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● Kuwait accuses Iran of sending armed Revolutionary Guard team to attack an island in nation

● Israeli bulldozers raze about 50 Palestinian shops ahead of settlement-linked road project

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● LDF slams Cong over delay in naming Kerala CM, says UDF 'failing' to honour people's mandate

● MoU signed between anti-cyber crime agency 14C, RBIH to curb mule accounts: Amit Shah



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www.thehillstimes.in

THE HILLS TIMES

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Voice of the hills people

Vol .No. III Issue No. 65

RNI-ASSEN/2023/86488

GUWAHATI, WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026

PAGES 12

PRICE ₹ 8

Himanta takes oath as CM for 2nd term ● Rameshwar Teli, Ajanta Neog, Atul Bora and Charan Boro sworn in as ministers ● A great day for Assam: Modi

Himanta vows to create a 'Viksit and Surakshit' Assam

GUWAHATI, May 12: The BJP-led NDA assumed the mantle of power for the third term on Tuesday when Himanta Biswa Sarma was sworn in as the chief minister of Assam for the second time in a row, cementing the saffron party's dominance in the state.

Four MLAs of the BJP and its alliance partners AGP and BPF also took oath as ministers in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office to Sarma and the four legislators at a 25-minute grand ceremony held at the Veterinary Ground in Khanapara area in Guwahati.

Besides Modi and Amit Shah, Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Sarbananda Sonowal, Pabitra Margherita, chief ministers and deputy chief ministers of BJP-ruled states and BJP president Nitin Nabin were present at the swearing-in ceremony.

The PM said that the NDA government assuming office for the third consecutive

term was a "great day for Assam" and congratulated Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on taking oath for the second time.

In a post on X, the PM said that Sarma has made a mark as a "wonderful administrator and has done pioneering work for the state. My best wishes to him for the tenure ahead".

Sarma said that it was an extremely emotional moment for him as he took oath as the CM for the second consecutive term and "with all humility I bow down to the people of Assam".

He said this would not have been possible without the PM's guidance which has been the "biggest motivating factor for our government".

It is his "leadership and vision which has guided us in our path of Sewa (service) and Samarpan (dedication)", he added.

Sarma also thanked party president Nitin Nabin for his leadership that galvanised all NDA workers in Assam to take the message of good governance to



every household. He further said that the occasion would

not have been possible without the 'mentorship of Amit Shah who has "stood with

us like a rock in our path to bring back peace and prosperity to the state and

work towards delivering our promises to the people".

He also thanked BJP workers across Assam, who toiled hard to achieve this historic victory.

The chief minister, attired in dhoti and kurta with the traditional 'gamosa' draped around his neck, took oath in Assamese.

The BJP's Rameshwar Teli and Ajanta Neog, AGP's Atul Bora, and Charan Boro of BPF also took oath as ministers, representing the tea community, women, the regional community and the indigenous Bodo tribe, respectively.

Teli, Bora and Neog took their oath in Assamese while the BPF minister took in Bodo.

The Prime Minister congratulated the CM and each of the ministers after they took the oath.

After the swearing-in ceremony was over, the PM greeted the people with folded hands and also all present on the dais, before leaving the venue.

BJP president Nitin Nabin said the 'double-engine' (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Man nabbed with bullets from new Assam govt's swearing-in venue



GUWAHATI, May 12: A man was nabbed on Tuesday from the venue of the swearing-in ceremony of the new Assam government allegedly with a few rounds of live bullets, police said.

The live bullets were recovered from the man during security screening at the entrance of the Veterinary College Field in Khanapara, they said.

"He was taken into custody for questioning. He is being taken to Basistha police station," an officer said.

However, no arms have been recovered from the person, he said. "An investigation is underway to determine the circumstances surrounding the recovery and whether any security threat was involved," he added.

The incident happened minutes before Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya was set to administer the oath of office and secrecy to Himanta Biswa Sarma as chief minister, along with a new Council of Ministers. The function was attended by (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

US-Assam will identify more scenarios for possible ties: Ambassador Sergio Gor

GUWAHATI, May 12: US Ambassador Sergio Gor on Tuesday said his country will explore more opportunities with Assam that will be commercially beneficial to both sides.

Gor was in Guwahati to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who created history by becoming the only non-Congress and the first BJP CM to assume power for two successive terms in the state.

"Honored to have been invited to Guwahati today to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma," Gor said in a post on social media.

"The United States and Assam have many commercial ties, and with the CM's leadership we will identify (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam ministers affirm to work for the people

GUWAHATI, May 12: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma congratulated his cabinet colleagues who were sworn-in as part of the third BJP-led NDA government in the state along with him on Tuesday.

He affirmed to work together for a developed and secure Assam.

"I extend warm congratulations to my valued colleagues Shri @Rameswar_Teli, Shri @ATULBORA2, Smt. @AjantaNeog and Shri @charanbofficial on taking oath as Ministers in the NDA 3.0 Govt," Sarma said in a post on X, soon after taking oath as the CM for the second consecutive term.

"Together, we shall work towards creating a Viksit and Surakshit Assam," he added.

Along with Sarma, BJP legislators Ajanta Neog and Rameswar Teli, and representatives of its allies, Asom Gana Parishad's (AGP) Atul Bora and Bodoland People's Front's

(BPF) Charan Boro took oath as ministers in the new government.

Expect Teli, who is a former Union minister of state, the other three were part of the previous NDA government in the state.

Neog, in a post on Facebook after taking oath, said, "Today, in the glorious presence of esteemed Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Assam, and along with him, I was also taken oath as a member of his ministry."

She extended her gratitude to Sarma for inducting her in his ministry, and affirmed her resolve to keep working to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the people and work for development, peace and prosperity of the state.

"I seek the blessing and cooperation of my seniors, well-wishers and people of Assam," Neog added.

Teli, who returned to state politics

NDA govt in Assam to work for fast development, effective governance: Union ministers

GUWAHATI, May 12: A battery of union ministers, including JP Nadda, Nitin Gadkari and Sarbananda Sonowal, on Tuesday hailed the third NDA government in Assam and hoped it would usher in fast development and effective governance in the coming period.

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office and secrecy to Himanta Biswa Sarma as chief minister, along with a new council of ministers.

Along with Sarma, four MLAs -- the BJP's Rameswar Teli and Ajanta Neog, AGP's Atul Bora and Charan Boro of BPF -- also took oath as ministers.

Attending the oath-taking function, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said a new chapter of growth and transformative development has begun in Assam.

"The people of Assam's continued mandate for the BJP for a third consecutive term reflects their deep faith in the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji," he added.

Gadkari hoped that this mandate would translate into faster development and effective governance. "From our department's side, projects worth nearly ₹ 2 lakh crore are in the pipeline, reinforcing our commitment to building a strong, dynamic, and forward-looking Assam," he added.

Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal said that it was a "historic and proud day" for the people of Assam.

"Honoured to be part of the swearing-in ceremony of the NDA 3.0 Govt in Guwahati, in the presence of Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi ji and esteemed NDA leaders. Deeply moved by the overwhelming love, blessings and enthusiasm shown by the public," he added.

The former chief minister of Assam offered his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to Sarma on taking the oath once again, alongside the members of his cabinet.

"I firmly believe that under the visionary and people-centric leadership of Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi ji, and (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

HC spikes NCHAC's anti-defection law

GUWAHATI, May 12: The Gauhati High Court has struck down an anti-defection law passed by the NC Hills Autonomous Council, maintaining that it was enacted "without any competence" and was "unconstitutional".

The order was passed by a bench comprising Chief Justice Ashutosh Kumar and Justice Arun Dev Choudhury on a petition filed by before it by some residents of Dima Hasao district, which comes under the jurisdiction of the council.

The writ petition had challenged the constitutional validity of Rule 18A of the NC Hills Autonomous Council (42nd Amendment) Act, 2017, which provided for disqualification of elected members of the council on the ground of defection from their political parties.

The newly inserted rule provided that a member of the council belonging to any political party shall be disqualified as a

member if he voluntarily gives up his membership of such political party; or if he votes or abstains from voting in the council contrary to any direction or whip issued by the political party.

The high court, after hearing submissions from the advocates of the petitioners as well as the council and government sides, in its order passed on May 7, struck down the amendment to the legislation as "unconstitutional".

It held that the NC Hills Autonomous Council, a body under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, is not a plenary legislature and lacks competence beyond enumerated subjects to frame laws on.

The court maintained that "in pith and substance, Rule 18A is an anti-defection law, falling outside the Sixth Schedule" and "the field is occupied by the Tenth Schedule, providing a complete constitutional code; and that Rule 18A is ultra vires and (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Mohan Bhagwat to visit Assam for three days

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, May 12: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat will arrive in Assam on May 13 on a three-day visit to participate in an organisational training programme, RSS functionaries said on Tuesday.

According to RSS functionaries, Bhagwat will take part in the 'Karyakarta Vikas Varg (Second Year)' training camp being organised in the state as part of the Sangh's cadre development and leadership training activities.

The RSS training programme is scheduled to be held at a designated camp venue in Guwahati and will witness the participation of swayamsevaks from different parts of the Northeast region.

Senior RSS leaders and pracharakas are also expected to attend the sessions during the three-day programme.

Sources said the RSS chief is likely to address participants on organisational expansion, social outreach, nation-building initiatives and the role of cadres in strengthening grassroots activities across the country. Bhagwat is also expected to hold interactions with senior Sangh functionaries from Assam and other northeastern states during his stay.

The 'Karyakarta Vikas Varg' is considered one of the important internal training programmes of the RSS, aimed at enhancing leadership skills, ideological orientation and organisational capabilities of its members. The second-year camp is attended by selected swayamsevaks who have already completed the first phase of training.

Security arrangements have been heightened in Guwahati ahead of Bhagwat's visit, with local authorities coordinating with organisers for the smooth conduct of the programme.

The visit of the RSS chief assumes significance as it comes shortly after the swearing-in ceremony of the new NDA government in Assam led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The RSS has been actively expanding its organisational activities across the Northeast over the past several years through educational, social and cultural outreach initiatives. Senior Sangh leaders have frequently visited the region to strengthen coordination with local units and volunteers.

Bhagwat's visit is expected to conclude on May 15 following the completion of the training programme.

Himanta Biswa Sarma: From Cong rebel to BJP's Northeast face

GUWAHATI, May 12: Widely credited with the BJP's rise across the Northeast, Himanta Biswa Sarma's swearing-in as the chief minister of Assam for a second consecutive term indicates not only continuity in leadership but also the party's growing political entrenchment in the region.

Despite strong criticism by the Congress and a series of allegations against his wife, Sarma remained unfazed and helped the BJP achieve a dominant position in Assam, reshaping the region's political landscape in favour of the ruling NDA.

The 57-year-old leader vowed to continue the state's development journey, stating that his first tenure as CM was "just a trailer and the movie will unfold in the second term".

Despite his development initiatives, rolling out welfare schemes and the focus on safeguarding the land rights of indigenous communities, his first term had also been marked by controversial measures and rhetoric, particularly targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims of Bangladeshi descent.



Actions like eviction drives on alleged encroached land, a crackdown on child marriage, moves against polygamy, enforcement of the Cattle Protection Act, and closure of government-run madrasas have drawn criticism from opposition parties, which accuse him of deepening social polarisation.

He remained defiant through controversies, though a row involving allegations by Congress leader Pawan Khera against his wife led to a sharp exchange that even drew mention in a Supreme Court order granting relief to Khera.

Opposition parties, especially the Congress, have also repeatedly alleged

corruption during his tenure and questioned the business dealings of his wife, but all these charges were denied by the chief minister.

Once regarded as the most influential politician in the Northeast, Sarma emerged as a key BJP campaigner and was instrumental in the party's emphatic victory with 82 seats of the 126-member assembly.

Political analysts, however, have criticised his rhetoric as divisive and unbecoming of a constitutional officeholder.

After losing his electoral debut in 1996, Sarma has represented Jalukbari continuously since 2001, winning as both a Congress and BJP candidate. A minister in successive governments since 2001, he earned a reputation for administrative effectiveness and political strategy.

Mentored by former Congress chief ministers Hiteswar Saikia and Tarun Gogoi, Sarma rose steadily within the party before differences with Gogoi led to his exit in 2015. The BJP quickly inducted (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

APSEZ to invest ₹ 13,000 cr in marine business, enters Europe subsea market

NEW DELHI, May 12: Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd is planning to invest ₹ 13,000 crore by FY31 to build its marine business as the company expands into specialised subsea and ultra-deepwater operations in Europe through a partnership between its Astro Offshore platform and Oceaneering International Inc.

The company said its marine platform, Astro Offshore has entered into a contract with US-based engineering and applied technology company Oceaneering International Inc to pursue offshore and subsea opportunities in Europe, marking APSEZ's entry into specialised deepwater engineering and underwater infrastructure services in the region.

As part of the expansion, Astro Offshore will add a 2021-built 97-metre DP2 multipurpose support vessel, Energy Savannah -- to be renamed Astro Atlas -- to strengthen its subsea construction and offshore execution capabilities.

The vessel, capable of operating in water depths of more than 3,000 metres, is equipped with a 150-tonne subsea crane, secondary crane, moonpool, and accommodation for up to 100 personnel, enabling offshore construction, cable laying and pipeline installation work.

APSEZ said the partnership combines Astro Offshore's expanding fleet with Oceaneering's remotely operated vehicle (ROV) and deepwater engineering expertise as the company seeks to build one of the world's largest integrated marine platforms.

The company is targeting a 200-vessel fleet and marine revenue of ₹ 6,000 crore by FY31 as it ex-



pands beyond ports into offshore logistics, subsea engineering and deepwater infrastructure services.

"As part of its long-term roadmap, the company is targeting a 200-vessel fleet, along with marine revenue of ₹ 6,000 crore and planned capex of ₹ 13,000 crore by FY31," APSEZ said in a statement.

The development aligns with APSEZ's strategy to build one of the world's largest integrated marine platforms spanning logistics, offshore support, underwater engineering, and deepwater infrastructure services. "This development supports APSEZ's ambition to build a globally diversified marine platform," Chief Executive Officer Ashwani Gupta said.

APSEZ said it has through its "marine platform Astro Offshore, has contracted with Oceaneering International Inc, a US-based engineering and applied technology company, to pursue specialised offshore and subsea opportunities in Europe."

"The agreement marks a significant step in APSEZ's expansion

into ultra-deepwater operations and international markets, further supporting its strategy to build one of the world's largest integrated marine platforms," it said.

"For Astro Offshore, the introduction of Astro Atlas, the company's first ultra-deepwater vessel, reflects its continued investment in strategically acquiring younger, high-spec vessels with advanced capabilities. This strengthens Astro's ambition to operate one of the industry's youngest and smartest fleets, while enabling entry into new offshore markets and supporting the broader growth ambitions of the APSEZ marine platform."

By combining Astro Offshore's expanding high-specification fleet with Oceaneering's deepwater engineering and ROV expertise, capabilities in complex offshore operations are being enhanced while expanding into Europe, said Gupta.

Mark Humphreys, CEO, Astro Offshore, said, "The introduction of Astro Atlas significantly en-

hances our operational capability and underscores our continued investment in a modern, high-spec fleet, particularly in ultra-deepwater environments. As our largest and most capable vessel to date, she enables us to support a broader range of complex offshore operations and respond more effectively to evolving client requirements."

Subsea activities involve specialised underwater engineering critical to offshore energy and marine infrastructure projects, including cable laying, pipeline installation, underwater construction, inspection, maintenance, and intervention in deepwater environments.

These projects require advanced vessels, remotely operated vehicle (ROV) systems, and high-end operational capabilities.

Astro Offshore has strengthened its deepwater fleet with the addition of Energy Savannah (to be renamed Astro Atlas), a modern 2021-built 97-metre DP2 multipurpose support vessel.

Equipped with a 150-tonne subsea AHC crane, a 25-tonne secondary crane, a moonpool, and accommodation for up to 100 personnel, the vessel is designed to support a wide range of offshore operations, including subsea construction, cable laying, and pipeline installation. "With the capability to operate in water depths of over 3,000 metres, Astro Atlas will enable Astro Offshore to enter the ultra-deepwater segment, unlocking access to more complex, high-value offshore projects. Its advanced DP2 system and robust design support safe and efficient operations in challenging environments," the statement added. (PTI)

Canon India launches new A3 colour MFD and document scanners

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 12: Canon India has expanded its business imaging portfolio with the launch of the imageFORCE C3150 A3 colour multifunction device and the imageFORMULA DR-C340 and DR-C350 document scanners.

The company said the new products are targeted at enterprises, SMEs, government organisations and commercial printing businesses, while also strengthening Canon's presence in the document digitisation segment.

The imageFORCE C3150 offers colour printing speeds of up to 50 pages per minute and is designed for high-volume print environments.

Canon stated that the device features its D² Exposure Technology, which uses an OLED-based exposure system instead of conventional laser technology to de-

liver resolutions of up to 4,800 × 2,400 dpi for sharper and more detailed output.

The multifunction device also supports printing on heavy and coated media up to 300 gsm and includes SRA3 sheet support for full-bleed A3 printing.

Additionally, it offers single-pass duplex scanning at speeds of up to 270 images per minute.

Alongside the MFD, Canon India launched the imageFORMULA DR-C340 and DR-C350 compact document scanners aimed at improving enterprise document digitisation and workflow management.

The DR-C340 supports scanning speeds of up to 40 pages per minute and 80 images per minute, while the DR-C350 offers speeds of up to 50 pages per minute and 100 images per minute with a 100-sheet automatic document feeder.

Contd. from Page 1...

Himanta vows to

government in Assam will accelerate development activities, investment and public welfare programmes. "This occasion marks a renewed momentum for Assam's ongoing journey toward good governance, stability, and development," Nabin said on an X post.

Shah said the NDA government has laid a robust foundation of development and security, on which a grand edifice of progress will be built.

"Electing the BJP-led NDA for the third consecutive term, the people of Assam have reaffirmed that the BJP-NDA governments are the dispensations of trust... I bow to the people of Assam for the historic mandate," Shah said.

Sarma also congratulated his cabinet colleagues who were sworn in as part of the third BJP-led NDA government in the state along with him.

"Together, we shall work towards creating a Viksit and Surakshit Assam," he added. Neog, Bora and Boro were members of Sarma's first cabinet, while Teli, a former Union minister, returned to state politics.

Neog was the finance minister, while Bora was in charge of the agriculture department and Boro held the transport department in the outgoing government.

The NDA won a record 102 seats of the 126-member assembly, including 82 from the BJP. The BJP allies, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the Bodoland Peoples' Front (BPF), bagged 10 seats each. (PTI)

HC spikes NCHAC's

unconstitutionality". "...Rule 18A introduced by the Constitution of N.C. Hills Autonomous Council (42nd Amendment) Act, 2017, is hereby declared to be invalid and null and void, as being a legislation without any competence of the N.C. Hills Autonomous Council to make a law on the subject of defection. Accordingly, we are left with no option but to strike down the afore-noted legislation as invalid," the high court ruled. (PTI)

NDA govt in

guided by the core mantra of 'A for Assam,' our state will reach new heights of development, peace & prosperity," Sonowal said. In this new term, the commitment to safeguarding the rights and interests of Assam's indigenous communities will gain renewed momentum as the NDA government scales new peaks of self-reliance and progress, he added. Food Processing Minister Chirag Paswan wished Sarma for a successful, illustrious and people-welfare-oriented tenure. "The people of Assam have expressed their trust in a politics centred on development, good governance, and national interest. I am fully confident that under your leadership, Assam will establish new dimensions of progress, prosperity, and cultural pride, and the state will continuously achieve new heights of development," he added.

Sarma individually, and also collectively, thanked everyone who was present on the occasion and wished him. "I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Honourable Chief Ministers, Deputy Chief Ministers of all states, and the Honourable Union Ministers for joining the swearing-in ceremony of the third NDA government in Assam like one family and extending their best wishes," he added. (PTI)

Man nabbed with

who's who of the BJP echelon, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, and over 40 NDA CMs and Deputy CMs.

Several diplomats and leading industrialists also attended the function. (PTI)

US-Assam will

many more win-win scenarios for both of our nations!" he added. Along with Sarma, four MLAs -- the BJP's Rameswar Teli and Ajanta Neog, AGP's Atul Bora, Charan Boro of BPF -- also took oath as ministers.

