the Coach Maintenance Depot, Kamakhya, the MTRS inspected India's first Vande Bharat rake and reviewed various maintenance and safety practices being

adopted at the depot.

At the pit line, detailed observations were made regarding new and advanced methods of rolling stock condition monitoring. The MTRS interacted with staff, appreciated their dedication and commended the implementation of several new safety measures.

The inspection also included a review of the quality standards of the Vande Bharat Sleeper coaches. Suggestions were provided for further strengthening safety practices and enhancing maintenance efficiency.

Officials briefed the MTRS about the technology-based rolling stock and track monitoring systems currently being developed by the Lumding Division. The initiatives are aimed at improving predictive maintenance, operational safety and overall efficiency of railway operations across the zone.

The MTRS also interacted with officers and staff, emphasising continuous innovation, safety consciousness and teamwork in railway operations.

Northeast Frontier Railway remains committed to modernisation, safety enhancement and passenger comfort through the adoption of advanced technologies and best operational practices.

# Garima Saikia Garg plants Nahor sapling

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, May 11:** Garima Saikia Garg, wife of Zubeen Garg, along with members of his Jontro musical band, on Monday planted a Nahor sapling at Garg's former residence at Bongal Pukhuri here.

Garima, after planting the sapling, told newsmen that Zubeen, who was very fond of the Nahor tree had wanted to plant another tree at the premises following the dying of a Nahor tree planted by him earlier.

Stating that Zubeen had a deep attachment towards the earlier tree he had planted, which had grown very tall, she said that whenever Zubeen came to Jorhat, he used to visit the tree even after midnight and would hug and talk to it.

Garima said that a branch of the tree had fallen on the roof of the house and damaged the tin sheet over the room in which Zubeen had once resided, adding that this incident occurred on October 29, 2024 and seemed to presage the death of Zubeen on September 19, 2025.

She said Zubeen had planned to plant a tree at the house compound during his proposed participation in the centenary celebrations of Bongal Pukhuri Durga Puja in 2025, but his wish remained unfulfilled.

Garima further said that the house had been sold to a businessman in 2003 and she had visited the place on May 1, during which she held discussions with the owner regarding planting a tree.

# 75th Council Foundation Day celebrated at NCHAC Secretariat Field

## CEM Gorlosa highlights peace, heritage and development at grand celebration

**HT Correspondent**

**HAFLONG, May 11:** The 75th Council Foundation Day was celebrated with grandeur and vibrant cultural participation at the NCHAC Secretariat Field.

On this occasion, Chief Executive Member (CEM) Debolal Gorlosa extended heartfelt greetings to all citizens, emphasising the importance of peace and harmony in the district. He expressed gratitude to every community and individual for keeping this spirit alive. He lauded the untiring efforts of tribal committees in codifying customary laws, now preserved and displayed at the Council Customary Court Library.

Remembering the contributions of historical figures such as King Govind Chandra, Senapati Tularam, Rani Gaidinliu, D Hojai and others, the CEM acknowledged their role in safeguarding traditions and pledged to continue strengthening cultural heritage. "It has been my duty and prestige to uphold these traditions for the past nine years, though much work still lies ahead," he remarked.



Highlighting development priorities, Gorlosa stressed regional connectivity and celebrated the district's academic achievements, particularly the recent success of students securing the first position in the Matriculation results in Assam. He further assured that the long-standing issue of salaries in the NCHAC has been largely mitigated, urging employees and teachers to continue their work with diligence.

The celebration saw the release of Class-II textbooks for Dimas medium LP schools, an award ceremony for Best Village under the DARA DISA Scheme 2025 and enhancement of remuneration for Gaon Buras to ₹ 5,000, among various other initiatives.

The event was graced by MLA Rupali Langthasa, Padmashri awardees Joynacharan Bathari and Ramkuiwangbe Jeme Newme, executive members, MACs, secretaries, ex-MACs, Gaon Buras, and distinguished guests.

# Youth drowned in Siloni River, body recovered by SDRF



**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, May 11:** The body of a youth was recovered on Monday by divers of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) from the Siloni River in Karbi Anglong. The report of a youth missing in the river was

received by the SDRF around 2 PM on Sunday, but as night fell the search was called off and resumed on Monday, leading to the recovery of the body.

According to reports, Ritish Bora (19), a resident of Haldiat, Bakulia in Karbi Anglong district, had come to the Siloni picnic spot yesterday along with four family members and one friend. The group of six arrived at the spot around 1 PM by auto-rickshaw.

Soon after reaching the area, Ritish and his friend reportedly went towards a dangerous point of the Siloni River. During the incident, Ritish Bora was swept away by the strong current and drowned, while his friend narrowly managed to save himself. The remaining four family members were safe.

The Siloni picnic spot, located about 40 km from Diphu is run by the Forest Department and is popular among residents of Karbi Anglong, neighbouring districts, and the state of Nagaland.

As per an SDRF jawan in the rescue team, the body was found away from the spot where the youth went under, beside a boulder on the riverbed and almost buried under sand.

The section of the river where the youth drowned is unusually deep, up to 25 feet, with strong current. The area has a warning sign reading "Danger Spot, Avoid, Closed Spot" written on a stone jutting from the river, but people continue to enter despite warnings.

Every year, one or two youths reportedly drown in the river by ignoring safety notices at the spot.

# Keot Jatiya Parishad greets CM

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 11:** The All Assam Keot Jatiya Parishad has extended its heartfelt greetings to Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma for the NDA's success in the recently concluded Assam Legislative Assembly election.

On the eve of his swearing-in ceremony as Chief Minister, the organisation's president Dilip Kumar Bora, working president Priyoram Khataniyar and general secretary Dilip Deka in a statement issued to the press, expressed hope that the NDA government led by CM Sarma would work sincerely towards fulfilling the aspirations and expectations of the various communities residing in Assam.

The statement mentioned that it was due to the capable leadership of CM Sarma that the NDA could secure an absolute majority in the

state. It further stated that the government received the public mandate because of the development and good governance witnessed in Assam over the past five years. For this achievement, the All Assam Keot Jatiya Parishad congratulated CM Sarma.

The organisation also urged the new government to address the long-standing demands raised by the Keot community of Assam, which, according to the statement has remained neglected in various spheres.

The statement additionally conveyed greetings to all the newly elected MLAs of the Assam Legislative Assembly, especially Ranjeet Kumar Dass of Bhawanipur-Sarbhog constituency, Mrinal Saikia of Khumtai constituency and Bikash Saikia of Teok constituency.

# Zaloni Ladies Club organises health camp under Project Nightingale

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, May 11:** A health camp was successfully organised by Zaloni Ladies Club under Project Nightingale on Sunday at 44 No Hatiali Deharang LP School near Kothaloni OCS with the objective of providing basic healthcare services, medical consultation and health awareness to the local community.

Started in the year 2002, Project Nightingale has been dedicated to providing medical aid to underprivileged communities living in remote Oil India Limited (OIL) operational areas where healthcare facilities are scarce. The initiative is undertaken by Zaloni Ladies Club in collaboration with OIL Hospital and is organised twice annually to ensure the availability of essential healthcare services for the community.

The Zaloni Ladies Club team was led by president Srutimala Bora and included advisors Susmita Bhatlacharya and Dr Leena Das, Secretary Henna Deori, members Pallabi Bhagawati and Rashmi Swargyari and Convener Dr Pallavi B Bhattacharjya.

The camp was conducted with the support and coop-

eration of doctors from OIL Hospital under the leadership of Dr N K Das, Executive Director (Medical Services), OIL, along with a dedicated team of doctors and paramedical staff comprising GNM nurses, pharmacists, laboratory technicians, dental technicians, optometrists and OPD staff members.

Services provided during the camp included consultations and check-ups in medicine, ENT, ophthalmology, paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology and dental care. General health check-ups, blood pressure monitoring, blood sugar testing, counselling on healthy lifestyle practices, cervical cancer screening, and distribution of medicines were also carried out during the camp.

A total of 206 patients attended the camp and benefited from the healthcare services provided. In addition, 10 cervical cancer screenings were conducted and 60 food packets were distributed among children.

The initiative was highly appreciated by the local community and played a significant role in promoting preventive and primary healthcare services at the grassroots level.



# MBBS student dies in road accident at Kaliabor

**HT Correspondent**

**KHERONI, May 11:** A pall of gloom has descended over the Phelangi area of Kheroni in West Karbi Anglong following the tragic demise of Mongve Ingti, a young medical student who lost his life in a horrific road accident at Hataigaon, Kaliabor.

Mongve Ingti was a second-year MBBS student at the Nagaon Medical College and Hospital (NMCH). Known for his academic dedication, his sudden passing has sent shockwaves across the Greater Kheroni region and his hometown.

Upon receiving the news, Mongve's grief-stricken parents and family members rushed to Nagaon. The scene at the hospital was deeply emotional as the family had to confront the sudden loss of their young son.

In a particularly moving turn of events, Mongve's elder brother, Sar-kiri Ingti, who is a final-year medical student at Barpeta Medical College and Hospital, also arrived at NMCH. Having to witness his younger brother's lifeless body, Sar-kiri was seen breaking down in inconsolable grief, a sight that moved many bystanders to tears.

The authorities of Nagaon Medical College, along with the faculty and the entire student fraternity, gathered to pay their last respects to the departed soul. Following a solemn tribute held at the college premises, the mortal remains of Mongve Ingti were handed over to the family to be taken to his ancestral home in Phelangi for the final rites.

The local community in Kheroni continues to mourn the loss of a promising youth who was on his way to serving society as a doctor.

# LPG shortage hits Nagaon, consumers face hardship amid DAC delays

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, May 11:** Nagaon district is grappling with a severe shortage of domestic LPG cylinders, leaving consumers in distress as many fail to receive Delivery Authentication Code (DAC) numbers on time despite completing registration.

According to complaints from local consumers, authorities have tightened the supply of LPG cylinders citing fuel and cooking gas shortages amid the Iran-America conflict. This has directly impacted households relying on domestic cylinders.

Even after following all directives issued by the concerned authorities, a section of consumers allege that they are not receiving cylinders within the stipulated time. The core issue lies in the delay of DAC numbers. Gas agencies have expressed their inability to supply cylinders because DAC numbers are not being generated within the fixed period after registration.

The situation is acute in Nagaon district. Although Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) has set timelines for agencies to deliver cylinders, many consumers in Nagaon have not received their DAC numbers even 10-15 days after registration. This has triggered widespread distress among households.

Agency sources confirmed that despite having adequate stock of cylinders, they cannot release them to consumers solely because DAC numbers have not been issued. The problem persists even for consumers holding valid permits for two cylinders.

Meanwhile, allegations of black market sales have surfaced in Nagaon, along with several other districts of the state. Consumers told media that a cylinder officially priced at ₹ 985 is being sold for ₹ 1,500 to ₹ 2,000 in the black market. Frustrated consumers have urged the concerned authorities to expedite the registration system and ensure faster issuance of DAC numbers so that regular supply can resume.

Experts stress sustainable innovation, environmental protection and healthcare research

# CSIR-NEIST celebrates National Technology Day

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, May 11:** CSIR-North East Institute of Science and Technology (CSIR-NEIST) celebrated National Technology Day 2026 with great enthusiasm and academic spirit under the theme, 'Responsible Innovation for Inclusive Growth'.

In his Technology Day lecture, Dr S Chandrasekhar, former Secretary, DST, Govt and Chief Scientific Adviser, PI Industries, spoke extensively on human health, environmental sustainability and the long-term consequences of unchecked industrialisation. He observed that rapid industrial growth over the past one and a half centuries has exerted immense pressure on the planet in the name of development. Elaborating on issues related to DNA and genomic damage, he called for greater public awareness regarding environmental degradation and recommended thought-provoking literature such as We Are Eating Earth.

Dr Chandrasekhar, who was



the chief guest on the occasion, also highlighted the remarkable contributions of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research towards national development through pioneering research and innovation. He further spoke on the scientific challenges posed by diseases such as tuberculosis and underscored the importance of research-driven healthcare interven-

tions. Emphasising sustainable solutions, he advocated the adoption of green ammonia and renewable energy sources as essential steps towards environmental protection and ecological balance.

Addressing the gathering as guest of honour, Professor Narinder K Mehra, Emeritus Scientist, ICMR, delivered an insightful talk on the growing

interrelationship between climate change and antimicrobial resistance (AMR). He expressed deep concern over the increasing health risks arising from environmental degradation, particularly the rise in cancer and drug-resistant infections linked to air pollution and antimicrobial resistance. He also discussed the alarming presence of AMR within the food chain and its implications for public health.

Highlighting the possible environmental links to Type 2 diabetes, Professor Mehra stressed the urgent need for sustainable development strategies and proactive preparedness to address emerging global health challenges.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Director of CSIR-NEIST, Dr Virendra Tiwari, highlighted the immense contributions of the invited dignitaries towards national development, particularly during the challenging pandemic years. Reflecting on the significance of National Technology Day, he recalled the historic Pokhran nuclear

mission and underscored the importance of the peaceful application of nuclear energy for national progress. He further emphasised the pivotal role of science, technology and innovation in building a resilient, sustainable and inclusive society.

On the occasion, Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed between CSIR-NEIST and Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Vishwavidyalaya, Golaghat, as well as with Assam Down Town University, Guwahati, marking an important step towards strengthening academic and research collaborations.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr P Yuvraj, Principal Scientist, CSIR-NEIST. The programme was conducted by Dr Monti Gogoi, TA, CSIR-NEIST. A tree plantation drive was also carried out within the institute campus, symbolising the collective commitment towards environmental sustainability and a greener future.

## Philippines VP impeached by lawmakers over suspected wealth, threats

### Duterte had survived an impeachment bid last year

MANILA, May 11: An overwhelming majority of the House of Representatives of the Philippines voted to impeach Vice President Sara Duterte on Monday over alleged unexplained wealth and threats to have the president assassinated, as the rift between the camps of the country's top two officials escalated.

The House, which is dominated by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s allies, voted 257-25 with nine abstentions. The two impeachment complaints against Duterte, which will now be elevated to the Senate for a trial, mark an initial setback to her plan to seek the presidency in 2028.

Shortly before the impeachment vote in the House, Senate President Vicente Sotto III, who had vowed to immediately put the vice president to trial, was ousted by 13 of 24 senators, including supporters of the vice president and her father, former President Rodrigo Duterte.

It's not immediately clear how the vice president's impending impeachment trial would be affected by the Senate leadership change, but Sotto told reporters that he and his allies in the Senate would insist that the proceedings against the vice president should be immediately taken up once submitted.

#### A standoff in the Senate

A tense standoff ensued when Sen. Roland dela Rosa, a supporter of former President Duterte, who is facing trial before the International Criminal Court in the Netherlands, suddenly appeared in the Senate after months of absence.

National Bureau of Investigation officers tried to run after dela Rosa but failed to reach him as he dashed into the Senate's plenary hall and sought the protection of fellow senators.

Rodrigo Duterte was arrested in March last year and detained in the Netherlands on charges of crimes against humanity. The charges are in

#### Pakistan summons Afghan diplomat over deadly KPK attack

ISLAMABAD, May 11: Pakistan on Monday summoned the Afghan Charge d'Affaires and issued a "strong demarche" over a deadly attack carried out by the TTP on a police post in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

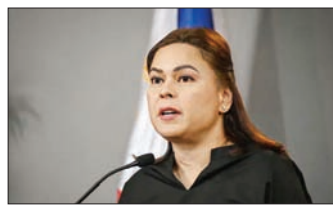
At least 15 security personnel were killed and several others injured in the suicide attack on the police post in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district on Saturday.

The ministry conveyed that a detailed investigation into the incident, along with evidence collected and technical intelligence, indicates that the attack was masterminded by terrorists residing in Afghanistan, the Foreign Office (FO) said in a statement.

"Reiterating Pakistan's grave concern over the continued use of Afghan soil for terrorist attacks against Pakistan, it was impressed upon the Afghan side that Pakistan reserves the right to respond decisively against the perpetrators of this barbaric act," it said.

