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New Assembly unlikely to have LoP ● Himanta to submit resignation to Guv today

Nadda and Saini to oversee selection of new CM candidate



GUWAHATI, May 5: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is likely to meet the governor on Wednesday and submit his resignation, paving the way for the formation of a new government, an official source said.

Speaking to reporters here, Sarma said that he would call on Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya once the election results are officially submitted to the latter.

The official source said the state's chief elec-

toral officer is scheduled to submit the final results to Acharya on Wednesday forenoon.

The NDA swept to a third successive term in the state by securing 102 seats in the 126-member state assembly. The BJP won 82 seats, while its allies Asom Gana Parishad and Bodoland People's Front bagged 10 constituencies each.

Sarma was projected as the chief ministerial candidate of the ruling alliance before the polls.

"I will meet the governor and hand over my resignation after the results are submitted to him. It will pave the way for the formation of a new government," he said.

Sarma further said that a meeting of the newly elected BJP MLAs will be convened as per instructions of J P Nadda and Nayab Singh Saini, who have been appointed as central observer and co-observer, respectively, for selection of the leader of the legislative party.

"I will talk to Nadda ji and call the MLAs as per the date set by him," the CM said.

"With it, the government formation process will start," he added.

Sarma further said there may not be the leader of the Opposition (LoP) position in the new assembly as the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Will play role of proactive Oppn: Gaurav

Routed in assembly polls, Oppn in Assam stares at survival crisis: Annalists



GUWAHATI, May 5: A day after the Congress was routed with its worst ever performance in Assam, the party's state chief Gaurav Gogoi on Tuesday said it will play the role of a "proactive opposition" to raise people's issues in the coming days.

Addressing a press conference here, he also said the Congress and

the Opposition will keep a watch on the activities of the BJP-led government and protest if any anti-people policies are adopted.

"We will play our role as a proactive opposition to highlight people's issues," Gogoi said.

The party will go to the people again to seek their feedback, and then it will work to strengthen the organisation, he added.

"We will keep a watch on the BJP government and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's works. We will raise our voice if any anti-people stand is taken," Gogoi said.

For its crushing defeat, he accepted moral responsibility as he was "the captain of the Opposition alliance".

CRISIS IN OPPN : Meanwhile, the overwhelming verdict of the BJP-led NDA in Assam has left the opposition fighting for relevance with its worst-ever show in recent times.

In the 126-member Assam Assembly, the NDA got a record 102 seats with the BJP alone accounting for 82 of them. The saffron party secured a majority on its own for the first time in the state.

On the other hand, the Congress and the Rajiv Dal, who were part of a six-party alliance, won 19 and two seats respectively. The Trinamool Congress and the AIUDF fought (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

NDA to work with more vigour to make Assam one of top states: AGP chief

GUWAHATI May 5: Thanking the people for the massive mandate to the BJP-led NDA, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) president Atul Bora on Tuesday said the alliance, in which his party is a constituent, will work with renewed vigour to make Assam one of the top five states in the country in terms of development.

He maintained that the Congress was removed from reality which led to its poor performance in the election, including the defeat of its state chief and MP Gaurav Gogoi.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, Bora said, "We had said before the elections that the NDA's strength will increase and we will win in double digits. It has been proved right."

"We thank the people for their support, and every worker of AGP and our NDA allies for their work," he added.

The NDA swept to a third successive term in the state by securing 102 seats in the 126-member state assembly. The BJP won 82

seats, while the AGP and Bodoland People's Front bagged 10 each.

Bora maintained that it was work done by the government for the people that ensured the alliance's victory.

"We renew our determination to make Assam among the top five states in the country in the next term. Be it infrastructure, agriculture, education, irrigation, our focus will be on all core sectors," the AGP president, who was a minister in the outgoing cabinet, said.

He maintained that the people of Assam are politically conscious and voted for the alliance that delivered on its promises.

On the next government formation, Bora said the party MLAs will meet here on Wednesday and elect their leader for the assembly.

"We will hold discussions in the BJP state head-office this evening," he said.

Refusing to divulge details of the talks when asked how many ministerial berths the AGP will seek, Bora (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Uncompromising stand against Bangladesh-origin Muslims swayed votes for NDA: Himanta

GUWAHATI, May 5: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday asserted that his government's "uncompromising stand" in taking steps against Bangladesh-origin Muslims swayed people in favour of the BJP-led NDA in this year's assembly elections, resulting in the alliance securing a two-thirds majority.

He maintained that the NDA's win was a victory for the Assamese indigenous people and affirmed continuing developmental work in the state.

Addressing a press conference, Sarma said, "The double-engine government and unprecedented development the state witnessed in the last five years are among the main reasons for our victory."

"We had assured of securing the Assamese 'jati' (community) and took steps to deliver it. Assam progressed in the cultural and economic sectors. Our uncompromising stand against Bangladesh-origin Muslims also had an impact," he said.

The NDA swept to a third successive term in the state by securing 102 seats in the 126-member state assembly. The BJP won 82 seats, while its allies AGP and Bodoland People's Front bagged 10 each.



On Sarma predicting nearly exact numbers for the alliance before the results, he said the assessment was based on his connect with the people.

"I visited every assembly segment thrice before elections. I have a good mass connect system, which helped in my assessment," he said.

Sarma claimed that recommendations of the Justice (ret'd) Biplob Sharma committee on Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, which deals with constitutional safeguards for the indigenous Assamese population, were implemented by his government.

"It was because of it that the Assamese people won yesterday. It was not just a BJP victory," he asserted.

The CM claimed the NDA secured the support of all sections of people, including Gen Z, which was evident in the young faces fielded by the BJP emerging victoriously.

He dismissed the charge that the BJP has an "outsider" among its MLAs, referring to Guwahati Central legislator-elect Vijay Gupta.

"Vijay Gupta is an Assamese. If he is a Bihari, we (ancestors) also came from Kanauj. We all have come from different parts. Mongoloids came from outside, Aryans came from outside. This outsider narrative has been created by you all (media)," Sarma said.

On the Congress' poor poll performance, he maintained that there were very few people in the opposition party who understood the sentiments of the Assamese people.

Otherwise, the Congress would not have brought singer Zubeen Garg's name in its manifesto or levied allegations against an Assamese woman, Sarma added, referring to the opposition party's charges of multiple passports and undisclosed foreign investments of his wife. The CM also maintained that Rajiv Dal (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam Assembly to have 7 women MLAs; six from NDA

GUWAHATI, May 5: Of the 59 women candidates who fought to enter the 126-member Assam Assembly, only seven managed to win, the same as the 2021 results.

In the new Assembly, the ruling NDA will have six women legislators, while the opposition Congress has one. Women comprise 49.98 per cent of the total 2.50 crore electorate of the state.

The BJP has increased the tally of its women MLAs to four, while its allies Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front will have one each. Of the 14 women candidates the Congress fielded, the highest among all parties, only one managed to win.

In the outgoing Assam Assembly, the BJP had three MLAs, and the AGP and the Congress two each.

The NDA is set to form the government in Assam for the third consecutive term after securing a two-thirds majority, with a record high of 102 seats in the 126-member assembly, while the Congress-led opposition delivered its worst performance in recent times.

The BJP won 82 of the 90 seats it contested, while its allies -- the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), which contested 11 constituencies, and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), which fought in 26 -- bagged 10 seats each. The most prominent woman (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Petrol bombs lobbed at Congress candidate's house in Assam

DIPHU, May 5: Unidentified persons have allegedly lobbed petrol bombs at a Congress candidate's house in Assam's Diphu, police said on Tuesday.

None of the six petrol bombs lobbed at the house of the party's Bokajan nominee, Raton Engti, on Monday night exploded, ensuring there was no damage, they said.

Engti lost to BJP's Suriya Rongphar by a margin of over 17,000 votes.

"Engti and his family members were inside the house when the incident happened. As the explosives did not go off, the people inside did not hear any sound," a police officer said.

Engti spotted the bombs in the morning and informed the police, who seized (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Delimitation key factor for NDA's landslide win in Assam

GUWAHATI, May 5: The delimitation of constituencies to reduce the impact of minority candidates in their earlier strongholds is one among the many factors that led to the NDA's stupendous performance in the Assam polls, securing a record win of 102 seats in the 126-member assembly.

The 2023 delimitation exercise, which redrew and realigned constituencies with some earlier Muslim-majority seats getting reserved for indigenous communities, played a significant role in the increase of seats for the BJP and its allies in the just-concluded assembly polls.

The minority votebank played a key role, particularly for the Congress and AIUDF, in all previous assembly polls in 35 seats but delimitation reduced its influence to

less than 25.

The 24 seats that the opposition won, mostly in constituencies unaffected by delimitation, include 22 Muslim candidates with both the Congress and AIUDF showing a sharp decline in their erstwhile bastions.

The realignment led to the fragmentation of Muslim-majority constituencies, and their merger with areas dominated by the indigenous community resulted in the dilution of the vote-bank.

The delimitation exercise kept the number of assembly seats the same at 126 but reserved more constituencies for the Scheduled Tribe and the Scheduled Caste, with the former being increased from 16 to 19 and the latter to nine from eight.

Barpeta and Goalpara (West), seats having a significant number

of Bengali-speaking Muslims, were reserved for the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribe, respectively, and the NDA wrested both from the Congress.

The impact of the delimitation was also evident in the other tribal reserved seats in the Bodoland region, where their number was increased from 11 to 15, as the NDA ally Bodoland Peoples' Front (BPF) won 10 of these seats while its sole Muslim candidate lost the polls.

Both the Congress and AIUDF have been severely impacted by the exercise, with most of its winning candidates restricted to the 25 seats, with only one achieving electoral success from the scheduled caste reserved Naoboicha seat. The AIUDF, which had won 16 constituencies (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Most of winning Congress candidates in assembly polls Muslims: Sources

NEW DELHI, May 5: Most of the Congress candidates who won in the recent assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu were Muslims, sources analysing the poll results said.

As per the results, 18 out of 19 MLAs that Congress has won in Assam are Muslims. The Congress had fielded 20 Muslim candidates in Assam, of whom 18 won, while only one non-Muslim won the elections, out of the 79 non-Muslims fielded by the party.

Congress ally Rajiv Dal has won two seats, out of which one is a Muslim and the other is Akhil Gogoi, who is under investigation by the NIA for alleged links with Maoists, the sources said.

Kerala has elected 35 Muslim MLAs in an assembly of 140.

Out of these 35, as many as 30

are from the Congress-led UDF alliance. Eight Congress MLAs are Muslims and the other 22 of its ally, the Indian Union Muslim League MLAs, are Muslims.

The grand old party won two seats in West Bengal -- both of whom are Muslims from Muslim-dominated seats. In fact, with 63 Muslim candidates, the Congress outdid the TMC in giving tickets to Muslims in West Bengal. The TMC gave tickets to 47 Muslim candidates in the assembly elections.

In Tamil Nadu, Congress nominated two Muslims, of whom one has won.

Muslims fielded by Congress alliances in both Kerala and Assam have an 80 per cent winning strike rate, the sources said.

The BJP on Monday scripted history by winning 206 seats to secure

more than a two-thirds majority in the West Bengal assembly polls, ending the TMC's 15-year rule.

The ruling NDA is set to form the government in Assam for the third consecutive term after securing a two-thirds majority, with a record high of 102 seats in the 126-member assembly, while the Congress-led Opposition delivered its worst performance in recent times.

Actor-politician Vijay's TVK created a record of sorts in the electoral history of Tamil Nadu and emerged as the single largest party by delivering a shock defeat to incumbent DMK.

Kerala witnessed a sharp political reset as the state electors voted out the last Left government in the country, bringing back the Congress to the ruling saddle after a gap of 10 years. (PTI)

17% Assam MLAs face criminal cases, 85% crorepatas: ADR

NEW DELHI, May 5: Around 17 per cent of newly elected MLAs in Assam have declared criminal cases against themselves, while a striking 85 per cent are crorepatas, according to a report released by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

The report, which analysed affidavits of all 126 winning candidates in the 2026 Assam Assembly elections, shows a decline in the proportion of candidates with criminal cases compared to the previous election. In 2021, 27 per cent, or 34 of the winning candidates had declared criminal cases against them, which has now dropped to 17 per cent, or 21 candidates.

This includes 19, or 15 per cent, candidates facing serious charges. This is also a decrease from 2021, when 28, or 22 per cent of MLAs had declared serious criminal cases.

Among specific offences, three winning candidates have declared cases related to attempt to murder, while two candidates have reported cases related to crimes against women.

The data reveals sharp variation across political parties. Among the BJP, 7 out of 82 winning candidates, or 9 per cent, have declared criminal cases. In the Congress, 9 out of 19 winners, or 47 per cent, face such cases.

The report added that two winning candidates from

the All India United Democratic Front and one Trinamool Congress candidate have also declared criminal cases against themselves.

Notably, all 10 winning candidates from the Bodoland People's Front have clean records.