The oath taking function was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, among others.

Several diplomats and leading industrialists also witnessed the grand ceremony at the Veterinary College Field in Khanapara. (PTI)

Assam ministers affirm

who continues to guide Assam on an uninterrupted path of peace, progress, and all-round development," Bora said in a post on X.

He maintained that the "dynamic leadership, political wisdom, and unwavering commitment" of Sarma have ushered in a new era of transformation and growth for the state.

"We firmly believe that under the able leadership of Hon'ble Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, the Government of Assam will continue to fulfil the hopes, aspirations, and dreams of the indigenous people of the state, and further strengthen Assam's journey towards becoming one of India's most prosperous, progressive, and self-reliant states," Bora added.

Third-time BPF MLA Boro also extended his gratitude at being included in the new government and entrusting him with the responsibility.

"In the esteemed presence of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji, as Hon'ble Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma took his oath of office, I am overwhelmed with gratitude and humility as I also took the oath of office as a Cabinet Minister in his visionary council," he wrote on Facebook.

Boro said he was "committed to working with unwavering dedication, integrity, and transparency to fulfil the aspirations of the people of Assam and to contribute towards the state's journey of peace, progress, and prosperity."

"As I embark on this new chapter of service, I seek the blessings and continued support of all my elders, well-wishers, and the beloved people of our state," he added. (PTI)

We take responsibility

and take strong action (in the matter)," Singh said. "The test conducted on May 3 had four code versions. None of the papers was found in the market, and no leak has been established. There were many questions in the PDF that circulated, and some of them looked similar to questions from the exam paper," the NTA DG said.

"So, I would not say that the entire paper was leaked. But I will definitely say that even if a single question matches our question paper, our commitment to zero tolerance and zero error is violated, and our entire process is compromised. We will take responsibility for it and take action accordingly," he added.

Singh also said that strict action would be taken against those attempting to mislead students or exploit the examination process.

"I want to assure all that we will take strict action against anyone attempting such mischief. Wherever we receive reports that someone is selling question papers or misleading students, we will act against them," he said. "There were many cases, even before the exam, where people were asking for OTPs in the name of providing papers and emptying bank accounts."

"We have taken action against all such people, and our policy is clear that we will not allow any irregularities in the examination process," Singh stressed.

The NEET-UG 2026 was held on May 3 across 551 cities in India and 14 cities abroad. The NTA organised the examination for nearly 23 lakh registered candidates at centres across the country. (PTI)

Himanta Biswa Sarma

him, leveraging his influence to strengthen its presence in the Northeast. As convener of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), he played a pivotal role in bringing all eight North-eastern states under the NDA's ambit, either through BJP governments or allied partners.

Sarma began his political journey during the anti-foreigner Assam Agitation of the 1980s, initially working with All Assam Students' Union (AASU) leaders such as Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and Bhriгу Kumar Phukan before entering mainstream politics.

He became a minister under Tarun Gogoi's leadership in 2001. Gogoi, impressed with Sarma's political skills, appointed him as minister of state for agriculture, planning and development and later during the same term, gave him additional responsibilities.

The Congress, facing an anti-incumbency wave in 2011, depended heavily on Sarma's skills in strategy and managed to come to power for the third time in a row. During this term, a rift developed between Sarma and Gogoi's son Gaurav. Sarma was sidelined within the Congress, and he resigned from the ministry, the assembly and subsequently from the party in 2015, before joining the BJP.

He was instrumental, along with Sarbananda Sonowal, in forming the saffron party's first government in Assam in 2016. He held key portfolios including finance, health, education and public works before succeeding Sonowal as chief minister in 2021.

Born in Jorhat to noted Assamese poet and novelist Kailash Nath Sarma and literary activist Mrinalini Devi, he earned a master's degree in political science in 1992 and also a PhD in the same subject.

Sarma obtained an LL.B degree in 1995 and practised at the Gauhati High Court for five years before entering politics in 2001. He has two children, a son and a daughter. (PTI)

Stock markets tank 2 pc as elevated oil prices, US-Iran tensions weigh on sentiment

MUMBAI, May 12: Equity benchmark indices ended lower for the fourth consecutive session on Tuesday, with the Sensex and Nifty tumbling nearly 2 per cent, as a spike in crude oil prices and uncertainty surrounding the West Asia conflict clouded markets' confidence. Unabated foreign fund outflows and the rupee depreciating to a lifetime low also impacted investor sentiment.

Amid a widespread sell-off, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 1,456.04 points, or 1.92 per cent, to settle at 74,559.24. During the day, it dived 1,565.78 points, or 2 per cent, to 74,449.50.

A total of 3,412 stocks declined, while 869 advanced and 129 remained unchanged on the BSE. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 436.30 points, or 1.83 per cent, to end at 23,379.55.

"Domestic equities remained under pressure, with the rupee weakening to record lows amid rising crude oil prices linked to escalating tensions in West Asia, along with FII outflows.

"The decline was broad-based, led by IT and realty stocks. IT stocks underperformed as concerns grew around AI-driven pricing pressure and potential disruption following recent enterprise adoption initiatives by OpenAI," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. In four trading days, the BSE gauge has tanked 3,399.28 points or 4.36 per cent, and the Nifty slumped 951.4 points or 3.91 per cent.

From the Sensex pack, Tech Mahindra, Adani Ports, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services, Titan and Bharat Electronics were among the major laggards. On the other hand, the State Bank of India was the only winner from the pack.

In the broader market, the BSE MidCap Select index

tanked 2.92 per cent, and the SmallCap Select index declined by 2.73 per cent.

Sectorally, realty dropped 4.22 per cent, Focused IT (3.61 per cent), services (3.51 per cent), IT (3.37 per cent), consumer durables (3.35 per cent) and industrials (3 per cent).

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 2.75 per cent higher at USD 107.1 per barrel.

The rupee depreciated 35 paise to close at an all-time low of 95.63 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday.

Hari Prasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Live-long Wealth, said, unlike a routine profit-taking phase, the current decline appears to be driven by a broader "confidence shock" in the market.

"Investors are increasingly interpreting recent policy messaging and austerity-oriented commentary as an indication that policymakers may be preparing for a tougher macroeconomic environment ahead," he said.

The pressure on Indian equities is now being amplified by a macro "triple hit" -- crude oil prices hovering near USD 105-107 per barrel, the rupee slipping to a fresh record low against the US dollar, and continued aggressive FII outflows, Hari Prasad added.

US President Donald Trump on Monday said the ceasefire with Iran was at its "weakest" and on "massive life support", a day after he rejected Tehran's proposal to end the months-long war as "totally unacceptable".

"It is at its weakest... After reading that piece of garbage they sent us... It's on life support, massive life support," Trump told reporters at the Oval Office in response to a question on the ceasefire with Iran in the wake of the rejection of the peace proposal. (PTI)

RE-TENDER NOTIFICATION

JAWAHAR NAVODAYA VIDYALAYA, MAHADEVPUR,

P.O:- MAHADEVPUR, DIST:- NAMSAL STATE:- ARUNACHAL PRADESH PIN- 792105

Ref. No.F. JNVNAMSAL/5-7/2026-27/

Dated :-12-05-2026

NOTICE INVITING FOR RE-TENDER

Sealed tenders are invited from the authorized registered Dealer/ manufacture/ Supplies/ Company for supply of various Store items like Grocery items, seasonal vegetables/fruits, Fresh Items, Daily Use Items, Sweets and Bakery items, Potato/Onion/Garlic, Vehicle Hiring, and Tuck Shop for the session 2026-27 to JawaharNavodayaVidyalaya, Mahadevpur, Dist:- Namsal, Arunachal Pradesh.

The Re-tender papers can be purchased on payment of Rs. 500/- each set of tender forms from the Office of the Principal, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Mahadevpur, Dist:-Namsal, A.P w.e.f. 13.05.2026 to 25.05.2026 during office hours. Further, the same can also be downloaded from the official website of the vidyalaya. However during submission of the tender forms an amount of ₹. 500/- per set in the form of draft should be deposited in favour of The Principal JNV, Mahadevpur, Namsal as cost of tender documents.

The last date for submission of completed sealed tenders along with the EMD in the office of EAC LEKANG, Mahadevpur on **26.05.2026** up to 4.00pm.

The Re-tenders will be opened on 28.05.2026 at 10.00 AM at EAC's Office, Mahadevpur by the Vidyalaya Purchase Advisory Committee.

Sd/-
PRINCIPAL

JNV, MAHADEVPUR, NAMSAL, A.P

Family members say people's blessings and dedication helped Sarma return as Chief Minister His hard work for Assam's growth has paid off: Himanta's family

GUWAHATI, May 12: After Himanta Biswa Sarma took oath as the chief minister of Assam for the second time in a row on Tuesday, his family members said it was the blessings of the people and his hard work for the state's development that led him to this position.

They maintained that Sarma will continue to work with the same zeal for the state and its people, as he became the only non-Congress chief minister to assume office for the second consecutive term.

"I am feeling very happy today. And I want to share this joy with the people, with the youth and with everyone. This happiness belongs to all," Sarma's mother Mrinalini Devi, who attended the swearing-in ceremony in a wheelchair, told PTI Videos.

She said her son will continue to work for the state and its people, and contribute to nation-building.

"My blessings are always with him," Devi added.

Sarma's wife Riniki Bhuyan Sarma credited the wishes of the people for his success and said it was a humbling moment for the entire family.

"It is because of his hard work, the blessings of the Almighty and the blessings of the people of



Assam that he has reached this position," Bhuyan Sharma said.

She said that Sarma has always maintained the lifestyle of a common man and worked hard, with the people of Assam believing in his vision for development.

People have complete faith in the BJP and trust in Himanta, and he will continue to work even harder to remain in the hearts of the people of Assam, the CM's wife said.

"Today, we are proud and humbled because the people of Assam have trusted him once again and given him a mandate with the belief that he can do even more for them," she said.

Bhuyan Sharma maintained that she has always stood by her husband under all circumstances.

"Keeping my fingers crossed that Assam becomes one of the top five states in the country soon," she said.

Sarma's children, Nandil and Sukanya, both pursuing higher education, also expressed delight at their father's achievement.

"In the last five years, Papa has done very good work as chief minister, and we hope he continues to work for the people of Assam in the same way," Nandil said.

Asked about Sarma's previous government's tough stance against infiltration, he told PTI Videos, "This has been a significant phase in Assam's political discourse and political landscape. Over the past five years, the BJP government has done commendable work. From what we have seen so far, it appears that the good work will continue."

Sukanya said that while working for the state, Sarma has not neglected his duties towards the family.

"As far as I have seen, he has worked day and night for the development of Assam. Sometimes, even in his sleep, he talks about how to develop Assam and work more for the people," she said.

"However, we have never felt that he has not taken care of the smallest of our needs," Sukanya added. (PTI)

Supreme Court launches 'SAMADHAN SAMAROH 2026' Special Lok Adalat to be held in August to encourage amicable settlement of pending cases

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 12: The Supreme Court of India has announced the launch of "SAMADHAN SAMAROH 2026" - Supreme Court Action for Mediated Adjudication and Disputes Harmonisation across Nation - with the objective of strengthening participative justice and ensuring doorstep delivery of justice through consensual dispute resolution mechanisms.

The initiative will commence on April 21, 2026 and culminate in a Special Lok Adalat scheduled to be held on August 21, 22 and 23, 2026, at the Supreme Court of India. The Special Lok Adalat has been conceived to facilitate amicable settlement of pending matters before the apex court through mediation and consent-based adjudication processes.

The Supreme Court of India has appealed to advocates, litigants and all stakeholders to actively participate in the initiative and contribute towards effective and harmonious resolution of disputes. Parties will have the option to participate both physically and virtually through the designated online platform for settlement proceedings.

Interested parties and their coun-



sels may submit their requests by filling up the prescribed Google Form available at:

[Google Form Link](https://forms.gle/pRWBf6wAPrgMsZ8?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

The Google Form is also accessible through the official website of the [Supreme Court of India](https://www.sci.gov.in?utm_source=chatgpt.com). The last date for submission of applications is May 31, 2026.

For assistance and further information, the One Stop Centre (War Room) In-charge for SAMAD-

HAN SAMAROH (Special Lok Adalat) may be contacted at 011-23112428 and 011-23112528. Assistance is also available at the One Stop Centre located in Room Nos. 806 and 808, B Block, Additional Building Complex, Supreme Court of India, through hotline numbers 011-23116464 and 011-23116465.

Queries may also be addressed to the Director, CRP at 011-23115652 or through email at specialokadalat2026@sci.nic.in. The initiative has been issued in public interest by the Supreme Court of India.

Theatre workshop concludes at Bodoland University

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 12: A 20-day Production-Oriented Theatre Workshop 2026 concluded on Tuesday at Bodoland University.

The event was organised by the Department of Bodo of Bodoland University in collaboration with Lwrgi Theatre Group and the Central Museum, Bodoland University. The workshop concluded with a grand cultural presentation of the play at Jwhlao Nileswar Brahma Auditorium Hall of the university.

The workshop commenced on April 22, 2026, at Sunitee Kumar Chatterji Hall on the university campus with the objective of promoting theatre arts and imparting production-oriented training to aspiring artists.

On the concluding day, the trainees staged the play Gwdan Lama, directed by Didwm Basumatary of NSD TIE Wing, Tripura with the script written by Udang Basumatary.

Obituary

Junmoni Das, a promising and young Assamese poet passed away on Tuesday morning following serious kidney ailments at the age of 41. His body was brought to his residence in Thanapatty, Sivasagar. The last rites were performed in the presence of many friends and admirers.

Born in 1985, Junmoni was in the editorial department of the popular weekly magazine Prantik in Guwahati.

Das's published poetry collections are Swapnak barason (2007), Jalastambha (2014), Uroniya sa (2016), Ninadita nirjanata (2016), Moithunrata mas (20 17), Samalami Surjya (2020) and Tengesi fulor tuponi (2023).

He also wrote numerous children's poems. He is survived by an elderly mother, wife, a daughter and a son.



NFR Central Hospital joins nationwide new-born survival initiative

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 12: The Central Hospital of Northeast Frontier Railway actively participated in the nationwide Neonatal Resuscitation Program (NRP) Day on May 10, 2026, reaffirming its commitment towards strengthening newborn healthcare and reducing preventable neonatal deaths.

As part of the programme, 15 healthcare professionals participated in a dedicated training session conducted at Central Hospital, Maligaon. The session was led by Dr Immanuel Tuolur, Senior Divisional Medical Officer of the Paediatrics Department, who served as the lead instructor. The event was coordinated by Dr KMSK Krishna, Senior Divisional Medical Officer of the Paediatrics Department.

The nationwide initiative was organised under the leadership of the National Neonatology Forum in collaboration with the Government of India, the Indian Academy of Pediatrics, the Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India and the Trained Nurses' Association of India.

The programme aimed at building large-scale life-saving capacity at every delivery point by ensuring the availability of at least one trained healthcare provider for every newborn. The initiative emphasised the importance of timely intervention during the critical "golden minute" after birth, when immediate resuscitation support can significantly improve newborn survival outcomes.

International Nurses Day celebration at GNM Training Centre

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, May 12: The GNM Training Centre in Mangaldai concluded its week-long celebration of International Nurses Day on Tuesday with a grand closing ceremony. The programme, which commenced on May 5, was organised to commemorate the birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing and a pioneering social reformer.

The week featured a series of vibrant competitions among the trainees in sports, literature, cultural events and various creative disciplines. The concluding day was marked by a solemn lamp-lighting ceremony in front of the portraits of Florence Nightingale and legendary Assamese music icon Zubeen Garg. A beautifully designed vintage magazine was also unveiled in tribute to Zubeen Garg.

The programme further showcased rich cultural

performances, including captivating dance and music recitals by the students, as well as a colourful fashion show highlighting the traditional attire and heritage of the Mising (Matmor) community from Assam's hills and plains.

The event was graced by several distinguished guests, including Dr D Adhikari, Joint Director of Health Services, Darrang; Dr Kamala Kanta Sarma, Additional Chief Medical & Health Officer; Sub-divisional Medical & Health Officers Dr Dhruvajyoti Saharia and Dr Nripen Kumar; Dr Ifitkar Choudhury, Superintendent of Darrang Cancer Centre and senior journalist Mayukh Goswami, among others. The principal, faculty members and students of the institute were also present in large numbers.

The celebrations not only honoured the noble profession of nursing but also beautifully reflected the cultural diversity and artistic spirit of the region.

IMD launches digital platforms for weather advisory and disaster preparedness

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 12: The DDMA, Sonitpur, has informed that the India Meteorological Department has launched a number of digital initiatives aimed at strengthening weather-based agrometeorological advisory services and disaster preparedness mechanisms. The digital platforms, namely KALP (Krishi Advisory based on Location-specific Weather Prediction), Mausam SANKALP (Systematic Agromet Analytics, Knowledge and Advisory Enabling Platform) and Mausamgram have been developed to provide location-specific weather forecasts, crop advisories and impact-based warnings for severe weather hazards.

NDA leaders visit Kamakhya temple ahead of Himanta's swearing-in

GUWAHATI, May 12: Senior NDA leaders on Tuesday offered prayers at the revered Kamakhya temple in Guwahati ahead of the swearing-in ceremony of the third BJP-led government in Assam.

Among those who paid obeisance to Goddess Kamakhya were Union minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh, BJP national president Nitin Nabin, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar and Rajya Sabha MP Praful Patel.

BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma is set to take oath as chief minister for a second consecutive term, along with four other MLAs - two from his party and one each from alliance partners AGP and BPF.

The ceremony, to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union ministers, chief ministers and deputy chief ministers of NDA-ruled states, will be held at the Khanapara Veterinary College ground.

Speaking to reporters after offering prayers, Nabin said, "May Goddess Kamakhya continue to bless the people of Assam. With her blessings, the people of

Assam have once again given their mandate to the BJP. We are here to seek blessings ahead of this auspicious occasion."

Goa Chief Minister Sawant said he prayed for the fulfilment of PM Modi's vision of a developed India and for the strength to realise his 'Viksit Goa' mission.

Congratulating the people of Assam, he said the state had once again reposed faith in Sarma's leadership. Delhi Chief Minister Gupta said the BJP's return to power for a third term in Assam reflected the blessings of Goddess Kamakhya, along with the people's trust in the party and Sarma's leadership.

"This is the result of Himanta Biswa Sarma's hard work and the love and trust that people have in him. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the journey towards a developed India and a developed Assam is moving forward," she said.

The BJP-led NDA retained power in Assam with a sweeping two-thirds majority in the just-held assembly polls. The BJP won 82 seats in the 126-member House, while allies Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF) secured 10 seats each. (PTI)

APDCL seizes electrical items from alleged land broker's house

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, May 12: The APDCL in Nagaon district seized electrical ware and other domestic electrical items from an illegally constructed house belonging to an alleged land broker at Lakhimi Path in Uttar Haibargaon on Sunday. Locals alleged that a person identified as Dutta, who is often accused of being involved in land brokerage activities, allegedly encroached upon a plot of land at the end of Lakhimi Path in the Uttar Haibargaon area and constructed a house there. Following the development, the owner of the land filed a complaint regarding the alleged land grabbing and the matter is currently under trial in a local court.

Meanwhile, the APDCL had disconnected the electricity connection to the newly constructed house a few months ago. However, the alleged land broker reportedly took an illegal electricity connection from a neighbour's house located opposite his residence by drawing a wire across the road at ground level, posing a serious threat to pedestrians in the area.

Following complaints lodged by local residents regarding the dangerous connection, officials of the APDCL rushed to the spot and seized electrical ware and other domestic items, including a refrigerator, fans and other appliances, sources added.

Notorious thief from Sivasagar arrested by Nagaon Police

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, May 12: In a major breakthrough, Nagaon Police arrested Ankur Das, a notorious thief from Sivasagar for allegedly orchestrating multiple thefts across Nagaon town in a single day last week.

According to police sources, Ankur Das had been operating in different parts of the town under the pretext of searching for rented accommodation. Taking advantage of empty houses, he allegedly carried out burglaries in three houses in Haibargaon and one in Borkilong on the same day.