It was further highlighted that the continued presence of various terrorist groups on Afghan soil, and the permissive environment enabling their operations, have been well documented in reports by the UN Monitoring Team and other international organisations, the FO said.

"The fight against terrorism is a common cause, and the Afghan Taliban must honour their commitment not to allow their territory to be used for terrorism against other countries," it said.



connection with deadly anti-drugs crackdowns he ordered while he was in office.

Dela Rosa once served as the national police chief under Duterte, and was the first to enforce the bloody campaign against illegal drugs that left thousands of mostly petty suspects dead.

Philippine police officials have summoned dela Rosa to appear before them for an investigation into his role in the Duterte-era killings.

The vice president has generally denied any wrongdoing without answering the criminal allegations against her in detail. Her lawyers said Monday they were ready to defend her in a trial.

"While questions of constitutional significance remain pending before the Supreme Court, we are fully prepared to defend the vice president before the Senate," the lawyers said in a statement, adding that "it is incumbent upon the prosecution to discharge the burden of proof."

She has repeatedly accused Marcos, his wife and his cousin, former House Speaker Martin Romualdez, of corruption, weak leadership and attempting to muzzle her because of speculation she may seek the presidency in 2028 when Marcos' six-year term ends.

Last year, she was also impeached by the House but survived by successfully petitioning the Supreme Court to declare the impeachment bid unconstitutional on a technicality.

Rep. Gervilio Luistro, who heads the House Justice Committee, said the impeachment complaints included several criminal allegations,

like huge bank transactions over the years that Duterte has not declared as required by law and misuse of confidential funds of her office as vice president and as education secretary, a post she once held under Marcos.

Luistro also cited threats made by the vice president during an online news conference in 2024 to have Marcos, his wife and Romualdez killed by an assassin if she herself was assassinated, as their political disputes escalated. The vice president then warned that her threat wasn't a joke.

The vice president later said she wasn't threatening him but was expressing concern for her own safety. Her threatening remarks set off a criminal investigation and national security concerns.

"These are matters that go into the integrity and accountability and fitness of a public official occupying the second highest position in our government," Rep. Leila de Lima, who endorsed one of two impeachment complaints against Duterte, told fellow lawmakers.

"Impeachment is not political persecution," de Lima said in response to allegations by Duterte's followers.

The vice president's husband, Manases Carpio, has filed criminal complaints against Luistro and other legislators and officials after government records of the couple's bank transactions were made public in a recent House hearing.

They said that violated the country's bank secrecy law.

The vice president remains popular, based on independent surveys. Sara Duterte and President Marcos were running mates in a whirlwind alliance in the 2022 election but have since had a bitter falling out.

She has accused Marcos of allowing the ICC to carry out what she described as the "kidnapping" of her father in violation of Philippine laws. (AP)

## EU imposes sanctions over helping Russia abduct thousands of Ukrainian children

BRUSSELS, May 11: The European Union on Monday imposed sanctions on 16 officials accused of helping Russia to abduct tens of thousands of children from Ukraine and force many to change their identities or be put up for adoption.

Sanctions were also slapped on seven centres suspected of indoctrinating the children or training them to serve in the armed forces, either for Russia or pro-Russian militias inside Ukraine. Over 130 people and "entities" are now under EU sanctions over the abductions.

EU headquarters said the asset freezes and travel bans were imposed because the officials and centres are deemed "responsible for actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine."

Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, an estimated 20,500 children have been unlawfully deported or forcibly transferred to Russia or Russian-held territories in eastern Ukraine.

EU officials say many of the children are stripped of their Ukrainian identity and culture, given Russian passports and put up for adoption. Some are forced into schools for indoctrination or into military camps.

"Russia is trying to erase their identity," Latvian Foreign Minister Baiba Braze said Monday at a meeting with EU counterparts in Brussels, where the sanctions were endorsed.

"When you look at the Genocide Convention, it's one of the features of

the genocide crime. So, it's very serious."

The International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for war crimes, accusing him of personal responsibility for the abductions.

Around 2,200 children have been returned, but identifying them is complicated. Children taken at a young age can be difficult to recognise just a few years later. Getting them home is a harrowing task, and some children are not necessarily welcomed when they return.

The EU on Monday was hosting, alongside Canada, a meeting of the 47-country International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children to increase diplomatic pressure on Russia and rally support for work to verify and trace those who are taken.

"War has really many faces, but stealing the children is really one of the most horrific," EU Enlargement Commissioner Marta Kos said ahead of the gathering. "We should stop this, and Russia should pay."

The officials targeted by Monday's sanctions include the heads of children's camps, government representatives and military officers in charge of youth training.

One of the 16 named was Lilya Shvetsova, head of the "Red Carnation" camp in occupied Crimea. The EU said she supervised "activities aimed at shaping the political and ideological views of children present at the facility, including Ukrainian children." (AP)

## Iran, US are at impasse ahead of Trump's China trip

DUBAI, May 11: Iran and the United States reached an impasse again Monday over how to end their war while their ceasefire grew increasingly shaky, with the two sides exchanging fire in recent days, ships and Gulf states being targeted, and fighting flaring between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

The volatility could tip the Middle East back into open warfare and prolong the worldwide energy crisis sparked by the conflict, with Iran's chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz and America's blockade of Iranian ports still in place. US President Donald Trump is expected to use a trip this week to China to urge Chinese President Xi Jinping to pressure Iran into making concessions and end the current limbo. Beijing is the biggest buyer of the Islamic Republic's sanctioned crude oil, giving it leverage.

But getting to any deal likely remains tough work. Iran insists it wants to see the American blockade end and sanctions lifted before beginning negotiations over its stockpile of highly enriched uranium. The US and Israel — want that material removed since it could be used to eventually build a bomb, should Iran choose to do so. Tehran insists its program is peaceful, but it has enriched uranium beyond the levels needed for civilian power generation.

Israel insists enriched uranium must be taken out of Iran. Trump said Sunday that Iran's response to his latest proposal was "TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE!"

Ending the blockade before discussing Iran's nuclear program would eliminate a major point of leverage for Trump in the talks.

In the meantime, the standoff over the strait, which is a key transit point for the world's oil and natural gas exports, has sent fuel prices skyrocketing and rattled world markets.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who launched the war with Trump on Feb. 28, insisted that the conflict was "not over," telling CBS's "60 Minutes" in an interview that aired Sunday that a critical goal is getting the nuclear material out of Iran. If that can't be accomplished with negotiations, Netanyahu said that Israel and the US agree "we can renege on them militarily."

Netanyahu also said the current Iranian government's "days are numbered — but it could take a lot of days."

The US and Israel have killed dozens of high-ranking Iranian officials, including the country's supreme leader, in the opening salvos of the war, and the conflict has inflicted heavy damage to Iran's economy, but its theocracy



would eliminate a major point of leverage for Trump in the talks.

Iran and the US blame each other for the impasse

Trump immediately rejected a new Iranian proposal sent to him on Sunday via Pakistan. In it, Iran demanded war reparations from the US, full Iranian sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, an end to sanctions and the release of its seized assets abroad, Iranian state television reported.

Iran also called for an immediate end to the war, including the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, which have repeatedly exchanged fire, though technically also in a ceasefire. That conflict has seen Israeli strikes into Lebanon, its occupation of Lebanese territory and deadly Hezbollah attacks, including one that killed another Israeli soldier, the Israeli military said Monday.

"We did not demand any concessions — the only thing we demanded was Iran's legitimate rights," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said Monday. "The American side still insists on its one-sided views and

unreasonable demands."

Iran did, however, offer to dilute part of its highly enriched uranium and transport the rest to a third country, and called for 30-day negotiations to finalise details, two regional officials involved in the negotiations told The Associated Press. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive diplomacy taking place.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has offered to take the uranium from Iran.

Russia runs Iran's sole nuclear power plant at Bushehr and also took some of Iran's uranium stockpile in Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Asked Monday about Putin's comments, Baghaei said: "At the current stage, our focus is on ending the war."

Iran keeps up its executions. Meanwhile, Iran executed another man it accused of spying for both the CIA and Israel's Mossad intelligence service. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency identified the prisoner as Erfan Shakourzadeh, saying he had worked on satellite communications and relayed classified information to those intelligence services.

Iran has carried out a string of executions since nationwide protests swept the country in January. Activist groups have long accused Iran of carrying out closed-door trials during which defendants are unable to fully defend themselves. Iran's judiciary chief has repeatedly said that Tehran would increase the speed with which it carried out hangings to fight back against its enemies at home and abroad. (AP)

## 3 passengers, French and American, test positive or have symptoms of hantavirus after evacuation



THE HAGUE, May 11: A French woman and two Americans tested positive or showed symptoms of hantavirus Monday as nations around the world scrambled to repatriate passengers from a cruise ship hit by an outbreak and quarantine or isolate them.

Passengers from the ship began flying home aboard military and government planes Sunday after the vessel anchored in the Canary Islands. Personnel in full-body protective gear and breathing masks had escorted the travellers from ship to shore in Tenerife in an effort that was continuing Monday.

The French woman tested positive for hantavirus and her health worsened in the hospital overnight, French Health Minister Stephanie Rist said Monday. The woman was among five French passengers repatriated Sunday to Paris from the MV Hondius. She developed symptoms on the flight to Paris, Rist told public broadcaster France-Inter.

One of the 17 American passengers evacuated from the ship and flown to Nebraska also tested positive for the hantavirus but is not showing any symptoms, and another had mild symptoms, US health officials said late Sunday.

The flight landed in the early hours of Monday morning and stopped near awaiting buses and police vehicles.

The Americans would first be taken to the University of Nebraska Medical Centre, which has a federally funded quarantine facility, to assess whether they have been in close contact with any symptomatic people and their risk levels for spreading the virus.

"One passenger will be transported to the Nebraska Biocontainment Unit upon arrival, while other passengers will go to the National Quarantine Unit for assessment and monitoring. The passenger who is going to the Biocontainment Unit tested positive for the virus but does not have symptoms," said Kayla Thomas, a

spokesperson for the Nebraska Medicine hospital that will help care for the passengers.

The medical school also has a special unit for treating people with highly infectious diseases that was used early in the pandemic for COVID-19 patients and previously for Ebola patients.

The World Health Organisation recommended close monitoring of the former passengers, and many countries quarantined them.

Earlier, officials from the Spanish Health Ministry, the World Health Organisation and the cruise company Oceanwide Expeditions had said none of the more than 140 people who were then on the Hondius had shown symptoms of the virus.

All of the passengers were escorted Sunday from the ship to shore by personnel in full-body protective gear and breathing masks. The planes arriving in Tenerife were to fly out passengers from more than 20 countries in an evacuation effort that was running into Monday.

Three people have died since the outbreak began, and five people who left the ship earlier were infected.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has stressed that the general public should not be worried about the outbreak. "This is not another COVID. And the risk to the public is low. So they shouldn't be scared, and they shouldn't panic," he said Sunday.

Hantavirus usually spreads from rodent droppings and is not easily transmitted between people. But the Andes virus detected in the cruise ship outbreak may be able to spread between people in rare cases. Symptoms usually show between one and eight weeks after exposure.

WHO is recommending that passengers' home countries "have active monitoring and follow-up, which means daily health checks, either at home or in a specialised facility," said Maria van Kerkhove, the organisation's top epidemiologist.

Numerous countries have said their people will be quarantined or hospitalised for observation. Australia is sending a plane, expected to arrive Monday, to evacuate its people and those from nearby countries, such as New Zealand, and unspecified Asian countries, said Spanish Health Minister Monica Garcia, who added that the evacuation flight was expected to be the last to leave Tenerife.

Dutch Foreign Minister Tom Berendsen said a second Dutch flight Monday would bring back more passengers from the Netherlands and other nations.

Berendsen said the evacuation operation "is based on concern for the passengers. But also concern for public health, and we try to do that in the best way". (AP)

## Thailand's Thaksin released from prison after serving 8 months for abuse of power

BANGKOK, May 11: Thailand's former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, whose 21st-century political odyssey sharply divided Thai society for decades, was released from a Bangkok prison on Monday after serving eight months of a one-year sentence for a corruption-related charge.

A crowd of about 300 supporters and political allies gathered outside the Klong Prem Central Prison to greet the 76-year-old billionaire populist.

Thaksin was a telecommunications magnate who founded his own political party in 1998 and served as prime minister from 2001 until a military coup ousted him in 2006 while he was abroad.

His ouster triggered nearly two decades of deep and sometimes violent political polarisation, while his political machine staged several comebacks even as Thaksin himself stayed in self-imposed exile to escape what he said was political persecution through the courts.

His three children, including former prime minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, and other family members

also arrived early to welcome him.

Thaksin emerged from the prison gate in a white polo shirt and blue pants and was embraced by his family. He smiled brightly as he walked around to greet his supporters who chanted "we love Thaksin", and gave red roses to him. He then left without speaking to reporters.

He arrived at his residence in western Bangkok about an hour later. In a video streamed by Thairath News, Thaksin was seen rolling down the car window to greet a small group of supporters waiting at his home, responding to reporters' shouted questions that "I was in hibernation, I can't remember anything now".

Thaksin was the first elected prime minister in Thai history to serve a full four-year term. Policies like a national healthcare scheme and projects to build roads in less developed parts of the country drew devoted support from the poorer segments of society, particularly in the rural north and northeast, but his popularity and sometimes high-handed style created deep fractures between his base and the country's urban elites, royalists, and military. (AP)

## China's passenger car exports surge nearly 85 pc in April as domestic sales slump

HONG KONG, May 11: China's exports of passenger cars surged in April, an industry group said Monday, as its carmakers push to expand in overseas markets as domestic sales continue to fall.

Exports of passenger cars from China last month jumped almost 85 per cent from a year ago to around 796,000 vehicles, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers. That's up from the 748,000 vehicles exported in March.

Among them, exports of new energy passenger vehicles, including battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids, jumped more than 120 per cent last month from the year before, to about 420,000 units.

At home, however, sales of passenger cars dropped 25.5 per cent from the year before to 1.3 million vehicles, marking its sixth straight month of year-on-year declines, CAAM data showed.

Domestic car demand in China has weakened due to dialled-back



government support this year for drivers to switch to new energy vehicles, auto analysts said, while the country's uncertain economic outlook, triggered by a prolonged property sector downturn, has also been holding some consumers off from purchasing new cars in the world's largest auto market.

Competition among Chinese carmakers has also been fierce. At the

Beijing auto show last month, more than 1,450 vehicles were showcased as companies displayed their latest models and technologies, from artificial intelligence-infused cars to advanced ultrafast-charging batteries.

Some analysts believe that domestic car sales momentum could improve later this year as more new models are rolled out. More Chi-

nese consumers will also probably start buying new cars again as they increasingly adjust to the government subsidy changes this year. Yichao Zhang, an automotive practice partner at consultancy AlixPartners, added.

Overseas, leading Chinese car brands such as BYD and Geely Auto are making inroads. In addition to export growth, some automakers, including BYD, have also been expanding production capacity abroad by building factories in regions such as Europe and Latin America.

As the war in Iran drives up petrol prices, there are also growing expectations that more drivers globally will switch to EVs. One in six new vehicles sold in Australia in April were EVs, according to the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, and BYD was the second-highest-selling brand behind Toyota.

With oil and fuel prices likely to stay elevated for a longer period,

Claire Yuan, an auto analyst at S&P Global Ratings, said it would likely "incentivise consumers to buy EVs, and this will benefit Chinese EV exports."

China's overall passenger car exports could still rise by around 20 per cent in 2026, according to estimates by AlixPartners, with Chinese carmakers expanding in key markets such as Southeast Asia.

Beijing has also made progress with the European Union and Canada over their imports of Chinese EVs. Some in the auto industry are closely watching trade discussions between US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping later this week when the American leader visits Beijing.

There has been pushback from the US against Chinese automakers' access to the American market, after Chinese EVs became virtually blocked from entering the United States due to a 100 per cent tariff imposed in 2024 by former President Joe Biden's administration. (AP)

# Manik Saha says ancient culture and traditions receiving renewed focus since 2014 Tripura CM praises revival of temples under Modi



**AGARTALA, May 11:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday said the country has witnessed massive redevelopment and protection of ancient history, culture, traditions and temples since Narendra Modi became prime minister in 2014.