At the same time, 7 (9 per cent) out of 82 winning candidates from BJP, 7 (37 per cent) out of 19 winning candidates from INC, both the two (100 per cent) winning candidates of AIUDF, the one winner (100 per cent) from AITC, one (50 per cent) out of the two winning candidates from Rajiv Dal and one (10 per cent) out of the 10 winning candidates from Asom Gana Parishad have declared serious criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits.

The report also highlighted a steep increase in the wealth of elected representatives. As many as 107 out of 126 MLAs (85 per cent) are crorepatas, up from 67 per cent in 2021.

The total declared assets of all winning candidates stand at 1,112 crore. The average asset per MLA has nearly doubled to 8.82 crore in 2026, compared to 4.59 crore in the previous election.

Among the political parties, 90 per cent of BJP MLAs are crorepatas, followed by 74 per cent MLAs from the Congress and 80 per cent from the Bodoland People's Front. All winners (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam polls: BJP received 37.81 pc of total votes polled in 2026, translating into 82 wins: EC

Saffron party's rise in vote share results in gain of 22 seats

GUWAHATI, May 5: A 4.6 percentage point shift in BJP's favour helped it pocket 22 more constituencies in the Assam Assembly elections this time compared to 2021 and win 82 seats, an analysis of the vote share data from the Election Commission showed.

The Congress, on the other hand, saw a marginal 0.17 percentage point increase in its vote share even as its seats fell by 10 from the last Assembly polls to settle at 19 this time.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) bagged 102 seats, its highest ever, way ahead of the halfway mark of 64 in the 126-member Assam Assembly.

According to information shared by the Election Commission, the ruling BJP received 37.81 per cent of the total votes polled in 2026, translating into 82 wins. Its vote share was 33.21 per cent in 2021, when it had won 60 seats.



For the opposition Congress, its vote share increased to 29.84 per cent this year from 29.67 per cent five years ago, but its number of MLAs went down to 19 from 29 in the outgoing Assembly.

For the BJP's ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), the vote share decreased to 6.47 per cent from 7.91 per cent in 2021, but it bettered its tally of MLAs by one to have 10 MLAs this time.

The Bodoland People's Front (BPF), another ally of the ruling

NDA, got 3.73 per cent of the total votes polled on its way to winning 10 seats. It had won four seats in 2021, but the EC had not shown its vote share separately in 2021.

In the opposition camp, the AIUDF saw its vote share erode to 5.46 per cent as it won only two seats. In 2021, it had 16 MLAs and 9.29 per cent vote share.

Of the total people who voted this time, 1.23 per cent chose the None of the Above (NOTA) option this time, a slender rise from the 1.14 per cent voters who chose it five years ago, the EC data showed.

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha did not win any seat but managed to corner 1.16 per cent vote share this time, signalling an expansion of the party to the Northeast.

The EC said that in the 'others' category, comprising all other contesting parties and candidates, the vote share stood at 10.17 per cent. It was 13.7 (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Party wins Bokajan, Howraghat and Diphu seats with big margins

BJP EKADC thanks voters for sweeping victory in Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau
DIPHU, May 5: The BJP-East Karbi Anglong District Committee (BJP-EKADC) has expressed gratitude to voters for the party's victory in all three Assembly constituencies—Bokajan, Howraghat and Diphu—in Karbi Anglong district in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2026.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP-EKADC office at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan here, district president Roland Killing credited party workers for the outcome, stating that their sustained efforts and dedication played a crucial role in the party's success.

"It is due to the hard work and selfless dedication of party karyakartas, who have worked day and night, that the BJP has achieved victory in all three constituencies with significant margins," Killing said.

He added that party workers endured various hardships and remained committed to organisational work throughout the campaign.

In Bokajan, BJP candidate Surjyo Rong-



phar defeated Congress candidate Raton Engti by a margin of 17,466 votes.

In Howraghat, BJP candidate Lusing Teron secured one of the highest margins in the region, winning by 78,106 votes against Congress candidate Sanjiv Teron.

In Diphu, BJP candidate Niso Terangpi

registered a convincing victory with a margin of 49,740 votes over APHLC-backed Independent candidate JI Kathar.

Killing described the outcome as a historic achievement for the party in Karbi Anglong, noting that in Howraghat constituency, the BJP candidate secured over

one lakh votes. He also pointed out that the Diphu result marked the first time a woman candidate has been elected from the constituency.

He credited the party's victory to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP national president Nitin Nabin, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, BJP Assam Pradesh president Dilip Saikia, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member and Rongkhang MLA Tuliram Ronghang, and MP Amarsing Tisso.

He also acknowledged the contributions of party office-bearers and various morcha leaders.

Killing expressed confidence that the BJP government would focus on development and governance in the coming five years, with emphasis on infrastructure, employment generation, youth welfare and women's empowerment in Karbi Anglong.

He said the party remains committed to ensuring peace and overall progress in the region.

Ripun Bora retires from electoral politics after defeat

Former APCC chief says he will continue in Congress as 'guardian'



HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, May 5: Ripun Bora on Tuesday announced his retirement from electoral politics after his defeat in the Borsola Assembly constituency.

Addressing the media in Tezpur, Bora said he would not contest any future elections but would continue to remain in the Congress and work as a "guardian" of the party.

He reaffirmed his commitment to the party, stating that he would remain with it and continue to op-

pose the BJP. Bora, who lost to BJP candidate Ritubaran Sarmah, urged party workers not to lose heart and said issues related to alliances would be discussed within the party.

He added that the Congress would undertake a detailed review of its performance in the Assembly elections.

While accepting the electoral outcome, Bora expressed reservations over the results, stating that doubts were being raised among sections of the public.

He referred to pre-result projections and said they closely matched the final outcome.

He also pointed to the participation of young voters and said their enthusiasm during the campaign did not appear to reflect in the results.

Bora further raised concerns over the functioning of electronic voting machines (EVMs), stating that questions regarding their use could not be entirely ruled out.

Referring to voter demographics, he said that of the nearly 2.11 crore voters in the state, around 1.08 crore were women, and questioned the voting pattern in light of welfare scheme beneficiaries.

Four arrested as Jorhat police bust theft gang

Cash, jewellery, mobile phones and temple items recovered

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, May 5: Police in Jorhat have busted a theft gang and recovered cash, jewellery, mobile phones and items stolen from temples.

Officer-in-Charge of Jorhat Police Station Hrishikesh Hazarika said four persons, including a jewellery shop owner and a scrap yard dealer, were arrested in connection with the case, while one more individual has been detained for questioning.

The accused have been booked under Sections 331 and 305 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

They were identified as Ujjal Borah of Palibor and Abdul Qadir.

Police said Ujjal Borah allegedly sold stolen jewellery at a low price to LN Jewellers at Tarajan. The shop owner, Jitumon Borah, has been arrested for purchasing stolen items. Scrap dealer Rofique Ansari was also arrested for allegedly disposing of brass items stolen from temples.

According to police, the operation was launched following a theft complaint from a resident of the Cholahora area. A special police team was formed, CCTV footage was analysed and a drive was carried out to apprehend the accused.

Police recovered ₹89,000 in cash, five mobile phones, brass xarais and other temple items, costly mekhela sadors, and jewellery worth around ₹10 lakh.

BJP retains Hojai, Lumding; Ajmal wins Binnakandi

HT Correspondent
HOJAI, May 5: The BJP retained both Hojai and Lumding Assembly constituencies in Hojai district, while the AIUDF held on to Binnakandi, reflecting the broader electoral trend in central Assam.

In 63 No Hojai constituency, BJP candidate Shiladitya Dev won with 1,44,361 votes, defeating Congress candidate Jhili Chowdhury, who secured 77,660 votes, by a margin of over 66,000 votes.

Following his victory, Dev described the result as a mandate of trust and said he would prioritise development in the constituency.

He also indicated that action would be taken against alleged encroachments on land belonging to religious institutions.

In 64 No Lumding constituency, BJP candidate Sibru Misra secured a third consecutive term, polling 1,15,330 votes against Congress candidate Swapan Kar, who received 94,736 votes. In 62 No Binnakandi constituency, AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal won with 1,17,549 votes, defeating AJP candidate Rejaul Karim Chowdhury, who secured 82,793 votes.

Tezpur College launches Indo-Bhutan academic exchange programme

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, May 5: Tezpur College on Tuesday inaugurated a week-long international student-teacher academic exchange programme aimed at strengthening academic collaboration between India and Bhutan.

The programme, organised by the Department of Geography, began at the Chandra Mohan Medhi Auditorium in the presence of a 15-member delegation from Samtse College of Education under the Royal University of Bhutan.

The delegation was led by senior faculty member Kuenzang Gyeltshen and included professors, administrative officials and research scholars.

The inaugural session began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by principal Dr Manoj Kumar Hazarika.

In his address, he said such initiatives would enhance academic and cultural engagement between institutions and contribute to human resource development in both countries.

Speaking on the occasion, Gyeltshen high-



lighted India's longstanding cooperation with Bhutan and expressed optimism that the programme would open new avenues for academic exchange and collaboration.

The seven-day programme aims to strengthen academic linkages between students and faculty of both institutions, promote innovative teaching practices and encourage field-based learning.

It includes classroom observations, co-teaching sessions, faculty interactions, student seminars and academic discussions on contemporary themes in geography education.

A key component of the programme is a workshop on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing, focusing on spatial data analysis and the application of geospatial technologies in teaching and research.

A special lecture on Gross National Happiness (GNH) and sustainable development is also scheduled.

The programme also featured cultural performances by students and was anchored by Violina Deka, Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics.

Arogya Yoga Kendra marks foundation day with yoga sports meet



HT Correspondent
NAGAON, May 5: Arogya Yoga Kendra, Dhing unit of Arogya Care Foundation, celebrated its 8th foundation day along with the 3rd annual yoga sports meet through a three-day programme.

The event was inaugurated by Dr Biman Hazarika, Principal of Dhing College, in the presence of Dr Mukut Devnath.

The closing programme began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp before the portrait of Zubeen Garg by social worker Bidyut Hazarika.

Addressing the gathering, he said trainees of the Kendra have brought recognition to the Dhing region by participating in various state and national-level competitions.

Competitions including yoga, art, essay writing, speech, musical chair, chess and races were organised during the event.

In his address, president Dr Jonaram Nath highlighted the institution's eight-year journey and its contribution to student development through yoga.

Participants were felicitated with medals, trophies and certificates. Sanchita Kuri was awarded best yoga player, while Saurav Deb Nath received the best player award.

Meritorious students, including Jiban Deb Nath, Sayon Karmakar, Saurav Deb Nath, Sneha Deka and Bishal Kar, were also felicitated for their performance in the HSLC and Higher Secondary examinations.

The programme was conducted under the supervision of secretary Rupjiyoti Kar.

Sushanta Borgohain accorded warm welcome in Demow after victory

HT Correspondent
DEMOW, May 5: Sushanta Borgohain was accorded a warm welcome by party workers and supporters in Demow following his victory in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2026.

Borgohain won the 95 No Demow constituency by a margin of 33,528 votes over Congress-led alliance candidate Ajoy Kumar Gogoi, while CPI candidate Ajoy Bora finished third.

After the declaration of results on May 4, Borgohain arrived in the constituency from the counting centre in Sivasagar, where he was received by party workers.

Celebrations were held at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan at Demow Alun Nagar near NH-37, where supporters felicitated him with phulam gamosa and chhella chadar.

On Tuesday, residents gathered at his residence in Demow Raichai to congratulate him, offering traditional honours including gamosa, flowers and chhella chadar.

Borgohain began his political career as a Congress candidate, winning from the erstwhile 107 No Thowra constituency (now 95 No Demow) in 2011.

He lost in 2016 but returned to the Assembly in 2021.

Following his victory, he resigned from the Congress and joined the BJP, later winning the by-election from the constituency.

The recent election marked his third term as MLA from the constituency following delimitation.

23rd edition organised by HTBS highlights cultural unity and heritage

Rongjali Bwisagu celebrated with enthusiasm in Howraghat

HT Correspondent
HOWRAGHAT, May 5: The 23rd edition of the Rongjali Bwisagu festival was celebrated with enthusiasm by the Howraghat Town Bodo Society (HTBS) on Sunday, reflecting the community's cultural vibrancy and unity.

The celebrations began with the ceremonial hoisting of the Bwisagu flag along with the HTBS organisational flag.

HTBS president KK Brahma hoisted the society's flag, while vice president Ajit Basumatary conducted the formal raising of the Bwisagu flag.

Former president Karuna Boro led the homage ceremony, paying tribute to the cultural significance of the occasion.



Addressing the gathering, Brahma spoke about the society's journey over the past 23 years in Howraghat and highlighted challenges, including financial constraints, faced in organising

such events. He thanked members and the local community for their continued support and urged greater participation in preserving Bodo culture.

Ajit Basumatary emphasised the importance of Rongjali Bwisagu as a symbol of cultural identity and unity, and appreciated the role of the local community in sustaining the celebrations.