The accused was apprehended from Teok in Jorhat

district following an intensive investigation by Nagaon Police into a series of thefts reported across the town last week. Police revealed that Ankur Das is a repeat offender who had earlier been jailed seven times for similar crimes.

During the investigation, police also detained two other individuals from Sivasagar identified as Sanjib Sarkar and Sanjay Karmakar for questioning in connection with the case. The duo allegedly purchased stolen gold from the accused. Nagaon Police recovered gold ornaments worth approximately ₹12 lakh from a jewellery shop in Sivasagar.

International Nurses Day celebrated at Diphu Urban Health Centre Nurses honour Florence Nightingale and felicitate retired ANM staff for dedicated healthcare service

HT Bureau

DIPHU, May 12: The Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) community of Diphu Urban Health Centre, Rongkhelan, celebrated International Nurses Day by recognising the selfless contribution and devotion rendered by nurses as frontline healthcare workers, providing care, love, hope and affection to sick persons in hospitals and homes.

The ANM nurses and other staff of Diphu Urban Health Centre came together to celebrate the day to commemorate the birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale. The theme of this year's celebration was "Our Nurses, Our Future: Empowered Nurses Save Lives."

The celebration began with floral tributes and the lighting of lamps before the portrait of Florence Nightingale, the woman who

revolutionised care for wounded soldiers by improving hygiene and living standards during the Crimean War and was later recognised as the founder of modern nursing.

The floral tribute ceremony was led by retired Lady Health Supervisor (LHS) of Diphu Medical College and Hospital (DMC&H), Kadom Rongpharpi, along with retired ANM Sandhya Rani Borchetia, LHS of Urban Health Centre Rongkhelan, Provwati Duarah and other nurses present on the occasion.

Highlighting the life and works of Florence Nightingale, Provwati Duarah said that she, from 1820 to 1910, was a British social reformer, statistician and founder of modern nursing, popularly known as "The Lady with the Lamp" for her dedicated care of



soldiers during the Crimean War. She revolutionised healthcare by improving hygiene, sanitising hospitals and establishing the first scientifically based nursing school, significantly reducing mortality

rates. During the Crimean War, Nightingale was sent to Scutari with a team of nurses to manage hospitals, where she found filthy conditions causing massive deaths. By focusing on cleanliness, fresh

air and proper food, she reduced the death rate from 42 per cent to 2.2 per cent. She became a Victorian icon for her nighttime rounds, providing comfort and personally tending to wounded soldiers. In 1860, she established the Nightingale School of Nursing at St Thomas' Hospital in London, professionalising the field for women.

Her book, Notes on Nursing, served as a cornerstone for nursing training. She published over 200 works on hospital planning, public sanitation and healthcare reforms, Duarah added.

She also stated that the significance of the celebration lies in empowering nurses through better working conditions, training and respect, which improve patient care and outcomes.

The programme also highlighted the urgent need to address the

global nursing burnout crisis and shortage, she added. She urged fellow nurses to follow in the footsteps of Florence Nightingale by showing compassion, kindness, care towards patients and devotion to the profession.

Marking the occasion, four retired ANM nurses of Urban Health Centre, Rongkhelan were felicitated for their contribution to healthcare and devoted service till retirement. The retired nurses honoured were Mina Tissopi, Tado Engtipi, Toramai Kropi and Jelina Tissopi. They were felicitated with Karbi traditional turbans (poho), appreciation notes and Assamese horai.

Songs and dances were also presented by the nurses, filling the room with a festive spirit. The celebration concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by retired ANM Sandhya Rani Borchetia.

Parismita Kalita named Brand Ambassador of Green and Green India & International

HT Bureau

JORHAT, May 12: Parismita Kalita has been appointed as the Brand Ambassador of Green and Green India & International, an announcement made on the first day of Bohag, bringing pride to Assam. The announcement was made by Bipul Hazarika, Supreme Officer of Green and Green India & International. He stated that the organisation was formed around 25 years ago and has its headquarters in Vrindavan,

Uttar Pradesh. He added that it has been working in different parts of the world with the aim of creating a global green revolution, with representatives from 106 countries associated with it and a presence in every Indian state.

He remarked that it is a matter of pride for Assam that an Assamese woman has been selected as the Brand Ambassador of such an organisation.

Parismita Kalita, from the Gorokhiya Doula area of Jorhat, holds a postgraduate degree in English and is also an announcer and actress. The organisation stated that she was selected for the ambassadorial role considering her personality and overall qualities.

It is also noted that the organisation, led by Bipul Hazarika as Supreme Officer has received approval from NITI Aayog.

Alongside Green and Green India & International, its associated organisations include Hari Darshan International, Ocean and Sky International, Wild and Wild India & International, Prabhat Health Foundation, and Labanya Prabha Social Cultural Foundation, which are engaged in various activities across India and abroad.

According to Bipul Hazarika, the principal organisations are connected with nature and living beings. He explained their focus areas as follows: Hari Darshan International and Wild and Wild India & International work in travel and wildlife; Ocean and Sky International focuses on air, water, earth and space-related studies and research and Green and Green India & International works for environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.

He further stated that Hari Darshan International promotes spirituality and social well-being, while Green and Green India & International continues efforts toward building a greener world and preserving ecological balance.

In addition, Prabhat Health Foundation works in public health and Labanya Prabha Social Cultural Foundation promotes knowledge and culture in society.

Bipul Hazarika added that although names of young women from various parts of the country were considered for the Brand Ambassador role, Parismita Kalita was ultimately selected for her personality and qualities, describing it as a proud and joyful moment for Assam.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

Set your goals high, and don't stop till you get there.
—Bo Jackson

Trump-Xi at Beijing summit

The U.S. President Donald Trump begins his three-day visit to China on May 13 for his summit with the Chinese President Xi Jinping, the outcome of which has special significance for Trump in shaping his political future in the context of the midterm elections in November this year. Among both leaders, the U.S. President has more immediate compulsions in concluding a composite deal with the Chinese supreme, especially the trade deal. Trump is not fully in a comfortable situation. As regards Iran, the ceasefire continues with some hiccups, but the Iranians are negotiating tough and to the political class in the U.S., the powerful U.S. President is looking more humiliated in diplomacy as against the Iranian government, though Trump is still maintaining that he is in a commanding position. And that the Iranians will agree to the peace deal on his terms. It is quite likely that Trump will seek Chinese help in persuading Iran to come to an amicable settlement as early as possible. Trump knows both China and Russia have influence on Iran and both have been assisting Tehran from behind. China also can make use of this Iranian imbroglio to extract some new concessions from the U.S. President in the overall context of the bilateral deal. China has been in touch continuously with Iran. Apart from the Iran war issue, Trump is highly interested in facilitating the trade deal and security in the South China sea, while China is interested in the future of Taiwan. Trump is more interested in the composite trade deal, the draft of which has been made ready by both sides headed by the trade ministers of both countries in three previous meetings. Already, as a follow-up of the last Trump-Xi summit in Busan, South Korea in October last year, a truce is there temporarily in the trade war. Trump unleashed last year a huge tariff hike on Chinese goods entering the U.S. market at 145 per cent at one point. China retaliated by restricting export of rare earth materials that are vital for US defence technology. After the Busan meet, China resumed supply on an ad hoc basis till the final agreement was concluded. So Trump will try to ensure some permanent agreement on this Chinese supply of rare earth materials at the Beijing summit.

China is seeking to extend the current trade truce, preserve access to US technology and halt or roll back the tightening of US export controls. In return it may offer substantial investments in the US economy, on the line of the deals the Trump administration has previously struck with nations such as Japan and South Korea. China is presently in an advantageous position as it has advanced rapidly in AI technology. In the latest report of WIPO, China has recorded the largest number of patents in high tech areas, though the US is still ahead of China in AI and two/three key areas of frontier tech.

The scientific importance of the Mother Tongue

The process of developing human consciousness and thinking ability is an extremely complex and subtle phenomenon, and it would be incorrect to describe it merely as a result of biological evolution. At the center of this process stands language. Language is not merely a collection of words, nor is it only a mechanical medium for exchanging ideas; rather, language is the mirror of human existence and the primary instrument for acquiring knowledge. When the importance of the mother tongue is analyzed

contrast, when education is received through an unfamiliar or less familiar language, a large portion of the learner's mental attention is spent deciphering meanings of words, thereby obstructing deep analysis and genuine appreciation of the subject itself. This clearly demonstrates that relying on the mother tongue is not merely convenient for achieving the highest level of intellectual development; it is a scientific necessity.

The role of the mother tongue in the development of creativity and originality is immeasurable. Creativity does not merely mean producing something new; it means viewing old ideas from a fresh perspective. This ability flourishes only when a person can think with complete mental freedom. The mother tongue provides that freedom. While thinking in a foreign language, a person must consciously pay attention to grammar and vocabulary, which interrupts the spontaneous flow of



DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The relationship between language and the structure and functioning of the brain is extremely intimate and innate. According to neuroscientific research, the brain of a child begins to receive external sounds and rhythms through the auditory senses while still in the mother's womb. From the moment of birth, the linguistic environment surrounding the child naturally establishes connections between the brain's neurons and the sounds, rhythms, and grammatical structures of that language. Neuroscientists describe this as a "neural network." The words of the mother tongue are not merely signals for the brain; they are symbols of emotions. When we hear or speak words in our mother tongue, a particular region of the brain associated directly with emotion and memory becomes activated. Consequently, any knowledge acquired through the mother tongue becomes embedded in the deepest layers of the brain and remains there as long-term memory. On the other hand, in the case of languages learned later in life, the brain often has to translate the information into the mother tongue before fully processing it. This process of translation creates an additional mental burden or "cognitive load" on the brain, which may slow down the natural speed of thinking and analytical ability.

The process of thinking itself is entirely dependent on language. Whenever human beings engage in inner dialogue or attempt to solve a problem, those thoughts emerge in the form of words. This internal conversation or "inner speech" generally occurs in the mother tongue. The reason is that conceptual clarity is strongest in one's native language. Whether it is a scientific formula or a philosophical theory, understanding any complex subject requires first constructing a clear mental image of it. The mother tongue helps create this image. When education is imparted through the mother tongue, students and researchers can directly enter into the core of the subject without becoming trapped in linguistic complexity. In

most of the world's timeless literature, philosophy, and scientific discoveries first germinated in the creators' mother tongues. The vocabulary of a mother tongue contains words and expressions capable of conveying the subtlest emotions and abstract concepts with precision. When translated into another language, much of this essence is often lost. Therefore, if a society wishes to cultivate an atmosphere of original thought and innovation, the practice and expansion of its language become indispensable.

The relationship between the mother tongue and emotional intelligence and mental stability is profoundly deep. Human beings are not merely slaves of logic; emotions and feelings are inseparable aspects of life. Fundamental human emotions such as joy, sorrow, anger, love, and empathy can find their truest expression only in the mother tongue. Whenever we wish to express our deepest pain or happiness, the words of our mother tongue naturally rise to our lips. Psychological studies have shown that individuals who are denied the opportunity to express themselves in their own language, or who are prevented from speaking it, often develop mental stress, inferiority complexes, and identity crises. The right to speak one's own language provides a sense of psychological security and self-confidence. This self-confidence, in turn, gives individuals the strength to confront the challenges of life. Furthermore, the mother tongue plays an important role in shaping the character and moral education of children. When elders in the family teach values through folktales or moral sayings, and if the language of that instruction is the mother tongue, it leaves a deep imprint upon the child's inner consciousness.

A society is not merely a collection of peo-

ple; it is a complex interweaving of shared beliefs, traditions, and accumulated knowledge. The primary foundation of this interweaving is language. Through the mother tongue, one generation transfers its accumulated wisdom, experiences, and cultural heritage to the next. When a community loses its language, it loses not only a means of communication but also its history, traditional ecological knowledge, and worldview. The death of a language signifies the death of a unique perspective. Every language possesses its own distinctive way of perceiving and understanding the world. Therefore, preserving and developing the mother tongue is not merely a linguistic issue; it is an essential step in protecting the diversity of human civilization. Socially, when people of all classes communicate in the same language, class divisions and social distances diminish. Conversely, when a foreign or elite language is adopted by a particular class as a symbol of prestige, unhealthy social divisions begin to emerge.

Debates surrounding the use of the mother tongue as the medium of education often prioritize assumptions over reality. Yet educational research has repeatedly proven that children progress academically more rapidly when primary education is conducted in the mother tongue. The scientific explanation is simple: learning progresses from the known to the unknown. When schools use the same language and vocabulary that children have already acquired at home, new concepts can easily connect with their existing knowledge. However, if the language of school is entirely different from the language spoken at home, children experience a significant gap. They spend more time trying to understand the language itself than understanding the content of their textbooks. As a result, a tendency toward rote learning develops. When understanding becomes difficult, memorization becomes the only option. Such education based on memorization dulls the thinking ability of students and turns them into mere machines designed to pass examinations. There can be no substitute for the mother tongue in the development of genuine knowledge and analytical skill. This does not mean, however, that learning other languages is undesirable. On the contrary, a strong command of one's mother tongue makes learning second or third languages much easier. Linguists maintain that those who possess a solid understanding of the grammar and vocabulary of their native language can master additional languages with much greater ease.

Language also exerts an indirect yet powerful influence on economics and development. Countries that have mastered science and technology in their own languages and applied them effectively possess stronger economic foundations than others. When the pursuit of scientific knowledge is not confined to a privileged minority but becomes accessible in the language of ordinary people, the true development of human resources takes place. If subjects such as technical education, agricultural science, and medical science are taught and

practiced in the mother tongue, their benefits spread to the grassroots level of society. When an ordinary farmer can read or understand modern agricultural methods in his own language, his productivity increases. Similarly, when a worker receives instructions for operating machinery in his own language, workplace accidents decrease and efficiency rises. Thus, language is not merely a literary concern; it is also one of the driving forces behind productivity and economic progress. In the age of globalization, people often assume that only international languages can lead society forward, but in reality, economic self-reliance cannot be achieved solely through foreign languages without the development of local knowledge and skills.

In this era of rapid technological transformation, preserving the existence and relevance of the mother tongue has emerged as a challenge, yet technology itself has also opened new opportunities for linguistic development. New tools are being developed to increase the use of mother tongues in artificial intelligence and digital platforms. Our responsibility in this age is to use technology as a carrier of the mother tongue. The vast reservoir of information available on the internet should not remain confined only to English or other dominant languages; it should also become accessible in our own languages. When high-quality content is created in our native languages, younger generations will naturally feel drawn toward them. A language survives through usage. If the mother tongue is not used in science, commerce, and administration, it risks becoming limited merely to domestic conversation. To keep a language alive in a powerful form, processes of modernization and the creation of new vocabulary must continue without interruption.

Ultimately, understanding the scientific importance of the mother tongue has become an urgent necessity in the present age. It is not merely a matter of emotional satisfaction; it is the foundation of our mental, intellectual, and social existence. The natural development of the brain, the depth of thought, the flowering of creativity, and social cohesion all depend upon the healthy cultivation of the mother tongue. If we wish to shape future generations into healthy, capable, and thoughtful citizens, we cannot allow them to become detached from their roots. Only when roots remain strong can a tree withstand storms and continue standing firm. To establish ourselves before the world, strengthening our own uniqueness and linguistic identity is far more important than blindly imitating others. On the touchstone of science and reason, the position of the mother tongue remains unique and indispensable. Therefore, every step taken toward respecting and developing the mother tongue in all dimensions must be regarded as a priceless contribution to human civilization and the world of knowledge. Let our thoughts, our dreams, and our creations find expression in our mother tongue—this alone is the true and scientific path toward progress.

Why Modi is asking for a Pandemic Mindset in the face of war

By: Satvabrat Borah

The world feels a bit like it is holding its breath right now. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi stood before a crowd in Hyderabad recently, his message was not just about local policy or standard political updates. It was a direct appeal for a change in how every Indian lives their daily life. The reason is a conflict thousands of miles away, the escalating war involving the United States, Israel and Iran. While the battle lines are drawn in the Middle East, the economic aftershocks are hitting Indian shores with a force that is hard to ignore.

To understand why a world leader is asking citizens to skip foreign holidays and put off buying gold, we have to look at the lifeblood of the global economy: energy. India is a country on the rise, but that growth requires massive amounts of oil and gas. Since the war began in late February 2026, the price of a barrel of Brent crude has jumped from around \$73 to well over \$105. This is not just a number on a screen; it is a massive bill that the Indian government has to pay in US dollars.

The geography of this war makes matters even more difficult. The Strait of Hormuz is a tiny stretch of water that acts as a throat for the world's energy supply. With Iran restricting passage and the US implementing naval blockades, the flow of oil and liquefied natural gas has become a trickle. For a country like India, which imports nearly 85 percent of its oil, this is an existential challenge. Every time someone drives a car or a factory turns on its machines, India has to dip into its savings to pay those inflated global prices. These savings are what economists call foreign exchange reserves. Think of it as a national emergency fund kept in foreign currencies to ensure the country can always buy what it needs from the world. Before this conflict, India's reserves were at a healthy peak of \$728 billion. In just a few months, that number has slid toward \$690 billion. It sounds like a lot of money, but when the cost of essentials like fuel and fertilizer is skyrocketing, those billions can vanish surprisingly fast.

This is where the Prime Minister's specific requests come in. He is looking at the things India buys from other countries and trying to figure out what can be cut. Oil and fertilizer are non-negotiable. Without oil, the country stops moving. Without fertilizer, the farmers cannot grow the food that feeds over a billion people. Since the government cannot stop buying these essentials, it is asking the public to help reduce the demand for everything else.

Gold is a huge part of this equation. For many Indian families, gold is more than jewelry; it is a traditional form of savings and a staple of cultural celebrations. India is the second-largest importer of gold in the world. In the last year alone, the country spent \$72 billion bringing gold across its borders. When you buy a gold coin or a necklace, that money eventually leaves the country in the form of foreign currency. By asking Indians to pause these purchases for a year,

the government is trying to keep those dollars inside the national "wallet" to pay for oil instead.

Foreign travel follows a similar logic. When an Indian tourist goes to Europe or the Americas, they spend money on flights, hotels, and food in foreign currency. Collectively, this adds up to tens of billions of dollars every year. By encouraging people to holiday within India or postpone international trips, the goal is to prevent that wealth from draining out of the country during this period of high stress.

The suggestion to return to a work-from-home model is perhaps the most practical way to tackle the problem at its source: fuel consumption. We all remember how the streets went quiet during the pandemic. If millions of people stop commuting every day, the national demand for petrol and diesel drops significantly. This isn't just about saving money for the individual; it is about reducing the total amount of oil India has to import from a volatile global market.

The Prime Minister's comparison of this moment to the COVID-19 pandemic is a way of signaling that this is a collective struggle. He described "patriotism" not just as a duty for soldiers at the border, but as a daily choice made by citizens. In this view, using public transport, carpooling, or even using less cooking oil becomes a small act of national service. Cooking oil might seem like a minor detail, but India imports a vast amount of it, and the prices have risen alongside energy costs. There is also the issue of urea and other fertilizers. The Gulf region is a primary source of the world's fertilizer supply. With the Strait of Hormuz blocked, these supplies are trapped or redirected, making them incredibly expensive. Farmers are being asked to use as efficient as possible, potentially cutting use by half where they can, to ensure the country doesn't go broke trying to keep the fields green.

The situation is a reminder of how interconnected our world has become. A dispute over maritime blockades and regional power in the Middle East directly affects the price of a flight from Delhi to New York or the cost of a wedding in Hyderabad. The Indian economy is strong, but no nation is immune to the kind of "energy shock" we are seeing now.

Whether people will actually stop buying gold or cancel their summer vacations remains to be seen. These are deeply personal choices tied to family traditions and hard-earned rewards. The government's hope is that by being transparent about the "foreign exchange" math, they can convince the public that these small sacrifices are necessary to keep the broader economy stable. Ultimately, the message is one of resilience. The world is in a period of intense uncertainty, and the global energy map is being redrawn by conflict. By asking for these lifestyle changes, the leadership is attempting to build a cushion for the country. It is a strategy of "living responsibly" today to ensure that the national reserves are there for the necessities of tomorrow. In a time of war and rising costs, the focus has shifted from expansion and luxury to conservation and stability.