Addressing the 'Somnath Swabhiman Parv', Saha said there had been repeated attempts to destroy the historic temple in Gujarat, but it continued to stand as a symbol of the country's ancient religious pride. The programme marks 1,000 years since Mahmud of Ghazni's invasion of the Somnath temple in the year 1026.

"Whenever invaders such as Alauddin Khilji, Jafar Khan and Aurangzeb attacked the temple, people came forward and rebuilt it to save the pride of our civilisation," he said.

Earlier, the CM offered prayers at Shivbari temple to mark the 'Somnath Swabhiman Parv'. (PTI)

The chief minister said the PM has focused on the redevelopment of several religious structures, which, according to him, was not witnessed during previous regimes.

"The country has been witnessing massive redevelopment and protection of ancient history, culture, traditions and temples after Narendra Modi became prime minister in 2014. The world is changing very fast, but we should not forget our roots, which are laid in ancient culture, tradition and religious pride," he said.

Saha said the present government has initiated the process of redeveloping religious structures across Tripura.

Earlier, the CM offered prayers at Shivbari temple to mark the 'Somnath Swabhiman Parv'. (PTI)

# Khandu hails India's scientific progress on National Technology Day

## Arunachal CM says India emerging as global leader in science, defence and innovation



**ITANAGAR, May 11:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday hailed India's growing technological strength, scientific excellence and self-reliance on the occasion of National Technology Day, saying the country continues to emerge as a global leader in science, defence and innovation.

In a social media post, Khandu said the day commemorates the successful Pokhran-II nuclear tests, which he described as a defining moment that showcased India's technological strength and resolve before the world.

"On the occasion of National Technology Day, we celebrate India's remarkable journey of scientific excellence, innovation, and self-reliance," the chief minister said in a post on X.

Highlighting the country's progress in various sectors, Khandu said, "Today, with rapid advancements in indigenous defence systems, next-generation technologies, and space innovation, India continues to emerge as a global leader in science and technology."

Paying tribute to the scientific community, he added, "A heartfelt salute to our scientists, engineers, and innovators whose dedication continues to build a stronger, self-reliant, and future-ready India. Jai Hind!"

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also extended greetings on the occasion and stressed the role of technology in improving people's lives and strengthening governance.

"Technology is not just about machines and innovation, it is about empowering people, connecting communities and creating opportunities for every citizen," Mein said in his social media message.

He said National Technology Day is an occasion to honour "visionaries, scientists, innovators, entrepreneurs and young minds whose ideas continue to drive India towards progress and self-reliance."

Referring to Arunachal Pradesh, the deputy chief

minister said technology is increasingly transforming governance, education, healthcare, connectivity and livelihoods across the state, including remote regions.

"In Arunachal Pradesh, we are witnessing how technology is transforming governance, education, healthcare, connectivity, and livelihoods, reaching even the farthest corners of our state," he said.

"Our commitment remains firm: to build an inclusive, digitally empowered and future-ready Arunachal," Mein added, while calling upon people to continue innovating and working together towards a technologically advanced India.

National Technology Day is observed every year on May 11 to commemorate the successful Pokhran-II nuclear tests conducted in Rajasthan in 1998 under Operation Shakti.

The day was officially declared by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1999 to honour India's achievements in science and technology and recognise the contributions of scientists, engineers and innovators to national development. (PTI)

## Women-led cafe set up at 13,000 ft with Indian Army's help to boost tourism in East Sikkim

**GANGTOK, May 11:** A cafe with all-women staff has been set up close to the Baba Harbhajan Singh Shrine in East Sikkim at an altitude of 13,000 feet with the Indian Army's help for the economic empowerment of communities in remote areas, an official said on Monday.

A public relations officer of the Army said the initiative reflects resilience, enterprise and self-reliance in the remote high-altitude region, and is expected to further enhance visitor experience in the area.

The project has been conceptualised and facilitated by the Trishakti Corps in coordination with civil administration and local stakeholders, a statement from the Army said. As part of the broader Ranbhoomi Darshan initiative, it aims to promote tourism in the area while showcasing the region's heritage and strategic significance, it added.

The cafe is generating local employment opportunities, particularly for women, thereby contributing to economic empowerment in remote communities, the release said, adding that by integrating livelihood generation with tourism, the initiative is expected to support sustainable development and increased tourist inflow.

"The effort stands as a reflection of effective military-civil collaboration, reinforcing the Indian Army's commitment to inclusive growth and development in border areas, while fostering stronger connections with citizens of India," the statement added. (PTI)

## Body of teenager feared drowned in Yomgo river found after a week

**ITANAGAR, May 11:** The decomposed body of a 17-year-old boy from Maharashtra, feared drowned earlier this month, was recovered from the banks of the Yomgo river in Arunachal Pradesh's Siang district, police said on Monday.

The teenager, identified as Prateshmesh Baswakar, son of ITBP personnel Rahul Baswakar and a resident of the ITBP camp in Guminagar, Aalo, went missing on May 3 during a picnic near Bene village.

He was feared drowned in the Yomgo river in West Siang district on May 3. His body was found on the Yomgo riverbank near Dama village in neighbouring Siang district on Monday, the police said.

Investigating officer Sub-Inspector Laxhi Mena said that the decomposed body found on Monday was that of Baswakar. (PTI)

# Khangri glacier in Arunachal showing rapid changes, flood threat detected: Study

**ITANAGAR, May 11:** Scientists studying the Khangri glacier in Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang district have observed rapid melting, formation of unstable terrain and the emergence of a potentially dangerous glacial lake that could pose a flood threat to downstream areas in the Mago Chu basin, an official said on Monday.

The findings were made during the fifth Khangri glacier expedition conducted by the Centre for Earth Sciences and Himalayan Studies (CESHS) here, in collaboration with the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research and the North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology, he said.

The scientific expedition began on May 4 in the transboundary Mago Chu basin, a key headwaters region of the Brahmaputra Basin system, with an aim of carrying out glacier health assessments, cryosphere monitoring, and climate hazard studies in the eastern Himalayas.

CESHS director Tage Tana said the expedition team observed "alarming geomorphological changes in the Khangri glacier" during ground studies, indicating

the growing impact of climate variability in the high-altitude Himalayan region.

Among the major observations was the development of a large glacier sinking zone where the glacier snout is rapidly collapsing, creating unstable terrain conditions.

Scientists warned that such instability could increase landscape hazards and downstream vulnerability in the Mago Chu basin.

The team also identified a newly formed proglacial lake at an altitude of around 16,500 feet.

According to the scientists, the lake has the potential to trigger a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF), which could impact downstream communities and river systems, including transboundary regions.

Despite comparatively good snowfall during the winter season this year, researchers found that glacier melting continues at a critical pace due to rising temperatures and persistent climate variability across the eastern Himalayas, Tana said.

To strengthen long-term glacier monitoring, the team installed five

new scientific monitoring stakes at elevations of nearly 17,000 feet using an ice-core drilling system integrated with Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) technology.

These installations will help monitor glacier mass balance and surface movement in the coming years.

The expedition team also retrieved important data from the existing automatic weather station (AWS) and automatic water level recorder. Maintenance and calibration of the systems were also carried out to ensure uninterrupted environmental monitoring in the high-altitude region, the official said.

In addition, moraine sediments and glacier meltwater samples were collected from the glacier snout for geochemical analysis.

Tana said the successful completion of the expedition has strengthened long-term cryosphere monitoring efforts in the eastern Himalayas and will provide important scientific inputs on glacier dynamics, water security, and climate-related hazards in the region. (PTI)

# NU-led study moots 'biochar' as solution for soil health in Nagaland

**DIMAPUR, May 11:** A Nagaland University-led international study is mooting the use of 'biochar' as a practical and affordable solution to address water scarcity and soil degradation in the hilly regions of Nagaland.

Biochar is a carbon-rich material produced by heating crop residues and organic biomass in low-oxygen conditions.

The findings highlight how converting agricultural waste into biochar can help improve soil moisture, enhance crop productivity and support sustainable farming systems.

The study, which involved researchers from the University of Johannesburg, South Africa, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh and Parul University, Gujarat, besides Nagaland University, focuses on biochar application in agricultural field.

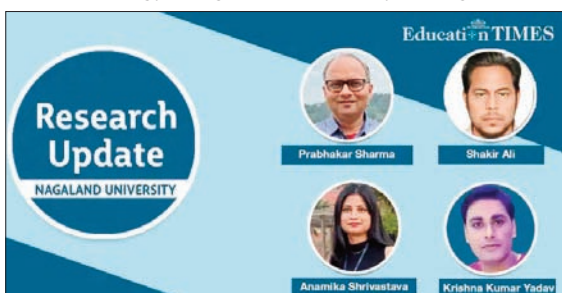
It demonstrates that biochar can act like a sponge in the soil, improving water retention, reducing irrigation needs and enhancing soil fertility. It also helps reduce soil erosion, making it particularly suitable for hill farming systems.

The study highlights that unlike conventional water-saving methods that require costly infrastructure, biochar offers a nature-based, low-cost and circular economy solution. By converting farm waste into a valuable soil input, biochar not only improves water availability but also increases crop yields, reduces dependence on chemical fertilisers and supports long-term carbon storage in soil.

The findings have strong relevance for addressing broader challenges such as groundwater depletion,

drought stress and declining soil quality across India. The research suggests that adoption of biochar can help farmers improve crop survival during dry spells, enhance productivity and income and promote sustainable use of agricultural residues instead of open burning.

The research was undertaken by Prof Prabhakar Sharma, department of agricultural engineering and technology, Nagaland University, along with Dr



Shaker Ali, University of Johannesburg, South Africa, Dr Anamika Shrivastava, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh and Dr Krishna Kumar Yadav, Parul University, Gujarat.

Nagaland's mountainous terrain presents significant agricultural challenges. Farmers often cultivate on slopes where rainwater quickly runs off, leading to loss of nutrient-rich topsoil. At the same time, dry periods result in water shortages. Rising temperatures, irregular rainfall and increasing soil degradation further affect farm productivity. This is creating an urgent need for climate-resilient solutions.

# COCOMI slams KOHUR over claims on Manipur border violence narrative

**IMPHAL, May 11:** The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), a conglomerate of civil society organisations based in the valley in Manipur, while strongly reacting to the recent press note issued by the Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust (KOHUR), said that the Kuki body was "attempting to discredit the statement of COCOMI regarding the terrorist attacks in Kamjong district is deeply unfortunate, misleading and detached from the ground realities faced by the people residing along the Indo-Myanmar border".

COCOMI said on Monday that the incidents that unfolded in the border villages of Kamjong district were not imaginary narratives or politically manufactured claims, but direct acts of armed aggression carried out by heavily armed groups operating from across the international border in Myanmar. "When local representatives, including the sitting MLA of the affected region, openly acknowledged the involvement of Kuki National Army (KNA-Burma) and allied armed elements, any attempt to dilute or deny the seriousness of

the situation only exposes the selective blindness and political agenda of organisations trying to shield such activities under the guise of activism," COCOMI said.

"It is also pertinent to note that even the statement issued by the PRO and spokesperson, Ministry of Defence Ref No PR/058/KOH/2026 regarding the rescue operation of a Naga woman villager from Namlee and another KNA(B) operative namely Lal Thag John aged 38 years was also apprehended along with weapons and ammunition from Churachandpur and later handed to the local police clearly acknowledged that the presence of cross-border narco-terrorist groups have infiltrated and several attacks and related hostilities were allegedly carried out by the KNA(B) faction operating from across the Indo-Myanmar border," it also said. It added that this further corroborates the consistent testimonies of local villagers, civil society organisations and elected representatives who have described the incident not as a mere communal clash, but as an organised act of cross-border armed aggression.

COCOMI said that attempts by KOHUR

to distort or selectively suppress these facts only expose their continued pattern of shielding and whitewashing violent elements instead of standing for genuine human rights and justice.

The committee stated that its position merely articulated the grave security concerns emerging from repeated cross-border infiltration, armed incursions and coordinated attacks affecting Indian citizens residing in border areas of Manipur. It added that labelling these concerns as "communal" or trivialising them is an insult to affected villagers who have lived under fear and insecurity due to militant movements along the porous international boundary.

COCOMI further said that KOHUR must understand that raising alarm against cross-border armed aggression cannot be equated with hatred against any community. It stressed that the issue concerns national security, territorial integrity and the protection of civilians from foreign-origin armed groups operating amid instability in Myanmar.

"It is also disturbing that pseudo human

rights groups like KOHUR selectively invoke the language of human rights only when it suits their narrative, while remaining conspicuously silent on the repeated attacks, intimidation, extortion, displacement and violence faced by indigenous communities in the border regions," COCOMI alleged. It added that human rights cannot become a shield for armed aggression or a tool to whitewash extremist activities.

COCOMI also said that instead of attacking it for voicing concerns, responsible civil society organisations should collectively demand stronger border security along the Indo-Myanmar frontier, neutralisation of foreign-origin armed incursions, protection and rehabilitation of affected civilians and transparent investigation into militant activities threatening India's sovereignty.

It further said that people of Manipur deserve peace, security and truth, not propaganda designed to distort realities and protect violent actors operating under political or ethnic cover. It added that denialism and narrative manipulation at a time of internal security challenges will only

deepen public mistrust and destabilise the region further.

COCOMI stated that KOHUR and similar organisations have consistently failed to condemn several acts of violence and terrorism against civilians in Manipur. It alleged that they remained silent during the Jiribam massacre where six women and children were killed, did not meaningfully speak against attacks in Tronglaobi where infants were among the victims and also failed to condemn the attack at T Kamson in Ukhrul district in which two Tangkhul civilians were killed.

COCOMI said such selective outrage undermines the credibility of any organisation claiming to stand for justice, peace and human rights. It added that human rights cannot be conditional or politically convenient and that the suffering of victims cannot be measured based on ethnicity or ideological alignment.

It further said that people of Manipur can clearly see who speaks for peace and protection of civilians and who remains silent when violence is committed by groups they are unwilling to confront. (NNN)

# NEHUTA urges political parties to keep politics out of NEHU

**SHILLONG, May 11:** The North-Eastern Hill University Teachers' Association (NEHUTA) on Sunday urged political parties to keep politics out of the university campus while refuting the Pro Vice-Chancellor's claims on delayed recruitment.

NEHUTA president Prof Lakhon Kma was responding to a report citing VPP Youth Wing president Marbud Dkhar's statement on PVC Prof S Umdor's remarks about recruitment delays in NEHU.

"On the part of political parties, NEHUTA would like to urge them not to play politics in the university," Prof Kma said in a statement.

"Outside the campus, there is ample room to play politics and fight elections."

NEHUTA accused PVC Prof S Umdor of "misleading the public" and the VPP Youth Wing on why 154 Group B and C posts advertised on November 3, 2023, had lapsed.

He pointed out that the student hunger strike began only after the posts had lapsed.

"The hunger strike by the students, which was fully supported by teachers and non-teaching staff, started on 5/11/2024 and ended on 21/11/2024," he said.

"The advertisement lapsed for the third time not because of agitations, but due to the frequent absence of the VC at that time, his complete lack of interest in the welfare of the university, and complete detachment from NEHU affairs during his entire tenure," Kma alleged, referring to former VC Prof PS Shukla.

"Between the last dates, i.e. 12/12/2023 and 2/11/2024, Prof Shukla did nothing to fill the posts and Prof Umdor is trying to mislead the public," he said.

"Prof Umdor is only trying to shield the total failure of the VC in completing the recruitment process for the third time."

On the VPP Youth Wing, Kma said, "Their lack of information and facts has allowed the PVC to mislead them, if the reports published in the newspaper are true. I only wish they had done their homework properly before approaching the university authority, who would then not have misled them and the people of Meghalaya."

NEHUTA reiterated its role as a watchdog in the university. "NEHUTA has always maintained itself as a watchdog over the conduct of the Vice Chancellors and other officials of the university and will continue to provide the checks and balances needed for the well-being of the university," Kma said.