The programme also featured a traditional dance competition, inaugurated by Bijoy Basumatary, a teacher at Kolongpar Vidyapith Senior Secondary School, Nagaon.

Cultural troupes from different parts of the region participated, showcasing traditional dance forms.

Outstanding performers were felicitated through traditional Bodo rituals. The event highlighted the continued efforts of the community to preserve and promote its cultural heritage.

12,239 NOTA votes recorded in Nagaon

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, May 5: A total of 12,239 voters in Nagaon district opted for the 'None of the Above' (NOTA) option in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2026, according to results declared on May 4. The NOTA option was exercised by voters who chose not to support any of the contesting candidates.

Among the seven Assembly constituencies in the district, Barhampur recorded the highest number of NOTA votes at 2,745. Nagaon-Batadroba followed with 2,061 votes, while Kaliabor registered 2,040 votes.

In Raha, 1,958 voters opted for NOTA, while Dhing recorded 1,680 votes. Rupahat registered 1,160 NOTA votes, and Samaguri reported the lowest count at 995.

Election officials said the figures reflect the participation of voters exercising their right to reject all candidates through the NOTA provision.

E-AUCTION FOR PROVISION OF CATERING STALLS OVER LUMDING DIVISION			
E-Auction is invited for Catering Stall (General Minor Unit & Special Minor Unit) Assets Over Lumding Division Auction Catalogue No.: CATER-LMG-04-26; Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots): At 10:30 hrs. on 18-05-2026. Days: 1826.			
Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description	
AA/1	Catg-LMG-JRNA-GMU-58-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. JRNATS-1 at platform-1 of Jirania Railway station.	
AA/2	Catg-LMG-BXP-GMU-103-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. BXPTS-3 at Platform-1 of Barpathar Railway station.	
AA/3	Catg-LMG-BHRB-GMU-119-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. BHRBTS-1 at platform-1 of Bhaibarai Railway station.	
AA/4	Catg-LMG-DSR-GMU-122-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. DSRTS-1 at Platform-1 of Dhansiri Railway station.	
AA/5	Catg-LMG-NHLG-GMU-150-26-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of Catering Service at General Minor Unit (GMU) NHLGTS-2 at PF-1 of New Halflong Railway Station.	
AA/6	Catg-LMG-BPB-GMU-151-26-2 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of Catering Service at General Minor Unit (GMU) BPBTS-9 at PF-2 of BADARPUR Railway Station.	
AA/7	Catg-LMG-HKD-GMU-185-26-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering services on General Minor Units (GMU), Tea Stall (HKDTS-3), of Hailakandi Railway Station at PF-1.	
AA/8	Catg-LMG-MXR-GMU-79-26-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. MXRTS-1 at Platform-1 of Mahur Railway station.	
AA/9	Catg-LMG-SHTT-GMU-53-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. SHTTTS-3 at platform-1 of Silghat Town Railway station.	
AA/10	Catg-LMG-MBO-GMU-169-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Units (GMU), Tea stall (MBOTS-1), at platform-1 of Mairabari Railway station.	
AA/11	Catg-LMG-NGAN-GMU-81-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. NGANTS-1 at Platform-1 of Nagaon Railway station.	
AA/12	Catg-LMG-DJA-GMU-109-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. DJATS-2 at Platform-1 of Daotuhaja Railway station.	
AA/13	Catg-LMG-NHLG-GMU-148-26-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of Catering Service at General Minor Unit (GMU) NHLGTS-1 at New Halflong Railway Station.	
AA/14	Catg-LMG-SHTT-GMU-171-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering stall (GMU Tea stall (SHTTTS-1) at platform-1 of Silghat Railway station.	
AA/15	Catg-LMG-BRGM-GMU-50-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. BRGMTS-2 at platform-1 of Baraigam Railway station.	
AA/16	Catg-LMG-DML-GMU-110-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. DMLTS-1 at Platform-1 of Dhamratul Railway station.	
AA/17	Catg-LMG-BXJ-GMU-178-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on (GMU), Tea stall (BXJTS-1) at platform-1 near Battery Room of Bokajan Railway station.	
AA/18	Catg-LMG-DHRY-GMU-108-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. DHRYTS-1 at Platform-1 of Dhalpukhuri Railway station.	
AA/19	Catg-LMG-RAHA-GMU-51-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. RAHATS-1 at platform-1 of Raha Railway station.	
AB/1	Catg-LMG-LKA-SMU-48-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on Special Minor Unit (SMU) tea stall No. LKATS-3 at platform-1 of Lanka Railway station.	
AB/2	Catg-LMG-JMK-SMU-183-26-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service (SMU tea stall No. JMKTS-1) at PF-1 of Jamunamukh Railway Station.	
AB/3	Catg-LMG-SANG-SMU-181-25-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering services on Special Minor Units (SMU), Tea stall (SANGTS-1) at platform-1 of Sairang Railway station.	
AB/4	Catg-LMG-LKA-SMU-59-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on Special Minor Unit (SMU) tea stall No. LKATS-7 at Other Platform of Lanka Railway station.	
AB/5	Catg-LMG-JID-SMU-180-25-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering services on Special Minor Units (SMU), Tea stall (JIDTSTS-1) at PF-1 of Jagiroad Railway station.	
AB/6	Catg-LMG-CPK-SMU-65-25-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on Special Minor Unit (SMU) tea stall No. CPKTS-6 at Old Platform-1 of Chaparmukh Railway station.	
AB/7	Catg-LMG-MYD-SMU-173-25-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering services on Special Minor Units (SMU), Tea Stall (MYDTS-2), at PF-1 of Mandardisa Railway Station.	
AB/8	Catg-LMG-JMK-SMU-184-26-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service (SMU tea stall No. JMKTS-2) at PF-1 of Jamunamukh Railway Station.	
AB/9	Catg-LMG-GHY-SMU-123-24-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of Fruit stall (Fruit, Juice & other packed items as approved by zonal Railways), stall No. 'GHYFS-2' at PF 4/5, between pillars No 14 & 15 at Guwahati Railway station.	
Closing date & time : At 15:30 hrs. on 18-05-2026. 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 for more details.			
			Sr. DCM, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY Serving Customers With A Smile			

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Sports is like a war without the killing. - Ted Turner

Sudden emergence of Vijay

The scale of what Vijay has pulled off in Tamil Nadu is not just unexpected—it is structurally disruptive. In a state where politics has, for over half a century, oscillated between two Dravidian poles—Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam—the sudden emergence of Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam as the single largest party, brushing past the 110-seat mark and falling just short of a majority in the 234-member Assembly, marks a generational rupture. This is not merely a victory. It is a rejection—of incumbency, of entrenched political networks, and perhaps most significantly, of the idea that Tamil Nadu's electorate is immutably loyal to Dravidian binaries. For M. K. Stalin, this election was supposed to consolidate the gains of 2021, when the DMK returned to power with a comfortable majority of 133 seats. Instead, the party has seen its tally nearly halved in early trends, dropping to the mid-50s—a stunning reversal in just five years. Several factors converged to produce the collapse. There was an anti-incumbency with economic edge. Unlike previous elections driven by identity or welfare politics, this verdict carries a strong undercurrent of economic resentment. Across urban and semi-urban Tamil Nadu, there has been growing disquiet over the perceived monopolisation of key sectors by networks linked to the ruling establishment.

From state-run cable distribution to the dominance of private media empires like Sun TV Network, and film distribution channels associated with Red Giant Movies, a narrative had taken root: that economic opportunity was being covered by a tight political-business nexus. This sentiment appears to have cut across caste and class lines—particularly among first-generation entrepreneurs, small manufacturers, and the urban aspirational class. Then, there is a perception over increasing family control. The DMK has long faced accusations of dynastic concentration, but this election sharpened that critique. The prominence of Udhayanidhi Stalin, alongside other family-linked power centres, fed into a perception that governance and economic access were increasingly centralised. While Udhayanidhi himself is leading, the broader backlash has been severe enough to unsettle or endanger several senior ministers, including figures like Durai Murugan. Even more striking are trends suggesting Stalin himself trailing in Kolathur—symbolically devastating if it holds.

The DMK's strategic calculation appears to have been that Vijay's entry would split the anti-incumbency vote, indirectly benefiting the ruling party. That assumption has collapsed. Instead, TVK has acted as a consolidator, not a splitter—pulling voters directly away from the DMK across regions, especially among youth and first-time voters. Political observers say his rise to power in two years with such a huge number surpasses another film personality NTR in Andhra Pradesh who ousted Mrs Gandhi with his *atmagauravam* (self-respect) campaign. What makes Vijay's rise particularly consequential is the ideological space he occupies. He is not easily boxed into existing Tamil Nadu frameworks: Not explicitly Dravidian in the classical sense; Not aligned with Hindutva politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party; and publicly positioned as an agnostic on religion and caste.

POST BAG

An open letter to the newly elected MLAs of Assam

Sir/ Ma'am,

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the MLAs who have emerged victorious in the Assam Legislative Assembly elections. The trust and responsibility that the people have placed upon you are not limited to a political victory; rather, they mark the beginning of a profound commitment. In this moment of celebration, it is important for every MLA to remember that they are not merely representatives of a party or a group, but the voice of every citizen in their constituency. Assam faces numerous challenges—education, employment, healthcare, floods and erosion, environmental conservation, and the future of its youth. These issues should not remain mere promises but must be transformed into concrete actions. Within the Assembly, uphold the dignity of democracy through rational, respectful, and constructive debates, and outside it, maintain continuous engagement with the public.

Through this open letter, I would like to make a special appeal. MLAs should allocate a portion of their development funds toward career guidance, skill development, and the creation of self-employment opportunities for the youth. This will help build a stronger future for the state. Many students in Assam complete their schooling without having a clear understanding of the diverse career opportunities available to them. Most tend to focus only on traditional professions such as medicine, engineering, teaching, or government jobs. However, in today's world, there is immense potential in fields like information technology, digital services, entrepreneurship, tourism, and agri-technology. Due to the lack of proper guidance, many young people fail to choose the right path and fall behind, facing unemployment or underemployment despite being educated. Therefore, it is essential to establish career guidance centres in every constituency. These centres can provide reliable information and counselling on educational opportunities, training programs, scholarships, competitive examinations, and employment prospects. Such initiatives would be especially beneficial for students in rural areas. The use of technology is also crucial. Developing an integrated online career guidance portal would enable students to access information easily. With features such as online counselling, mentorship programs, and learning resources, the youth can become more aware and better prepared. In addition, it is important to strengthen collaboration between educational institutions, industries, and the government. Programs such as internships, apprenticeships, and industrial visits can provide practical experience and prepare students for the real world of work. Such measures will help bridge the gap between education and the job market.

Another significant issue in Assam is youth migration. Many talented young individuals leave the state in search of better opportunities. By focusing on local skill development and career guidance, more employment opportunities can be created within the state, thereby strengthening the local economy. The career guidance system must be accessible and inclusive for all. Special attention should be given to students from rural and economically weaker sections through scholarships, free counselling, and targeted skill development initiatives. The youth of Assam are the future of the state. With the right direction and opportunities, they can contribute not only to their own growth but also to the progress of the entire state. Therefore, prioritizing career guidance is the need of the hour.

Dr Buljit Buragohain

Why our democracy needs a vision, Not just a protest

Sir/ Ma'am

Through the columns of your esteemed daily, I want to share a perspective from a young voter watching our recent elections. The outcome of the recent elections is known and with it is born a sentiment of disappointment among us youngsters. It is not with the result per se but more with the lack of any grand vision by the opposition that has disappointed us. Coming from a generation of innovative youth, it pained me that the opposition was all about pointing the fingers at them without offering anything concrete regarding what the alternative future would look like.

An effective opposition forms the lifeblood of any nation. They cannot simply become a "no machine". In order to create a balanced democracy, the opposition needs to come up with an alternative and visionary path regarding various issues such as employment, technology, climate change etc. The pressure generated through this opposition will make the ruling party do even better.

Opposition in itself means nothing. What we need is leaders who not only oppose a policy but also have an alternate future to present. If the opposition keeps looking into its past, our country and its democracy will be left behind.