BJP's Bengal Triumph: A Tribute to Dr Mookerjee's legacy

By: Dipak Kurmi

The political landscape of India has witnessed a seismic shift that recalibrates the nation's ideological compass, specifically with the historic installation of the first ever Bharatiya Janata Party government in West Bengal. This victory is not merely an electoral statistic but the fruition of a metaphorical seed planted decades ago by Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the visionary founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. For years, the lotus remained a distant aspiration in the soil of Bengal, yet through persistent struggle and the sacrifices of countless party workers, it has finally achieved a full grown presence. The mandate given to the BJP in the land of its ideological progenitor signifies a profound homecoming. It reflects a rousing endorsement of the current leadership spearheaded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP President Nitin Nabin, and Home Minister Amit Shah, who have collectively orchestrated a campaign that rewrote history. The appointment of Suvendu Adhikari as the Chief Minister marks a new chapter for a state that has long been a bastion of ideologies diametrically opposed to the saffron surge.

The legacy of Dr Mookerjee is deeply intertwined with the cultural and intellectual fabric of Bengal, a fact often overshadowed by contemporary political discourse. One must recall his significant relationship with the legendary icon Rabindranath Tagore, which highlighted his commitment to cultural synthesis. During his influential tenure as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, Dr Mookerjee demonstrated immense foresight by inviting Tagore to deliver the university's convocation address in Bengali in 1937. This was a landmark event, as it was the first time the mother tongue was used for such a prestigious academic ceremony, breaking a long standing colonial tradition. This historical milestone underscores the fact that the roots of the BJP's ideology in Bengal are not imported but are deeply embedded in the state's own renaissance and linguistic pride. The current triumph is thus a tribute to that intellectual heritage which sought to marry national integrity with regional identity.

To understand the magnitude of this win, one must look back at the arduous journey the party has undertaken since its inception. The BJP has grown into a dominant force despite being systematically suppressed by successive governments that viewed

its rise with apprehension. The struggle began in 1951 when Dr Mookerjee formed the Jana Sangh on October 21 as a precursor to the modern BJP. In India's first General Elections in 1952, the Jana Sangh managed to secure three elected Members of Parliament, with Dr Mookerjee himself being one of them. During that nascent stage of Indian democracy, the voting patterns were remarkably different from today as caste was not the predominant factor it later became. Instead, the electorate was divided along clear ideological lines, with voters choosing between Socialist, Leftist, and Jana Sangh frameworks. This period was defined by a battle of ideas rather than identity politics, setting the stage for a long term ideological conflict.

The early years of the Jana Sangh were marked by intense friction with the ruling Congress party under Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. As the Prime Minister and the face of the Congress, Nehru viewed the fledgling Jana Sangh as a communal entity closely linked to the RSS, perceiving it as a direct threat to his vision of secularism and the absolute dominance of his party. This era was characterized by an environment where political dissent was often met with a heavy hand. Indeed, the historical record suggests that the Congress party was instrumental in developing tactics aimed at decimating the Opposition, thereby drifting away from the core democratic principles of pluralism. The antagonism was palpable within the halls of Parliament, where the clash of personalities and visions for India's future frequently led to fiery exchanges that remain etched in the annals of Indian political history.

One of the most famous parliamentary confrontations occurred when Nehru, pointing directly at Dr Mookerjee during a Lok Sabha debate, declared his intention to crush the Jana Sangh. In a moment of legendary defiance that drew thunderous applause, Dr Mookerjee stood his ground and replied that while Nehru intended to crush the party, he himself intended to crush that very "crushing mentality." This rejoinder was not merely a witty comeback but a profound rejection of authoritarian overreach and a defense of the right to exist as a political opposition. This exchange was so significant that it was frequently cited in later years by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, another towering figure who helped shape the party's destiny. These debates reflected a deep hostility, as Mookerjee used the floor to critique Nehru's policies on Kashmir, foreign affairs, and national unity,

while Nehru attempted to marginalize the Jana Sangh as a fringe threat.

Reflecting on the evolution of the electoral process since 1952 provides a fascinating glimpse into how much India has changed. In those early days, technology played no role, and the process was rudimentary; voters were given slips carrying the names of candidates and were required to place them into specific ballot boxes designated for each contender. There was also no concept of reserved seats in the modern sense; instead, multiple candidates could contest from the same seat under different categories. For instance, in the Pulpur constituency, Pandit Nehru contested as a general candidate while Ma-suriyadeen contested as a minority candidate. Comparing that era to the current digital and highly organized campaign environment highlights the BJP's ability to adapt and master the tools of modern politics. The party has transitioned from a small group of ideological dissenters to a technologically savvy, dominant pole in Indian politics that leaves its adversaries struggling to keep pace.

The focus on West Bengal has been a consistent strategy for the BJP leadership over the decades, rather than a sudden interest. During my own tenure as BJP President, I made it a priority to tour the state extensively to strengthen our grassroots organizational structure. A pivotal moment in this journey was the holding of the National Executive meeting in Calcutta in April 1993, which served as a clear signal that the party viewed Bengal as a vital frontier. The political scenario has since undergone a qualitative change, with the BJP emerging as the central axis around which Indian politics now revolves. The recent landslide victory and the swearing in of a BJP Chief Minister in Kolkata represent the ultimate fulfillment of Dr Mookerjee's dream. It is a moment of profound satisfaction for those who witnessed the early struggles and the relentless efforts of workers who refused to be intimidated by the political violence that often plagued the state.

While the BJP celebrates its breakthrough in the east, the political landscape in southern India, particularly Tamil Nadu, presents a starkly different challenge. Despite national momentum, the party has struggled to breach the Dravidian fortress, where the reasons for its limited footprint are structural rather than merely tactical. Language remains a potent tool used by Dravidian parties to create a narrative of North South friction, framing the BJP as an outsider to the

Tamil cultural ethos. However, the deeper issue lies in the realm of cultural compatibility and the unique nature of Tamil religiosity. Unlike the heartland, Tamil traditions are heavily influenced by anti Brahminical and non Sanskritic movements, such as the Bhakti and Self Respect movements. These traditions emphasize a direct, devotional relationship with the divine while simultaneously rejecting the priestly rituals and the Varna hierarchy that are often associated with the BJP's perceived ideological leanings.

The history of Tamil Nadu's political leadership illustrates this deep seated anti Brahmin sentiment. A prime example is the case of C. Rajagopalachari, India's first Governor General and a leader of immense stature, who was nonetheless forced to step down as the Chief Minister of Madras State primarily because of his Brahmin identity. This event underscores the historical force of the Dravidian movement in shaping the state's power dynamics. Interestingly, Tamil Nadu boasts the highest density of temples in the country and a population that is deeply religious, yet this has not translated into a natural advantage for the BJP. This is because iconic leaders like M.G. Ramachandran and J. Jayalalithaa managed to shrewdly occupy a space of soft Hindutva. They cultivated a sense of religious devotion that was devoid of Brahminical overtones, effectively neutralizing the BJP's traditional platform within a Dravidian framework.

The complexity of Tamil politics is further highlighted by the fact that while Rajaji was ousted for his caste, Jayalalithaa, a Brahmin woman from Karnataka, was able to rule the state for many years with immense popularity. This suggests that the Tamil electorate is moved more by emotional connections and a unique form of hero worship than by the "cult politics" seen in other parts of the country. They are not easily influenced by the political trends that dominate the rest of India, preferring leaders who can navigate the delicate balance of Tamil identity and spiritual tradition. The recent rise of actor Joseph Vijay as a political phenomenon is the latest manifestation of this trend, proving that the intersection of cinema, charisma, and regional pride continues to be the primary driver of success in the state. For the BJP to succeed there, it must move beyond national templates and engage with these deep rooted structural and cultural realities that define the Tamil soul. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmi@gmail.com)

Mumbai's deonar landfill: From toxic legacy to Climate asset

By: Diya Shah, Dhaval Desai

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) recently floated an INR 2,368 crore tender inviting bids to close India's oldest dumping ground, Deonar, over the next three years. Operating continuously since 1927, the landfill spans 311 acres in the city's eastern suburbs. The site receives an estimated 4,000 tonnes of waste per day, accumulated over nearly a century into a mound that now rises 40 metres, equivalent to a 13-storey building. The waste is typically untreated, making its environmental hazard more significant than landfill volume alone would suggest.

As of 2026, the Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management Authority (MCZMA) has cleared the site for rehabilitation on 124 of the 311 acres, with the project awaiting approval from the Bombay High Court. However, the details of the clearing method and the standards to be upheld to ensure safe rehabilitation remain limited. Experts have received the three-year cleanup timeline with scepticism, noting that making the land fully habitable will require partial scientific closure followed by several additional years of biomining — in which living organisms such as bacteria or fungi are used to extract metals from waste — along with bioremediation, which employs similar microorganism-based processes to treat waste that can then be partially converted into energy and construction materials. For this purpose, the BMC is considering a waste-to-energy plant alongside the rehabilitation project. While both have their purposes, neither end use resolves the public health questions that any intervention at this site must address.

Yet alternatives exist that provide essential infrastructure to minimise public health risks, mitigate post-closure toxic emissions rather than simply capping them, and sustain the economic productivity of the land in question.

The Public Health Baseline and the Malad Experience

The public health argument attached to both current proposals has a concrete local precedent. According to BMC data, M East Ward, where Deonar is located, reports low life expectancy and a high prevalence of tuberculosis. Therefore, any intervention that adds combustion or accelerated decomposition to this environment warrants proportionate caution.

Mindspace demonstrates that subsurface gas migration can persist long after surface-level remediation is declared complete. Without gas capture, Deonar risks repeating the same pattern after closure — subsurface decomposition continuing to generate methane and other gases long after the site is officially shut.

The trajectory of the Malad dumping ground, officially closed by the BMC in 2002, illustrates why. The Malad dumping ground was reclaimed to become what is today known as Mindspace, one of Mumbai's largest IT parks. The release of pol-



lutants, including methane, hydrogen sulphide, and mercaptans from the former dumpsite has caused documented damage to property and electronic equipment in the area. More importantly, leaching pollutants continue to pose significant health risks, causing chronic problems in and around Mindspace. Experts fear that this leaching will continue for over half a decade. Mindspace demonstrates that subsurface gas migration can persist long after surface-level remediation is declared complete. Without gas capture, Deonar risks repeating the same pattern after closure — subsurface decomposition continuing to generate methane and other gases long after the site is officially shut.

Across much of the world, landfills continue releasing methane for decades after closure, and closure and capping are frequently mistaken for mitigation. The Malad Mindspace experience shows that this is not a theoretical risk in Mumbai's context. With two crore tonnes of legacy waste and a compressed work calendar, the timeline for safe rehabilitation at Deonar extends well beyond what current approvals cover.

The waste-to-energy proposal also carries parallel concerns. Such plants emit toxic by-products, a matter contested by public health experts, particularly when such plants are sited adjacent to

densely populated areas rather than designated industrial zones. The question, therefore, is whether there is an approach that addresses public health risks rather than adding to their complexity.

The Ecological Logic of Mangroves at Deonar

The Deonar site sits adjacent to Thane Creek, the existing mangrove cover, and the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary. At least 60 percent of the remaining land not allocated for rehabilitation could be directed toward mangrove afforestation. Mangroves reduce toxic air pollution, benefiting both the rehabilitation zone and adjacent slum settlements. Since the land is state-owned, afforestation can be carried out via state-designated agencies, keeping carbon finance revenues within urban public streams.

The proposal for the closure of Deonar dumping ground pairs afforestation with landfill gas capture. Landfill gas (LFG) is composed of roughly 50 percent methane and 50 percent CO₂. Methane is at least 28 times more potent than CO₂ at trapping heat over a 100-year period. Gas capture must therefore be a core component of both the rehabilitation and afforestation plan.

Local and International Precedents
Since its closing in 2012, the Jardim Gramacho restoration in Rio de Janeiro has been transform-

ing what was once Latin America's largest landfill into an active climate-mitigation site. Following closure and capping, the installation of a landfill gas capture system and large-scale mangrove restoration dramatically reduced methane emissions while restoring coastal ecosystems along Guanabara Bay. The transformation followed a clear sequence: scientific closure first, gas capture second, and mangrove planting across stabilised coastal sections third.

The project avoided an estimated 850,000 tonnes of CO₂e annually, demonstrating that legacy waste sites can be stabilised in ways that simultaneously address methane emissions and restore ecological function. Biocovers placed over capped waste further reduced fugitive emissions, while mangrove root systems stabilised sediment and contributed to blue carbon accumulation. The marshy, tidal-adjacent portions of Deonar that are unsuitable for built development are precisely where this sequencing applies.

A closer precedent exists within Mumbai itself. A legacy landfill at Gorai, in the city's western suburbs, was closed and retrofitted with a gas capture system comprising 40 engineering-designed extraction wells, converting captured methane into electricity fed to the national power grid. To fi-

nance the project, the implementing agency secured carbon co-financing covering 56 percent of the total capital cost, in exchange for a portion of the project's expected Certified Emissions Reductions generated under the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). Registered as a CDM project in 2010, it became India's first landfill closure of its kind. The BMC's INR 26 crore in earnings from carbon credit financing established a replicable proof of concept: that the scientific closure of a legacy dumpsite can generate meaningful urban revenue alongside its environmental outcomes.

A credit accounting framework at Deonar would generate verified emission reductions eligible for sale to institutional buyers in India's domestic Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) and to international voluntary market participants.

Similarly, inception work on a coastal mangrove carbon finance project in Gujarat, developed for tidal wetland restoration, provides directly applicable evidence. The carbon sequestration potential across approximately 2,997 hectares of mangrove plantation in coastal Gujarat is estimated at around 1.1 million tonnes of CO₂e equivalent over a 30-year crediting period. Mangrove plantations qualify as an afforestation practice under the Kyoto Protocol, and carbon finance generated through voluntary markets can contribute to state-level carbon neutrality goals.

These precedents lay the groundwork for Deonar. In the decade since the success of these projects, India's carbon market framework has evolved to the point where Deonar's credits could be hosted within its domestic voluntary market.

The Voluntary Carbon Market Opportunity

Deonar presents a viable opportunity to facilitate participation in India's evolving carbon market. A credit accruing framework at Deonar would generate verified emission reductions eligible for sale to institutional buyers in India's domestic Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) and to international voluntary market participants.

Gas capture infrastructure at Deonar could generate renewable energy or flared-methane credits, thereby substituting for the waste-to-energy plan while reducing toxic emissions. Additionally, mangrove restoration above stabilised coastal sections could generate blue carbon credits under an internationally recognised standard. With state ownership of the land, these revenue streams would accrue within urban public finance. Mumbai's natural carbon sinks are already widely recognised as insufficient to offset the city's greenhouse gas emissions.

In light of the recent Supreme Court order permitting the felling of 45,000 mangroves for Mumbai's ambitious coastal road extension, directing Deonar's coastal and ecological characteristics toward a restoration-led approach is a policy avenue that runs in parallel with remediation already underway — and one that turns a long-standing environmental and social liability into a measurable urban asset. (Courtesy: ORF)

The forgotten martyrs: India's forest guards are dying to save the forests

By: VK Bahuguna

Forest protection is becoming a real challenge for frontline field foresters like Forest Guards, Rangers, and Wildlife Wardens in view of emerging, well-coordinated mafias with the latest superior weaponry. Over the last 30 to 35 years, thousands of forest personnel have lost their lives to protect natural resources all over the world. India is frequently cited by the International Ranger Federation (IRF) as the most dangerous country for foresters. In a typical three-year period, IRF statistics have shown that India accounts for nearly 30-40 per cent of all global forester deaths. India has the highest number of forest staff fatalities in the world, with reports highlighting hundreds of injuries and deaths in the line of duty. Between 2012 and 2017, India accounted for nearly 31 per cent (162) of the 526 forest ranger deaths reported globally. Compared to this, between 2006 and 2021, the IRF recorded approximately 2,351 casualties across 82 countries.

Thus, thousands of foresters' lives are lost in the line of duty due to attacks by timber smugglers and poachers; conflicts with elephants, tigers, leopards, and other wild animals during patrolling; and occupational hazards such as forest fires, malaria, and water-borne diseases. Not only frontline staff but also senior IFS officers like DFOs, Conservators, and National Park Directors have been killed in India.

P Srinivas, a 1979 IFS officer, who was beheaded by the sandalwood smuggler Veerappan in 1992, is now an icon of civil service sacrifice for the sake of duty, and at the Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy and other such academies, a P Srinivas Memorial Lecture is arranged every year during the foundation course of civil servants by the Government of India. P Srinivas was awarded the Kirti Chakra for his sacrifice. Similarly, Sanjay Singh, a 1992 batch IFS officer and DFO Rohtas, was killed by Maoists in February 2002.

Apart from foresters, large numbers of local people are also killed by wild animals in conflicts. Over the last 25 years, 1,296 people were killed by animals, mostly in recent years. In Uttarakhand alone, during 2025, 40 people were killed by leopards and 72 were attacked by bears. In this article, however, I want to discuss more about the problems of forest department staff because, if remedial measures are taken, then attacks on locals will also be reduced.

Members of the IFS, as also other ranks, work in difficult areas where civic facilities are poor, and

they have to battle organised timber and mining mafias and well-equipped wildlife poachers with very primitive tools, while the mafias are equipped with advanced gadgets and weapons. When personnel are killed or seriously injured, they are left to their own fate, and their families suffer ignominiously. Compensation from state governments is poor, delayed, and sometimes ignored completely.

The Indian Forest Service Association (IFS) took note of the pitiable conditions of such personnel and constituted the Indian Forest Service Benevolent and Welfare Trust (IFSBWT) to bridge that gap with immediate financial relief and to complement the support extended by the states. Initially, this was meant for IFS officers but has now been made applicable to all categories of forest personnel in the country.

The Trust was originally established in July 2008 by a group of Indian Forest Service officers in Delhi as a public charitable trust under the provisions of the Registration Act, 1908, so that bereaved families of IFS officers who die in harness can be assisted. Recently, it has been noted that largely frontline forestry personnel are killed or grievously injured while attempting to stop illegal mining, smuggling, encroachment, and poaching across several states; therefore, in January 2026, the Trust substantially widened its scope to include all frontline staff, as the majority of casualties and injuries occur mainly among Foresters, Guards, and Watchers, who are the real green warriors at the delivery point and the only line of defence for the country's forests.

Supporting these frontline warriors and their families was therefore made the foremost priority of the Trust. Accordingly, the Trust was re-registered on February 11, 2026, with an expanded mandate covering all categories of forestry field personnel in the country, from IFS officers to Forest Guards and below.

Notwithstanding the attempts by the IFS Central Association, society and government must take the lead to ameliorate the pitiable working conditions under which Forest Guards, Foresters, and Rangers have to work in a hostile environment, which is more often than not made vicious by the political patronage of mafias, especially the mining mafia.

To address this issue and improve the welfare of "Green Soldiers", concrete measures need to be taken. First and foremost is to vest frontline staff with legal powers by granting forest officers the authority for the "minimal and proportionate use of force", simi-

lar to the police, to deter organised crime such as sand, timber, and poacher mafias.

Further legal protection should be provided against frivolous counter-complaints filed by offenders to harass forest staff. Amend state rules to provide Section 187 of BNSS protection to all field staff, ensuring they cannot be prosecuted for actions taken in the line of duty without prior government sanction. Second, provide modern and effective firearms and tactical training to field staff working in high-conflict zones so they are not outgunned by poachers.

Third, provide financial and social security by ensuring a minimum uniform ex gratia of at least ₹50 lakh for unnatural deaths in the line of duty across all states, and continuing their last drawn salary for the family of the deceased until the retirement date. In addition, the government must extend schemes like the PM Scholarship for children of deceased armed forces personnel to the children of forest martyrs.

Next is to ensure better infrastructure for frontline staff, as in the police, by improving remote forest beats with basic amenities such as potable water, electricity, and high-quality field gear like satellite phones, fast-moving, good-quality vehicles, drones, night vision, GPS, etc. A Forest Housing Corporation should be established in each state with 100 per cent grants from the Central Government on the same pattern as in the police department. Immediate access to emergency medical support and air evacuation for staff injured in remote areas must also be ensured.