"We would like to request the PVC to have the guts to call 'a spade a spade' and stop misleading the people of Meghalaya," he added. (NNN)



The last date for submission of hard copies was December 12, 2023, and the advertisement lapsed on November 2, 2024.

Nagal wit

# Twenty firearms seized in Manipur

**IMPHAL, May 11:** Security forces seized at least 20 firearms and ammunition in two separate operations in Manipur's Imphal West district, police said on Monday.

A cache of 16 arms and ammunition were seized from the Langol hill range under the Lamphel Police Station limits on Sunday, a statement said.

The recovered arms include ten pistols, an INSAS rifle, a .303 rifle, a detonator and five live rounds.

In another operation on Saturday, security forces seized four firearms, including two pistols, two hand grenades and ammunition from the Ingel Hill at Tendongyang under the Sekmai Police Station limits, he said.

Security forces have been conducting search operations in Manipur since ethnic violence broke out three years ago.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. (PTI)

# No power can make India bow or yield to pressure: PM Modi

## The 'forces' promoting appeasement politics were still active in the country

**SOMNATH (GUJARAT), May 11:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday drew parallels to the 1998 Pokhran nuclear tests, asserting that no power in the world can make India bow or succumb under pressure.

Addressing a gathering here at Somnath Amrut Mahotsav, marking 75 years of the inauguration of the restored temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, he also said that "forces" in the country continue to prioritise appeasement politics over national self-respect. A similar mindset was witnessed during opposition to the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the PM noted.

"While India attained Independence in 1947, the Pran Pratishtha (consecration ceremony) of Somnath in 1951 served as a proclamation of India's liberated consciousness," he said.

Modi stressed that the 'Amrut Mahotsav' of Somnath is not merely a commemoration of the past, but it is also a festival of inspiration for India for the next thousand years.

May 11 is a significant date as it not only marks the consecration of the Somnath temple, but also India's nuclear tests in 1998 under the leadership of then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he said.

"On May 11, 1998, the nation conducted its nuclear tests. Our scientists demonstrated India's ca-

pabilities and potential to the entire world," Modi pointed out.

The tests "sent shockwaves across the globe" and triggered angry reactions from several countries, he said. "Who is India to conduct nuclear tests? The world reacted with anger," Modi said, referring to the international response following the Pokhran tests. He said global powers then tried to isolate India through sanctions and economic pressure after the tests. "Global powers mobilised to suppress India. Various sanctions were imposed, and every passage to avert a potential economic crisis was blocked," the PM said.

Many countries would have succumbed under such circumstances, but India stood firm, he highlighted. "Anyone else would have faltered. When the world's major powers launch such a massive offensive, it becomes difficult to find a path ahead. But, we are built differently," Modi asserted.

India went ahead with two more nuclear tests on May 13, 1998, despite mounting pressure from the international community, he noted.

"On May 11, our scientists had completed their task. However, on May 13, two more nuclear tests were conducted. This demonstrated to the world just how unwavering the political will of India truly is," Modi said.

He praised the then Vajpayee-led government for refusing to



bow to global pressure.

"At that time, India faced immense pressure from the entire world. Yet, under the leadership of Atal ji, the BJP government demonstrated that for us, the nation comes first. No power on earth can make India bow down or succumb to pressure," he said.

Somnath reminds us that no nation can remain strong unless it is connected to its roots, the PM said.

On the occasion, Modi also released a special stamp on the completion of 75 years of the inauguration of the restored Somnath temple, located in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district. "Invaders attempted to erase the splendour of the Somnath temple; this temple was demolished time and again, yet it kept being rebuilt," he said.

Some "forces" in the country continued to prioritise appeasement politics over national self-respect, Modi alleged, adding that a similar mindset was witnessed during the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

He said politics had often been played over issues linked to national pride and identity, citing the reconstruction of the Somnath temple after Independence.

"There are countless examples across the world where foreign invaders destroyed sites linked to a nation's identity. Whenever people got an opportunity, they restored their heritage and upheld their dignity," said the PM in his address.

"Yet, in our country, politics was played even over issues linked to national self-respect, and the Somnath temple stands as a prime example," he added.

Modi said Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and India's first President Dr Rajendra Prasad made immense efforts to rebuild the temple, but faced opposition from then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

The "forces" promoting appeasement politics were still active in the country, he said. "We witnessed this same phenomenon during the construction of the Ram temple and the manner in which it was opposed. We must remain vigilant against such a mindset and leave this kind of parochial politics behind us," Modi said. "We must move forward by embracing both development and heritage in tandem. The neglect of our cultural centres has, in fact, served as an impediment to our progress," he noted. In India, heritage and modernity are inseparable; both go hand in hand, PM Modi added.

Earlier, PM Modi performed 'Maha Pooja' and other rituals at the Somnath temple as part of the Somnath Amrut Mahotsav.

Before the event, he also held a roadshow along the nearly 1.5-km route from the helipad to Veer Hamirji Circle near the temple.

A large number of people lined up to greet him. They waved flags and raised slogans as his convoy passed through the area. Artists from different parts of the country, including West Bengal, performed traditional dances at designated spots along the route. (PTI)

# Adhikari cabinet approves BSF land transfer for border fencing



**KOLKATA, May 11:** West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Monday announced a series of significant administrative and policy measures, including the state's induction into the Centre's Ayushman Bharat health scheme, transfer of land to the BSF for border fencing, and implementation of the BNS criminal law.

The decisions were taken during the first cabinet meeting of the BJP government in West Bengal, chaired by Adhikari and attended by the five ministers who had taken the oath of office, along with senior bureaucrats.

Bengal would now become part of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, alongside multiple other central welfare projects like PM Jan Arogya Yojna, PM Fasal Bima Yojna offering crop insurance for farmers, PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) scheme for upgrading state-run schools, PM Viswakarma scheme supporting artisans and craftspeople, the CM told a press conference.

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme for women's education and empowerment, and the Ujjwala 3.0 scheme for subsidised cooking gas connections would also be implemented in the state.

All these schemes were allegedly kept out of bounds for the state people owing to political considerations under the previous Mamata Banerjee regime.

"We are now part of Ayushman Bharat, as per the Prime Minister's commitment he made during poll campaigns. The cabinet has asked the state chief secretary, the CM's secretary and health secretary to oversee the drawing up of necessary agreements with the Union health ministry for immediate implementation of the Ayushman Bharat scheme," Adhikari said.

The Ayushman Bharat and PM Jan Arogya Yojna aim to provide cashless hospitalisation coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year to poor and vulnerable households for secondary and tertiary healthcare services.

The TMC government, instead,

had launched its own Swasthya Sathi scheme for a similar cash insurance limit in public healthcare.

Adhikari confirmed that the new government would not discontinue any existing state schemes.

"We will, however, identify and remove those who are undeserving, like the dead and non-Indians, from receiving welfare support that is meant for the people of this country," the chief minister said.

Implementing promises made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to seal the country's porous borders with Bangladesh to curb illegal cross-border migration, the Adhikari cabinet, in its very first meeting, approved beginning the process of transferring land to the BSF for setting up border fences.

"The transfer process will begin immediately, and the cabinet has empowered the chief secretary and the secretary of the state's land and land revenue department to complete the process within the next 45 days," Adhikari said.

The chief minister said that, as per the knowledge he acquired during his previous tenure as the Leader of Opposition, some 90 per cent land required to complete the border fencing exercise was already under state acquisition.

"As a chief minister, I will have to go through the papers to figure out the exact status of the land required and for which I will need some more time," he added.

West Bengal shares a 2,216.7 km border with Bangladesh, of which about 569 km remains unfenced, officials said.

In a significant allegation, Adhikari said that while the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) - criminal laws which replaced the IPC and CrPC Acts respectively - were long passed by both Houses of the Parliament, received the President's assent and of which rules have already been framed, has been implemented elsewhere in India, the Acts were officially yet to be promulgated in Bengal. (PTI)

# 'Another lazy headline-grabbing exercise': Cong

**NEW DELHI, May 11:** As the Centre announced that the VB-G RAM G Act will come into force from July 1, the Congress on Monday described it as "yet another lazy headline-grabbing exercise" and alleged that the only guarantee that the law offers is that of "extreme centralisation" and "weakening of the bargaining power of rural labour".

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh also alleged that the constitutional right to work and the right to wages of rural Indian families are being stolen.

"Today's press release by the Union Ministry of Rural Development on VB-G RAM G adds nothing new to what is already known. It is yet another lazy headline-grabbing exercise by a government that specialises in such exercises. No details have been revealed except to say that they will be released soon," Ramesh said on X.

"If this replacement for MGN-REGA is to be implemented from July 1, 2026, then all operational details should have been available by now. Public consultations and discussions with state governments on these details have to be done in a meaningful manner and not just to complete a formality," he said.

"But let there be no doubt. The only guarantee that VB-G RAM G offers is that of extreme centralisation and weakening of the bargaining power of rural labour," Ramesh added.

The Centre on Monday announced that the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act will come into force across the country from July 1, replacing the two-decade-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

The new Act will have a fresh framework that promises 125 days of statutory wage employment to rural households, it said.

In a statement, the Ministry of Rural Development described it as a "historic transition" in India's rural development architecture, aligned with the vision of "Viksit Bharat @2047". (PTI)

# Mamata, others can file fresh pleas on victory margin being less than deletion of votes: SC

**NEW DELHI, May 11:** The Supreme Court on Monday said former West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and others can file fresh applications regarding their claim that the victory margins in 31 constituencies in the recent assembly polls were less than the deletion of votes there during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi took note of the submissions after senior advocate and TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee referred to an earlier observation of Justice Bagchi that the court can look into the grievances if victory margins are less than the number of names deleted during the SIR. He claimed that there were 31 such seats.

The Election Commission, represented by senior advocate D S Naidu, opposed Banerjee's submission, saying that the remedy was an election petition.

Naidu said the poll panel can be held accountable for issues related to the SIR only and the consequential appeals against the addition or deletion of votes during the electoral rolls revision. At the outset, Kalyan Banerjee referred to the earlier observation of Justice Bagchi on victory margins and said, "One of my candidates lost by 862 votes and, interestingly, 5,550



votes were deleted during the SIR from that constituency." He claimed there were 31 such seats where victory margins were less than the deleted votes. "Whatever you want to say about results, about deletions, etc., this requires an independent IA (interim application)," Justice Bagchi said. Justice Bagchi said that whatever the poll panel is saying -- that the election petition was the remedy -- it can come in the EC's reply in its court-affidavit.

Banerjee then referred to the resignation of former Calcutta High Court Chief Justice TS Sivagnanam from the SIR Appellate Tribunal, which had been hearing appeals by persons excluded from the electoral roll in the SIR exer-

cise and cross appeals of the EC against alleged wrongful additions. Justice Sivagnanam was one among 19 judges who had been designated as Appellate Tribunals by the Calcutta High Court to hear appeals against additions or deletions of persons from the voters' list. Senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy, appearing for one of the petitioners, said that there is a feeling that appellate tribunals will now take four years to decide the appeals against deletions.

The CJI said he can see whether any improvement can be made in the adjudication of appeals against the deletions. The apex court bench was hearing a batch of petitions, including one filed by Mamata Banerjee, related to the SIR of electoral rolls in the state.

Approximately 700 judicial officers from West Bengal and neighbouring Odisha and Jharkhand were deployed to deal with around 60 lakh claims and objections of those who were deleted from voter lists during the SIR of electoral rolls in the state.

Later, the Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court, at the direction of the top court, set up as many as 19 tribunals headed by former HC chief justices and judges to decide appeals against deletions of names of persons from the voter lists. (PTI)

# Amaravati to get Punggol-style integrated township: Andhra Minister Nara Lokesh

**AMARAVATI, May 11:** Andhra Pradesh Minister for Education, IT and Electronics Nara Lokesh on Monday said the proposed integrated township in Amaravati modelled on Singapore's Punggol district is set to become a model urban development project for the country.

Lokesh participated in a meeting with representatives of the Joint Implementation Steering Committee (JISC) under Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry during his visit to Singapore today.

"The proposed integrated township in Amaravati, inspired by Singapore's Punggol model, is envisioned to become a benchmark urban development project for Andhra Pradesh as well as the country," said Lokesh in an official press release.

According to him, the state government aims to develop the Amaravati Economic Region in the best possible manner with Singapore's support, and Amaravati now has national legal validity as the state capital, which will further boost investor confidence in the region. The minister urged the Joint Implementation Working Committee (JIWC) to expedite procedures for the integrated township project while securing support from the World Bank for its implementation.

Lokesh noted that Andhra Pradesh had already issued notifications inviting Requests for Proposals (RFPs) from interested partners for the development

of the Amaravati Economic Region. He asked the Singapore side to explore opportunities to facilitate trade access between Andhra Pradesh and Southeast Asian and East Asian countries through Singapore.

The minister said Andhra Pradesh aims to emerge as a global Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) destination on the lines of Singapore and would study the Suntec City model for establishing similar infrastructure in the state.

Lokesh further said Andhra Pradesh would continue utilising Singapore's expertise in strengthening Real Time Governance and assured support for companies willing to invest in the state. Consultations on the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Andhra Pradesh and Singapore are being conducted every month through working groups, said the press release.

He said six Andhra Pradesh Ministers recently attended training sessions in Singapore under the Singapore-Andhra Pradesh Governance Excellence (SAGE) programme, while 37 government teachers also completed training programmes there.

The Andhra Pradesh government had signed an MoU with Singapore in November last year covering integrated township development, the Amaravati Economic Region and digital transformation initiatives, including Real Time Governance. (PTI)

# Ground-level economic situation far removed from govt's propaganda: Cong

**NEW DELHI, May 11:** The Congress on Monday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "unexpected pleas" to the people from Hyderabad could mean that tough austerity measures may well be on their way, and claimed that the ground-level economic situation is far removed from the "government's propaganda".

Congress general secretary in-charge (communications) Jairam Ramesh asserted that the time for reckoning has arrived.

"The prime minister's unexpected pleas to the people of the country made from Hyderabad yesterday (Sunday) could mean the following -- The economic situation is far more serious than what official numbers suggest and what the prime minister and his colleagues have been claiming all this while," Ramesh said on X. Tough austerity measures, including increase in fuel prices, may well be on their way and an environment is being created to make them more acceptable, he said.

"That the ground-level economic situation -- reflected, for instance, in stagnation in real wages, growing household indebtedness, and lack of momentum in job-creating private investment --" is far removed from the Modi government's propaganda has been obvious for a long time," Ramesh said.

The Congress on Sunday attacked Modi over his remarks urging citizens to use petroleum products judi-

ciously, saying the prime minister is clueless about ensuring India's energy security even after three months into the US-Iran war.

The opposition party said it is "shameless, reckless and downright immoral" that the prime minister is pushing people into inconvenience, rather than building contingency plans to ensure the country's economy is unaffected by this global crisis. Emphasising that the Centre is trying to shield people from the adverse impact of the West Asia conflict, Prime Minister Modi on Sunday called for judicious use of fuel, postponement of gold purchases and foreign travel, among other measures, to strengthen the economy.

Addressing a rally organised by the Telangana BJP in Hyderabad, he suggested reducing petrol and diesel consumption, using metro rail services in cities, carpooling, increased use of electric vehicles, utilising railway services for parcel movement, and working from home to conserve foreign exchange amid the crisis in West Asia.

Stressing the need to save foreign exchange due to the crisis, Modi called for postponing the purchase of gold and foreign travel for one year.

"We have to save foreign exchange by any means," he said, adding that due to the West Asia conflict, prices of petrol and fertilisers have increased significantly. (PTI)

# NEET-UG 2026: NTA says committed to fair, credible exams amid Rajasthan SOG probe

**NEW DELHI, May 11:** The National Testing Agency has said the NEET (UG) 2026 was conducted under a "full security protocol" and that it is working closely with investigating agencies amid reports of alleged irregularities being probed by the Rajasthan SOG.

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) was conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) on May 3 for students seeking admission to medical education courses at the undergraduate level.

In a post on X on Sunday, the NTA said question papers were transported in GPS-tracked vehicles carrying unique, traceable watermark identifiers, while examination centres were monitored through AI-assisted CCTV surveillance from a central control room.