Sanju Paul
Dibrugarh University

Mama Magic: BJP's unstoppable victory in Assam

The results of the Assam Legislative Assembly elections declared today have marked the beginning of an unprecedented and historic chapter. According to the official data and statistics of the Election Commission, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led alliance has managed to capture power in Assam for a third consecutive term with a massive and absolute majority, completely uprooting the foundation of the opposition camp. In a democratic system, political analysts generally believe that after remaining in power for two consecutive terms, a natural wave of anti-incumbency or public dissatisfaction begins to take shape against the ruling party. The opposition parties had also made tireless efforts in this election to counter the ruling party by using issues such as price rise, unemployment, and various regional concerns as their main weapons. However, in this electoral battle, all those conventional political theories and the expectations of the opposition were shattered in an instant. Out of the 126 Assembly seats in Assam, the remarkable results achieved by the BJP along with its allies are rare in the political history of post-independence Assam. On the other hand, the condition of the Congress and its led Assam United Alliance became so pitiable that they were forced to struggle even to preserve their existence. Particularly, in an important and historic constituency like Jorhat, the manner in which Congress's prominent leader Gaurav Gogoi suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of BJP's veteran and experienced politician Hitendra Nath Goswami proved that in Assam's soil, elections can no longer be won merely on the basis of lineage or national-level recognition. Behind this unstoppable victory lies the ruling party's long-term strategic planning, its ability to understand public psychology, and a strong organizational base at the grassroots level. The results clearly indicate that the voters of present-day Assam do not cast their votes merely out of emotion or by being swayed by promises, but instead seek continuity in development, security, and strong leadership, which they have found in the BJP.

The chief architect and driving force behind this massive and historic victory of the BJP is, above all, the name of the state's Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma. His political acumen, extraordinary hard work, and the close bond he has built with the people have given a distinct and vibrant dimension to the entire electoral process. In Assam's politics, Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma is



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

no longer just a Chief Minister or a political leader; he has become an emotion for the general electorate. People across the state— young and old, especially the youth and women—affectionately address him as 'Mama'. This title is not something artificially imposed through political propaganda; rather, it is a spontaneous reflection of his continuous public engagement, his readiness to stand by people in times of distress, and his simple and approachable demeanor. During the election campaign, the way he tirelessly traveled across the state day and night, interacting directly with people in every rally, was beyond the imagination of opposition leaders. His eloquence, his ability to make quick decisions on complex issues, and his magical political strategy of turning opposition attacks into his advantage are truly unparalleled. Whenever opposition parties targeted him personally, he skillfully projected those attacks as conspiracies against Assam and Assamese pride. Dr Sarma operates in the political arena like a skilled and visionary general who anticipates the opponent's next move and prepares both defense and offense in advance. His massive victory margin in the Jalukbari constituency was merely a formality, as his real and larger battle was to transform the BJP's base across Assam into an impregnable fortress. A key feature of his so-called 'Mama Magic' lies in eliminating the distance between the government and the people. He has proven that if a leader can genuinely touch the hearts of the people, no political storm can shake him.

The process of constituency delimitation carried out in Assam before the election played a decisive and significant role in this Assembly election, which can be described as a far-sighted and masterstroke political victory for the BJP. This long-pending process, completed through the Election Commission of India, brought about a massive structural transformation in Assam's political map. As a result of this delimitation, representation of indigenous and tribal communities was ensured and their political rights became more secure. Constituencies that were earlier dominated by certain migrant or minority groups, where indigenous communities were on the verge of losing their political identity, witnessed a fundamental change in demographics. The government led by Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma successfully established this entire legal and administrative process in the public psyche as a strong and historic step towards safeguarding the existence of indigenous communities in



Assam. Consequently, the trust and confidence of indigenous voters across Upper Assam, Lower Assam, the North Bank, and Central Assam increased manifold towards the ruling party. The BJP effectively used identity politics in its favor and rendered the opposition completely defenseless on this sensitive issue. While Congress and other opposition parties opposed the delimitation, the BJP linked it with the future and security of the Assamese people, creating a deep emotional resonance. Meanwhile, parties like AIUDF found their influence restricted to a few specific constituencies, reducing their overall significance at the state level. Congress lost many of its traditional strongholds as the geographical boundaries and demographic composition of those constituencies changed. Under the visionary leadership of Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, the BJP had already begun building its organizational base in these newly formed and redefined constituencies years in advance through silent and systematic planning. Each constituency's new equations, ethnic composition, and local issues were studied meticulously, and candidates were selected accordingly. All these factors smoothed the BJP's path to victory to such an extent that the opposition seemed mentally defeated even before the contest began.

Rapid infrastructure development and beneficiary-centric welfare economics emerged as another powerful and unassailable weapon behind the BJP's sweeping victory, appealing equally to both rural and urban voters. Among the government's various schemes, the 'Orunodoi' scheme, in particular, initiated a silent revolution in Assam's socio-economic and political landscape. Through this ambitious scheme, lakhs of poor and underprivileged women began receiving direct financial assistance in their bank accounts every month. Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma did not confine this scheme merely as a government subsidy; instead, he transformed it into a symbol of women empowerment, poverty alleviation, and dignity. Women voters constitute a decisive and silent force in any democratic election, and through schemes like Orunodoi, the BJP successfully established this vast segment as a

reliable vote bank. Simultaneously, unprecedented infrastructure development across the state instilled deep confidence among the people in the government's intentions. Massive bridges over the Brahmaputra, modern medical colleges in various districts, improved national highways, and the upgrading of educational institutions visibly transformed the state's landscape. Dr Sarma consistently highlighted the concept of a 'double engine' government, explaining in simple terms the coordinated development brought by both central and state governments. Even those voters who were not ideologically aligned with the BJP earlier were compelled to support the ruling party after witnessing these tangible changes and benefiting from government schemes. While opposition parties criticized these initiatives as electoral gimmicks or misuse of public funds, such theoretical criticisms held no value for rural families who depended on the monthly financial support for their livelihood. The Chief Minister's strict monitoring of governance and his sharp oversight across departments made the administrative system more transparent and accountable, the benefits of which were returned by the people through their votes.

On the other hand, the opposition's consistent strategic failures, lack of a constructive vision, and severe leadership crisis further eased the BJP's path to this sweeping victory. Before the 2026 elections, the Assam United Alliance led by Congress made several promises and launched strong criticisms against the government, but failed to demonstrate genuine coordination among its constituent parties at the grassroots level. Internal conflicts over seat-sharing even before the elections eroded public confidence in the alliance. Although Congress projected Gaurav Gogoi as a prominent face, his defeat in a key constituency like Jorhat proved that national-level image and parliamentary eloquence alone are insufficient to win state elections. Against a grounded and experienced leader like Hitendra Nath Goswami, Gogoi's campaign lacked strategic depth. The opposition failed to present a credible alternative vision capable of countering Dr Hi-

mananta Biswa Sarma's strong personality, persuasive communication, and aggressive political style. In a democratic election, mere criticism of the ruling government is never enough; the opposition must present a reliable and hopeful alternative for the future, which they failed to do. Additionally, the BJP's well-organized and disciplined booth-level machinery had no parallel in the opposition. From mobilizing voters on polling day to managing the entire process till the last moment, the BJP displayed unmatched efficiency and dedication, leaving the opposition bewildered.

Overall analysis reveals that the results of this Assam Legislative Assembly election clearly establish the unstoppable momentum of the BJP and the extraordinary political influence of Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma. This landslide victory rests on a firm foundation of nationalist ideology, an unwavering commitment to holistic development, and continuous efforts to connect with every citizen. The BJP has not merely focused on winning elections; it has embedded its ideology and governance model deeply within the social fabric of Assam. For the opposition, this result serves as a harsh and realistic warning. If they aspire to regain relevance, they must overhaul their strategies, reconnect with grassroots realities, and rebuild public trust. They must step beyond the confines of social media and engage directly with people, understanding their concerns and aspirations. Moreover, they require strong, visionary, and widely acceptable leadership capable of presenting a credible alternative. Otherwise, halting the BJP's momentum will remain a distant dream, and the phenomenon of 'Mama Magic' will continue to dominate Assam's political landscape for years to come. This election proves that there is no magic in politics; what is described as 'Mama Magic' is essentially the result of relentless hard work, timely decision-making, and a deep understanding of public sentiment. The people of Assam have not merely voted for a party; they have voted for continuity, security, and the promise of a brighter future, thereby establishing a new milestone in the political history of the state.

Fortress Assam and the fall of Bengal's Didi

The 2026 Assembly elections have left India at a crossroads that feels both familiar and deeply unsettling. As the dust settles across Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry, the political map of the country looks like a patchwork quilt of conflicting ideologies and shifting loyalties. We are looking at a moment where the National Democratic Alliance finds itself celebrating massive territorial gains in the north and east while facing a stubborn, almost impenetrable wall in the south. This election cycle was never just about who gets to sit in the Chief Minister's chair for the next five years. It was a high-stakes battle for the soul of our federal structure and the definition of what it means to be a secular republic in a rapidly changing world. When we look at the numbers and the narratives that emerged from these five regions, we see a story of incredible consolidation on one side and a desperate, sometimes failing, struggle for relevance on the other.

In Assam, the story is one of absolute dominance that has effectively rewritten the rules of the game. For the first time in the history of the state, the Bharatiya Janata Party has managed to cross the halfway mark of sixty four seats entirely on its own strength. This is a massive psychological and political victory for Himanta Biswa Sarma, who has spent the last few years crafting a persona that blends aggressive communal rhetoric with a very calculated system of welfare redistribution. By winning one hundred and one seats along with its partners in the one hundred and twenty six member Assembly, the NDA has essentially decimated the opposition. The Congress party is starting at a wreckage that is hard to describe. This is their worst performance ever, falling even below the dismal numbers they saw in 1985 after the Assam Agitation. It is a stinging blow to the grand old party, especially with Gaurav Gogoi losing his own seat. It feels like the old guard of Assamese politics has been pushed out by a new, more muscular form of nationalism that does not feel the need to hide its polarising edges. The regional parties that tried to find a middle ground or align with the Congress, like the Rajiv Dal and Assam Jatiya Parishad, were completely routed. Even the allies within the NDA, such as the Asom Gana Parishad and the Bodoland People's Front, find themselves in a precarious position. They won a few seats,

but they have almost no leverage left because the BJP does not actually need them to stay in power. The state has moved from a complex multi-polar contest to a virtual one-party system.

While the victory in Assam was a validation of a sitting government, the earthquake in West Bengal is what will define the history books of this decade. The BJP has achieved what many thought was impossible just a few years ago. They have managed to dismantle the Trinamool Congress's fortress through a combination of relentless, long-term planning and a deep understanding of Bengal's unique political history. Bengal has always been a paradox. It was the cradle of India's national movement and a bastion of secularism for decades under the Left, but it was also the birthplace of many Hindutva ideas long before they became mainstream in the cow belt.

The BJP tapped into this older, dormant identity and fused it with a totalising nationalist narrative that eventually overwhelmed the regional pride Mamata Banerjee had successfully weaponised for so long. The Trinamool Congress now finds itself in a state of existential crisis. Mamata Banerjee is seventy one years old, and without a clear line of succession that carries her same fire and connection to the grassroots, the party looks vulnerable. Its cadres and voters are now exposed to the immense pressure of a triumphant BJP that has shown it knows how to subsume regional politics, much like it did in Maharashtra and Odisha.

But we cannot talk about the Bengal results without addressing the dark clouds that hung over the entire process. This was perhaps the most tainted election in our recent memory. The fact that nearly twenty seven lakh people were arbitrarily removed from the electoral rolls is a staggering blow to the integrity of our democracy. When the Supreme Court of India took what many see as an unhelpful view of this massive disenfranchisement, it sent a shiver down the spine of anyone who cares about fair play. If a victory is built on the foundation of excluding a significant portion of the electorate from the very act of voting, then the mandate carries a heavy burden of doubt. It is a sign of a decaying democratic culture where the process matters less than the result. This trend is a cause for serious concern because it suggests that the fundamentals of our republic are being tinkered with in ways that might be irreversible.

The narrative shifts completely when we cross the Vindhyas and look at the southern states. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the NDA's juggernaut hit a solid wall of regional identity and alternative governance models. In these two states, the incumbents were swept away, but not in the direction the BJP hoped for. The people chose to change their leaders, but they did not choose the saffron path. Tamil Nadu remains a territory where the Dravidian identity is the primary filter through which all politics must pass. The rejection of the NDA here is a reminder that a singular, centralised nationalist narrative often fails to resonate in places that take deep pride in their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness.

Kerala also followed its tradition of rotating power, but it did so by keeping the contest within the frameworks of its own unique social coalitions. These states act as a vital check on the idea that India is moving toward a monolithic political future. They represent the federal spirit of our republic, proving that different parts of the country can and will march to different beats.

The success of the BJP in the east and its failure in the south creates a strange imbalance in the national discourse. We are seeing a country that is becoming more politically polarised not just between parties, but between entire regions. The north and east seem to be gravitating toward a strong, centralised authority that uses a mix of religion and direct benefit transfers to maintain its grip.

Meanwhile, the south continues to protect its autonomy and its own specific brand of social justice politics. This divergence makes the task of national integration much harder. It places a lot of stress on our federal institutions, which are supposed to mediate between these different visions of India. When one side feels that the very rules of the election are being manipulated, as we saw in Bengal, the trust that holds a diverse country together begins to fray.