Last but not least is to institute the President's Green Gallantry Medals specifically for foresters, on a par with police or military medals, to boost morale and public respect for the service. On the organisational front, it is necessary to separate protection and enforcement from development and silviculture. States need to create dedicated anti-poaching and protection units at the division level.

These teams should consist of physically fit, tactically trained personnel whose only job is patrolling and enforcement, leaving plantation and other work to a separate administrative wing. States also need to create an intelligence wing at the range level to build an intelligence network.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests needs to take up these suggestions on a war footing, as the country's ecological warriors can only be neglected at the peril of destabilising food, water, and ecological stability. (Courtesy: The Poineer)

Natural farming for sustainable agriculture

By: Dr Manjurma Gogoi, Dr Neethi Baruah

Natural farming is a chemical-free, ecologically sustainable agricultural system that restores soil health, increases biodiversity, and eliminates synthetic inputs by relying on on-farm biomass recycling. It is considered as agro ecology based diversified farming system which integrates crops, trees and livestock with functional biodiversity. It is largely based on on-farm biomass recycling with major stress on biomass mulching, use of on-farm cow dung-urine formulations, maintaining soil aeration and exclusion of all synthetic chemical inputs. Natural farming is expected to reduce dependency on purchased inputs. It is considered as a cost-effective farming practice with scope for increasing employment and rural development while delivering many other benefits, such as restoration of soil fertility and environmental health, and mitigating and/or reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This method works along with the natural biodiversity of each farmed area, encouraging the complexity of living organisms, both plants, and animals that shape each particular ecosystem to thrive along with food plants. Natural Farming builds on natural or ecological processes that exist in or around farms.

Can be achieved through following specific principles:

1. Adoption of diversified cropping system-based agriculture
2. Recycling of naturally available nutrients in fields
3. Recycling of on-farm generated biomass
4. Use of locally developed and refined practices based on plant, animal and microbial source as raw materials
5. Innovative practices continuously evolve on the field by farmers based on the cropping pattern, local climatic conditions, altitude, soil quality, severity and variability of insects and pests etc.

Important practices, essential for adoption of natural farming includes:

- No external inputs,
- Local seeds (use of local varieties),
- On-farm produced microbial formulation for seed treatment (such as bijamrita),
- On-farm made microbial inoculants (Jivamrita) for soil enrichment,
- Cover crops and mulching with green and dry organic matter for nutrient recycling and for creating a suitable micro-climate for maximum beneficial microbial activity in soil.
- Mixed cropping,
- Managing diversity on farm through integration of trees
- Management of pests through diversity and local on-farm made botanical concoctions (such as neem, agni, neem ark, dasharni ark etc);



- Integration of livestock, especially of native breed for cow dung and cow urine as essential inputs for several practices and
- Water and moisture conservation.
- Aims and Objectives for Natural Farming promotion:**
- Preserve natural flora and fauna
- Restore soil health and fertility and soil's biological life
- Maintain diversity in crop production
- Efficient utilization of land and natural resources (light, air, water)
- Promote natural beneficial insects, animals and microbes in soil for nutrient recycling and biological control of pests and diseases
- Promotion of local breeds for livestock integration
- Use of natural / local resource-based inputs
- Reduce input cost of agricultural production
- Improve economics of farmers

Features of Natural Farming

1. According to natural farming principles, plants get 98% of their supply of nutrients from the air, water, and sunlight. And the remaining 2% can be fulfilled by good quality soil with plenty of friendly microorganisms. (Just like in forests and natural systems)
2. The soil is always supposed to be covered with organic mulch, which creates humus and encourages the growth of friendly microorganisms.
3. Farm made bio-cultures named 'Jeevamrit, Beejamrit etc.' are added to the soil instead of any fertilizers to improve microflora of soil. Jeevamrit, Beejamrit are derived from very little cow dung and cow urine of desi cow breed.
4. It holds the promise of enhancing farmers' income while delivering many other benefits, such as restoration of soil fertility and environmental health, and mitigating and/or reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
5. The system requires cow dung and cow urine (Gomutra) obtained from Indian breed cow only. Desi cow is apparently the purest as far as the microbial content of cow dung, and urine is considered.
6. In natural farming, neither chemical nor organic fertilizers are added to the soil. In fact, no exter-

nal fertilizers are added to soil or given to plants whatsoever.

7. In natural farming, decomposition of organic matter by microbes and earthworms is encouraged right on the soil surface itself, which gradually adds nutrition in the soil, over the period.

8. In natural farming there is no ploughing, no tilling of soil and no fertilizers, and no weeding is done just the way it would be in natural ecosystems.

9. Natural, farm-made pesticides like Dasharni ark and Neem Astra are used to control pests and diseases.

10. Weeds are considered essential and used as living or dead mulch layer.

11. Multi-cropping is encouraged over single crop method.

Principles of natural farming

A healthy soil microbiome is critical for optimal soil health and plant health, and thereby animal health and human health. Soil can be covered with crops for maximum period of the year. The soil across a farm or larger field should have diverse crops, a minimum of 8 crops over the year. Minimal disturbance of soils is critical; hence no till farming or shallow tillage is recommended. Animals should be incorporated into farming. Integrated farming systems are critical for promoting Natural Farming. Healthy soil microbiome is the key to retaining and enhancing soil organic matter. Bio stimulants are necessary to catalyze this process. There are different ways of making bio stimulants. The most popular bio-stimulants are based on fermentation of animal dung and urine, and uncontaminated soil. Increasing the amount and diversity of a healthy soil microbiome is critical for optimal soil health and plant health, and thereby animal health and human health. Increasing the amount and diversity of organic residues returned to the soil is very important. These include crop residues, cow-dung, compost, etc. Pest management should be done through better agronomic practices (as enshrined in Integrated Pest management) and through botanical pesticides (only when necessary). Use of synthetic fertilizers and other biocides is harmful to this

process of regeneration and is not allowed. As per the farmers who are regularly practising natural farming the practices that has been considered as the most important components of Natural Farming are: Beejamrit, Jivamrit, Mulching, Whapasa, Agniastra, Brahmastra, Neemastra, Dasharni Ark, Gingerastra, Amrutpaneti.

Benefits of Natural Farming

Improve Yield: - Farmers practicing Natural Farming reported similar yields to those following conventional farming. In several cases, higher yields per harvest were also reported.

Ensures Better Health: - As Natural Farming does not use any synthetic chemicals, health risks and hazards are eliminated. The food has higher nutrition density and therefore offers better health benefits.

Environment Conservation: - Natural Farming ensures better soil biology, improved agro-biodiversity and a more judicious usage of water with much smaller carbon and nitrogen footprints.

Increased Farmers' Income: - Natural Farming aims to make farming viable and aspirational by increasing net incomes of farmers on account of cost reduction, reduced risks, similar yields, incomes from intercropping.

Employment Generation: - Natural farming generates employment on account of natural farming input enterprises, value addition, marketing in local areas, etc. The surplus from natural farming is invested in the village itself.

Reduced Water Consumption: - By working with diverse crops that help each other and cover the soil to prevent unnecessary water loss through evaporation, Natural Farming optimizes the amount of "crop per drop".

Minimized Cost of Production: - Natural Farming aims to drastically cut down production costs by encouraging farmers to prepare essential biological inputs using on-farm, natural and home-grown resources.

Eliminates Application of Synthetic Chemical Inputs: - The overuse of synthetic fertilizers, especially urea, pesticides, herbicides, weedicides etc. alters soil biology and soil structure, with subsequent loss of soil organic carbon and fertility.

Rejuvenates Soil Health: - The most immediate impact of Natural Farming is on the biology of soil — on microbes and other living organisms such as earthworms. Soil health depends entirely on the living organisms in it.

Livestock Sustainability: - The integration of livestock in the farming system plays an important role in Natural Farming and helps in restoring the ecosystem. Eco-friendly bio-inputs, such as Jeevamrit and Beejamrit, are prepared from cow dung and urine, and other natural products.

China's largest Hengrui seals USD 15.2 bn deal with America's BMS

BEIJING, May 12: Ahead of US President Donald Trump's visit to Beijing, China's largest drug company, Jiangsu Hengrui Pharmaceutical, has signed a USD 15.2 billion collaboration and licensing agreement with American pharmaceutical giant Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS).

Trump is visiting China from May 13 to 15 for talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping to reach, among others, a trade deal over tariffs and investments.

Jiangsu Hengrui Pharmaceutical, China's largest drug company by market capitalisation, has signed a global collaboration and licensing agreement with US pharmaceutical giant Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS) worth up to USD 15.2 billion, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on Tuesday.

The deal adds credibility to China's growing reputation for innovative drug development, as China largely depends on the global multinational pharma firms to supply, it said.

China's pharmaceutical industry in recent years has grown from a mainly low-cost manufacturing base into innovative drug ecosystems, making it a major player in APIs (active pharmaceutical ingredients), generics, biotech, contract manufacturing, and increasingly in novel drug discovery.

China is one of the largest exporters of API, including to India.

The Jiangsu Hengrui-BMS collaboration covers four oncology and haematology programmes originating from Hengrui, four immunology assets from BMS, and another five novel programmes to be jointly developed using Hengrui's discovery platforms, the Post reported.

All 13 programmes are at the pre-clinical stage, according to a filing with the Hong Kong stock exchange.

BMS has agreed to pay Hengrui up to USD 950 million in near-term consideration, including an upfront payment of USD 600 million.

The overall deal value could reach about USD 15.2 billion if all development, regulatory and commercial milestones are met and options on the co-discovery projects are exercised, the report said. (PTI)

Kuwait accuses Iran of sending armed Revolutionary Guard team to attack an island in nation

DUBAI, May 12: Kuwait accused Iran on Tuesday of sending an armed paramilitary Revolutionary Guard team to attack an island in the Middle East nation home to a China-funded port project, just before US President Donald Trump travels to Beijing for a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Iran didn't immediately acknowledge the allegation by Kuwait, which came under repeated attack by Iran in the war and even during the shaky ceasefire still holding in the region. However, the allegation and ongoing attacks throughout the region have threatened to tip the region back into open warfare.

The accusation came as the US ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, said that Israel sent Iron Dome anti-missile batteries and personnel to operate them to the United Arab Emirates to defend the country during the war as well. That underlined the growing defence relationship between Israel and the UAE, countries long suspicious of Iran.

It also represents the first publicly acknowledged deployment of Israel's military to the Emirates, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula home to Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

The narrow Strait of Hormuz re-

mains in Tehran's chokehold, and negotiations between the US and Iran appear at a standstill for the moment — also raising the risk of the conflict breaking out again.

Kuwait said that a team of six armed members of the Guard tried to infiltrate Bubiyan Island in the northwest corner of the Persian Gulf near Iraq and Iran.

It accused the team of planning to carry out "hostile acts."

Kuwait said that it detained four of the men, while two escaped. Kuwait, which said one of its security officials had been wounded in the attack.

Bubiyan Island is home to Mubarak Al Kabeer Port, which is under construction as part of China's "Belt and Road" initiative. That project also came under attack during the war by Iran.

Trump is travelling this week to China for a summit with Xi, during which Iran will likely be a topic.

Beijing has long been a buyer of sanctioned Iranian crude oil and has been hurt by the Strait's closure, which has sparked a global energy crisis.

Huckabee, a Baptist minister, former governor of Arkansas and one-time presidential candidate, made the comment on stage at an event in Tel Aviv, Israel.



"I'd like to say a word of appreciation for the United Arab Emirates, the first Abraham Accord member," Huckabee said at the Tel Aviv Conference. "Just look at the benefits. Israel just sent them Iron Dome batteries and personnel to help operate them."

The United Arab Emirates diplomatically recognised Israel in 2020. That drew criticism from Iran, long Israel's main regional enemy. Iran didn't immediately respond to Huckabee's remarks, though it has repeatedly suggested over the years that Israel maintained a military and intelligence presence in the Emirates.

The UAE and Israel didn't immediately respond to a request for comment over the acknowledgement-

Iranian government and average Iranians as a place to safely do business offshore from the Islamic Republic.

On Thursday, during a visit to the Emirates by Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, his Emirati counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan accompanied him to an air base where Egyptian pilots and Rafal fighter jets were stationed — the first acknowledgement of a detachment operating in the UAE. Sheikh Mohammed and the UAE strongly backed el-Sissi as he rose to power in 2013 and in the years since.

Huckabee added that he was "very optimistic" that additional countries in the region will soon join the Abraham Accords, the 2020 diplomatic recognition deal that also included the Gulf Arab kingdom of Bahrain, for formal relations with Israel.

However, many Arab states remain incensed by Israel's wide-ranging military campaigns after Hamas' 2023 attack on the country, which has seen the Gaza Strip levelled and Iran's allies attacked across the wider Mideast.

Israel now controls territory in Lebanon and Syria as well.

Huckabee, in his remarks, also sought to shore up US support for

the recent war, suggesting that "Israel is the appetiser, America has always been the entrée" for Iran's theocracy.

"The Gulf states now understand they will have to make a choice — is it more likely they will be attacked by Iran or Israel?" Huckabee asked.

"They see that Israel helped us, and Iran attacked us. Israel is not trying to take over your land, and is not sending missiles to you."

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, prosecutors in Bahrain said at least two dozen people were handed prison sentences on charges including espionage and conspiring with Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. They said three were sentenced to life. Others received shorter Iran-related sentences.

Bahrain — an island nation ruled by a Sunni Muslim monarchy with a Shiite-majority population — has sentenced dozens on Iran-related charges since the start of the war.

Prosecutors and the Interior Ministry have alleged that Iran maintains cells that carry out espionage and help identify targets there.

Rights groups say the island nation has widened a crackdown on dissidents during the war, as well as on Shiites. (AP)

Pakistan calls report on Iranian aircraft parked at airbase 'misleading'

ISLAMABAD, May 12: Pakistan on Tuesday rejected as "misleading" a US media report that claimed Islamabad allowed Iranian military aircraft to park on its airfield to potentially shield them from American airstrikes, while playing the role of mediator between the two sides.

In a statement, the Foreign Office said that the Iranian aircraft currently parked in the country arrived during the ceasefire period following the initial round of US-Iran peace talks and bears "no linkage" to any military contingency or preservation arrangement.

CBS News reported that days after US President Donald Trump announced the ceasefire with Iran in early April, Tehran sent multiple aircraft to the Nur Khan Airbase near Rawalpindi.

"Among the military hardware was an Iranian Air Force RC-130, a reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering variant of the Lockheed C-130 Hercules tactical transport aircraft," the report claimed.

In its statement, the Foreign Office categorically rejected the CBS News report as "misleading and sensationalised." "Such speculative narratives appear aimed at undermining ongoing efforts for regional stability and peace," it said.

"Following the ceasefire and during the initial round of

the Islamabad Talks, a number of aircraft from Iran and the US arrived in Pakistan to facilitate the movement of diplomatic personnel, security teams and administrative staff associated with the talks process," it said.

The FO said that some aircraft and support personnel remained temporarily in Pakistan in "anticipation of subsequent rounds of engagement."

"Although formal negotiations have not yet resumed, senior-level diplomatic exchanges have continued. In this context, visits by the Iranian foreign minister to Islamabad were facilitated through the existing logistical and administrative arrangements," it said.

"The Iranian aircraft currently parked in Pakistan arrived during the ceasefire period and bears no linkage whatsoever to any military contingency or preservation arrangement. Assertions suggesting otherwise are speculative, misleading, and entirely detached from the factual context," the FO said.

"Pakistan has consistently acted as an impartial, constructive, and responsible facilitator in support of dialogue and de-escalation. In line with this role, Pakistan has extended routine logistical and administrative support where required, while maintaining full transparency and regular communication with all relevant parties," it said. (PTI)

Israeli bulldozers raze about 50 Palestinian shops ahead of settlement-linked road project



AL-EIZARIYA (WEST BANK), May 12: Israeli bulldozers tore down dozens of Palestinian shops on the edge of a town southeast of Jerusalem this week, clearing land ahead of a settlement-linked road project in the occupied West Bank.

Israel says the demolitions are needed to make way for a road serving local Palestinian communities. But Palestinian officials say the road is part of a broader plan to keep Palestinian vehicles off a new highway being built to serve nearby Israeli settlements.

That project is part of a strategic section of the West Bank known as E1, which Israel is developing with the intention of preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state.

"The shops that were demolished are where Israel is planning to build a new road that will divert all Palestinian traffic to that road so that they can close down the whole area of E1 for Palestinians," said Hagit Ofran, director of the anti-settlement group Peace Now.

The project would lead to the displacement of thousands of Bedouin Arabs living in the area, Ofran said.

Tuesday's demolitions took place in the town of al-Eizariya, less than a week after some owners received notices to evacuate shops built without permits. Attorneys appealed, up to Israel's Supreme Court, but the demolitions went ahead.

Israeli authorities said the buildings, including car washes, scrap metal shops and vegetable stands, were built illegally and owners had been warned for "several years" that enforcement was forthcoming.

COGAT, the Israeli military body overseeing civil affairs in the West Bank, said the structures obstructed construction of the planned road to connect Palestinian towns.

The new road system is meant to solve congestion and improve the quality of life of Palestinian towns in the area, Israel says.

The Palestinian Authority says the demolitions are connected to Israel's plans to overhaul transportation and build a tunnel and bypass road to reroute Palestinian traffic off a major Israeli highway linking nearby settlements to Jerusalem and cutting them off from large swaths of the West Bank. They say it will lead to separate road systems for Israelis and Palestinians.

Israel has not linked the demolitions to its plans for E1.

Some of the demolished shops partially blocked sidewalks and roads leading into the town. But Palestinians say proper construction permits are nearly impossible to obtain from Israeli authorities, even as Israeli settlements rapidly expand.

Mohammad Abu Ghalieh, a 48-year-old shop owner, was dumbfounded that he would have to start over after the demolitions.

"Forty-eight years of night and day to build something for his children and himself, and in one day and one night, everything was gone," he said.

Daoud al-Jahalin, the head of the nearby village council, said more than 200 families would lose their incomes.

The E1 project is especially contentious because it runs from the outskirts of Jerusalem deep into the occupied West Bank, isolating the cities of Ramallah and Bethlehem and hindering north-south movement for the Palestinians.

Both Israeli leaders and critics of settlements say the E1 plan would complicate efforts to establish a contiguous Palestinian state in the West Bank. Israel is planning to build some 3,500 apartments next to the existing settlement of Maale Adumim.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast War. The international community overwhelmingly considers Israeli settlement construction in the occupied territory to be illegal and an obstacle to peace. (AP)

8 killed, 35 injured after explosive-laden vehicle explodes in northwest Pakistan



PESHAWAR, May 12: At least eight people, including two security officials, were killed and 35 others were injured when a suicide bomber detonated an explosive-laden vehicle in northwest Pakistan on Tuesday, police said.

The incident occurred in the Lakki Marwat district of the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

A District Police official said the suicide bomber detonated his explosive-laden three-wheeler auto rickshaw at the Phattak Chowk in Naurang Bazar.

Two traffic police personnel and a woman were among the eight people killed, officials said, adding that 35 others were injured and were shifted to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital in Sarai

Naurang for treatment.

Several people who were said to be in critical condition were referred to hospitals in Bannu and Peshawar for further medical care.

An emergency was declared at the hospitals and all medical staff were called.

Ambulances and teams were dispatched to the site for relief work, said Rescue 1122 spokesperson Shahdab Khan.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Muhammad Suhail Afridi took note of the blast and directed the Inspector General of Police to submit a detailed report on the incident.

"We stand with the bereaved families in this difficult time, and the provincial government will extend all possible support to them," he said. (PTI)

South African President Ramaphosa will not step down as impeachment process unfolds

JOHANNESBURG, May 12: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has announced he will not step down from his position as an impeachment process unfolds in Parliament after an earlier ruling by the country's highest judicial authority regarding an incident where a vast sum of undeclared US dollars were stolen from his farmstead in 2020. As the country waited with bated breath for an official statement by Ramaphosa on national television on Monday evening, analysts and media spent the day speculating on whether the president would resign or continue amid divided opinions on the matter.