The agency said biometric verification of all candidates was conducted, and 5G jammers were deployed at centres to ensure the sanctity of the examination. "The examination process itself proceeded as planned across all centres on the day," the NTA said.

"The National Testing Agency is aware of reports concerning the action initiated by the Rajasthan Special Operations Group (SOG) in connection with alleged irregularities around NEET (UG) 2026. The examination on May 3, 2026 was conducted as scheduled and under a full security protocol," the NTA said.

According to the agency, inputs regarding alleged malpractice activity were received on the late evening of May 7, four days after the examination, and were escalated to central agencies on the

morning of May 8 for "independent verification and necessary action".

It further said the action taken by law enforcement authorities, including recent detentions reported in the media, was a result of the "professional and timely work" of the investigating agencies.

"NTA places on record its appreciation for the agencies leading this effort and confirms that it is working closely with them in a fully supporting role, providing all examination-related data and technical assistance required," it said.

The NTA said the matter remains under investigation and that it would not "pre-judge the inquiry" or speculate on the outcome. "The matter is presently under investigation and the facts will be established by the agencies in due course. NTA will not pre-



judge the inquiry, nor characterise its likely outcome," it said, adding, "Whatever the agencies determine -- including findings that may require further action -- will be examined transparently and disclosed in keeping with established procedure."

Seeking to reassure students and parents, the NTA said the efforts and integrity of the "very large majority of bona-fide aspirants" would not be devalued.

"NTA is conscious of the anx-

ety reports of this nature can cause, and we ask candidates to allow the agencies the space to complete their work. Any necessary steps will be taken in consultation with the Ministry of Education at the appropriate stage," it said.

"NTA remains committed to fair, secure, and credible examinations and to working closely with all investigating agencies in support of the integrity of the examination system," it added.

Meanwhile, Vishal Bansal, Additional Director General (ADG) of the Rajasthan Police's SOG, said the probe is currently focused on a "guess paper" that was allegedly circulated among students ahead of the examination.

"Regarding the various misconceptions surrounding the NEET examination, let me clarify one specific point: there is a guess

paper containing approximately 410 questions. Out of these, it is alleged that roughly 120 questions appeared in Chemistry," Bansal said. While the Chemistry paper in the exam carries 45 questions, the test used four sets of question papers.

"It is reported that this guess paper had been circulating among the students well in advance; it began reaching them as early as 15 days to a month prior to the actual examination. We are investigating on the basis of the guess paper and it is also available in open domain," he said.

Bansal asserted that the probe is currently focused on determining whether any cheating or criminal activity has occurred based on this guess paper. "As of now, we have not made any arrests of any kind," he added. (PTI)

# Uncertainty persists over Kerala CM choice; Chennithala to accept party decision

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, May 11:** Uncertainty continues within the Congress party over the selection of Kerala's next Chief Minister, even two days after party president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi held discussions with the three contenders for the top post.

Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala, AICC general secretary (Organisation) K C Venugopal and Leader of the Opposition V D Satheesan are the three leaders lobbying for the Chief Ministership of the state. The high command met the three leaders on Saturday in New Delhi.

KPCC chief Sunny Joseph and AICC general secretary in charge of Kerala Deepa Dasmunsi also attended the meeting. Party leaders here indicated on Monday that a decision is expected after Kharge meets senior leader Sonia Gandhi regarding the leadership issue.

They also indicated that the high command is

waiting for the political atmosphere in Kerala, which witnessed strong demonstrations and posters between supporters of Satheesan and Venugopal last week, to calm down further before making an announcement.

After meeting Kharge and Rahul, the Kerala leaders and Dasmunsi jointly appealed to party workers to refrain from protests and flex-board campaigns over the leadership issue.

As discussions continue behind the scenes, Congress leaders in Kerala remain in suspense over the final decision. Congress alliance partners are also said to be unhappy over the prolonged delay in deciding the Chief Minister, despite the alliance securing a massive mandate by winning 102 out of the 140 seats in the state.

Asked about the delay in decision-making, a senior Congress leader, who did not wish to be named, said: "The Assembly expires only on May



23. So there is no hurry -- why worry?"

Meanwhile, Chennithala said on Monday that whatever decision the party high command takes regarding the Chief Ministership post would be accepted by all Congress and UDF workers in the state.

"We have conveyed whatever we had to say to

the high command. They have heard everything. The rest is for them to decide," Chennithala told reporters after returning from New Delhi.

He said the delay in taking the decision was part of a democratic process.

"All the discussions have been completed. We are not taking as much time as the Left Front took last time," Chennithala said.

Whatever decision the party high command takes regarding the Chief Ministership post in Kerala will be accepted by all Congress and UDF workers in the state, he added.

Referring to the BJP criticism on the issue, Chennithala on Sunday said there was no need to respond when the BJP itself had taken days to decide on its CM in Delhi. After the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections, the BJP came under attack from opposition parties over the alleged delay in announcing its CM candidate.

He had criticised the BJP amid the ongoing deliberations over the selection of Kerala's next Chief Minister, saying the Congress was not a party that functioned on instructions from Nagpur. Meanwhile, senior Congress leader K Muraliedharan compared the ongoing uncertainty over the selection of Kerala's next chief minister to a train journey, saying there was no point in moving before the train reached the station.

"There is no point in walking inside a moving train. The train has not yet reached the station," he told reporters here while responding to questions on the delay in announcing the Congress Legislature Party leader.

Muraliedharan said it was difficult to predict when the Congress high command would announce its decision and that it would become known only when officially declared. (PTI)

## Modi's appeal on fuel savings an admission of failure, will rattle markets: Akhilesh



**LUCKNOW, May 11:** A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal regarding an austerity drive amid the West Asia conflict, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on Monday alleged that the BJP government had failed in handling both the economy and foreign policy, calling its appeal an "admission of failure".

In a post on X, Yadav said, "As soon as elections are over, the government suddenly remembered the 'crisis'. In reality, there is only one crisis for the country and its name is BJP."

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister questioned how the country would achieve the goal of becoming a "five trillion dollar economy" if the government was forced to impose several restrictions.

"So many restrictions are being imposed, then how will the much-publicised 'five trillion dollar economy' become a reality? It appears the BJP government has completely lost control," he said.

Claiming that the rupee was weakening sharply against the dollar, Yadav alleged that the BJP government's economic management had collapsed.

"The dollar is touching the sky while the Indian rupee is sinking deeper," he said.

Referring to the government's appeal to avoid unnecessary purchases, including gold, the Samajwadi Party (SP) chief said such advice should be directed at BJP leaders instead of common people.

"An appeal not to buy gold should be made to corrupt BJP leaders, not to the public, because ordinary people are anyway unable to buy even a small quantity

of gold," he said.

He further alleged that BJP leaders were engaged in converting "black money into gold", adding, "If anyone doubts this, they should enquire from Lucknow to Gorakhpur or from Ahmedabad to Guwahati."

Yadav also questioned why such appeals and restrictions surfaced only after the elections.

"During the elections, BJP leaders took thousands of chartered flights. Were those planes flying on water? Were they not staying in hotels? Why did they not campaign entirely through video conferencing if savings were so important?" he asked.

He alleged that the restrictions and appeals were meant only for the common people while those in power continued to enjoy privileges.

The SP chief warned that such statements from the government could create panic in markets and among the public.

"This kind of appeal will spread fear, anxiety, restlessness and disappointment in trade, business and markets due to apprehensions of recession and inflation," he said.

"The government's job is to utilise its vast resources to help the country overcome emergency situations, not to create fear and chaos," he added.

Yadav said if the government was unable to govern effectively, it should "accept its failure instead of ruining the country".

He also blamed the Centre's foreign policy for the present economic situation, alleging that the BJP government had moved away from India's traditional non-aligned approach.

"The real reason behind these conditions is the BJP government abandoning the country's traditional policy of non-alignment and aligning itself with certain groups due to specific pressures and interests," he said.

According to Yadav, the public was paying the price for these policies in the form of inflation, unemployment, slowdown and economic distress.

"Farmers, labourers, youth, homemakers, salaried employees, professionals and traders -- everyone has been affected," he said. (PTI)

## 'Compromised PM' no longer capable of running country: Rahul slams Modi

**NEW DELHI, May 11:** The Congress on Monday launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for calling for measures to be taken by citizens to overcome the challenges posed by the West Asia conflict, saying that the "compromised PM" is no longer capable of running the country.

The opposition party also asked Prime Minister Modi not to shift the blame for "12 years of failures" onto the shoulders of the Indian public. Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said the prime minister's words were "evidence of failure".

"Yesterday, Modi Ji called upon the public to make sacrifices -- do not buy gold, do not travel abroad, consume less petrol, cut down on fertilisers and cooking oil, take the metro, and work from home," Gandhi said in an X post in Hindi.

"These are not words of counsel; they are evidence of failure," he said. Over a span of 12 years, the country has been brought to such a juncture that the public now has to be told what to buy and what not to buy, where to go and where not to go, Gandhi said.

"Time and again, they shift the responsibility onto the public to evade their own accountability," Gandhi said, adding, "The 'compromised PM' is no longer capable of running the country."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said that at a time when people are struggling under the weight of adversity, the prime min-



ister is busy lecturing the country on the virtues of saving.

"When the conflict in West Asia erupted on February 28, the Congress party highlighted every critical aspect of the crisis -- the devastation of the economy; the continuous depreciation of the Rupee; soaring prices and shortages of petrol, diesel and LPG; scarcity of fertilisers for farmers; the looming threat to food security; the rising cost of medicines; the crisis facing MSMEs; and much more!" Kharge said on X.

Why, then, was the prime minister so engrossed in election campaigning and was conducting roadshows, he asked. "Why was he claiming that 'the situation is under control' and that 'everything is fine'? Now that the elections are over, the nation is being subjected to sermons -- don't do this, don't buy that, save on this, work from

home," Kharge said.

"Do not shift the blame for your own 12 years of failures onto the shoulders of the Indian public, Modi Ji!" the Congress chief said.

Congress general secretary in-charge (communications) Jairam Ramesh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "unexpected pleas" to the people from Hyderabad could mean that tough austerity measures may well be on their way. He claimed that the ground-level economic situation is far removed from the "government's propaganda".

Ramesh asserted that the time for reckoning has arrived.

"The prime minister's unexpected pleas to the people of the country made from Hyderabad yesterday (Sunday) could mean the following -- The economic situation is far more serious than what official numbers suggest and what

the prime minister and his colleagues have been claiming all this while," Ramesh said on X.

Tough austerity measures, including an increase in fuel prices, may well be on their way, and an environment is being created to make them more acceptable, he said.

"That the ground-level economic situation -- reflected, for instance, in stagnation in real wages, growing household indebtedness, and lack of momentum in job-creating private investment -- is far removed from the Modi government's propaganda has been obvious for a long time," Ramesh said.

The Congress on Sunday attacked Modi over his remarks urging citizens to use petroleum products judiciously, saying the prime minister is clueless about ensuring India's energy security even after three months into the US-Iran war.

The opposition party had said that it is "shameless, reckless and downright immoral" that the prime minister is pushing people into inconvenience, rather than building contingency plans to ensure the country's economy is unaffected by this global crisis.

Emphasising that the Centre is trying to shield people from the adverse impact of the West Asia conflict, Modi on Sunday called for judicious use of fuel, postponement of gold purchases and foreign travel, among other measures to strengthen the economy. (PTI)

## J-K: Family escapes unhurt after BSNL tower falls on house

**JAMMU, May 11:** A family had a narrow escape after a Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) mobile tower fell on their house following high-speed winds and a severe storm in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district, officials said.

The incident took place in Pandour village during the intervening night of Sunday and Monday, when strong winds accompanied by heavy lightning and rain lashed the area, causing widespread damage, they said.

Officials said the BSNL tower collapsed onto the house of Banarsi Dass, damaging their residence. Two rooms of the house were damaged, while nearby tin sheds and solar panels were also destroyed, they said.

"A powerful storm accompanied by strong winds hit the area at midnight. The mobile tower collapsed completely onto their house, causing damage to two rooms," an official said.

Recalling the terrifying incident, Banarsi Dass said he was awake around 12:30 in mid night when he heard a massive crashing sound amid intense lightning and rainfall. "The noise was so loud that initially we could not understand what had fallen. I immediately told the children to remain inside and not come out," he said.

Dass said that after the rain subsided slightly, the family came outside and discovered that the tower had fallen on their house.

"Two of our rooms have been damaged, though the side sheds remained safe. Thankfully, nobody was inside the rooms at the time, otherwise it could have turned into a major tragedy," he added.

Dass said the storm and lightning were unlike anything witnessed in the area before and added that electricity remained disrupted for nearly 11 hours after the incident. He appealed to the administration for assistance in rebuilding the damaged house.

According to the family, the tower belonged to BSNL and had been installed in 2012. BSNL officials also visited the site after the incident.

## Ahead of crucial floor test, CM Joseph Vijay calls on DMK supremo Stalin

**CHENNAI, May 11:** Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Monday called on his predecessor, DMK President MK Stalin at the latter's Alwarpet residence here, days ahead of the crucial floor test the government is slated to face.

After winning polls and assuming office as the chief minister, this is the first time Vijay was meeting Stalin and the visit was described by government sources as a "courtesy call." Stalin and his son Udhayanidhi Stalin accorded a warm welcome to CM Vijay.

The meeting happens a day after Vijay's harsh criticism of the previous DMK regime for Rs 10 lakh crore debt burden on the state. He had also indirectly hit out at the DMK for "multiple power centres" and had asserted that he was the only power centre in his TVK regime.

DMK chief Stalin had hit back at Vijay for his debt burden jibe.

Later, Vijay called on MDMK

founder Vaiko.

Vijay's brief meeting with Stalin and Udhayanidhi happens days ahead of the crucial floor test in the TN Assembly to demonstrate the TVK regime's majority strength in the House on May 13. VCK, IUML and the Left parties that have extended support to the TVK are part of the DMK-led front.

Vijay was accompanied by his cabinet colleague N Anand.

Congress party, which has extended support to TVK is a former ally of the DMK. The party has five MLAs in the 234-member House.

In the Assembly, TVK has 107 seats (after Vijay's resignation from Tiruchirappalli East) and the support of 13 MLAs of Congress, VCK, IUML and the Left parties.

On Monday, Udhayanidhi initially welcomed Vijay with a handshake and a warm embrace upon the CM's arrival. Later, Stalin also hugged Vijay, held his

hands and took him inside his house.

Vijay and Stalin honoured each other with silk shawls and bouquet. Udhayanidhi presented a book on the historical political journey of the DMK "Kalathin Niram Karuppu Sivappu-DMK 75."

The meeting comes after an acrimonious electoral battle between DMK and Vijay's TVK ahead of the April 23 polls, which the latter won.

Vijay later proceeded to the residence of MDMK founder Vaiko and met the veteran leader. Vaiko's son Durai Vaiko welcomed Vijay.

Vaiko presented a white silk shawl to Vijay and also garlanded him. The CM honoured Vaiko with a shawl. Later, the two leaders were seen briefly chatting and those present at Vaiko's residence greeted Vijay.

Later, addressing reporters, Vaiko said Vijay has emerged as a big leader post elections and that the elections showed the people wanted a change. (PTI)

## Delhi: Ahead of 2 global summits, civic agencies to move homeless population to shelters

**NEW DELHI, May 11:** The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has asked multiple agencies, including the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), Delhi Police and the Public Works Department (PWD), to shift homeless people staying under flyovers, on footpaths and central verges to shelter homes ahead of two international summits scheduled in the national capital later this month.

In its bid to prepare for the upcoming summit, the MCD, in its May 4 communication, said the exercise was being planned in view of the fourth India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-IV) 2026 and the first International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA) Summit, scheduled to be held at the Bharat Mandapam from May 28 to June 1.

The letter, issued by the deputy commissioner (DC) of MCD's Central Zone to agencies, said joint field inspections had found homeless persons "temporarily residing or congregating" on footpaths, central verges and beneath flyovers along important arterial roads, many of which fall under the jurisdiction of PWD. "This is resulting in sanitation challenges, unhygienic conditions and compromised aesthetics of key stretches in the city," the letter read.