Puducherry followed the trend of the NDA retaining power, similar to Assam, which provides a small foothold for the alliance in the south, but it is too small a sample to suggest a broader shift in the region. The real story remains the massive consolidation of power in the hands of a few leaders who have mastered the art of the permanent campaign. The way Himanta Biswa Sarma has reinforced his position in Assam is a masterclass in modern Indian politics. He has managed to make himself indispensable

by being both a development-oriented administrator and a fierce ideological warrior. This dual identity allows him to appeal to a broad base of voters while keeping his core supporters energised.

On the other hand, the loss for the Congress and its regional allies in the state shows a complete lack of a counter-narrative. You cannot defeat a powerful ideological machine with half-hearted alliances and a leadership that seems disconnected from the ground.

The situation for the opposition in Bengal is even more dire. The Trinamool Congress's politics had clearly run its course, exhausted by years of incumbency and allegations of corruption that the BJP was able to exploit. But more than that, the BJP succeeded because it was willing to play the long game. They did not just show up for the election; they spent years building an organisation that could match the TMC's muscle on the streets. This meticulous preparation is what allowed them to convert a threshold population to their side. Now that they have won, the question is how they will govern a state as complex and volatile as Bengal. Will they try to heal the wounds of a fractured society, or will they continue the same polarising tactics that brought them to power? Given the history of the last few years, many fear it will be the latter.

When we think about the future of India as a secular, democratic, federal republic, these election results offer a mixed bag of hope and despair. The persistence of regional identities in the south is a sign of health for our federalism. It shows that the Indian voter is not a monolith and can distinguish between national trends and local needs. But the erosion of democratic norms in the election process in Bengal is a warning that we cannot ignore.

A democracy is only as strong as its weakest link, and if our electoral rolls and our courts fail to protect the right of every citizen to vote, then the very foundation of our republic is at risk. We are living through a time of great flux where old certainties are disappearing and new, often harsher realities are taking their place. The 2026 elections have shown us that while some parts of India are ready to embrace a new order, others are digging their heels in to protect a different vision of the country. This tension is what will define our politics in the years to come. It is not just about who wins or loses; it is about what kind of India survives the victory.

Free Bus services as public goods: Lessons from the Dunkirk experiment

By: Ramanath Jha

Among the inclusionary initiatives adopted by some Indian states is the provision of free or subsidised bus transport. For example, Delhi launched the 'Pink Ticket' scheme to extend the facility of unrestricted bus rides for women. Cities in Tamil Nadu offer a zero-fare bus travel scheme, allowing women to travel on government buses without charge. The Karnataka government has named a similar scheme 'Shakti'. Maharashtra, on the other hand, provides subsidised bus travel for women at 50 percent of the normal fare under the 'Mahila Samman Yojana'. Telangana's 'Maha Laxmi Scheme' offers free bus rides to both women and marginalised groups. In Andhra Pradesh, women can travel within their districts without charge. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as well as BEST (Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport) in Mumbai, also provide bus concessions.

Lessons from Europe

Even before free bus rides were introduced in India, several countries and cities had adopted similar initiatives. Luxembourg, a small but affluent European country, pioneered free public transport across all modes in February 2020, except for first-class train travel, followed by Malta in October 2022. Earlier, Hasselt (Belgium) abolished fares in 1997, and Tallinn (Estonia) in 2013. More recently, Kharkiv (Ukraine) adopted a similar policy in 2022, and Belgrade followed in 2025.

Even before free bus rides were introduced in India, several countries and cities had adopted similar initiatives.

While Hasselt and Tallinn are smaller cities, Kharkiv and Belgrade are large metropolitan centres with populations exceeding one million. Notably, in India, decisions on free or subsidised transport have been taken by state governments, whereas in Europe, such initiatives have largely been led by city governments. This distinction reflects a broader structural difference: European cities enjoy greater autonomy, while in India, local transportation is not included in the 12th Schedule of the Constitution, which outlines municipal functions.

The Dunkirk Model

Another city was added to the above-cited list in 2014. Mayor Patrice Vergriete, who holds a doctorate in urban planning, announced that Dunkirk, a city in France with a population of 81,920, would provide free bus services. The initiative

was titled "100% free bus, 7 days a week". The objectives were to improve mobility in the city, reduce reliance on private vehicles, and lower carbon emissions and air pollution. However, the plan was preceded by nearly four years of preparation before its rollout.

The programme was communicated to the public through the media and on the streets. This was followed by surveys and extensive dialogue with residents, leading to revisions and simplification of timetables to better align with commuting patterns. Vehicle quality improved, bus stop locations were modified, and the fleet size increased. In 2015, the city piloted the programme by introducing free weekend travel. The full free bus service was rolled out in 2018. Throughout the process, a total investment of €26.47 million was made, with a contribution of €1.65 million from the European Union's European Regional Development Fund.

While Dunkirk's experience has been replicated in several European cities, debate persists over the model's viability in major cities worldwide—including New York City, where Zohran Mandani campaigned on a promise of free bus rides for all residents.

The results of the endeavour were highly encouraging. There was a 165 percent rise in bus ridership. About 10 percent of bus users had permanently given up their cars, and parking lot use declined by 30 percent. A 2019 study found that half of new bus riders were taking bus journeys they previously made by car. People travelled more to the city centre, and walking increased significantly. The initiative had little impact on cycling, which was mainly a leisure activity for residents. The initiative also catalysed a positive shift away from the idealised image of private car ownership, especially among young people.

While Dunkirk's experience has been replicated in several European cities, debate persists over the model's viability in major cities worldwide—including New York City, where Zohran Mandani campaigned on a promise of free bus rides for all residents.

In Dunkirk, free bus rides cost €17 million (3.4 percent) of the city's total budget of €500 million. However, in New York, transportation is the second-highest household cost, accounting for an average of 14 percent of household spending. Estimates for a free bus service in New York City put the cost at US\$ 652 million, or about 4 percent of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's



(MTA) total revenue. This does not account for the likelihood that free rides will boost demand, thereby increasing bus trips, which stood at 415 million in 2022. Increased travel demand will require an expansion of the city's bus fleet. While US\$ 652 million in revenue loss is a small portion of the city budget, the resulting deficit is likely to affect other services. This shortfall, however, could be offset by raising fares on other public transport modes or by increasing general taxes.

Public Good or Populism?

This scenario brings us to the debate over freebies—things given without charge—and their desirability. Western countries have practised welfarism in various forms for a long time. In India, this is a more recent phenomenon, raising concerns in certain quarters, especially about the growing use of such measures. Critics have cautioned that such measures may create disincentives to work and discourage labour force participation. Besides, they can place significant pressure on a country's economy by diverting cap-

ital to unproductive expenditures and crowding out resources required for development and infrastructure upgrades. The Economic Survey 2025-26 reported that unconditional cash transfers had risen to become a central pillar of national welfare policy and amounted to INR 1.7 lakh crore in FY 26.

This scenario brings us to the debate over freebies—things given without charge—and their desirability. Western countries have practised welfarism in various forms for a long time. In India, this is a more recent phenomenon, raising concerns in certain quarters, especially about the growing use of such measures.

Economists and policy analysts, however, have argued that the distribution of certain commodities, such as foodgrains, could be classified as essential. Other goods have been labelled as 'merit goods', which yield significant public benefits, especially in health and education-related areas, such as mid-day meals. However, the inclusion of cash transfers or goods such as TV sets is often

seen as less justifiable. Money that is directly transferred to an individual may lack clearly defined public objectives beyond individual benefit and may, in some cases, influence political preferences. This may lead to greater consumption, but the public authority has limited control over how the money is spent. Despite these criticisms, several social commentators have also justified such measures.

While a universal definition of 'freebies' remains difficult, one possible approach is to consider a cap on such expenditures as a share of city and national budgets. Such a cap would be relatively easy to monitor and could help prioritise expenditures that deliver greater public value.

In the suggested gradation, free bus service emerges as one of the most desirable interventions on account of the several public benefits it generates. It promotes public transport and discourages private car use. It reduces traffic congestion and air pollution, and contributes positively to the urban environment. It can also release parking space due to reduced demand. Walking to and from bus stops contributes to public health. These benefits are complemented by its inclusionary nature, particularly for lower-income groups. Given its global popularity, free bus transport can be considered a significant public good.

The Dunkirk experiment demonstrates how free bus transport, when carefully designed and supported by complementary investments, can yield significant mobility, environmental, and social gains.

Conclusion

The Dunkirk experiment demonstrates how free bus transport, when carefully designed and supported by complementary investments, can yield significant mobility, environmental, and social gains. For Indian cities, grappling with congestion, pollution, and unequal access, such initiatives hold promise as targeted, inclusion-oriented interventions rather than broad-based welfare measures. The key lies in embedding them within a broader framework of transport planning, fiscal prudence, and institutional accountability. Free bus services should not be viewed in isolation, but as part of a larger effort to shift commuters away from private vehicles, strengthen public transport systems, and improve urban livability. As Indian cities continue to expand, the challenge will be to strike a balance between equity and efficiency, while ensuring that such schemes remain financially sustainable and deliver tangible public value. (Courtesy: ORF)

Women's Bill: A new era of inclusive leadership

By: Dr Vijay Garg

The Women's Bill is not merely a legislative reform—it represents a profound shift in how power is perceived, distributed, and exercised in society. At its core, the bill challenges long-standing structures that have historically limited women's participation in decision-making processes. By advocating for greater representation and equality, it seeks to redefine power as inclusive, balanced, and representative of the entire population.

For decades, women have played vital roles in shaping families, communities, and economies, yet their presence in formal political and institutional spaces has remained disproportionately low. The Women's Bill addresses this imbalance by ensuring that women have a rightful seat at the table. It recognizes that true democracy cannot exist when half the population is underrepresented.

Redefining power also means changing mindsets. Traditionally, power has been associated with dominance and control—qualities often framed in masculine terms. The Women's Bill introduces a more collaborative and empathetic vision of leadership. Women leaders frequently bring perspectives rooted in social welfare, education, healthcare, and community development. Their inclusion broadens policy priorities and leads to more holistic governance.

Another significant aspect of the Women's Bill is its potential to inspire future generations. When young girls see women in positions of authority, it reshapes their aspirations. It sends a clear message: leadership is not defined by gender but by capability, vision, and determination. This psychological shift is as important as the structural changes the bill proposes.

However, the success of such legislation depends not only on its passage but also on its implementation. Social barriers, cultural biases, and institutional resistance can still hinder progress. Therefore, alongside legal reforms, there must be continuous efforts in ed-

ucation, awareness, and capacity-building to empower women at all levels.

Critics sometimes argue that reservations or quotas undermine merit. However, this perspective overlooks the systemic barriers that have historically prevented women from accessing opportunities. The Women's Bill does not replace merit—it creates a level playing field where merit can truly shine.

Ultimately, the Women's Bill is about redefining power from exclusivity to inclusivity. It is about acknowledging that diverse voices lead to stronger decisions and more resilient societies. By empowering women, the bill strengthens democracy itself.

The Core Provisions

The bill (now the 106th Amendment Act) introduces several structural changes to ensure that women are not just participants, but stakeholders in power: Quantitative Shift: Reserves 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies (including the Delhi Assembly). Sub-Reservation: Includes a quota within the quota for women from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST).

Sunset Clause: The reservation is initially set for 15 years, allowing for a periodic review of its effectiveness and the hope that gender parity will eventually become self-sustaining.

Rotational Policy: Reserved seats will be rotated after each delimitation exercise to ensure broader representation across different geographical areas.

Why It Redefines Power

Political analysts and leaders argue that this bill changes the "grammar of power" in three distinct ways:

1. From "Proxy" to "Principals"

In the past, critics of women's reservation at the local Panchayat level pointed to the "Sarpanch Pati" phenomenon (where husbands ruled through their elected wives). However, the 2023 Act targets higher legislative bodies where the scrutiny of the media and the complexity of policy-making demand direct leadership. It forces political parties to build a leadership

pipeline of women who can debate law, manage budgets, and lead ministries.

2. Changing the Legislative Agenda

Global studies suggest that women in leadership often prioritize "social infrastructure"—healthcare, education, and drinking water—over traditional "hard" infrastructure. By reaching a critical mass of 33%, women can move from being a silent minority to a voting bloc that can swing the national agenda toward more inclusive, welfare-oriented policies.

3. Altering Political Culture

The bill challenges the "old boys' club" nature of political party structures. Since 33% of seats must be filled by women, parties can no longer argue that they cannot find "winnable" female candidates. This institutionalizes gender as a central pillar of political strategy rather than an afterthought.

The Path to Implementation

While the bill is a historic milestone, its actual impact on power depends on two "triggers":

The Census: The reservation will only take effect after the first census is conducted following the bill's passage.

Delimitation: Following the census, a delimitation exercise (redrawing of constituency boundaries) must occur before the seats are officially reserved.

"This is not only about representation; it is about redefining power. India is not just correcting a historical injustice—it is completing the circle of its democratic promise."

Current Standing (2026 Context)

As of early 2026, the focus has shifted from the passage of the bill to the execution of the census and delimitation. The debate now centers on ensuring that "redefining power" also includes women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including the demand for an OBC (Other Backward Class) sub-quota, to ensure the new power structure is as representative as possible.