"There have been calls from certain quarters calling on me to resign. At the same time, there have also been calls for me not to resign. I respectfully want to make it clear that I will not resign," Ramaphosa said in his address.

"To do so would be to pre-empt a process defined by the Constitution. To do so would be to give credence to a panel report that unfortunately has grave flaws. To do so would be to abdicate the responsibility that I assumed when I became president of the Republic," Ramaphosa added.

"To resign now would be to give in to those who seek to reverse the renewal of our society, the rebuilding of our institutions and the prosecution of corruption. I fully intend to continue serving the people of South Africa and to advance their interests. There is still much work to be done," Ramaphosa said.

In what has become known as the Phala Phala incident, after the private farm where Ramaphosa breeds exotic cattle, the incident goes back to 2020, when USD 580 million were stolen from there, allegedly from where it was hidden inside a leather sofa.

The burglary only became known

two years later, when the former head of State Security, Arthur Fraser, filed a criminal complaint against Ramaphosa for not declaring the money as required by law, or the theft to police. At the time, Ramaphosa claimed that the money was proceeds from the sale of buffalo to a Sudanese businessman, Mustafa Mohamed Ibrahim Hazim, but the incident sparked a huge controversy regarding legal and ethical questions around it.

The scandal led to a Section 89 Independent Panel inquiry, which initially found that there was prima facie evidence that the president may have committed a serious violation of the law. This brought the country to the brink of an impeachment process in late 2022, but the South African Reserve Bank and the Public Protector later cleared the president of certain legal breaches — concluding that the "sale" was never technically perfected and thus no legal obligation to declare the funds had yet arisen.

Ramaphosa was reportedly on the verge of resigning then, but was convinced by colleagues and legal advisers not to do so.

The parliamentary impeachment issue came to the fore again after a ruling by the Constitutional Court last Friday that effectively revived the Section 89 process that appeared to have been buried by a parliamentary vote nearly four years ago.

The apex court ruled that the National Assembly had acted unlawfully and unconstitutionally in December 2022 when it voted to reject the report by the Section 89 Independent Panel.

The court set aside the specific parliamentary rule that allowed the National Assembly to block the referral of the report to an impeachment committee. It also ordered that the Section 89 report be referred to a formal Impeachment Committee. (PTI)

Narrative of scientific progress seen through narrow lens: Jaishankar at maths exhibition inaugural

UNITED NATIONS, May 12: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar inaugurated an exhibition highlighting Indian civilisation's contributions to mathematics, noting that the global narrative of scientific progress has long been viewed through a "narrow lens" and stressing the need to "right" historical distortions.

The exhibition titled 'From Shunya to Ananta (Zero to Infinity) - The Indian Civilization's Contribution to Mathematics', hosted by the Permanent Mission of India to the UN, has been organised by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations in collaboration with the India International Centre.

"When we assemble at the United Nations, we often speak of a shared human heritage. Yet if we look at the arc of modern history, the global narrative of scientific progress has for far too long been viewed through a narrow lens, limited in time and in geography," Jaishankar said in his remarks as he inaugurated the "historic, first-of-its-kind" mathematics exhibition at the United Nations headquarters Monday.

India's Ambassador to the US Vinay Mohan Kwatra, Consul General of India in New York Binaya Pradhan, Professor in Mathematics at Princeton University and Fields Medal awardee Manjul Bhargava, as well as UN Ambassadors, diplomats and senior officials, attended the inauguration.

"As geopolitical churn ushers in a political and economic rebalancing, it is inevitably paving the way for a cultural rebalancing too. And that will be done by making space



for diverse narratives, including a more comprehensive understanding of our past," he said.

Jaishankar had undertaken an official visit to Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago from May 2-10.

During his brief visit to New York on Monday, he inaugurated the exhibition, which forms part of 'SAMHITA' (South Asian Manuscript Histories and Textual Archive), a project of the India International Centre, supported by the Ministry of External Affairs.

The special interactive exhibition highlights ancient mathematical concepts with roots in India that then spread across the world over millennia — from zero, the decimal place value system, algebra and algorithms to planetary models, astronomical computation, combinatorics, and binary enumeration and geometry — the 'Baudhayana-Pythagorean theorem'.

The exhibition also recognises the lineage of legendary Indian scholars from Aryabhata, Brahmagupta and Bhaskara to the Ker-

code, which is the basis of our current technological age, was conceptualised in India centuries ago," he said.

On how the exhibit matters in the United Nations, he said, "A diverse and democratic collective cannot be built on a unidimensional narrative. These truths will increasingly become apparent as we embark on the journey of AI, where our grasp of the past will profit from the tools of the future."

He hoped that the exhibition will heighten awareness and spark a debate about the richness of "our inherently pluralistic world. It will also help cast aside prejudices and assumptions about the embrace of technology in the current era."

"This exhibition is a reminder that mathematics is a universal language, and its spread has served and continues to serve a global good. The United Nations, as the most established platform for international cooperation, can draw on that message in its quest to advocate closer international collaboration," he said.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Harish Parvathani said mathematics is universal and is enriched by the contributions of humanity from diverse civilisations.

"It binds humanity rather than divides it," Parvathani said, adding that the exhibition "traces our foundational concepts" such as zero, the decimal system, algebra, trigonometry and early notions of infinity that travelled from India across cultures into the wider world.

The exhibition reminds the world that mathematics in India has never

been confined to abstraction but has shaped art, architecture, music and cultural expression, remaining a living and evolving tradition.

Parvathani underlined that India has always made its knowledge available to the entire world. "Open source, in today's language, was an Indian mantra since time immemorial."

The exhibition, which will run in the UN headquarters from May 11-15, connects these ancient insights to the present, he said, adding that the same principles now underpin computing algorithms, GPS and artificial intelligence, demonstrating that what "we consider modern innovation often has deep historical roots".

"This exhibition invites us to view India's mathematical heritage as a shared inheritance of humanity. It underscores the value of knowledge exchange and reminds us that progress is built through collaboration across cultures and generations," the Indian envoy said.

The Permanent Mission of India said the exhibition aims to present India's rich heritage of thinking, applying, and developing mathematics across more than two thousand years.

It demonstrates that the ideas born on the Indian subcontinent through works of ancient mathematics are still relevant today, underpinning the technologies and sciences that shape contemporary global life.

The exhibition aims to highlight that while mathematics is global in its reach, India's contribution to its formation is "distinctive and foundational." (PTI)

Sangma condemns incident, urges stronger protection and justice for victims of racial violence

NE woman's assault in Delhi: Meghalaya CM calls for stringent action against accused



SHILLONG, May 12: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Tuesday expressed concerns over the alleged assault of a woman from the Northeast in Delhi and called for stringent legal action against the accused.

He condemned the alleged physical and racial harassment faced by the woman from Assam. "Such repeated acts of violence and discrimination cannot be dismissed as isolated incidents and must be met with the strictest punishment under the law," Sangma said in a post on X.

Two women, one from Assam and the other from Bihar, were allegedly molested and assaulted by a group of men outside a hotel in southeast Delhi's Nehru Place, the Delhi Police said on Monday, adding that all four suspects involved in the incident have been detained.

The incident occurred around 6.30 am on May 10, near a tea stall outside the hotel. Sangma also urged the authorities to take immediate action against those involved and ensure the safety and dignity of people from the Northeast residing in different parts of the country.

"Racial discrimination and violence against people from the Northeast have no place in our society and must be dealt with firmly," the chief minister added. (PTI)

Meghalaya launches WNTD 2026 campaign amid rising tobacco concerns

SHILLONG, May 12: Tobacco use has reached alarming levels in Meghalaya, with nearly half of all adults aged 15 and above consuming tobacco and close to 8,000 lives lost each year to tobacco-related illnesses, Meghalaya Nodal Officer for the National Tobacco Control Programme, Dr Nabaneeta D Mawrie, said on Monday.

Speaking at the launch of the World No Tobacco Day 2026 campaign, Dr Mawrie described the situation as a serious public health concern and said urgent action was needed to protect the state's youth and communities.

"Tobacco is not just a habit, it is a carefully designed trap that targets our youth and communities," she said.

"With nearly half of adults aged 15 and above in Meghalaya using tobacco and close to 8,000 lives lost annually due to tobacco-related illnesses, the urgency to act has never been greater."

The WNTD 2026 campaign was launched under the theme "Tobacco! Business of DEATH," in line with the global theme "Unmasking the appeal, countering nicotine and tobacco addiction."

The drive, which began on April 6, will run in schools and colleges across the state through April and May, culminating on May 31. Dr Mawrie said the campaign aims to mobilise educational institutions to lead rallies, signature drives and community outreach programmes to counter industry tactics and promote informed choices among students.

"The campaign seeks to expose the harmful tactics used by the tobacco industry, encourage students to make informed and healthy choices and transform awareness into meaningful community action," she said.



Department of Education official Jennyfer J Synrem said the scale of last year's participation showed momentum was building.

"In 2026, we are not just continuing a campaign; we are building a movement," she said. "Schools are not only centres of learning but catalysts of change."

Deputy Commissioner of South West Garo Hills, Anendya Raajshre, said sustained effort was key.

"True change happens when awareness turns into action. Initiatives like WNTD and ToFEI are not just campaigns, they are commitments to protect lives," she said.

The campaign is expected to draw participation from schools, colleges, government departments, civil society organisations and community groups in the lead-up to World No Tobacco Day on May 31. (NNN)

'Article 371(A) a temporary transitional provision'

DIMAPUR, May 12: Nagaland chief secretary Sentiyanger Imchen on Tuesday said Article 371(A) applicable in Nagaland is a temporary transitional provision.

Speaking at a seminar on "Article 371(A)" and "The Nagaland Village Council Act 1978" at Mokochung town hall, Imchen said Article 371(A) is a provision under the Constitution of India intended to safeguard the traditional and customary identity of the Naga people.

However, he said, many fail to fully understand the provision and often misinterpret its purpose, which he described as unfortunate. Imchen underscored the need to adapt to and follow the laid-down rules and laws that evolve with changing times and societal needs.

He further observed that laws act as agents of social change necessary for the progress of society.

Thunderstorms, moderate rainfall likely in Nagaland till May 15

DIMAPUR, May 12: Several districts in Nagaland, including Kohima, Chumoukedima, Dimapur, Peren, Wokha, Mokochung, Mon, Longleng and Tsemnyu are likely to experience localised thunderstorms, accompanied by lightning and light to moderate rainfall on May 13.

In its weather advisory till May 15, the Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority (NSDMA) said thunderstorms with lightning and light to moderate rainfall are likely to continue in many districts. Longleng district may experience moderate to heavy rainfall at isolated places on May 14.

On May 15, scattered intermittent light to moderate rainfall is expected in several districts, including Kohima, Chumoukedima, Dimapur, Mokochung, Mon and Tsemnyu.

Moderate to heavy intermittent rainfall is also likely over Mon district, the NSDMA said.

It advised the public to remain cautious during thunderstorms and lightning activity.

The NSDMA also advised people to avoid sheltering under trees and near electric poles during bad weather conditions.

"Residents in low-lying and landslide-prone areas are advised to stay alert for possible waterlogging, flash floods and landslides during the period," the advisory read.

The NSDMA further directed all district disaster management authorities and departments concerned to remain on alert and take necessary precautionary measures to ensure public safety.

Two NSCN cadres eliminated in Changlang operation

Assam Rifles launch major counter-insurgency operations in eastern Arunachal Pradesh



HT Correspondent DIBRUGARH, May 12: Two NSCN militants were eliminated during a night-long operation by security forces near Songking village under Miao police station in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district on Tuesday.

Following intelligence inputs on militant movement in Songking village, the Assam Rifles launched an operation in the area, resulting in the elimination of the two dreaded NSCN cadres.

Officials said that arms and am-

munition were also recovered from the encounter site.

The Assam Rifles carried out the operation based on inputs that NSCN militants were camping in the area to carry out extortion from villagers.

"The NSCN cadres were continuously pressuring the villagers to pay extortion money. The security forces got the lead and launched a massive combing operation in the area. A fierce gun-battle took place between the NSCN cadres and the militants

hiding in the jungle. During the night-long operation, two NSCN cadres were eliminated," an official source said.

Security forces have launched a massive search operation in the area.

Meanwhile, another heavy exchange of fire took place between troops of the Assam Rifles and militants near Chop village under Wakka circle in Longding district of Arunachal Pradesh on Monday night.

"The Tirap, Longding and Changlang districts of eastern Arunachal Pradesh are disturbed areas and most factions of NSCN militants are active in the region. The local villagers are suffering due to the continuous movement and threats from militant groups," a source said.

However, there are no reports of casualties from either side. Further details are awaited.

Sources said extortion has become a major source of income for the militants, who pressure villagers and businessmen to fund their organisation.

Meanwhile, security forces have launched massive operations across eastern Arunachal Pradesh against militants and have achieved significant success by apprehending several cadres belonging to different factions of the NSCN.

Manual registration of births and deaths in Nagaland to end on May 31



HT Correspondent DIMAPUR, May 12: The Nagaland government has decided to discontinue the manual registration of births and deaths from May 31.

The state economics & statistics department, through an order on Tuesday notified the transition to 100% online registration of births and deaths in the state from June 1 to enhance data accuracy, reliability, real-time reporting, as well as to phase out fraudulent practices in the registration of births and deaths.

Accordingly, the order said, all registrations of births and deaths will be carried out through the designated CRS ORGI Portal.

This order supersedes notification No. ES/RBD/1-146/2013 VOL-II/1252 dated 22/01/2025, the department added.

Tripura: CPI (M), Congress accuse Centre of pushing country's economy towards crisis



AGARTALA, May 12: The opposition CPI (M) and Congress in Tripura on Tuesday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his recent appeal for austerity, accusing the Centre of pushing the country's economy towards a crisis through "faulty policies" and excessive spending.

Leader of Opposition in the Tripura assembly, Jitendra Chaudhry, alleged that the PM's call to reduce the use of fuel, LPG and gold purchases reflected the worsening state of the economy.

"There was no visible concern over the economy till the assembly elections in five states concluded. Now, the PM is urging people to cut down on fuel, LPG and even avoid buying gold jewellery for a year to reduce the import burden," he told reporters.

The senior CPI (M) leader claimed that excessive spending on "unproductive sectors", including election campaigning, had contributed to the economic strain.

He alleged that huge amounts of public money were spent on election rallies and government events during the poll campaign.

Chaudhry also criticised Modi for projecting India's economy as strong during election rallies and then appealing for austerity after the polls.

"People have understood the situation and the significance of the PM's appeal," he said.

Echoing similar concerns, state Congress president Asish Kumar Saha said the economic slowdown had existed well before the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

"The economy was already fragile, and the situation has now worsened further. Had the government taken corrective measures earlier, the present condition could have been avoided," Saha said, holding the Centre responsible for the crisis.

He also alleged that the government's foreign policy decisions had added to the economic pressure and urged the PM to fulfil promises made to voters during the elections. (PTI)

Six militants arrested in Manipur



IMPHAL, May 12: Security forces arrested six militants, belonging to several proscribed outfits from three districts of Manipur, police said on Tuesday.

Four members of the banned People's Liberation Army were held from the Nongada Chana area under the Lamlai Police Station limits in Imphal East district on Monday, a police statement said.

The militants allegedly held three youths for recruitment in the proscribed outfit, it said, adding that the victims were rescued.

Security forces also arrested a cadre of the outlawed Zogam Liberation Front (ZLF)

from his residence near Geljang village in Churachandpur district, the police said.

One active cadre of the banned KCP (Taibanganba) was apprehended from Irengband in Kachhing district.

Four firearms and ammunition were seized from his possession, the police statement added.

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

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

Khandu, Mein congratulate Himanta on taking oath as Assam CM for second term

Arunachal leaders express confidence in Northeast development under new Assam govt

ITANAGAR, May 12: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Tuesday congratulated Himanta Biswa Sarma on taking oath as the CM of Assam, and stated that the pace of development across the Northeast would accelerate further under his leadership.

Khandu said he was truly excited and optimistic that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the new leadership in Assam, development in the Northeastern region would reach greater heights.

"May this new journey bring progress, prosperity, connectivity and renewed opportunities for the people of Assam and the entire Northeastern region. Wishing him a successful and impactful tenure ahead," he said in a social media post.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also congratulated Sarma, expressing confidence that the NDA government under his leadership would usher in unprecedented development and growth in Assam.

"Heartiest congratulations and best wishes to Dr Himanta Biswa ji on taking



oath as the Chief Minister of Assam for the second term," he said in a social media post.

"I am confident that under your dynamic leadership, NDA Govt will bring in unprecedented development and growth in Assam," he added.

Mein, who attended the swearing-in ceremony in Guwahati, also congratulated the members of the new Assam cabinet. "I also congratulate all the Cabinet

Ministers of the new Govt in Assam," he said.

Sarma was sworn in as the chief minister of Assam for the second consecutive term, marking the formation of the third BJP-led NDA government in a row in the northeastern state.

Along with Sarma, four legislators, BJP leaders Rameshwar Teli and Ajanta Neog, AGP's Atul Bora and BPF MLA Charan Boro, also took oath as ministers. (PTI)

No. DDB/15thFC/01/2026/685

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Dated:- 11/02/2026

Sealed tender affixing a non-refundable Court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight & twenty five) only with a validity period of 180 Days, which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the printed of F-2 form are invited from the registered Contractors of Class-II and Class-I (A, B, & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads & Building) and BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the works under Dhamdhama Dev. Block of Baksa Dist. under 15th FC Untied Fund for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26 as stated below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 12.00 Noon on 13/05/2026 and will be opened on the same place on 02/06/2025 at 3.00 P.M.

Sl. No.	Name of works	Tender Amount (Approx)	Cost of Tender Paper	Time of Completion of Work
1	Improvement of road with CC Block Road from Hitesh Swargiary to Moniam Boro house under 15 th FC Untied Fund for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26.	Rs. 10,00,000.00	Rs. 500/-	3(three) Months from the date of issue of F.W.O.
2	Improvement of road with CC Block Road from Bani Kanta Boro house to Mahesh Boro Khongai under 15 th FC Untied Fund for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26.	Rs. 10,00,000.00	Rs. 500/-	3(three) Months from the date of issue of F.W.O.
3	Improvement of road with Construction of 3 No. Hume pipe culvert at Benchiman near Jatin Swargiary house under 15 th FC Untied Fund for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26.	Rs. 8,00,000.00	Rs. 500/-	3(three) Months from the date of issue of F.W.O.
4	Improvement of road with CC Block Road from Mojen Boro house to Kantaswar Boro house under 15 th FC Untied Fund for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26.	Rs. 10,00,000.00	Rs. 500/-	3(three) Months from the date of issue of F.W.O.

Detail N.I.T. may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender papers will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agents from 13/05/2026 to 02/06/2026 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Demand Draft/Banker's Cheque from any Nationalized Bank, duly pledged in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC Kokrajhar, payable at Kokrajhar.

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/84

Sd/-Block Dev. Officer
Dhamdhama Dev. Block,
Baganpara

LDF slams Cong over delay in naming Kerala CM, says UDF 'failing' to honour people's mandate

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, May 12: The opposition LDF on Tuesday hit out at the Congress-led UDF over the delay in selecting Kerala's new chief minister, alleging that the coalition was "failing" to honour the mandate given by the people.

Addressing a press conference here, senior CPI(M) leader and Left Democratic Front convenor T P Ramakrishnan said, "The Congress and the UDF should be prepared to respect the people's verdict."

The people of the state had voted in favour of the UDF to form a government. "The Congress and UDF have a moral responsibility to show justice towards them in turn," he said after attending a LDF meeting here. He alleged that even before the formation of the new government, administrative procedures that should normally be part of governance were already being carried out.

Claiming that government employees were being transferred based on lists prepared by organisational functionaries, Ramakrishnan said such steps, taken even before a government was formally constituted, were not in keeping with democratic practices.

He also accused the UDF of initiating "anti-people measures" and referred to reports of a hike in rice



prices through Supplyco depots.

Ramakrishnan said the previous LDF government had not increased the prices of 13 essential commodities and that a later revision in prices had been carried out only following a cabinet decision.