The civic body, in its communication, said that Delhi is expected to host heads of state and government, along with representatives of international organisations, and several public spaces, transit corridors, hotels and heritage sites will come under international

scrutiny during the events.

Civic officials noted that all its zones were carrying out focused interventions aimed at improving cleanliness, urban aesthetics and overall city presentation around summit venues, airport and hotel routes, markets, tourist spots and heritage areas.

According to the communication, DUSIB has been asked to shift homeless persons to nearby notified shelter homes while ensuring their safety, dignity and access to basic amenities.

Furthermore, the corporation has instructed all deputy commissioners that all beautification, sanitation, and branding-related tasks must be completed "well in advance of the summits" and continuously monitored throughout the event period.

The PWD has been directed to identify such locations under flyovers and coordinate the shifting operations with other agencies. It has also been asked to ensure cleaning, sanitisation and upkeep of these areas after the exercise.

Additionally, the Delhi Police has been asked to assist during the shifting process and ensure that re-encroachment does not take place under flyovers and on footpaths. The Revenue Department has also been asked to supervise the exercise on the ground through executive magistrates wherever required.

The letter highlighted that the measures were necessary to maintain public health, safety, cleanliness and a "dignified urban environment" during the summit period. (PTI)

**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM**  
**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER, WEST KARBI ANGLONG, HAMREN**  
**(Disaster Management Branch)**

No. DDMA.1/Pt.2/2025/157 Date: 12/05/2026

**Tender Notice**

Notice for quotation in sealed cover affixing court fee stamp Rs. 8.5 (Rupees Eight & Twenty Five Paise) only is hereby invited from the registered Govt. manufacturers/Distributors/Suppliers/Reputed firms/Individuals etc. of Assam for the supply of items in connection with relief and rehabilitation operation during any kind of disaster. The rate should be quoted for each item separately inclusive of GST & other taxes and the supply order shall only be given as and when situation demands. The intending quotationer must submit sample along with rate quoted during office hour before 03:00 PM on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2026 addressing to the District Commissioner-cum-Chairperson, DDMA, West Karbi Anglong, Hamren.

For details, intending quotationer may visit O/o the District Commissioner, West Karbi Anglong, Hamren during office hour.

Sd/-  
District Commissioner cum Chairperson,  
District Disaster Management Authority,  
Hamren, West Karbi Anglong.

### ADVERTISEMENT

Applications are hereby invited for the empanelment of Support Person as per Advertisement by the (State Child Protection Society (SCPS)), Assam vide letter No: SCPS(POCSO)86/2023-24/189) Sec 39 of POCSO Act, 2012 & Rule 5(6) of the POCSO Rules 2020. Eligible candidates are requested to submit the applications along with testimonials to the below mentioned address on or before 25/05/2026 between 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM on all Govt. working days.

#### Qualification for Support Person:

1. Post graduate degree in Social Work or Sociology or Psychology or Child Development OR
2. Graduate with minimum three years of experience in child education and development or protection issues.
3. Person of any organization actively engaged in the realm of child rights or child protection.
4. Additionally, any official associated with a Children's Home or Shelter Home responsible for the custody of the child may also be eligible to apply as a Support Person.

For detailed guideline of Support Person, Applicants can visit the NCPDR Website at <https://ncpdr.gov.in>

OFFICE OF THE  
DISTRICT CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER,  
OLD MARKET NEAR INDUSTRY & COMMERCE OFFICE  
P.O.- HAMREN, P.S.- SADAR HAMREN, PIN-782486, DIST-WEST KARBI ANGLONG (ASSAM)  
Cont. 7002161314

Sd/-  
i/c District Child Protection Officer  
WEST KARBI ANGLONG

# TOP INDIAN DIRECTORS ON BACKING 'DUG DUG'

Filmmakers Anurag Kashyap, Vikramaditya Motwane, Nikkhil Advani, and Vasanth Bala, who have come together to lend support to indie film "Dug Dug", say it is their way of amplifying good stories that don't necessarily have the marketing budget to reach their audience.

The four are serving as executive producers on the film, directed by Ritwik Pareek. The movie released in theatres on May 8.

Inspired by true events, "Dug Dug" follows a bizarre phenomenon in a village where a deceased man's motorbike is believed to grant wishes, provided devotees pray to it and offer alcohol. As word spreads and prayers begin to be answered the belief snowballs into a full-blown, commercialised religion. The comedy mystery satire has garnered positive reviews from audiences.

Motwane, known for movies such as "Udaan" and "Lootera" as well as hit OTT shows "Jubilee" and "Black Warrant", said a niche audience exists for indie cinema, but reaching them remains a challenge without industry backing.

"Indie cinema doesn't have

marketing budget as bigger films have. There's an audience out there to watch, of course, smaller audience than the ones who will go to see big films.

"But to reach that audience and tell them it's worth their while, I think having names that can endorse it is necessary, which is why many of us have started this process over the last two or three years, with 'Stolen,' 'Sabar Bonda,' and 'Dug Dug'. I gives validation to the film, makes people notice it and opens up a little space for indie films to play alongside the larger ones (films)," he said.

Advani, known for "Kal Ho Naa Ho", "D-Day" and series "Freedom at Midnight", described the quartet's coming together as a "necessary" step for indie cinema, though he believes larger systemic changes are required.

"I'm so happy to support whenever needed. But distribution barriers need to be broken and a solution must be reached, otherwise it's all going to be very difficult to sustain (for independent cinema)," the filmmaker told PTI.

Kashyap, who has long championed independent voices in cinema, said such



collaborations can generate "curiosity". "We hope it (combined support to indie films) can generate curiosity for sure and slowly generate trust. After that, the film has to run on its own legs, or we lose that trust. If we build on it, doing so also needs curation," the



filmmaker, who has his new film "Bandar" ready for release, told PTI. When pointed towards the success of Hollywood indie powerhouses like A24, Kashyap said the absence of dedicated platforms in India could possibly be one reason why indie cinema doesn't thrive

here.

"It's not necessary that what's working in Hollywood works here too. There they have independent cinemas, we don't (have it here). There is a diverse audience that they have, while ours seek those films elsewhere. We want to find a way to bring them to cinema and find them a platform and if we succeed in doing so, we give ourselves a platform too."

Bala, however, downplayed the impact of their endorsement of the film, calling it just a "recommendation."

"The four of us coming together will not shatter any distribution barriers. It is more like a recommendation because you're associating your name with it saying, 'Yes, I believe in the film.' Beyond that the real hard work and legwork is required," the "Zigra" director told PTI.

He credited behind-the-scenes efforts of distributors-producers

like Ranjan Singh, who often find space in theatres for indie projects. On whether the fatigue of big-budget "tentpole" films is pushing audiences towards more grounded storytelling, Kashyap said he prefers not to generalise audience behaviour.

"We don't know what the audience is seeking. I definitely know what the artist or cinephile in me is seeking, so the effort is to create that atmosphere. You get what you vote for. I vote for the alternative (cinema)," the filmmaker said.

Motwane disagrees with this notion, saying that diverse audience preferences have always existed.

"The audience is looking for something new and different all the time and even though 60 to 70 percent will watch a certain kind of thing, there's 30 percent of the audience that is going to watch something different. We are seeing it on streaming, reels, micro dramas, and the big screen," he said.

"I don't think tentpole films are fuelling this counter movement. It's always been there, it's always existed. The important thing is to be able to give people options and opportunity to watch something that is not tentpole," Motwane added. (PTI)



## Focus on local resources: CM Abdullah outlines roadmap for J-K's emergence as premier film destination

In a bid to make Jammu and Kashmir a cost-effective destination for global filmmakers, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has announced a series of initiatives aimed at building a robust local film infrastructure and a skilled workforce that will create employment opportunities for the youth in the region.

Beyond traditional Bollywood, the chief minister is actively looking at encouraging Southern cinema and music video producers to come to Jammu and Kashmir, promising a streamlined "single-window" clearance system and significant reductions in production overheads. Recognising that high production costs often deter film units, Abdullah told PTI recently that the government is collaborating with major production houses in Mumbai to train local youths in technical crafts such as cinematography and lighting.

"We are working with organisations, particularly in Mumbai, to create a trained pool of resources so that when a film unit comes here, they don't have to bring everybody with them," Abdullah told PTI here.

He said that this strategy serves a dual purpose, because it is cheaper for the film unit and it also creates local employment here. "Look, we need to sort of recognise that we need to build an infrastructure here for people to be able to come and film.

"We need to make it easier and cheaper because production costs are extremely high. So one of the things we're trying to do is to create a pool of talented youngsters who are trained," he said.

In addition to manpower, the government is focusing on the "logistics of filming", Abdullah said and added that plans are underway to establish a local pool of high-end filming equipment, ranging from spotlights to camera dollies.

"So they don't have to bring everything... all the way here for filming. So it's something that we are currently in the process of executing, and we hope that it will show results," he said.

Addressing concerns regarding bureaucratic hurdles, the chief minister said that Jammu and Kashmir's film policy is being effectively implemented through the tourism department, which has a dedicated officer to coordinate all permissions. Acknowledging some "dealing difficulties" in the past, the chief minister asserted that his administration has worked to remove these bottlenecks to ensure a smoother experience for creative teams.

"It is something that we are currently in the process of executing, and we hope that it will show results soon," Abdullah said and hoped that these measures would firmly place the valley back on the international cinematic map. (PTI)

## Payal Kapadia, Zoya Akhtar, Reema Kagti back theatrical release of 'Shape of Momo'

"Shape of Momo", the critically-acclaimed debut feature by filmmaker Tribeny Rai, is set for its theatrical release on May 29 in India and Nepal via Rana Daggubati's Spirit Media.

Cannes-winner Payal Kapadia and filmmakers Zoya Akhtar and Reema Kagti have boarded as executive producers for the film, which is set in a Himalayan village in Sikkim and traces the lives of women across generations within a single family, shaped by emotional inheritances, silences, and everyday negotiations.

It also reflects the complexity of one's relationship with home as both a place of comfort and something that can, at times, hold one back.

The film features an ensemble cast of late Bhanu Maya Rai, Gaumaya Gurung, Pashupati Rai, Rahul Mukhia and Shyamashree Sherpa.

"Shape of Momo" has screened at the Busan International Film Festival as well as San Sebastián International Film Festival. Rai praised Spirit Media and Kapadia for championing her film.

"Shape of Momo" is my debut feature, told from a personal lens and shaped by the women and experiences around me. As someone who observes closely, I always felt my first film had to come from that space.

"To now have the film release in theatres in India feels like a significant milestone for our team. We make films with the hope of experiencing them on the big screen, but we're also aware of the challenges independent films like ours face, so to see it come together like this feels surreal but also rewarding."

Kapadia called "Shape of Momo" a deeply moving coming-of-age story of a young woman conflicted by her yearning for a home.

"The film feels refreshingly contemporary and Tribeny's stance is strong and uncompromising yet by the end very

touching as well. I am so thrilled that this layered film - after a commendable festival journey around the world - will now find its way to audiences across India. I really hope more people come and see this wonderful movie," said Kapadia, who is heading the Cannes Critics Week jury this year.

Produced by Dalley Khorsani Produc-

Rai's voice as a filmmaker is confident and clear. We love watching stories from across India, stories that bring distinct, lived-in perspectives and expand the world of Indian cinema. We are so excited that the audience that may never have visited parts of our diverse and lush country, including places like Sikkim, will now get to experience a beautiful



tion in co-production with Kathkala Films, "Shape of Momo" explores womanhood and relationships, with a crew led largely by women.

Daggubati, whose banner had also released Kapadia's Cannes Grand Prix winner "All We Imagine As Light" in theatres in India, said "Shape of Momo" is a quietly powerful film that gently unfolds and stays with the audience.

"Tribeny brings a very personal lens to the film. She has a refreshing distinct voice as a filmmaker in the way she observes her characters and their world. At Spirit, we're drawn to stories that are deeply rooted in their world and told with emotional honesty, and 'Shape of Momo' really reflects that," he said.

Executive producer Zoya Akhtar said the film is a deeply personal peek into the lives of three generations of Sikkimese women.

"With rare emotional truth, Tribeny

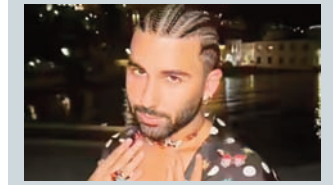
and authentic story from there in the cinema," she said.

Kagti, who was born in Assam, also praised Rai for making the film with sensitivity, warmth and emotional insight. She pointed out that many interesting new voices are emerging from north east.

"There's an intimacy to the storytelling, but also an expansiveness in the way it engages with family, intergenerational bonds, womanhood, quiet rebellion, and identity. The film arrives at a moment when some of the most exciting independent cinema in India is emerging from newer voices and regions, especially from the Northeast.

"Films like 'Boong', 'Raptures' and 'Village Rockstars' have opened up exciting new creative possibilities within Indian independent cinema, and it's wonderful to see 'Shape of Momo' become part of that journey." (PTI)

Once you become famous, you become relevant: Orry



He has long been a subject of fascination as the guy who hangs out with star children and Bollywood celebrities. Orhan Awatramani, better known to the world as Orry, says as he rose to prominence, he was often told that his "15 minutes of fame" will end soon.

With 2.4 million followers on Instagram, trending reels, an appearance on "Koffee With Karan" and cameos in shows and movies such as "Call Me Bae" and "Nadaaniyaan", Orry says he has proved the naysayers wrong.

"I was initially privately famous and (then) I chose to become publicly famous. (Initially) Everyone was like, 'His 15 minutes will end'. It's been three years and my 15 minutes is still going, your watch is broken," the influencer told PTI in an interview.

"Once you become famous... you become relevant. So, I was pushing, and the day I got famous, then you have to keep the fame up," Orry said.

The socialite, whose photos with star kids on Instagram are a major draw on the internet, is now set to appear on the upcoming season of "Khatron Ke Khiladi", a reality show that excited him with its endurance format.

"I've been offered every reality show. I keep getting offers, left, right and centre. I don't like the concept of captive reality, so I usually decline it. I don't know if I'm allowed to take names (of the shows being offered). But you can assume every show with big money, but I'm like, 'This is not for me'. Honestly, I just wanted to feel something new," he said.

As for his equation with host Rohit Shetty, Orry said he doesn't even have a photo with the filmmaker, but he is confident that by the time the season ends, he'll have a lot of pictures with the "Chennai Express" director.

There were reports that Orry will be in a cameo in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's "Love And War", but the socialite dismissed the story.

"I love my reality and I don't want to put my feet into the shoes of some character and pretend to be someone else; that's not my thing. Also, I don't like film sets, there are a lot of wires on the set, it's a lot. I just hate so many wires and don't want to be on the sets," he said.

The 15th season of "Khatron Ke Khiladi" features a host of ex-contestants, with the addition of new ones, facing their worst fears to win the coveted title.

Popular TV actors including Rubina Dilaik, Jasmin Bhasin, Rithvik Dhanjani, Karan Wahi, Gaurav Khanna, Vishal Aditya Singh, Avika Gor, Farrhana Bhatt, Avinash Mishra, Shagun Sharma, Ruhaanika Dhawan and comedian Harsh Gajral will be seen as the contestants on the upcoming season of the show.

The filming for the adventure and stunt-based reality show is likely to begin in Cape Town, South Africa, this month. (PTI)

## Harsh Chhaya, Varun Badola talk about how OTT opened new creative avenues for actors like them

Actors Harsh Chhaya and Varun Badola, who have been working in the showbiz for over two decades and have successfully adapted to OTT platforms, believe the key to surviving a creative drought is patience, even if it means going without work for years.

The two actors currently appear in the fourth and final season of the popular crime thriller "Undekhi" on SonyLIV. Chhaya, known for television shows like "Hasratein" and "Swabhimaan" and films like "Fashion" and "Jolly LLB", said he walked away from acting between 2013 and 2019 as he didn't like the quality of work that came his way.

"The problem with daily soap is that you are fighting against time. In films, I was not getting the kind of work that I wanted to do. I may have gotten some interesting parts but it wasn't moving forward the way I wanted it to. So then I stopped doing it because there is no point," he said.