In redefining power, we are not taking it away from anyone—we are expanding it to include everyone.

Women power or a new mask of power?



By: Dr Priyanka Saurabh

When the Nari Shakti Vandan Act was passed in India, it was hailed as "historic." Parliament erupted in applause, and a new era of women's empowerment was announced. But amidst all this celebration, an uncomfortable question persisted: are the doors of politics truly open for women, or is it merely a new symbolic framework being created into which the same old image of power will be fitted?

The character of Indian politics has been more realistic and, at times, harsh, than idealistic. Where equations prevail over principles, and morality often shifts according to the convenience of power, expecting that reservation alone will change the character of the system may be naive. Increasing women's participation in politics is a fundamental democratic necessity, but the question is whether this participation will translate into genuine empowerment or whether the same power structures will adapt them to their own mold, as they have done with every new entrant. The path to entry into politics is still extremely complex, with pressures from family, capital, connections and party loyalty at play. For women, the path becomes even more difficult as they face additional hurdles such as social constraints, character questions and lack of opportunities. To assume that every woman who rises will do so only through compromise is not only an oversimplification but also an insult to the struggles of thousands of women who are making their way through their hard work and talent.

The real problem is that the system under which this reservation is being implemented is itself not transparent and fair. The lack of democracy within political parties, the opacity in ticket distribution, and the centralization of leadership ensure that opportunities are distributed more based on proximity than merit. Therefore, even if seats are reserved for women, they will not necessarily emerge as truly independent and empowered representatives; rather, they may become part of the same power game where decisions are made elsewhere and faces are seen elsewhere. This is why both hope and apprehension about this law are natural, because if the structure remains unchanged, the outcome will remain the same as before. The question of ethics in politics is also central to this debate, as a

culture of "contact" and "compromise" has long existed in the corridors of power, and it is not limited to women but permeates the entire system. Therefore, if this culture is not challenged, reservations could become ingrained in the same structure and lose their original purpose.

It's also important to understand that increasing representation doesn't guarantee change. Sometimes, even newcomers fall into the trap of following old patterns because the system forces them to do so. Therefore, any reform should be evaluated not just on the basis of numbers, but on its impact. Whether increasing the number of women will bring sensitivity to policies, prioritize social issues, or will politics simply continue in the same old direction with new faces is an open question that only time will answer. The most important element in this entire scenario is accountability. If anyone, whether male or female, abuses power, action should be taken against them. However, this requires independent and strong institutions that can function without political pressure. Unfortunately, the nexus between crime and politics has become a serious problem today, where in many cases the accused are protected and the voices of the victims are suppressed. Expecting reservation alone to solve this problem is unrealistic.

As a solution, we need comprehensive reforms, bringing transparency within political parties, establishing clear and fair criteria for ticket distribution, developing safe and independent grievance mechanisms for women so they can express themselves without fear, and preparing them not just as symbolic representatives but as capable and trained leaders. This requires political education, resources, and institutional support. And most importantly, a change in societal mindsets, because unless women are given equal status, no law will fully achieve its objective. Ultimately, we must understand that the solution to the country's problems lies not simply in increasing the number of seats, but in strengthening education, health, and infrastructure, because only an empowered society can lay the foundation for a strong democracy. The Nari Shakti Vandan Act is an opportunity, but it will only be meaningful if implemented with honesty and foresight; otherwise, it will remain a new mask, hiding the same old image of power behind it.

Keep hydrated this summer

By: Shahnaz Husain

Does your skin feel tight, dull, or rough with the arrival of summer? That's often a sign your skin is losing moisture faster than it can retain it.

Heat, sun exposure, and long hours in air-conditioned spaces can quietly dehydrate the skin, affecting its texture and natural glow.

Dehydration leads to flakiness, wrinkles, itching, and skin infections. The tricky part is that your skin can look oily even when it's dehydrated underneath.

Dehydration can affect many bodily processes, including digestion, immune system support, and temperature regulation.

Dehydration isn't just about feeling thirsty – it can affect your mood, focus, skin, and vital organ functions. The key to avoiding it lies in knowing how to hydrate your body consistently, especially when the temperature soars.

Thirst is often a late indicator of dehydration.

Listen to your body - if you're feeling thirsty or sluggish, you might already be running low on hydration. Mild fluid loss can mess with how you feel.

There's no magic number when it comes to how much water you need daily - it all depends on your activity level, health conditions, height, weight, gender, and other factors. Experts recommend drinking 8-10 glasses of water daily for healthy adults.

Pregnant women should drink 10 glasses of water daily, and breastfeeding women should drink 12 glasses. Kids and teens should drink 6 to 8 cups of

water a day.

Drink a glass of water every 2 hours to maintain hydration.

Most people should drink water, not sports drinks, during their workouts. Sports drinks may be useful for people doing intense exercise for a long time, especially if they're sweating a lot. But for non-athletes, sports drinks are simply another sugary beverage.

Water doesn't have any added sugars or calories in it, which makes it a great beverage to have throughout the day.

Adding lime, cucumber, or mint makes it easier to keep sipping throughout the day as the flavour encourages increased fluid intake compared to plain water.

Infusing water with lemon, lime, cucumber, and mint is an easy way to add nutrients and a burst of natural flavour. It's also a tasty way to stay hydrated, support digestion, and promote alkalinity while adding vitamins, antioxidants, and a natural cooling effect.

It's an extra refreshing way to stay hydrated and a cooling alternative when it's too hot to sip on herbal tea.

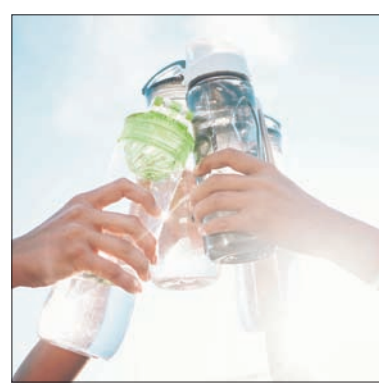
The hydrating effects of cucumber mint water contribute to glowing, healthy.

Cucumbers are composed of approximately 95-96% water, making them one of nature's most hydrating foods.

Cucumbers contain vitamins C and K, which help reduce skin inflammation and promote collagen production.

Keep water within reach. Carry a reusable water bottle everywhere and use it - refill it often so hydration stays on your radar.

Water-rich fruits are rich in natural



sugars, fibre, and antioxidants. They are not only an excellent source of hydration but also protect the body against damage caused by heat and sun exposure. Many fruits naturally contain high amounts of water along with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Including hydrating summer fruits such as watermelon (92%), strawberries (91%), cantaloupe (90%), and peaches (89%) not only provides essential nutrients like vitamin C, vitamin A, potassium, and antioxidants, helping with hydration, immunity, and overall energy.

Adding a variety of colourful water-rich fruits ensures that you get different nutrients to stay healthy all season long. Incorporating hydrating fruits into daily meals just requires minor dietary changes to add these fruits to your routine. You may prepare fresh fruit salads for breakfast or snacks, add fruits to smoothies or yoghurt bowls, and consume chilled fruit slices during mid-day breaks. Key strategies include adding berries or bananas to morning oatmeal/yoghurt, swapping processed

snacks for apples or citrus, and adding sliced fruit to salads.

Eat whole fruits. However, if you drink fruit juice, keep your serving to ½ cup, and be sure it's labeled 100%. Skip fruit drinks, punches or fruit cocktails. They are often loaded with excess sodium and/or added sugar. Be sure to take a wide variety of water-rich fruits with different types and colours since they offer different nutrients. Always keep a good stock of fresh fruit in your refrigerator so that you are always prepared to eat healthily. Develop a habit of eating two servings of water-rich fruit daily.

Choose Coconut Water or Natural Electrolyte Drinks for hydration during this summer season.

Electrolytes are minerals that conduct an electrical charge when mixed with water. They help regulate a variety of your body's most essential functions, including nerve signalling, pH balance, muscle contraction, and hydration.

Coconut water replenishes lost electrolytes and is a natural alternative to energy drinks, making it one of the top hydration tips for tropical climates.

Coconut water is best for fluid replenishment after light activity. It offers a hydration boost that performs somewhere between water and traditional sports drinks or electrolyte solutions.

Unsweetened coconut water also contains naturally occurring sugars—about 7 to 10 grams per cup.

Coconut water, milk, fruit juices, and smoothies are high in electrolytes. Drinks with electrolytes may help you rehydrate after intense exercise, vomiting, or diarrhoea. You can also make your own drink at home.

Khandu stresses on holistic education, youth empowerment

The chief minister commended students, artists and mentors for presenting a vibrant cultural showcase

ITANAGAR, May 5: Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Tuesday described Arunachal Panorama as a unique platform promoting cultural unity while emphasising the need for holistic education and youth empowerment, as he attended the inaugural ceremony of the 9th edition of the festival at Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU) in Doimukh.

Addressing students, faculty members and dignitaries at the university's Rono Hills campus, Khandu said the flagship cultural and youth festival celebrates the rich diversity of Arunachal Pradesh while fostering unity among its many tribes and communities.

Recalling its inception in 2006 under former Vice Chancellor Professor Atul Sharma, he lauded the university for sustaining the festival as a meaningful tradition showcasing the cultural expressions of the state's tribes and sub-tribes.

The chief minister commended students, artists and mentors for presenting a vibrant cultural showcase, including a fusion of traditional dances, and noted that such platforms help present the diversity of over 26 major tribes in a cohesive and engaging manner, particularly for the younger generation. Reflecting on the journey of RGU since its establishment in 1984, Khandu said the institution has played a key role in shaping the state's human resources, with its alumni contributing across sectors such as governance, politics, business, technology and public



service.

He expressed confidence that current students would carry forward this legacy in line with the vision of a developed India by 2047.

Highlighting the changing dynamics of education, the chief minister said academic learning alone is no longer sufficient and stressed the importance of sports, co-curricular activities and technological adaptability in an era driven by artificial intelligence and machine learning.

He advised students to use technology judiciously and avoid overdependence.

Reiterating the government's commitment to educational reforms, Khandu referred to the implementation of the National Education Policy and ongoing initiatives under Mission Shiksha Arunachal aimed at strengthening

foundational literacy and numeracy, improving secondary education outcomes and integrating skill development.

He said investments have been made in upgrading schools, building hostels and rationalising infrastructure.

On higher education and research, he emphasised the role of universities in bridging academic knowledge with grassroots realities and encouraged Rajiv Gandhi University to enhance research-driven policy contributions and improve its national ranking.

The chief minister also announced that the state cabinet has approved a satellite campus at Kambang to expand access to higher education in eastern Arunachal Pradesh.

Khandu outlined several initiatives for youth empowerment, in-

cluding the scheme for academic excellence to support students securing admission to top international universities, and urged students to utilise such opportunities.

Encouraging entrepreneurship, he highlighted initiatives like the Arunachal Pradesh Innovation and Investment Park, which provides incubation, mentorship and financial support to startups, and said the state is emerging as a strong performer in the startup ecosystem.

He also announced the proposed establishment of the Arunachal Creative Economy Cell under the Chief Minister's Office to promote talent in art, music, design and other creative fields, and to provide wider exposure to youth.

Khandu further spoke about plans to boost participation of Arunachali youth in the Armed Forces and Central Armed Police Forces through structured training and support, and highlighted ongoing infrastructure initiatives, including development of science centres, colleges and university facilities.

Responding to issues raised by student representatives, he assured support for infrastructure improvements at the university, including roads, street lighting and water supply systems.

The chief minister extended his best wishes to organisers and participants of Arunachal Panorama 2026, expressing confidence that the festival would continue to strengthen cultural unity and inspire the youth. (PTI)

BJP councillor dies by suicide after being threatened by youths following party's bypoll win

AGARTALA, May 5: A BJP councillor of Dharmanagar Municipal Council (DMC) in North Tripura died by suicide on Tuesday after he was allegedly threatened and humiliated by a group of youth following the saffron party's victory in the Dharmanagar bypoll, police said.

Rahul Kishore Roy, who was also the BJP's Yuva Morcha mandal president, took the extreme step a day after BJP candidate Jahar Chakraborty won the bypoll for the Dharmanagar Assembly constituency by a massive margin.

Chief Minister Manik Saha expressed shock over the youth leader's death and assured an impartial inquiry into the allegations brought by the deceased's wife, Ananya Bhattacharjee.

"I am shocked by the untimely death of Rahul Kishore Roy. May his soul rest in peace, and also offer my sympathy to the bereaved family. I also assured that an impartial inquiry will be conducted following the complaint of the deceased's wife," the CM wrote on Facebook.

Nagaland gov reminds community leaders of their crucial role

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, May 5: Nagaland Governor Nand Kishore Yadav on Tuesday reminded community leaders, particularly the gaon burhas (village heads) and tribal organisations, that their role is crucial in guiding society and fostering cooperation among the people.