"Now reports say that the price of rice distributed through Supplyco depots has been increased by Rs 2. Such a move is highly condemnable," he said. At the same time, he said the LDF would extend all support to the new government for developmental and welfare activities and would cooperate on all justified issues.

Ramakrishnan also questioned the urgency in deciding the Leader

of Opposition when the chief minister was yet to be finalised.

"First, a government has to be formed. What is the problem if the Leader of Opposition is decided after the chief minister," he asked.

He said governance was not merely about selecting a chief minister, but also about deciding on ministers and ensuring that the functioning of various departments moved forward. "The delay is a wrong practice that needs to be criticised," he added.

Referring to the LDF's own plans to appoint the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, Ramakrishnan said there would be no delay or controversy in the matter.

He said the CPI(M) Politburo had entrusted the party's state unit with taking a final decision.

"There is no dispute regarding the selection of the Opposition leader. There is no chance of it getting prolonged or becoming a contentious issue. The CPI(M) will take a decision at the earliest," he said. Taking a swipe at the Congress, Ramakrishnan said criticism would have been justified had the chief minister been decided and the Opposition leader's post remained unresolved.

"The LDF has no difficulty in deciding the Opposition leader," he said.

On reports that the CPI, the second-largest constituent in the LDF, had staked claim to the Deputy Leader of Opposition post, Ramakrishnan said there was precedent for the CPI(M) holding both positions in the past.

He cited the example of late CPI(M) leaders V S Achuthanandan and Kodyiyer Balakrishnan, who had served as Leader of Opposition and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, respectively in the Assembly.

Referring to CPI state secretary Binoy Viswam reportedly writing an open letter on the issue, Ramakrishnan said such matters should be discussed internally within the front. (PTI)

MoU signed between anti-cyber crime agency 14C, RBIH to curb mule accounts: Amit Shah

NEW DELHI, May 12: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday announced that the country's anti-cyber crime agency 14C signed an MoU with Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH) to curb the menace of mule accounts used by cyber criminals to cheat gullible victims.

In a message posted on X, he said mule accounts are big hurdles in curbing cyber crimes.

"Today, the 14C under MHA signed an MoU with Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH) unleashing the power of Artificial Intelligence to combat cyber fraud. The move will swiftly detect and cull hidden mule accounts by feeding the data from the 14C's Suspect Registry to the AI-driven fraud detection system and serve the citizens as their next gen shield against cyber crime," Shah said.

Mule accounts are bank accounts used by criminals to illegally receive, transfer and launder the proceeds of cybercrimes with or without the knowledge of account holders.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), which works under the ministry, and RBIH will strengthen collaboration in combating cyber-enabled financial frauds and curtailing mule accounts across the banking and digital payments ecosystem.



The collaboration reflects a broader regulatory push to safeguard digital payments infrastructure, which has become both a symbol of financial inclusion and an increasingly attractive target for organised cybercriminal networks.

The agreement seeks to strengthen preventive mechanisms by enabling faster detection of suspicious transactions and improving the identification of mule accounts -- bank accounts used by fraudsters to siphon off and layer stolen money, it said.

"The MoU aims to facilitate cooperation in the areas of fraud-risk intelligence sharing, analytical support and operational coordination for strengthening proactive fraud detection and prevention

mechanisms," the statement said.

The MoU was signed by Roopa M, IG (Admin), 14C, and Sahil Kinni, CEO, RBIH, in the presence of senior officials from the Reserve Bank of India, 14C and RBIH.

"Under the MoU, 14C and RBIH will collaborate for sharing of mule account related intelligence and suspect identifiers from I4C-MHA's Suspect Registry to strengthen AI-driven fraud detection systems such as MuleHunter.ai implemented across banks," it said. The statement said the RBIH will utilise the datasets for training and enhancement of AI-driven fraud-risk assessment models, including MuleHunter.ai," it said. (PTI)

'Another lazy headline-grabbing exercise': Cong

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NEET-UG paper leak, exam cancellation put question mark on NTA's efficacy: Congress

NEW DELHI, May 12: The Congress on Tuesday said the NEET-UG paper leak and the subsequent cancellation of the exam have put a question mark on the purpose and efficacy of the National Testing Agency (NTA), which needs fundamental restructuring to keep it out of the hands of the Modi government's "corrupt henchmen".

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged that the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has destroyed the decades-old admission process by replacing it with a central agency that is rife with corruption and beyond Parliamentary accountability.

"The recent paper leak of the NEET-UG paper and the subsequent cancellation of the exam is only the latest in a series of instances which throw a question mark on the purpose and efficacy of the National Testing Agency (NTA)."

"The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports in its 371st report had noted that in 2024 alone, of the 14 national examinations conducted by the NTA, 5 saw paper leaks and irregularities. In JEE Mains 2025, 12 questions in the paper had to be withdrawn



due to errors in the answer key," Ramesh said in a post on X.

He said in the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) that the BJP-led Centre has imposed on universities for admissions, the conduct of the examinations and the release of the results are routinely delayed -- an issue that has thrown the academic calendars of all educational institutions into "utter chaos" and precipitated a shift of students towards private universities with more predictable and early admission cycles.

The Congress leader said the parliamentary panel has also noted that the NTA has consistently failed to provide an annual re-

port to Parliament, only providing audited statements.

"The Modi government has destroyed decades-old admissions practices and examinations, replaced it with a centralised body rife with corruption, and ensured that it remains beyond accountability to the Parliament."

"On 16th June 2024, the Education Minister had acknowledged that the NTA 'needs a lot of improvement'. Two years later, one must wonder what follow up action has occurred on this admission. It is increasingly clear that what is needed is not just improvement, but a fundamental restructuring of the NTA and its ecosystem so that it is kept out of the hands of the Modi government's corrupt henchmen," Ramesh said.

The NTA on Tuesday cancelled the NEET (UG) 2026 exam held on May 3 amid allegations of paper leak, with the government asking the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to carry out a comprehensive inquiry into the "irregularities". The exam was held in 551 cities in India and 14 cities abroad and was organised by the NTA for nearly 23 lakh registered candidates at centres across the country. (PTI)

BJP protests in Jharkhand over water, power crises

RANCHI, May 12: The opposition BJP on Tuesday protested outside district collectorates across Jharkhand over the alleged water and electricity crisis in the state. In Ranchi, BJP workers led by state party president Aditya Sahu marched from Zila School Ground to the district collectorate carrying earthen pots as a symbol of water scarcity.

Union Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth and former chief minister Arjun Munda also joined the protest. Demonstrators raised slogans demanding uninterrupted water and power supplies. Seth accused the state government of ignoring public issues and alleged that people across the state were facing severe shortages of drinking water and prolonged power cuts.

"The government is busy with political tourism and has failed to provide even basic necessities like electricity and water. Residents of Ranchi are facing power cuts of eight to ten hours, while the situation in rural areas is even worse," he claimed.

Sahu said the BJP had been holding statewide protests over the last one week, and warned that the agitation would intensify if the government failed to improve the situation. The week-long campaign concluded with demonstrations at district headquarters in Ranchi, Lohardaga, Simdega, Gumla, Khunti and Dumka.

Munda alleged that governance in the state had "collapsed", claiming that the JMM-led government had failed to manage water and electricity supply during the summer season. He also alleged that corruption has become rampant in the administration. BJP leaders alleged that more than 80,000 hand pumps across Jharkhand were lying defunct.

In Dumka, party workers staged a protest outside the district collectorate and submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner, demanding proper supply of drinking water and electricity. Former minister Raj Paliwal alleged the state government has completely failed in resolving issues related to basic necessities such as electricity, water, and healthcare.

Reacting to the protests, JMM spokesperson Supriyo Bhattacharya said, "BJP workers should focus on the inflation caused by the policies of the Centre that has put common people in trouble." (PTI)

PM's 'amrit kaal' has turned into 'vish kaal' for country: Rahul

NEW DELHI, May 12: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on the Modi government over the cancellation of the NEET (UG) 2026 examination, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi's so-called 'amrit kaal' has turned into a 'vish kaal' (poison-filled era) for the country.

Gandhi said the hard work, sacrifices, and dreams of more than 22 lakh students have been "crushed by this corrupt BJP regime".

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "The NEET 2026 examination has been cancelled. The hard work, sacrifices, and dreams of more than 22 lakh students have been crushed by this corrupt BJP regime. Some fathers took loans, some mothers sold their jewellery, lakhs of children stayed up all night studying, and in return, they got paper leaks, government negligence, and organised corruption in education."

"This is not just a failure—it's a crime against the future of the youth," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said. Every time, the paper mafia gets away scot-free, while honest students bear the punishment, Gandhi said.

Now, lakhs of students will once again endure the same mental stress, financial burden, and uncertainty, he said. If one's destiny is determined not by hard work but by money and connections, then what meaning will education hold, the former Congress chief

asked. "The Prime Minister's so-called amrit kaal has turned into a 'vish kaal (poison-filled era)' for the country," Gandhi said.

The National Testing Agency on Tuesday cancelled the NEET (UG) 2026 exam held on May 3 amid allegations of paper leak, with the government asking the CBI to carry out a comprehensive inquiry into the "irregularities".

The examination for students seeking admission to undergraduate courses in medical colleges will now be held afresh on dates to be notified separately. In a statement on X, the Agency said the decision was taken in the interest of maintaining transparency and preserving trust in the national examination system.

"On the basis of inputs subsequently examined by NTA in coordination with central agencies, and the investigative findings shared by the law enforcement agencies, the National Testing Agency, with the approval of the Government of India, has decided to cancel the NEET (UG) 2026 examination conducted on 3 May 2026, and to re-conduct the examination on dates that will be notified separately," the agency said.

The NEET-UG 2026 examination was held on May 3 across 551 cities in India and 14 cities abroad. The examination was organised by the NTA for nearly 23 lakh registered candidates at centres across the country. (PTI)

Opposition attacks govt after NEET-UG cancellation, demands overhaul of NTA

NEW DELHI, May 12: Opposition leaders on Tuesday attacked the government after the cancellation of the NEET-UG examination, alleging administrative failure and insensitivity toward students, and also slammed the "repeated lapses" in the conduct of national-level competitive examinations.

Several opposition leaders took to X questioning the functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA) and demanding accountability over the recurring controversies surrounding entrance tests.

The NTA on Tuesday cancelled the NEET (UG) 2026 exam held on May 3 amid allegations of paper leak, with the government asking the CBI to carry out a comprehensive inquiry into the "irregularities".

The examination for students seeking admission to undergraduate courses in medical colleges will now be held afresh on dates to be notified separately.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi targeted the government over the cancellation, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi's so-called 'amrit kaal' has turned into a 'vish kaal' (poison-filled era) for the country.

He said the hard work, sacrifices, and dreams of more than 22 lakh students have been "crushed by this corrupt BJP regime".

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "The NEET 2026 examination has been cancelled. The hard work, sacrifices, and dreams of more than 22 lakh students

have been crushed by this corrupt BJP regime. Some fathers took loans, some mothers sold their jewellery, lakhs of children stayed up all night studying, and in return, they got paper leaks, government negligence, and organised corruption in education."

"This is not just a failure—it's a crime against the future of the youth," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said affected students will have to resort to mass protests as the government only understands the language of agitation.

At a press conference, he alleged "political patronage" in paper leaks, saying the NEET question paper was leaked four times in the past nine years and none of the accused were punished.

He said that paper leaks did not happen out of nowhere, as he alleged complicity of higher ups, and accused the government of toying with the future of lakhs of students.

"I want to tell the students that they will have to come out on the streets. This government understands only the language of mass agitation... Kejriwal is with you," the AAP supremo said.

Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha member Sagarika Ghose said the cancellation had thrown the lives of lakhs of students into "disarray and anxiety". (PTI)

Is austerity meant only for commoners, asks Raj; questions 'extravagant' political campaigns

MUMBAI, May 12: MNS president Raj Thackeray on Tuesday asked if austerity was meant to be practiced only by common people, and flagged the fuel consumption during the recent election campaigns where thousands of cars were used and roadshows were conducted.

In a post on Facebook after Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an appeal to people to reduce fuel consumption and use public transport among other things, Thackeray said the prime minister and senior leaders continue to travel across the country with massive convoys.

"They also hold roadshows, use helicopters, receive flower showers, and conduct extravagant political campaigns," the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief added.

"Will the prime minister admit

that 'such political excesses were our mistake, and all of us including me will not repeat them'? Why should the common man suffer for your mistakes? Is austerity meant only for citizens and never for the political class?" Thackeray asked.

He also said that crude oil prices were hovering around USD 90-100 per barrel but this was not the first time the world had seen such a situation.

Crude prices touched these levels during the 2008 financial crisis, the Arab Spring of 2011, during 2013-14 phase when the BJP aggressively attacked the UPA over domestic fuel prices, and again during the OPEC production cuts in 2022-23, Thackeray said.

"The PM asked people to reduce fuel consumption, but why didn't this wisdom emerge during the massive election campaigns in-

volving thousands of vehicles, endless roadshows and the transportation of lakhs of supporters across states like West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala? That itself would have burnt crores of litres of petrol and diesel," he said. Such situations had arisen during the tenure of Dr Manmohan Singh and also during Modi's previous term, the MNS chief said.

But Dr Singh did not ask people to stop travelling abroad and Modi himself did not make such appeals earlier, he said.

When global crude prices had fallen to nearly USD 60-65 per barrel, Indian consumers still continued to pay extremely high prices for petrol and diesel because of heavy taxation and the government earned lakhs of crores of rupees, Thackeray said, asking "where did that money go."



"Tell the nation what concrete steps the government plans to take. Call a special session of Parliament if needed, which is anyway done on a whim nowadays. Explain transparently how the country ended up in this situation and

how the government plans to navigate through it," Thackeray further said.

The economy appears strong on the surface but is vulnerable underneath and the government should not blame the situation in West

Asia for this, he said.

"Tell the country why the rupee has weakened significantly over the past decade. Explain why three RBI governors resigned during your tenure. Dr Manmohan Singh, despite being an accomplished economist and former RBI governor himself, still believed in listening to experts. You have not run even a simple business. How will you understand it. Enough with your 'Mann Ki Baat'. Now listen to the 'Mann Ki Baat' of the real economists," Raj Thackeray said.

Speaking to reporters, BJP leader and Maharashtra revenue minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule said those criticising the prime minister's appeal for austerity should remember that Mahatma Gandhi had given the slogan of 'Swadeshi'.

"If promoting Swadeshi is

wrong, then they should tell me so. PM Modi only said that people should use more indigenous products. What is the alternative to petrol and diesel? It is ethanol, which is produced in the country. Ultimately, what PM Modi said is what Mahatma Gandhi had advocated and what our ancestors had also emphasised. I do not think this should be politicised," he said.

State BJP chief spokesperson Navnath Ban took a swipe at Raj Thackeray over his own party's "decline".

"Soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed to the people of the country to practice austerity, Raj Thackeray started feeling uncomfortable. Narendra Modi has been elected as prime minister three times because people believe he is capable of leading the country." (PTI)

Accused's counsel hails CBI probe into murder of Suwendu's aide; mother says son framed

BALLIA (UP), May 12: The counsel of the man arrested in connection with the murder of the aide of West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari has welcomed the CBI probe into the matter.

Advocate Hariyansh Singh also accused the West Bengal Police of failing to adhere to legal procedure during the arrest of his client, Raj Singh.

He alleged that Raj Singh's arrest was officially recorded as taking place in Ayodhya, and the police ought to have obtained a transit remand from the Chief Judicial Magistrate's court to transport him to West Bengal.

Instead, the West Bengal Police took Raj Singh directly to Kolkata, he said.

Chandranath Rath, the executive assistant to Adhikari, was shot dead in Madhyamgram on May 6, two days after the declaration of the fiercely fought West Bengal Assembly Polls results.

On Monday, the West Bengal Police arrested three people, including Raj Singh, from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in connection with Rath's killing, pursuing leads from a UPI transaction made at a toll plaza by one of the suspects.

Jamwanti Singh, Raj Singh's mother, and a Rasra Post Office employee, claimed that her son was framed.

She alleged that she and her son

were picked up by the police while they were returning from Ayodhya, and he was later taken to Kolkata on a flight.

She said that she and Raj Singh had gone to Lucknow on May 7 for the wedding of the daughter of Member of Legislative Council Ravishankar Singh alias Pappu Singh.

"Five people, including my son Raj Singh, his friend Monu Singh, a driver and a photographer, had gone there," she said.

On May 8, the group went to a dargah in Ambedkar Nagar district and stayed the night at a hotel near the shrine, she claimed.

"On the morning of May 9, after offering prayers at the shrine, we left for Ayodhya and later stopped at a roadside eatery for food. But just as we were leaving, a police team intercepted us and took us away," she said.

All five of them were detained in a police station, she said.

"On May 10 afternoon, police allowed me to meet Raj and informed me that he was being taken to Kolkata by flight," Jamwanti Singh said.

The CBI has registered an FIR in Rath's murder, taking over the investigation from the state police, officials said.

The CBI took over the probe following a request from the state government, they said. (PTI)

NEET-UG 2026 cancelled

CBI to probe paper leak allegations

NEW DELHI, May 12: The National Testing Agency on Tuesday cancelled the NEET (UG) 2026 exam held on May 3 amid allegations of paper leak, with the government asking the CBI to carry out a comprehensive inquiry into the "irregularities".

The examination for students seeking admission to undergraduate courses in medical colleges will now be held afresh on dates to be notified separately.

In a statement on X, the National Testing Agency (NTA) said the decision was taken in the interest of maintaining transparency and preserving trust in the national examination system.

"On the basis of inputs subsequently examined by NTA in coordination with central agencies, and the investigative findings shared by the law enforcement agencies, the National Testing Agency, with the approval of the Government of India, has decided to cancel the NEET (UG) 2026 examination conducted on 3 May 2026, and to re-conduct the examination on dates that will be notified separately," the agency said.

The NEET-UG 2026 examination was held on May 3 across 551 cities in India and 14 cities abroad. The examination was organised by the NTA for nearly 23 lakh registered candidates at centres across



the country.

The agency said the inputs received, taken together with findings shared by law enforcement agencies, established that the "present examination process could not be allowed to stand."

"The re-conducted examination dates, along with the re-issued admit-card schedule, will be communicated through the official channels of the Agency in the coming days," it added.

The NTA further said the government has decided to refer the matter to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for a comprehensive inquiry into the allegations linked to the examination.

"NTA will extend full cooperation to the Bureau and will provide all materials, records, and assistance the inquiry requires," it added.

"This decision has been taken in the interest of students and in recognition of the trust on which the national examination system rests," NTA said.

The agency acknowledged that the re-conduct of the examination would cause "real and significant inconvenience" to candidates and their families, but said the decision was necessary to prevent "greater and more lasting damage" to trust in the examination system.

According to the NTA, the registration data, candidature and examination centres opted for in the

May 2026 cycle will be carried forward for the re-conducted examination.

"No fresh registration will be required, and no additional examination fee will be levied," the statement said, adding that fees already paid by students will be refunded and the examination will be re-conducted using the NTA's internal resources.

The agency said fresh examination dates and the revised admit-card schedule will be communicated through official channels in the coming days and advised candidates and parents to rely only on verified information released by the agency.

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

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

According to the agency, inputs regarding alleged malpractice activity were received on the evening of May 7, four days after the examination, and were escalated to central agencies on the morning of May 8 for "independent verification and necessary action".

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

"Regarding the various misconceptions surrounding the NEET examination, let me clarify one specific point: there is a guess paper containing approximately 410 questions. Out of these, it is alleged that roughly 120 questions appeared in Chemistry," Bansal had said.

While the Chemistry paper in the exam carries 45 questions, the test used four sets of question papers.

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

14 lakh kanals of state land encroached in Jammu, 3 lakh in Kashmir: Official data

JAMMU, May 12: More than 17 lakh kanals of state land have been encroached by the land mafia across Jammu and Kashmir, with Jammu division accounting for over 14 lakh kanals, more than three times the figure recorded in Kashmir division, while Rajouri district topped the list among all 20 districts, official data said.

According to the official figures, a total of around 17,27,247 kanals of encroached state land entries were expunged from revenue records across Jammu and Kashmir.