"The last film I did was 'Jolly LLB' with Arshad Warsi, after that I stopped doing films, and the last series I did was '24'. After that, I stopped doing acting work because I was not getting to do what I wanted to," he told PTI in an interview.

Chhaya said he didn't want to continue playing "those (sad) roles or the US-return doctor". He said the period of stepping back was difficult but it also turned out to be one of self-discovery.

"Sometimes, you do get into a phase where you need to figure out where is it that you want to be or want to go at a



certain point of time from where you are." "It had come to a point where it was like, 'I'll eat once a day if I have to but I'll not do what I don't want to do'. I've lived that way for almost 6-7 years — not that I was eating only once a day — but it certainly wasn't a luxury not to be

doing the only thing that you do." He used those years to write and direct, making his debut with the 2018 film "Khajoor Pe Atke". Badola, who earned acclaim as both writer and actor on "Apaharan", "Undekhi" and "Yeh Kaali Kaali Aankhen",

said he did not have the same freedom to step away but found his own path through the transition.

"I was hoping that I would get a chance to leave television and do OTT. Luckily, in the first show ('Apaharan') I was writing, and then it was decided that I would play a character in it," he said.

The actor said the shift from television to OTT opened new creative possibilities.

"There was a benefit in that transition from TV to OTT because a new avenue opened, the way things work here brings a little satisfaction... 'Apaharan' did exceedingly well and so did 'Undekhi' and 'Yeh Kaali Kaali Aankhen'."

Badola, who also received acclaim for his performance in season one of "Kohrra", said writing is a "bloody difficult job".

"They still don't pay writers well. I work with one person because of the friendship," he said, referring to writer-filmmaker Sidharth Sengupta.

Chhaya and Badola first met on the sets of the 2002 television show "Astitva — Ek Prem Kahani" and it marked the beginning of a long friendship.

"We're friends because we don't get in each other's way," Badola said.

"Undekhi: The Final Battle" is produced by Applause Entertainment in association with Banijay Asia and directed by Ashish R Shukla. It also stars Dibyendu Bhattacharya, Surya Sharma, Ankur Rathee, Shivjyoti Rajput and Gautam Rode. (PTI)

## P6, fastest lap: Racing prodigy Atiqa Mir makes big impact on 'dream' FIA Karting debut



**VALENCIA, May 11:** Indian racing sensation Atiqa Mir exceeded expectations on her FIA European Championship debut, finishing a stellar sixth in Race 2 in the "pinnacle" of karting here.

Awarded a wildcard for round two of the championship considering her special talent, the 11-year-old was once again thrown at the deep end and yet again she was able to navigate majority of the challenges that were posed by the best in the business.

Atiqa, India's first Formula 1 Academy backed driver and also the highest ranked female in the OKNJ class (age 12-14) in the FIA ranking, had to deal

with a more powerful equipment in the OKJ category and a tricky set of Maxxis tyres for the first time against 92 world class drivers with much more experience.

Qualifying position is often decisive in a heavily populated field but Atiqa fought her way into the Super Heats of the FIA (world body for four wheel racing) sanctioned series, showing a lot of fight and speed after starting 15th on the grid.

Atiqa's best race finish of the weekend was P6 in Race 2 and she also got the coveted Fastest Lap in Race 5. A few crashes and penalties notwithstanding, the Indian with roots in J&K qualified

for the Super Heats on her debut and attracted attention of the entire paddock.

Voluntarily competing in the higher age category, Atiqa showed she belonged there and collected invaluable experience for the season ahead. Aiming to become the first female in Formula 1 since 1992, Atiqa would also be taking part in the FIA World Cup later in the year.

Reflecting on the special weekend, Atiqa said: "It's really special driving in a FIA series, it is a dream come true for me. My pace was good the entire weekend. I raced hard and learnt a lot this weekend. It is fun mixing it up with these guys."

Atiqa's father Asif Mir, a former India racer himself, was happy with her performance considering the enormous challenge at hand.

"A standout performance from Atiqa. She was a Wild Card entry and amongst the youngest and it was her debut in this category. She had to contend with more power, different tyres and a new team which she handled remarkably well. Qualifying P15 in a massive field and finishing P6 in one of the heat races were among the highlights," said Asif.

Atiqa would travel to Greece later this month to take part in round two of COTFA International. (PTI)

## Vinesh reaches competition site despite WFI ban in new showdown

**GONDA (UTTAR PRADESH), May 11:** Setting up a fresh showdown with the Wrestling Federation of India, Vinesh Phogat insisted Monday she will compete at the National Open Ranking tournament here and not "take sanyaas", in defiance of a ban by the controlling body of the sport.

She told reporters that she has replied to the WFI's show cause notice, and is eligible to return from retirement. The WFI, however, says she cannot compete until disciplinary proceedings against her are complete.

The WFI had declared Vinesh ineligible to participate in domestic events till June 26, 2026, citing the mandatory six-month notice period linked to athletes returning from retirement under anti-doping rules.

"What do you expect me to do? Shall I take sanyaas and stay away? Accept defeat? So that their conspiracy against me succeeds?" Phogat told reporters after meeting the WFI officials.

Immediately after landing at the nearby Ayodhya airport, Vinesh replied to the WFI's show-cause notice, claiming that Rule 5.6.1 of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Code concerning retired athletes does not apply to her as she had already informed United World Wrestling (UWW) in June about her decision to resume competition after retirement.

As per world governing body UWW's rules, any athlete seeking to return to competition from retirement must notify UWW at least

six months in advance while remaining available for testing during that period.

Vinesh argued that her formal intimation to UWW about her comeback fulfilled the procedural requirements needed to return to competition.

She said she had informed the WFI on December 12 that she intended to return to the sport. "Why did you have to wait for six months to give me show cause notice just two days before the competition?" she said.

Still, she gave a short reply initially and will give a full reply within the stipulated 14 days.

WFI sources said the federation was not satisfied with her reply and felt that the wrestler had addressed only the eligibility aspect while failing to respond comprehensively to the broader disciplinary charges levelled against her in the detailed notice issued on Saturday.

"The reply is not enough. She has not answered the full show-cause notice. Until a disciplinary hearing is conducted and the matter is decided, she cannot be permitted to compete," a WFI source told PTI.

"We will not stop her from coming here but until we have a full explanation, and not just on one issue, she has to wait," added the source. The controversy erupted after WFI issued a strongly worded show-cause notice to the celebrated wrestler, accusing her of indiscipline, breach of federa-



tion rules and anti-doping related procedural violations.

Before that, Vinesh had claimed that WFI was trying to block her entry.

The WFI also maintained that a "wrong narrative" was being spread that the selection criteria for the National Open Ranking Tournament had been altered specifically to prevent Vinesh from competing.

Vinesh had announced her retirement from the sport after her disqualification from the women's 50kg gold medal bout at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

While her husband Sombir Rathi said that Vinesh never announced her retirement officially, and merely posted it on social media, WFI maintained that a communication from UWW in December 2024 acknowledged that she had intimidated the Interna-

tional Testing Agency (ITA) about her retirement.

The federation has sought her explanation on several charges, including her disqualification from the 2024 Paris Games after failing to make weight, alleged whereabouts failures under anti-doping rules, and competing in two weight categories during the March 2024 selection trials conducted by the then IOA-appointed ad-hoc panel.

The weigh-in for the women's wrestlers at the Ranking event is scheduled between 5pm and 7pm on Monday and the competition is scheduled for Tuesday.

The medal winners at the event are likely to get a chance to compete at the World Championship trials later this year but they won't be allowed to compete in Asian Games trials as per the WFI policy. (PTI)

## Norway's Kristoffer Reitan earns 2-shot win at Truist Championship for first PGA Tour victory

**CHARLOTTE (USA), May 11:** Kristoffer Reitan was not having much fun early in his career on the DP World Tour, and he began contemplating the idea of leaving competitive golf to become a YouTube golfer.

He never followed through, instead sticking with his goal of winning tournaments.

He's glad he did.

The 28-year-old PGA Tour rookie from Norway shot 2-under 69 on Sunday to earn a two-shot win over Rickie Fowler and Nicolai Hojgaard at the Truist Championship for his first victory on the PGA Tour.

Reitan, who chose golf over soccer at a young age, won twice previously on the European Tour but this week proved to be his breakthrough moment. He finished at 15-under 269.

"I don't have any words, to be honest," Reitan said. "This is way more than I expected and for it to happen this quickly is just unreal. Yeah, a dream come true."

Reitan said stepping away from the game for a bit after losing his DP Tour card helped him gain perspective.

"It helped me find my game again," Reitan said. "It helped me discover my talents again. Yeah, that was something really important to me, which I try to remind myself of every single day. So that was definitely a huge thing for me getting back and starting to play some good golf again."

Alex Fitzpatrick, the third-round leader, finished three shots back after shooting 73.

Reitan started the round one shot behind Fitzpatrick, but was even



side of the green and his chip came out short leading to bogey. He finished with a round of 65.

Fitzpatrick was the last man standing in Reitan's way, but he faltered again on 17 as his chip from the deep rough never made the green and he made double bogey.

Reitan played the final three holes of the Green Mile in even par and secured the win with a par on 18.

Reitan's best previous finish was a tie for second last month at the Zurich Classic when he and playing partner Kris Ventura lost by one stroke to Fitzpatrick and his brother, Matt.

When he was young, Reitan had two loves — soccer and golf.

He realized pretty quickly he was better at golf, and his parents would take him to Spain every Christmas to give him a place to practice. On Sunday, he thanked them for making that investment in him.

"They have made golf a very, very high priority in our household," Reitan said. "They have definitely made a great, great effort to at least help me get to the place I am today and I couldn't be more grateful."

It was a disappointing day for Cameron Young, the world's No. 3 player.

Looking for his second straight PGA win after a victory last week at Doral, Young started the day just two shots off the lead but had a double bogey on the second hole and never recovered with just one birdie the rest of the day.

He finished with a 74 and tied for 10th, six shots behind. (AP)

## Aaron Rai finishes in top 5 at Myrtle Beach Classic



**MYRTLE BEACH (USA), May 11:** Aaron Rai carded a final round of even par 71 to finish the week as sole fifth on the leaderboard at the Myrtle Beach Classic, a PGA Tour event held opposite the Truist Championship, a Signature event.

Rai had led the field coming into the weekend before dropping down but still secured a top five finish. Rai had a total score of 15-under par (65-67-66-71). He will play the PGA Championship next.

Brandt Snedeker took the title after carding a final round of 5-under 66.

Rai began his final round at Myrtle Beach with a birdie on the first hole before making four consecutive bogeys starting at the seventh hole. Birdies on the 11th and 12th holes along with a late birdie on the 18th hole allowed Rai to finish the day with an even par score and hold onto the fifth place on the leaderboard.

Snedeker had a total score of 18-under par (67-66-67-66) and won the title by a single stroke. Third day leader Mark Hubbard finished in second place, one stroke behind Snedeker, with a total of 17-under par (66-67-64-70). Beau Hossler and Kevin Roy finished in T-3 with a total of 16-under par.

The 2026 Presidents Cup Captain earned his 10th PGA Tour win and a spot at Aronimink where the PGA Championship will be held. The 45-year-old last played in a PGA in 2020. With his win in the competing PGA Tour event, Snedeker joined Justin Rose and Gary Woodland as players in their 40s winning this season. (PTI)

## Bodoland University wins medals at AIU Wushu Championship

University athletes secure gold and bronze medals at national-level event in Kashmir



**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, May 11:** The Wushu team of Bodoland University brought laurels to the institution and the Bodoland region with an impressive performance at the AIU Wushu Championship 2026 held at the University of Kashmir.

The six-day championship concluded on Saturday with participation from universities across the

country.

The Bodoland University contingent, comprising seven athletes, participated under the supervision of coach Danswring Daimary with support from coach Tularam Basumatary.

The athletes representing the university included Daisy Rabha, Bhabani Brahma, Rangjali Brahma, Lakshmitabi Deory, Chibika Ramchiary, Kautik

Brahma and Kamal Kumar Boro.

Among the notable performances, Daisy Rabha won a gold medal in the Baguazhang women's category. Bhabani Brahma and Rangjali Brahma secured bronze medals in the Duijian event, while Chibika Ramchiary won bronze in the Nanquan category.

Bhabani Brahma also clinched another bronze medal in the Nanquan event.

University officials said the achievements reflected the dedication of the athletes as well as the guidance and training provided by the coaching staff.

The university credited Vice-Chancellor BL Ahuja for encouraging sports activities alongside academics. The team was facilitated by the office of the Director of Students' Welfare under the leadership of Registrar-cum-DSW Prahlad Basumatary and DSW co-coordinator Ewki Iswary.

The success of the team has also highlighted the growing popularity of Wushu among the youth of the Bodoland region and the university's efforts to promote sports and physical excellence among students.

## Yellamaraju earns top-20 finish at Truist Championship

**CHARLOTTE (USA), May 11:** Indian-born Canadian golfer Sudarshan Yellamaraju, trying to force his way into a maiden Major appearance at the PGA Championship, carded a 1-under 70 to finish tied for 19th on the final day of the Truist Championship here.

He finished with a four-day total of 5-under par (71-69-69-70).



who finished the week at 15-under par (66-70-64-69), became only the second Norwegian after Viktor Hovland to win on the PGA Tour.

Besides Yellamaraju, the other two Indian-origin players, Akshay Bhatia (70) and Sahithi Theegala (77), finished well down the leaderboard.

Bhatia finished tied for 37th

at 2-under par with rounds of 68-70-74-70.

Theegala had a difficult final day, carding a 6-over 77 to fall to 69th with a total score of 8-over par (72-71-72-77).

Yellamaraju began his final round with an early bogey on the fourth hole and was still 1-over par at the turn despite a birdie on the seventh and a dropped shot on the ninth.

On the back nine, Yellamaraju made consecutive birdies on the 10th and 11th holes, followed by another on the 14th, before finishing the round with a bogey on the 18th. (PTI)

## Tezpur hosts key meeting ahead of World Masters Games 2026



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 11:** A crucial meeting was held by Sonitpur district Masters Games Association at Tezpur on the May 10 with respect to the participation of district athletes in the upcoming World Masters Games 2026.

It on shaping up strategies and creating competitive teams in various sport disciplines.

The main objective of the meeting was to inspire district senior and above 30 athletes, especially in disciplines like athletics, football, volleyball, badminton and table tennis.

Organisers said the Masters Games is a great opportunity for seasoned athletes to step back on the field and showcase their revived talent. The officials who attended the meeting said that the initiative is focused on benefiting the district in enhancing the district's sporting culture.

Furthermore, the association has decided to initiate membership campaigns and awareness campaigns in the near future for the benefit of the interested athletes.

President Pranjal Borthakur and secretary Mahesh Borkakati, discussed its next steps and activities.

## SAI lists BFI irregularities, suspends assessment camp in Patiala

**NEW DELHI, May 11:** The Sports Authority of India (SAI) has suspended an assessment camp by the Boxing Federation of India in Patiala for "irregularities" but is open to granting a resumption if the body revamps its "opaque" selection process and answers "legitimate questions" on its criteria of picking coaches.

The suspension order was issued on Sunday evening after the BFI failed to respond to SAI's "persistent queries on irregularities in the selection policy for boxers as well as coaches", a well-placed SAI source told PTI.

The SAI said that it has been "bombarded" with complaints from boxers and coaches who have been adversely affected by the policy and the BFI's "refusal to give a clear explanation" has not helped matters.

"Several complaints have landed at our doorstep, in which boxers are telling us that at this as-



essment camp, the bout results were not going to be immediately released. Instead, the BFI's so-called High Performance Unit (HPU) along with the selection committee was going to have discussions and then decide who to pick," the source said.

"The idea is against all norms of fairness and if it ends up being challenged in a court of law, SAI would need a plausible explanation

from the BFI. But they are not responding to queries and write to us only when they need approval for something that they want to do. Things don't work in this manner," he added.

"Even for the coaches panel, we granted provisional approval but they are conveniently omitting the word provisional while trying to paint themselves as victims. Can they explain why have they not re-

sponded to repeated queries? Everything is documented at SAI."