Yadav made the remarks while interacting with the leaders of civil society organisations and government officials at Niuland DC's conference hall during his visit to the district.

Stating that their leadership and commitment will play a key role in shaping the future of this district, he said, together with collective effort and shared responsibility, Niuland will emerge as a model district in the state.

Yadav noted that Niuland, one of the youngest districts of Nagaland, holds immense promise and potential while it is still in its formative years.

He said he was delighted to see a strong sense of unity, identity and purpose among its people.

"The coming together of different tribal bodies and community organisations reflects the spirit of cooperation and harmony which is essential for progress and development," he stated. Yadav said his visit to the district is part of an effort to understand the aspirations, challenges, and priorities of the people at the grassroots level.

He said development is most effective when it is inclusive and responsive to local needs and urged all stakeholders — civil society organisations, village leaders, and district administration — to continue working in close coordination to ensure that government initiatives reach every household.

Yadav further emphasised the importance of maintaining peace, strengthening community bonds, and nurturing the values of integrity and responsibility.

"As Niuland grows, it must do so with a vision that balances development with preservation of its rich cultural heritage and traditions," he said.



Roy's wife has lodged a complaint with the local police station, holding seven persons responsible for her husband's death.

"Soon after the announcement of the results of the bypoll to the Dharmanagar Assembly bypoll, six to seven youths attacked our residence at Chandrapur at 3 pm and started hurling abuses at my husband. They also assaulted me to hand over my husband to them," she stated in the complaint.

Ananya said, "The same gang returned late at night again, attacked our house and hurled two or

three bombs. They also threatened to eliminate my husband whenever he is found at Dharmanagar."

Deeply upset by the attacks and threats, my husband committed suicide by hanging from the ceiling early Tuesday morning. I urge the Officer in Charge (OC), Dharmanagar police station, to investigate against these people for justice, she said. "Based on a specific complaint, we have registered a case, and an investigation is underway. No one has been arrested yet." SP, North Tripura, Avinash Kumar Rai said. (PTI)

Arunachal CM stresses merit, transparency in recruitment

ITANAGAR, May 5: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Tuesday underscored merit-based recruitment, transparency and integrity in public service while urging newly appointed candidates to discharge their duties with sincerity and compassion.

The chief minister was addressing candidates at a function where appointment orders were handed over to successful candidates of the Non-Ministerial Technical Examination (NMTE) conducted by the Arunachal Pradesh Staff Selection Board (APSSB).

Khandu, along with Rajya Sabha MP Nabam Rebia, minister Balo Raja and Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta, felicitated the candidates and congratulated them on their success, describing their achievement as a result of hard work, perseverance and merit, an official communique said.

Highlighting the significance of the event, he said that while appointment orders have been issued since the establishment of the APSSB in 2017-18, the event reflects a more organised approach where candidates are brought together on a common platform, fostering a sense of camaraderie among new entrants to government service.

Emphasising transparency, Khandu said the creation of the APSSB marked a transformative step in ensuring that government jobs are awarded purely on merit.

He observed that earlier, the absence of a structured mechanism often posed challenges for deserving candidates, but the Board has now streamlined recruitment with near-zero error systems and full transparency.

Describing the Board as an ISO-certified recruitment agency, alongside the Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission, he said the state has developed robust institutions to uphold fairness and equal opportunity in public employment.

Encouraging aspirants to aim higher, the chief minister urged the newly appointed candidates to prepare for competitive examinations such as the Arunachal Pradesh Civil Service and the Union Public



Service Commission, noting that reforms have aligned examination patterns to enable preparation for both state and national services simultaneously.

Providing details of the recruitment process, he said that out of 225 sanctioned posts, 183 were filled through the examination, with 166 candidates receiving appointment orders, while some posts remained vacant due to eligibility constraints or candidates opting for other opportunities.

He added that the government is considering introducing a waiting list system in future to ensure better utilisation of vacancies.

Stressing capacity building, Khandu said training is essential for public service, particularly for technical personnel, and called on departments to collaborate with training institutions to design structured programmes for skill enhancement.

Addressing the appointees, he reminded them that government service is fundamentally about serving the people and urged them to maintain humility, honesty and compassion in their work so that citizens feel respected and supported.

Khandu also highlighted ongoing efforts to improve working conditions, including upgrading office infrastructure, healthcare facilities and residential accommodations, adding that district-wise reviews are being undertaken to identify and address gaps.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to recognising merit and hard work, the chief minister said integrity remains non-negotiable in public service and expressed confidence that the new recruits would contribute meaningfully to the state's development and governance. (PTI)

NU Prof participates in Fulbright-Nehru Prog in US

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, May 5: Prof Dipak Sinha, pro-vice chancellor, School of Agricultural Sciences, Nagaland University, who was selected for the 2025-26 Fulbright-Nehru International Education Administrators Award (FNIEA), participated in the Fulbright-Nehru Programme in the United States from April 11 to 25, a varsity release said on Tuesday.

This fully funded fellowship, offered under the Indo-US Fulbright-Nehru initiative by the United States-India Educational Foundation, is designed for senior education administrators from India, including vice-chancellors, pro-vice chancellors, deans and academic leaders. The programme aims to strengthen leadership in higher education, promote international academic partnerships and support institutional development through direct exposure to global practices. It is specifically designed to expose participants to diverse university systems as well as key federal agencies shaping higher education and research.

The programme, which began at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, provided a comprehensive understanding of the United States higher education system. It included visits, meetings and academic interactions with leading institutions across multiple cities. These engagements across geographically diverse academic centres highlighted the scale and diversity of the U.S. higher education landscape.

Prof Sinha's participation in this prestigious global fellowship is expected to contribute meaningfully to the academic growth, international engagement, and institutional strengthening of Nagaland University, the release added.

Trinamool Congress a 'gone case' after defeat in Bengal Assembly polls: Biplab Deb

AGARTALA, May 5: Senior BJP leader Biplab Kumar Deb on Tuesday claimed that the Trinamool Congress, which had ruled West Bengal for 15 years, is a "gone case" now after the crushing defeat in the recently concluded assembly elections.

The BJP secured 207 seats in the 294-member assembly, ending the TMC's uninterrupted 15-year rule in West Bengal and marking a decisive shift in the state's political landscape.

"The Trinamool is a gone case now after the defeat in the West Bengal elections. I thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for liberating the people from the mis-governance of the Trinamool Congress government," said Deb, who played a key role in guiding the BJP to the historic triumph as co-in-charge of the party's West Bengal elections.

The former Tripura chief minister declared the West Bengal Assembly election result a "historic" win for democracy and a rejection of the TMC's "politics of fear, appeasement, and mismanagement". He emphasised it was a mandate for development under PM Modi and indicated a "liberation" for the people of Bengal.

He also praised the people of West Bengal for coming out in large numbers to vote for regime change.



On his new responsibility, the former chief minister replied, "Whatever responsibility has been assigned to me by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, I performed wholeheartedly," he said. Asked who would be the chief minister of Bengal, the West Tripura MP said the party will decide on the issue.

Earlier, thousands of party leaders and workers gave a rousing welcome to Deb upon his arrival at MBB airport here after the BJP's victory in Bengal. He also went to the Maa Tripura Sundari temple and offered prayers. (PTI)

Arunachal Governor urges police to adopt mission-oriented approach in policing

ITANAGAR, May 5: Arunachal Pradesh Governor K T Parneik on Tuesday advised the police to adopt a proactive and mission-oriented approach, based on the latest technologies and human intelligence.

Reviewing the state's security situation with Director General of Police Shiv Darshan Singh Jamwal at Lok Bhavan here, Parneik underscored that policing in such sensitive and strategically significant areas must combine firmness and efficiency with empathy and a humane touch, ensuring the force remains approachable and responsive to people's needs, an official report said.

With special reference to the Tirap-Changlang-Longding (TCL)

region, the governor reiterated that public trust is the cornerstone of effective policing, and it must be nurtured through consistent engagement, transparency, and fairness in action.

He emphasised that in the TCL districts, where geographical challenges and security concerns coexist, building confidence among citizens is as important as maintaining law and order. He emphasised the need to review the deployment of police personnel, as well as the strategic location of police stations and outposts in the TCL region.

The governor emphasised the urgent need for the early implementation of border fencing, un-

derscoring that it is not merely an infrastructure project but a critical pillar of national security. He said that in sensitive frontier regions, effective border management plays a decisive role in curbing illegal infiltration, trans-border crime, and other security challenges that can disrupt peace and stability.

The governor stressed that a well-secured border is fundamental to safeguarding the nation's sovereignty and called for coordinated efforts among all concerned agencies to expedite the process with utmost priority and diligence.

Earlier, Jamwal briefed the governor on the overall law and order situation across the state, the report added. (PTI)

Nagaland inks pact with Tata Motors to strengthen its public transport services

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, May 5: The Nagaland government on Tuesday signed a landmark memorandum of agreement (MoA) with Tata Motors Limited for the procurement of 43 buses to strengthen and expand public transport services under the Nagaland State Transport (NST) department.

The agreement, signed at the chief secretary's conference hall in Kohima, introduces a structured deferred payment mechanism, allowing the state to acquire the fleet without immediate heavy capital outflow. The total project cost of ₹ 13 crore will be paid in three installments over a period of three years, beginning with a mobilisation advance of ₹ 5 crore, followed by ₹ 4 crore each in the subsequent two years. The payments will be serviced through state plan allocations, minimising additional financial burden and avoiding conventional borrowing.

Under the agreement, the NST is expected to receive delivery of all



43 buses within three months, leading to an immediate boost in fleet capacity.

The expansion is anticipated to significantly enhance operational efficiency, improve service coverage across urban and rural areas, and increase revenue generation potential for the department. Officials stated that the induction of the new buses will improve passenger safety, comfort, and reliability, while also strengthening last-mile connectivity and reducing disruptions caused by the aging fleet.

The initiative is also expected to enhance both inter-district and in-

terstate transport connectivity.

Described as a first of its kind structured procurement model between Tata Motors Limited and a government entity, the agreement marks one of the largest fleet expansion efforts undertaken by NST. The tripartite agreement was signed in the presence of chief secretary Sentyangar Imchen. Signatories included Merangkaba Imchen, additional chief engineer representing NST, Ketouhou Metha, OSD from the finance department, and Ajay Gupta, DGM (sales & marketing), Tata Motors Limited.

Rate hornbill sighted in Arunachal's Pasighat after long gap: Officials

ITANAGAR, May 5: A rare adult Oriental pied hornbill has been sighted at Pasighat in East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh after a long gap, indicating a healthy forest ecosystem in the region, officials said.

The hornbill was observed foraging near the forest office area by local resident Biswajit Tayeng, the officials said.

The sighting has generated interest among wildlife enthusiasts and conservationists.

Hornbills are considered key ecological indicators, and their presence reflects the overall health of forest habitats.

Officials said the species plays a crucial role in seed dispersal and forest regeneration, contributing to the maintenance of biodiversity.

"The return of the hornbill after a prolonged gap suggests that habitat conditions in the area remain favourable and conservation measures are yielding positive outcomes," a forest official said.

Often referred to as "farmers of the forest," hornbills help in the regeneration of native vegetation by dispersing seeds over large distances. Experts observed that the species depends on mature trees and undisturbed forest cover for survival.



The sighting has highlighted the importance of continued conservation efforts in Arunachal Pradesh, which forms part of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspot.

Officials stressed the need to protect natural habitats, prevent deforestation, and strengthen community participation in conservation initia-

tives. Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein expressed happiness over the sighting of the avian species. "Its presence signals a healthy ecosystem, as hornbills play a key role in seed dispersal and forest regeneration," Mein said in a post on X. (PTI)

Karan Johar makes Met Gala debut in Manish Malhotra outfit inspired by Raja Ravi Varma's art

Filmmaker Karan Johar made his Met Gala debut in a bespoke outfit by designer Manish Malhotra that draws inspiration from the works of celebrated Indian painter Raja Ravi Varma.

The outfit, titled 'Framed in Eternity', features Johar in a power-shouldered vintage jacket over a hand-painted cape approximately six feet in length. The piece was created by over 80 artisans over 85 days.

Johar, 53, accessorised the look with a multi-gemstone necklace and rings from his jewellery brand Tyaani.

The visual language of the outfit draws directly from Varma's works, including Lady with the Peach, Hamsa Damayanti, Kadambari, Arjuna and Subhadra, and There Comes Papa.

"It's amazing to represent your nation, your culture and heritage on a global platform as magnificent as the Met, which truly signifies the work of art. Today's theme really beautifully blends fashion and art, and I couldn't have chosen a better debut on a theme like this," Johar told reporters at the red carpet of the fashion gala, which is held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City every year in May.

This year's Met Gala theme is "Costume Art" with the dress code titled "Fashion is Art". The event, considered one of the biggest nights in global fashion, is co-chaired by Beyonce, Venus Williams, Nicole Kidman and Anna Wintour.