The Ajay Singh led BFI has maintained that it has always kept SAI in loop on selection policy related matters and has got due approval from the nodal body.

So far, Sachin Siwach (60kg) among men, and Preeti Pawar (54kg), and Priya Ghanghas (60kg) among women have qualified for both the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games by reaching the finals of the Asian Championships held last month in Mongolia.

Jaismine Lamboria (57kg), and Arundhati Chaudhary (70kg) have secured slots for only the Commonwealth Games on the back of similar results as their weight categories do not feature in the Asiad.

The CWG is due to be held in July-August in Glasgow, followed by the Asiad in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan during September-October. (PTI)

# Playoff pressure builds as SRH face GT in high-stakes clash

**AHMEDABAD, May 11:** As the IPL enters its decisive final phase, second-placed Gujarat Titans prepare for a critical showdown here on Tuesday, which could prove to be pivotal in shaping the playoff race.

The Shubman Gill-led GT appear slightly better placed after recovering from a slow start to the season with a string of crucial wins, including a commanding 77-run victory over Rajasthan Royals, which lifted them to third on the points table.

With the top three sides -- RCB, SRH and GT -- all locked on 14 points, net run rate could become a decisive factor in the race for the playoffs, making it imperative for SRH to improve theirs in front of their home crowd.

SRH have found their rhythm at the right time, with the emphatic 33-run win over Punjab Kings underlining their immense batting potential after piling up a massive 235 for 4. But despite their resurgence and stronger position on the table, they cannot afford complacency as the race for the playoffs remains extremely tight and a single misstep could prove costly.

GT's biggest strength lies in the balance of their side, particularly their batting, which revolves around skipper Gill and Sai Sudharsan, both of whom have provided solidity at the top while negotiating the powerplay smartly.

With experienced campaigners like Jos Buttler and Washington Sundar adding depth, GT prefer building steadily before accelerating through the middle and death overs, an approach that has served them well both while setting targets and in chases.

Their bowling attack is equally formidable with the pace and wicket-taking ability of Mohammed Siraj and Kagiso Rabada complemented perfectly by Rashid Khan's con-



control and match-turning spells in the middle overs.

Of late, their bowling has looked far more disciplined and effective than it did at the start of the season, a sign that the overseas pacers are settling well into Indian conditions and finding greater consistency in their roles.

However, the side will need to overcome its over-reliance on the finishers to rescue the innings when the top order fails, a weakness that was exposed earlier in the season during a string of heavy defeats.

SRH have once again underlined their reputation as one of the most explosive batting units in the league, with the top-order quartet of Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head, Ishan Kishan and Heinrich Klaasen providing relentless firepower.

Their ultra-aggressive approach has seen them breach the 200-run mark with remarkable consistency this season -- as many as eight times, including a high 249 against Mumbai Indians -- making them one of the most feared batting line-ups in the competition.

SRH's bowling attack is also centred around the aggressive approach of captain Pat Cummins, who has added bite and intent to the unit since returning after missing the first half of the season due to injury, with Ishan Kishan leading the side in his absence.

Their Sri Lankan pacer Eshan Malinga has been a revelation this season, consistently making an impact in almost every game either by picking up crucial wickets or keeping the runs in check with disciplined spells. With 16 wickets to his name, he currently sits among the top five wicket-takers in the competition.

However, SRH's ultra-aggressive batting has at times been their undoing, as early wickets tend to expose a fragile middle order and leave them vulnerable to collapses, while their fielding has also remained an area of slight concern.

#### Teams:

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

**Sunrisers Hyderabad:** Pat Cummins (c), Abhishek Sharma, RS Ambrih, Amit Kumar, Salil Arora, Gerald Coetzee, Harsh Dube, Krains Fuletra, Travis Head, Praful Hinge, Ishan Kishan, Heinrich Klaasen, Liam Livingstone, Dilshan Madushanka, Eshan Malinga, Kamindu Mendis, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Harshal Patel, Sakib Hussain, Shivang Kumar, Ravichandran Sranan, Onkar Tarmale, Jaydev Unadkat, Aniket Verma, Zeeshan Ansari.

Match Starts: 7:30pm IST. (PTI)

# Star Aussie bowling trio to sit out of Pakistan and Bangladesh tour post IPL

**SYDNEY, May 11:** Australia has rested its premier pace trio of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, and Josh Hazlewood for the upcoming limited-overs tours of Pakistan and Bangladesh, opting to manage their workloads following a gruelling Indian Premier League season.

The decision opens the door for fresh talent even as Cummins, Starc and Hazlewood use the break to prepare for Australia's World Test Championship campaign, which resumes in August with a two-match home Test series against Bangladesh.

The trio will miss the three-match series against Pakistan starting May 30, with uncapped all-rounder Liam Scott and Australia Under-19 World Cup captain Ollie Peake earning their first senior international call-ups in a new-look Australian squad.

The IPL concludes on May 31. Young batter Joel Davies is another new face after he was selected for the T20 series against Bangladesh in June. Travis Head, Cooper Connolly, Ben Dwarshuis and Xavier Bartlett, who are all involved in the ongoing IPL with various franchises, will, however, travel to Bangladesh once their commitments in India are completed, while veteran all-rounder Glenn Maxwell was omitted altogether.

Mitchell Marsh will be the captain across both tours as Australia begins their preparations for the ODI World Cup to be held in South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe in October next year. Australian selection panel chairman George Bailey said the tours presented opportunities for emerging players.

"It's always exciting to see new players get an opportunity to play international cricket and be a part of the national team," Bailey said.

"The blend of experienced players coupled with new or returning players will provide a nice mix for these subcontinent tours.

"Continuing to provide opportunities for players to develop across a broad range of conditions and experiences is important and will continue to be a focus over the next 18 months to two years."

Australia play Pakistan in three ODIs in Rawalpindi (May 30) and Lahore (June 2 and 4) before travelling to Bangladesh for three ODI games in Dhaka (June 9, 11 and 14) and three T20 Internationals in Chattogram (June 17, 19 and 21). (PTI)



## Cricket Canada announces interim operational leadership appointment



**TORONTO, May 11:** Cricket Canada has announced the appointment of Bhavjit Jauhar as interim chief operating officer, following the conclusion of the organisation's Annual General Meeting (AGM) here on May 9-10.

The interim appointment supports immediate commercial, operational, governance, and compliance priorities during a period of organisational transition and renewal, Cricket Canada said in a press release.

"The AGM marked a significant milestone in Cricket Canada's ongoing governance transformation initiative, reinforcing the organisation's commitment to institutional accountability, operational excellence, financial oversight, and long-term strategic development across Canadian cricket," it said in the release.

Members from across the country participated in governance discussions relating to the ongoing bylaws review process, the finalisation of the organisation's financial audit, and the election of a renewed Board of Directors mandated to lead

Cricket Canada through its next phase of growth and modernisation.

Cricket Canada Board of Directors comprises Arvinder Khosa -- President, Ranjit Chaudhri -- Vice President, Paramjit Shahi -- Secretary, Amit Joshi -- Director at Large, Hassan Mirza -- Director at Large, Sonali Vig -- Director, Player Representative -- Female, Manzoor Chaudhary -- Director, Player Representative -- Male.

As part of the governance reform framework adopted by the membership, Cricket Canada introduced dedicated 'player representative' positions within the Board structure, ensuring direct athlete representation in alignment with internationally recognised governance standards for modern sporting institutions.

The governance reforms, advanced following the Special General Meeting on April 9, 2026, were designed to strengthen institutional processes, enhance organisational oversight, and position Cricket Canada for long-term operational sustainability and stakeholder confidence. (PTI)

## Lakshya, Sindhu shift focus to individual glory at Thailand Open

**BANGKOK, May 11:** Lakshya Sen and PV Sindhu will spearhead India's challenge as the shuttlers shift focus back to individual glory after the country's bronze-medal finish at the Thomas Cup Finals when the USD 500,000 Thailand Open Super 500 tournament begins here on Tuesday.

Seventh seed Lakshya, who suffered an elbow injury and missed the crucial semifinal against France in Denmark, will open against Singapore's Jason Teh Jia Heng, while Ayush Shetty, who impressed during the Thomas Cup campaign, faces a difficult opener against sixth seed Japan's Kodai Naraoka, a world championships medallist.

In women's singles, sixth seed Sindhu will begin against Chinese Taipei's Tung Chiou-Tong. The 30-year-old from Hyderabad looked sharp during the Uber Cup campaign while sporting an experimental wearable device on her temple, but she will need to close out tight matches better to rediscover her



ruthless edge.

With a semifinal finish in Malaysia and a quarter-final appearance in Indonesia this season, Sindhu has managed to stay just outside the top 10 rankings, but the two-time Olympic medallist will need a consistent run to end her title drought.

Former world championships silver medallist Kidambi Srikanth, who reached the finals of the Malaysia Masters and Syed Modi International last season, has shown flashes of brilliance but

has often struggled with inconsistency and unforced errors.

Now 33, Srikanth faces an uphill task to return to the podium regularly and will hope to make a strong start against eighth seed Loh Kean Yew in a re-match of the 2021 World Championships final.

Tharun Manneppalli, whose progress has frequently been interrupted by injuries and niggles, will take on Japan's Koki Watanabe.

Among other Indian women in fray, Unnati

Hooda faces fourth seed Pornpawee Chochuwong in a tough opener, while Devika Sihag meets Japan's Natsuki Nidaira and Tanvi Sharma takes on Hina Akechi.

Malvika Bansod will open against Canada's Wen Yu Zhang, while Anmol Kharb has been handed a daunting first-round clash against second seed and former Olympic champion Chen Yufei. Isharan Baruah will face a qualifier.

In men's doubles, top seeds Satwiksairaj

Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will face Indonesia's Muh Putra Erviansyah and Bagas Maulana.

The Asian Games champion pair of Rankireddy and Shetty will hope to regain their dominance after appearing slightly subdued on their return at the Thomas Cup Finals following the former's shoulder injury.

Seventh seeds Hariharan Amsakarunan and MR Arjun, who impressed at the Thomas Cup, will face Chinese Taipei's Chen Zhi Ray and Lin Yu Chieh.

In women's doubles, sisters Rutaparna Panda and Swetaparna Panda will be India's lone representative and face Taiwan's Lin Chih-Chun and Yang Chu Yun.

In mixed doubles, Rohan Kapoor and Gadge Ruthvika Shivani will face China's Jiang Zhen Bang and Li Yi Jing, while Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto will look to regain rhythm against Denmark's Mathias Christiansen and Alexandra Boje.

Young Indian pair Ashith Surya and Amrutha Pramuthesh will also be in action. (PTI)

## Andy Flower fined for breaching IPL code of conduct



**RAIPUR, May 11:** Royal Challengers Bengaluru head coach Andy Flower has been fined 15 per cent of his applicable match fee for breaching the IPL's code of conduct by getting involved in a dispute with the fourth umpire during their match against Mumbai Indians here, the tournament organiser said on Monday.

"Andy Flower, Head Coach, Royal Challengers Bengaluru has been fined 15% of his applicable match fee for breaching Level 1 of the IPL's Code of Conduct for Players and Team officials," the IPL said in a statement.

"Andy was found to have breached article 2.3 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which relates to 'use of an audible obscenity during a match.' The incident occurred in 17.2 over when Andy spoke aggressively with the fourth umpire.

"Andy admitted to the offence and accepted the sanction imposed by Match Referee, Amit Sharma."

Having being set a target of 167, RCB won the last-ball thriller by two wickets, which kept their playoffs hopes alive while knocking out MI from the race for the knockouts. (PTI)

## India retain top spot in ICC men's ODI rankings after annual update

**DUBAI, May 11:** India retained the top position in the ICC's men's ODI team rankings after the latest annual update with reigning world champions Australia claiming the third spot.

In a statement issued on Monday, the ICC said, "India remain at the pinnacle of the ICC Men's ODI Team Rankings after the latest annual update, leading second-placed New Zealand (113 points) by a narrow five-point margin, while Australia (109 points) retain the third place to round off the top three."

India have slipped marginally by a single rating point, and now have 118 points to their name.

The annual rankings update applies full weightage (100 percent) to matches played since May 2025, while results from the previous two years are given half weightage (50 percent).

South Africa's tally of 102 points allowed them to edge past Pakistan's 98 points and break into the top four.

The remainder of the top 10 re-

mains unchanged, with Sri Lanka (96), Afghanistan (93) and England (89) completing the top eight.

Bangladesh are ninth with 84 points, while the West Indies are on 74 points now, and trail the Tigers by 10 points compared to six in the previous update.

"This particular outcome has important ramifications for both the sides, as they seek to secure a direct qualification for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2027," the ICC said. (PTI)

## England mulling tour of Nepal: Report

**LONDON, May 11:** The England cricket team might tour Nepal for a short white-ball series during the 2027-31 cycle, a media report has stated, suggesting that the plan was discussed at a meeting between the two Boards during the T20 World Cup in India.

According to ESPNcricinfo, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is open to the idea of a three-match T20 series against Nepal before engagements like a tour of India.

"England's men could become the biggest international team yet to tour Nepal, with the ECB exploring the prospect of scheduling a short T20I series at some stage in the 2027-31 international cycle," the website reported.

England and Nepal squared off for the first time during the T20 World Cup when the South Asian nation fell short by a mere four runs at the Wankhede Stadium. (PTI)

## We were not consistent enough: Jayawardene on MI's disastrous IPL season



**RAIPUR, May 11:** Head coach Mahela Jayawardene admitted that Mumbai Indians were simply "not good enough" this season after a heartbreaking two-wicket defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru ended their IPL playoff hopes here.

The defeat, MI's eighth in 11 matches, also exposed the inconsistency that plagued the five-time champions throughout the campaign.

"Yeah, I mean, the season, it's disappointing," Jayawardene said after the match.

"We've had our opportunities. We were not good enough. We were not consistent enough with the ball, with the bat, and that showed the margins."

MI appeared in control at various stages of the contest but failed to close

out the game after handing the final over to rookie all-rounder Raj Angad Bawa, who was bowling for the first time in his four-year IPL career.

Defending a narrow total, Bawa began with a wide and a no-ball before dismissing Romario Shepherd, only to concede another wide and then a decisive six to Bhuvneshwar Kumar as RCB sealed victory off the last ball.

"All our bowlers were finished (with their quota of overs) at that time, we didn't have anyone left, any experienced bowler," Jayawardene explained.

"We had couple of spinners; one was Ragu Sharma who hadn't bowled. The other option probably would have been Allah Ghazanfar.

"I think Suryakumar backed Raj. Raj

is a decent bowler. We know what he can do in practice, executing yorkers, the wide stuff and all that."

Jayawardene, however, sympathised with the youngster for faltering under pressure.

"Couple of wides, no-ball, it's under pressure for him as well," he said.

"But I think I was pleased with the way we fought. It was a game of margins, we probably should have executed a bit better at the end."

The former Sri Lanka captain also refused to blame the Raipur pitch after MI managed only 166 despite being well-placed for a bigger total.

"We knew 170-180 was a good score. And we were heading towards that," he said.

"And we lost again another couple of wickets in that 14-15 mark. Naman getting out. And then Jacks getting out as well just before the timeout. Those were a couple of unforced mistakes during that time."

Jayawardene said injuries to key players disrupted MI's campaign and prevented the side from fielding a settled combination.

"What you guys probably didn't know is that we had a lot of injuries, a lot of niggles, players getting injured, and some players were not available," he said.

"I would have loved to have our main core guys consistently being out there. But there's no excuses. I think we had a quality squad. It's just that we were not

good enough overall."

Backing senior players despite poor returns was another talking point through MI's disappointing campaign, particularly the struggles of skipper Hardik Pandya and Suryakumar Yadav.

But Jayawardene defended the experienced core, insisting their commitment never wavered.

"No, I don't think it is harder to back them," he said.

"The commitment, the effort that they're putting in is unbelievable. The core group is quite valuable for us. You can't just keep changing."

"They had a really good World Cup, winning it and all that. So I think it's just that as a unit, we haven't been good enough." (PTI)