Describing his experience on the red carpet, he said it was "exhilarating, nervous and also heavy in equal

measure".

Paying tribute to both his designer and the artist who inspired the look, the filmmaker said, "Manish Malhotra is a magnificent, famous Indian designer. This is a tribute to Raja Ravi Varma, a glorious artist who did the most magnificent work of the 19th century. I'm just very happy to pay homage to him and to Manish Malhotra."

One of India's most celebrated names in filmmaking with titles such as "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai", "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham", "My Name is Khan" and "Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani", Johar has become the first director to represent India at the event that has seen the presence of celebrities like Shah Rukh Khan, Alia Bhatt, Deepika Padukone and Priyanka Chopra Jonas in the past.

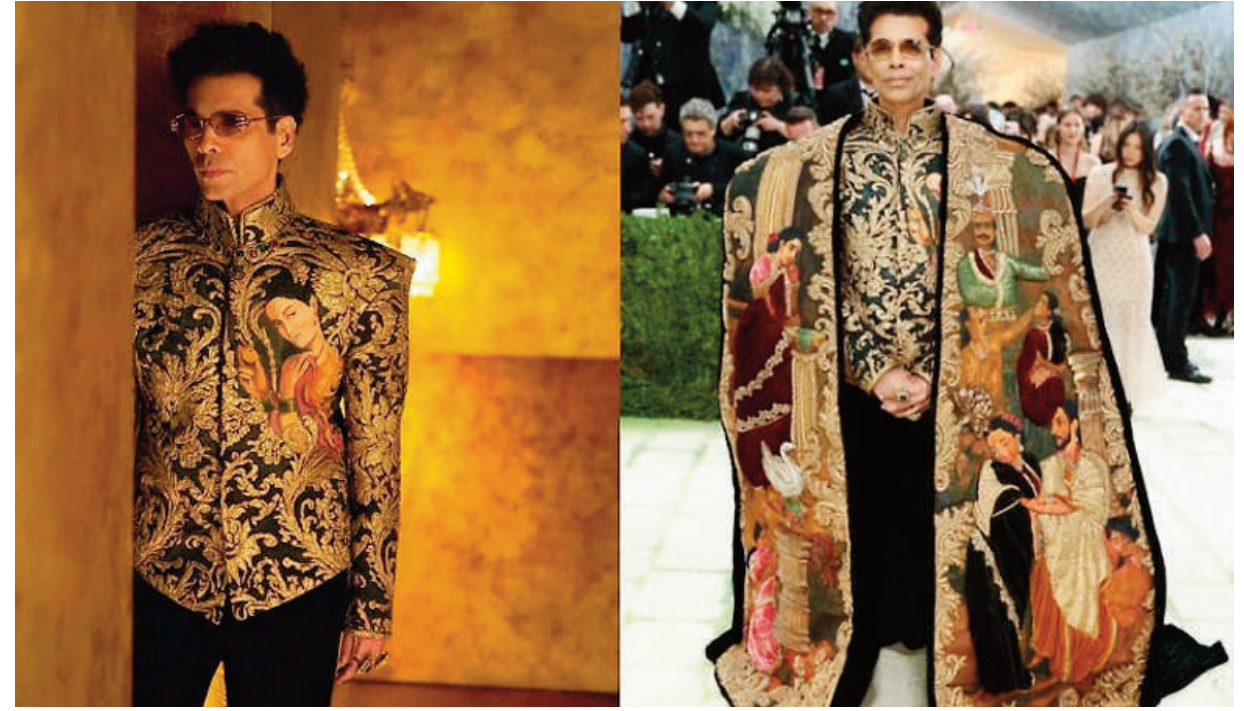
At the red carpet, Johar said he is looking forward to meet Sabrina Carpenter as his daughter Roohi is a huge fan of the globally-popular singer.

"My daughter told me that I must meet Sabrina Carpenter. So I have to meet her because it's her dream come true if I do meet her," he added.

Johar's Met Gala look was developed with stylist Eka Lakshani in collaboration with Malhotra, who has often dressed the filmmaker and his many stars in films and outside of it.

Malhotra, who also attended the event, said Johar's outfit was a tribute to the skilled craftspeople behind it.

"These are all the skilled workers who worked on the



garment -- from the design team to the tailors to all the artisans. I'm honouring all the artisans tonight on this beautiful carpet," he said.

The designer said the signatures of his entire atelier featured on the outfit.

"On a carpet like this, which is so grand and the best,

we need to honour all of the artisans who work backstage," Malhotra added.

Malhotra designed his own outfit for the evening. He wore a black ensemble featuring elaborate white three-dimensional sculptural embellishments on the shoulders and sleeves. (PTI)

Irrfan Khan's unreleased film 'The Last Tenant' finally make its debut... on YouTube



"The Last Tenant", a movie featuring Irrfan Khan long before he became one of India's most versatile stars but remained unreleased, has finally been made available on YouTube by its makers.

The film, which was completed in 2000, was released on the YouTube page of The Salt Inc as a tribute to Irrfan Khan on his sixth death anniversary on April 29.

Written and directed by Sarthak Dasgupta, the 43-minute movie featured Irrfan alongside Vidya Balan, who was famous at the time for featuring in the TV show "Hum Paanch".

"Some films aren't lost. They wait. In the year 2000, a young filmmaker, with no budget, no guarantees, and only a vision gathered two extraordinary souls and made some-

thing quietly magical. That filmmaker was Sarthak Dasgupta.

"Those two souls were Irrfan Khan and Vidya Balan, before the world truly knew their names. The film was thought to be gone forever. The footage, lost. The memory, alive only in those who lived it. Until now," read the caption on the YouTube page of the movie.

Irrfan passed away on April 29, 2020, at Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, following a battle with cancer.

In a statement, Vidya expressed a deep sense of nostalgia upon the film's release.

"It feels surreal to see 'The Last Tenant' finally reach audiences. I was just starting out, trying to find my footing. Working with Irrfan was incredibly special then and that much more now considering it's the only time I got to share screen space with him.

"This film is a beautiful reminder of where it all began for me, and I'm glad it is being shared as a tribute to him," the actor said in a statement.

"The Last Tenant" had remained shelved for over two decades as the director had lost the footage of the film, until recently when he found a VHS copy of the same, the press release read.

Sarthak, best known for Amol Palekar and Rinku Rajguru starrer film, "200 Halla Ho", and "Music Teacher" featuring Neena Gupta and Divya Dutta, said the release of "The Last Tenant" is a dream come true moment for him.

"Fuelled by pure intuition, I had embarked on a journey, still unsure if it could become a career. Releasing this film now, as a tribute to Irrfan, makes it even more emotional. It feels like revisiting a forgotten dream," the director said.

The film is produced by Sarthak and his wife Neena under their banner, The Salt Inc. (PTI)

Swanand Kirkire, Sudhir Mishra team up again for Emergency-set series 'Summer of 77'

Acclaimed writer-lyricist-composer Swanand Kirkire is set to reunite with filmmaker Sudhir Mishra after 18 years for the upcoming political drama series "Summer of 77".

The duo, who previously joined forces on films like "Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi" and "Khoaya Khoaya Chand", will come together for the eight-part Hindi streaming series set against the backdrop of the 1975-77 Indian Emergency.

Kirkire, who recently created the series "Bandwaale", has composed the entire music album for "Summer of 77", which features six songs. He has also lent his voice to three of the tracks, including "Ye Kaisa Hai Junoon".

"After 'Bandwaale', I was really looking to immerse myself in something that allowed me to explore music as a narrative force again, and 'Summer of 77' offered exactly that.

"This isn't just a period drama, it's a story about a very emotionally charged time in our history, where music, poetry, and expression played a huge role in shaping voices of resistance and identity," Kirkire said in a statement.

The composer said working on a project set during the Emergency came with a certain responsibility.

"You're not just creating melodies; you're trying to capture the spirit of a generation that was questioning authority, dreaming of change, and finding its voice amidst chaos. The songs had to feel rooted in that time, yet resonate with today's audience," he said. On "Ye Kaisa Hai Junoon" in particular, Kirkire said the track reflects the passion, confusion and fire of youth during the era.

"It's not just about romance or rebellion, but about a larger emotional unrest that defined those years," he said.

Kirkire also praised Mishra's approach to filmmaking, saying the director gives music the space to breathe within a narrative.

"When a filmmaker trusts music to carry emotion and subtext, it pushes you as a composer to go beyond the obvious," he said. The series boasts an ensemble cast including Rahul Bhat, Isha Talwar, Vishal Vashishtha, Saurabh Shukla, Rajat Kapoor, Manav Vij, TJ Bhanu and Anjan Dutt. (PTI)

Adivi Sesh announces two romantic projects, calls it an 'expansion'



Fresh off the success of "Dacoit", Telugu star Adivi Sesh is set to feature in two romantic dramas, the actor has announced.

"Dacoit", which has emerged as one of the top five highest-grossing Telugu films of 2026 so far, was mounted at a production cost of Rs 65 crore and broke even for all stakeholders within the first two weeks of its release.

Sesh will first headline "G2", the much-anticipated sequel to his spy thriller "Goodachari", before transitioning to the two romantic projects. The first of the romantic films will be directed by Sai Marthand, whose debut Telugu film "Little Hearts" was a blockbuster.

In a statement, Sesh said the projects marks a departure from the action-heavy roles he has been celebrated for.

"Over the last few years, I've explored intense, high-stakes narratives, and I'm grateful for how strongly they've connected. At the same time, I've been feeling a strong pull towards stories that are more intimate and emotionally driven. Romance, when done right, can be incredibly powerful and deeply relatable," the 40-year-old actor said.

On choosing two romantic scripts, Sesh said both stood out for approaching love and relationships in very different ways.

"They're not just love stories, they're about people, vulnerability, and the choices that define us. That's something I'm very excited to explore as an actor," he said.

At the same time, Sesh clarified that the move does not signal a retreat from action.

"I don't see it as a shift away from action, but rather an expansion of what I want to do. 'G2' is very much in that high-octane space, but these romantic dramas allow me to tap into a completely different emotional spectrum. As an actor, that's the kind of diversity I've been seeking," he said. (PTI)

Malayalam actor Santhosh Nair dies in road accident in Pathanamthitta

Malayalam actor Santhosh Nair was killed in a road accident at Enathu in this district early on Tuesday, police said.

The accident occurred around 6.30 am when the car in which Nair was travelling collided with a lorry, leaving him and his wife injured.

Nair sustained critical injuries after his chest hit the steering wheel of the vehicle, police said.

He later succumbed to the injuries. His wife suffered rib fractures and is undergoing treatment, they added.

Nair made his debut in cinema with the 1982 film 'Ithu Njangalude Katha' and went on to act in over 100 films, portraying a wide range of roles, including hero, villain and supporting characters.

His latest film 'Mohiniyattam' is currently running in theatres.

Superstar Mohanlal and actor-turned-politician Suresh Gopi expressed grief over Nair's demise.

In a Facebook post, Mohanlal recalled that Nair was his college mate and a close friend, describing him as a warm personality who earned the affection of everyone.

"Santhosh was my junior in college. From those days onward, he was not just a good friend but like a brother to me. We have worked together in many films," Mohanlal said in his FB post.

Union Minister Suresh Gopi also said Nair was like a brother who had been a constant presence in his life, and that his death has left an irreplaceable void. (PTI)



Writers far from what they deserve in cinema: scriptwriter Jyoti Kapoor

Due credit, fair compensation and a wish that their work does not get stolen. Noted screenwriter Jyoti Kapoor says writers in Hindi cinema don't ask for much but they still get short-changed.

Kapoor, who has written for films like "Badhaai Ho" and "Good Newwz", said, "Writers are far from what they deserve."

"A writer essentially wants three basic things when they collaborate with anyone their due credit, a fair compensation for their work and a silent prayer they make every night before they go to bed that their work never gets stolen.

"There's more awareness now but the nature of our business is such that no matter how careful you are, you will end up getting short-changed at some point," Kapoor told PTI in an interview.

Kapoor was speaking on the sidelines of a session hosted by Screenwriters Association around the disputes within the screenwriting community.

"A script is the blueprint of the film and the rest is execution. Filmmaking is a highly collaborative medium and everyone has their part to play, but somehow people end up forgetting the most important person, who gave birth to the story to begin with," Kapoor said.

The legal framework of major production houses also works against writers, she said.



"It's a collaborative medium and it takes a long time for the end product to be made. You end up pitching your work to many prospective collaborators during that time. It's difficult to keep a track of things.

"Almost all production houses make you sign a dreaded NDA which essentially says that, even in the case they end up making anything remotely or substantially similar to your work, they do not have any accountability. And almost all

writers end up signing it."

Kapoor said that while instances of stealing ideas may have reduced due to increased awareness, issues still persist. Though there are a handful of writers who have managed to gain their footing as creators or showrunners on streaming platforms.

But the nature of the business is highly unpredictable, she said, describing how a show that she developed for over five years was shelved recently.