Of the total, Jammu division accounted for 14,00,051 kanals and five marlas of encroached state land, whose entries were expunged from revenue records, while Kashmir division recorded 3,27,199 kanals, it said.

The data revealed stark regional differences, with seven districts of Jammu division recording more than one lakh kanals of encroached state land each, while two districts -- Rajouri and Reasi -- crossed the two lakh kanal mark.

In contrast, none of the 10 districts of the Kashmir division recorded encroachments exceeding one lakh kanals. Only Baramulla and Kupwara crossed the 50,000 kanal mark in the Valley, it said.

The figures further showed that the twin capital districts of Jammu and Srinagar recorded wide disparities in encroached state land.

Jammu district accounted for 1,45,487 kanals and six marlas of encroached land, while Srinagar



recorded 13,862.95 kanals, indicating that Jammu district alone had over ten times more encroached state land than Srinagar.

Rajouri district has emerged as the worst-affected district in Jammu and Kashmir in terms of encroachment on state land, with 2.73 lakh kanals found under illegal occupation by land grabbers, according to official data.

Rajouri topped the list with 2,73,848 kanals and 12 marlas of encroached state land, followed by Reasi with 2,26,857 kanals and six marlas, and Ramban with 1,73,832 kanals. Jammu district recorded 1,45,487 kanals and six marlas of encroached land, while Kathua accounted for 1,30,403 kanals and 1.5 marlas.

Udhampur and Poonch also crossed the one lakh kanal mark with 1,19,822 kanals and eight marlas, and 1,11,133 kanals and 16 marlas, respectively, the data said.

Doda recorded 91,957 kanals and five marlas of

encroached land, followed by Samba district, which accounted for 74,196 kanals and three marlas of encroached land, while Kishtwar recorded 52,513 kanals and 7.5 marlas respectively.

In the Kashmir division, Baramulla recorded the highest expunged encroached land at 81,327.65 kanals, followed by Samba in Jammu division with 74,196 kanals and three marlas, Kupwara with 52,698.1 kanals, and Kishtwar with 52,513 kanals and 7.5 marlas, the data revealed.

Pulwama recorded 42,730.8 kanals of encroached land, followed by Anantnag with 36,984 kanals, Budgam with 21,775.55 kanals and Bandipora with 20,925.65 kanals, it said.

The data further showed that Shopian recorded 19,034.85 kanals, Ganderbal 19,005.2 kanals, Kulgam 18,853.75 kanals and Srinagar 13,862.95 kanals of expunged encroachment entries.

The figures were disclosed in response to a query seeking details of state and central governments, and JDA lands presently under encroachment and steps being taken to retrieve and regularise such land.

The authorities have expunged illegal records of land grabbers of state government land under encroachment in Rajouri, Reasi, Ramban, Jammu, Kathua, Udhampur, Poonch, Doda, Baramulla, Samba, Kupwara, Kishtwar, Pulwama, Anantnag, Budgam, Bandipora, Shopian, Ganderbal, Kulgam and Srinagar districts. (PTI)

Kedarnath temple's earnings jump 34 pc to ₹ 71.06 crore in 2024-25

DEHRADUN, May 12: The Kedarnath temple recorded total earnings of ₹ 71.06 crore from offerings, donations and different services in the 2024-25 financial year, registering a 34.32 per cent increase over the previous year's collection.

The Shri Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) provided these figures in response to a Right to Information (RTI) query filed by activist Amit Gupta.

The shrine's earnings during the 2023-24 financial period were ₹ 52.90 crore. The total available funds for the Himalayan shrine reached ₹ 74.84 crore after including an opening balance of ₹ 3.77 crore, the reply said.

The temple committee earned ₹ 14.18 crore from special pujas and ₹ 9.59 crore from 'thali bhet' (offerings). Primary darshan through helicopter services generated ₹ 3.19 crore for the shrine. Special donations and 'hundi' (collection boxes) accounted for ₹ 4.46 crore.

The temple also collected ₹ 1.56

crore from 'yatri bhog' and ₹ 2.75 crore as interest on investments.

Total expenditure for the shrine stood at ₹ 66.39 crore for the period ending March 31, 2025. The closing cash and bank balance remained at ₹ 8.44 crore. The temple had recorded an expenditure of ₹ 54.16 crore against an income of ₹ 52.90 crore during the 2023-24 financial year, according to the RTI reply.

Speaking to PTI, BKTC chairman Hemant Dwivedi said the committee manages 47 temples, as well as the Badrinath Dham, in addition to the Kedarnath temple.

"We employ approximately 600 to 700 personnel including temporary and seasonal staff. Salaries account for ₹ 20-25 crore of the expenditure," Dwivedi added.

The chairman noted that funds support the maintenance of 47 temples, 27 guest houses and seven schools. Major expenses include devotee services, tourist amenities and maintenance work during the opening and closing of the shrines. (PTI)

IIT-Bhubaneswar launches MTech in cybersecurity

BHUBANESWAR, May 12: IIT-Bhubaneswar announced the launch of an industry-linked MTech programme in cybersecurity for engineers working in different industries.

The programme is scheduled to commence on July 24, with applications currently open for eligible candidates who aspire to advance their careers in cybersecurity through this innovative and flexible learning model, the institute said in a statement.

The course was developed in strategic association with WhizHack Technologies, one of India's leading cybersecurity training and simulation companies, and designed specifically for working professionals, it said.

The blended-mode programme combines academic learning with hands-on industry exposure to equip learners with advanced cybersecurity skills required to address emerging digital threats across industries, it added.

Admission to the programme does not require a GATE qualification, with selection based on academic background and professional experience, the statement said.

The curriculum is designed to provide comprehensive knowledge in secure system design, cyber risk assessment, governance and compliance, AI-driven security, blockchain security, and advanced attack-defence strategies, it said. (PTI)

CJI sets up high-powered panel for judicial infrastructure overhaul

NEW DELHI, May 12: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant has decided to set up a high-powered committee headed by Supreme Court judge Arvind Kumar to prepare a blueprint for the modernisation of courts across the country and secure government allocation of funds.

The CJI announced the constitution of the Judicial Infrastructure Advisory Committee to address infrastructural deficiencies in courts through substantial financial support from the government.

Apart from Justice Kumar, the committee will comprise Justices Debansu Basak, Ashwani Kumar Mishra and Somasekhar Sundaresan of the high courts of Calcutta, Punjab and Haryana, and Bombay, respectively.

"A Judicial Infrastructure Advisory Committee has been constituted by the Chief Justice of India keeping in view the varied infrastructural requirements of different High Courts and District Courts.

"The purpose of the Committee is to ensure a unified infrastructural ecosystem on a pan-India basis," the secretary general of the apex court said in a statement.

"The committee will submit its report to the Chief Justice of India who shall, on consideration thereof, take up the matter with the Government of India and the state governments," the statement said.

The director general of the Central Public Works Department and the secretary general of the Supreme Court will also be members of the panel.

The committee is likely to focus on seven key areas, including identifying systemic constraints, improving facilities for litigants and lawyers and implementing cutting-edge technology to accelerate case disposal. (PTI)

India ready to quell any cross-border misadventure: Navy chief designate Swaminathan

MUMBAI, May 12: Indian Navy chief designate Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan has said the country has been a victim of terrorism for several years, and asserted that it remains prepared to counter and quell any "misadventure" from across the border.

Operation Sindoor was targeted specifically at terrorists and terrorist camps that participated in a very dastardly incident in Pahalgam in 2025, said Swaminathan, the Flag Officer, Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command.

The country cannot accept terrorist activities in the country, especially when they come from foreign soil, he asserted at an event organised by the Bramha Research Foundation, a think tank, in Mumbai on Monday.

"Anybody who is sensible in the world knows the misadventure does

not come anywhere or anytime from India. India has always been in a responding kind of mode. The misadventure comes from across the border. People can say what they want, but as far as we are concerned, India will remain prepared and if any misadventure comes from that side we are actually ready to quell it," Swaminathan said.

He was responding to reports of remarks made by Field Marshal Asim Munir, also the Chief of Defence Forces of Pakistan, that any future misadventure against Islamabad will result in extremely widespread and dangerous, far-reaching and painful consequences for New Delhi. In response to the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 persons, mostly tourists, were gunned down, India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year, carrying out airstrikes on nine terror infrastruc-

tures in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, eliminating at least 100 terrorists.

Swaminathan said Operation Sindoor is important to make sure India does not continue to be a victim of terrorism. It also reminds about what needs to be done to make the country stronger. As far as the Indian office is concerned, Operation Sindoor is ongoing, he maintained.

"So we continue to be prepared for whatever challenges anybody might throw at us, and we continue to negotiate terrorism from a position of strength," the Navy chief designate asserted. The global security environment is undergoing profound change. Supply chains are increasingly weaponised, access to critical technologies is contested, and geopolitical competition is reshaping the strategic landscape across all regions and all domains, he pointed out. (PTI)

Industry, labour unions hail Goa govt's new worker welfare initiatives

PANAJI, May 12: Labour unions and industry representatives in Goa have welcomed several welfare schemes announced for them by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, calling it a "major step towards empowering the workforce".

During a function on May 1, Sawant hailed the working class as the "backbone of Goa's economy" while announcing a series of measures for them, including compensation of ₹ 50,000 for families of deceased workers and an assistance of ₹ 25,000 for workers injured at the workplace.

He had also launched initiatives like the digital literacy training, medical aid for elderly parents of workers, coaching support for competitive exams for their children, tuition fee reimbursement and accident insurance coverage under the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY). The government also honoured 20 workers with the Shram Gaurav Shramik Mitra Award. It said that either the management of private companies or workers themselves can apply to the Labour Welfare Department with proof of service of more than 20 years to claim a one-time incentive of ₹ 15,000.

According to the government, more than 1.4 lakh workers have already registered under the programme.

Welcoming the initiatives, Ashley Lazarus Dias, Chief Administrative Officer of Goa-based Veejay Facility Management Pvt Ltd, said the announcements reflected the government's commitment towards strengthening the workforce.

"Digital skills are no longer optional; they are essential in today's technology-driven world," Dias said, adding that the decision to provide full fee reimbursement for digital training would improve employability and confidence among workers. He said the schemes related to insurance, elderly care and education support would significantly improve workers' quality of life.

"This is not just an investment in skill policy, but an investment in people and the hardworking workforce," he added, terming it a "wonderful initiative" that enjoys industry support. Labour union leader Puti Gaonkar also welcomed the measures and thanked CM Sawant for introducing the schemes.

He said some of the initiatives would be highly beneficial for workers, particularly the ₹ 15,000 incentive for work excellence, one-time financial assistance during serious illness and educational support for children pursuing professional courses such as MBBS and engineering. (PTI)

Unable to sell paddy, Odisha farmer seeks euthanasia

BHUBANESWAR, May 12: Unable to sell his paddy at the state-run market yard, a farmer in Odisha's Bargarh district has sought permission from the government for euthanasia.

The distressed farmer, identified as Rohit Bhoi of Sahara Tikra village under Bheden block, on Monday submitted a petition to the Bargarh Collector Aditya Goyan when the officer came to hold a public grievance session.

"I want 'ichha mrityu' (euthanasia) for being unable to sell my paddy even after waiting for six months for procurement. I am under distress and unable to afford medicine for my elderly parents and fund my children's education. Therefore, it is better to die," farmer Bhoi wrote in the petition. The farmer said that, though procurement for the new kharif season has already begun, his paddy from the previous season remains unsold. He has harvested around 220 packets of paddy, but the state-run 'mandi' is yet to procure them.

Bhoi pointed out that cultivation is the sole source of his family's income. "I have written several letters

to the district authorities, but none paid any heed towards my plight," he told the district collector.

"Left with no option, I sought permission for euthanasia," the farmer said.

Odisha Cooperation minister Pradeep Bal Samanta said, "The matter came to my knowledge just now. I will immediately ask the department and the concerned district collector to take up the matter and ensure that no injustice is done to the farmer."

"If there is a problem, there is a solution. We should discuss the matter instead of seeking euthanasia or taking any extreme step. If the farmer takes any adverse step, it will harm him, his family, the government and the state as a whole. Therefore, I will ask authorities to address the farmer's issue immediately," the minister told reporters.

Meanwhile, local Atabira MLA Nihar Mahananda said he would certainly take up the farmer's issue. Opposition BJD came down heavily on the state government and "blamed" it for the "mismanagement" in paddy procurement for which a farmer has been seeking euthanasia. (PTI)

Nursing personnel exemplify highest standards of service: Prez

NEW DELHI, May 12: President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday conferred the National Florence Nightingale Awards for 2026 on 15 nursing professionals in recognition of their exemplary service and contribution to strengthening public healthcare delivery.

"Nursing personnel exemplify the highest standards of service and play a crucial role in delivering quality healthcare, often in the most challenging circumstances. I commend all the awardees for their inspiring devotion to duty and their tireless efforts in upholding the highest standards of patient care," the president said on the occasion.

A total of 15 nurses from diverse regions and healthcare settings were honoured for their unwavering dedication to strengthening public health delivery and outstanding commitment to the welfare of the community.

The awards were presented at a ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan in the presence of Union Health



Minister J P Nadda.

In her message, the President said that the occasion is a fitting tribute to the invaluable contribution of nursing personnel and healthcare professionals who serve the nation with compassion and un-

wavering dedication.

Instituted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the National Florence Nightingale Award honours the dedication, compassion and resilience of nursing professionals, including registered nurses,

midwives, auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs) and lady health visitors serving in central and state governments, Union Territories and voluntary organisations.

The award carries a Certificate of Merit, a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh and a medal.

Among the awardees were six ANMs and nine nurses from different parts of the country, including Ladakh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Delhi, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Lakshadweep.

The health ministry statement said nurses play a pivotal role in addressing multiple health challenges and are central to evidence-based and accessible healthcare delivery.

It also highlighted initiatives undertaken to strengthen the nursing workforce, including the National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Act and the establishment of 157 nursing colleges co-located with medical colleges in the country. (PTI)

Anjali Sivaraman to play Amrita Sher-Gil in Mira Nair's 'Amri'

Filmmaker Mira Nair on Tuesday announced her new film "Amri", a biopic on renowned Hungarian-Indian painter Amrita Sher-Gil, with actor Anjali Sivaraman headlining a cast that also includes Jaideep Ahlawat and Priyanka Chopra Jonas.

The biopic on Sher-Gil, a pioneer in modern Indian art who rattled the establishment with her bold imagery and life, has been something of a dream project for Nair, known for movies such as "Salaam Bombay!", "Monsoon Wedding", "The Namesake" and "A Suitable Boy".

Nair had first announced the project in 2020 but it was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At the time, Tanya Maniktala, who played the lead in "A Suitable Boy" was set to portray Sher-Gil.

Nair also unveiled the first look of Sivaraman as Sher-Gil. The 31-year-old Kerala-born actor is known for her roles in "Cobalt Blue", "Class" and "Bad Girl".

In the film, Emily Watson will play Sher-Gil's mother, Marie-Antoinette Gottesman, Ahlawat her father, Umrao Singh Sher-Gil, Krisztian Csakvari as Victor Egan,

Anjana Vasani as Indira Sher-Gil, Jim Sarbh as Karl Khandalavala and Jonas as Madame Azurie.

Jonas is also executive producing the movie, which is set across Hungary, France and India in the early twentieth century to trace the worlds of Europe and India that shaped Sher-Gil's imagination and her artistic vision.

Sher-Gil, now considered one of the greatest women artists of the 20th century, died at the age of 28 but her paintings, now highly valuable, give a glimpse into India and its women. Some of the most famous art works of Sher-Gil include "Two Women", "The Bride's Toilet", "Group of Three Girls", "The Girl in Blue", "Sleeping Woman", "Hill Women", "Hungarian Gypsy Girl" and several self-portraits.

"Amri" is currently completing production across India and Hungary.

"Every film I've made in the last several decades has been inspired by the art of Amrita Sher-Gil. She taught me how to see. She absorbed the best European training to distill the soul of India in a way that no one ever had — it is this distillation that has informed my own cinema

from the beginning. The bravery of her palette, color and framing of the ordinary people of India has eternally moved me," Nair said in a media statement.

"Amri" explores Sher-Gil's coming of age as both an artist and a woman, her restless search for selfhood, her defiance of convention even to the point of scandal in her love life, and her determination to create a visual language entirely her own.

The youngest student to ever be admitted in the Academie des Beaux-Arts de Paris, educated and trained in the conventions of European tradition, Amrita evolved a personal aesthetic that highlighted the everyday life of ordinary women and men in India. This was a radical aesthetic breakthrough that later shaped Nair's own sensibility, the release said.

The film promises to be rich with the cultural, emotional and social currents of its time as it brings to life Sher-Gil.

Nair co-wrote the film with Clara Royer and also produces it with Samudrika Arora and Michael Nozik. Arora said, "Amrita Sher-Gil's life and oeuvre reflect the aspirations of the modern generation, where iden-

and unapologetic self-expression meet. There is something deeply human in the tension of coming from two wildly different worlds — the challenge of belonging to both, and never entirely to either.

"What moved me to make this film is how 'Amri' carried the best of each world within her, and not lose herself in the space between them. It is a privilege to bring this story to fruition alongside Mira, whose craft for telling crosscultural stories is unparalleled."

Nozik added, "While the film is set between the two World Wars, Amrita is a character out of time and before her time — she is a true visionary artist and social revolutionary, her life story a beacon of inspiration. With Mira's direction, Anjali's performance of Amrita seizes that spirit of youthful curiosity and rebellion."

Major exhibitions of Amrita Sher-Gil's work are planned across the world for 2027 starting in Paris, moving to Los Angeles, Doha and finally in New Delhi where a permanent exhibition is planned.

"Amri" is a Mirabai, Samscape, Papertown Production in association with KNMA and Miramax. (PTI)



'Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power' season 3 set for November debut

Prime Video has announced that third season of "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power" will premiere on November 11 and also renewed the epic fantasy series for a fourth season.

The announcement was made at Amazon's annual Upfront presentation.

The series, which launched with its first season in 2022 followed by the second chapter in 2024, brings to screens for the first time the legends of the Second Age of Middle-earth's history, set thousands of years before the events of author J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings".

It follows an ensemble cast as they confront the re-emergence of evil across Middle-earth, from the Misty Mountains to the elf capital of Lindon and the island kingdom of Numenor.

"From the very beginning, this series has embodied the scale, ambition, and cinematic storytelling that define Prime Video's biggest global series," Peter Friedlander, Head of Global Television, Amazon MGM Studios, said. "We're thrilled to announce an early Season 4 renewal, and continue our creative partnership with J.D. Payne, Patrick McKay, and the entire exceptional cast and crew."

Jumping forward several years from the events of season two, the third season is set at the height of the War of the Elves and Sauron, as the Dark Lord seeks to craft the One Ring to bind all peoples to his will and rule all of Middle-earth.

Season Three is produced by showrunners Payne and McKay, alongside executive producers Lindsey Weber, Justin Doble, Kate Hazell, and executive producer-director Charlotte Brandstrom. The series is produced by Amazon MGM Studios. (PTI)



SUNBURN FESTIVAL TO RETURN WITH 19TH EDITION IN MUMBAI IN DECEMBER



One of India's biggest electronic music festivals, Sunburn is returning for its 19th edition with a new venue, a reimagined format and a fresh creative identity.

Billed as one of its most defining chapters yet, the festival will be held on December 18 and 19, 2026, at Mahalaxmi Racecourse in Mumbai, one of the city's most centrally located large-format event venues, followed by a closing party at NSCI Dome on December 20.

The shift to a condensed two-day format is a deliberate move, organisers say, designed to deliver sharper programming and a more concentrated flow of performances, with the NSCI Dome finale extending the experience beyond the main event, a press release said.

The theme for the 2026 edition is "Awaken the Core", which the festival describes as a signal of its evolution from spectacle to depth, from scale to intensity, it added.

Mahalaxmi Racecourse has hosted several

of its landmark Mumbai moments — Avicii's early India performance in 2011, Swedish House Mafia in 2013, Martin Garrix in 2016 and, more recently, a Keinemusik set earlier this year.

Tickets will be available on BookMyShow, with an exclusive pre-sale for RuPay Credit Card holders opening on May 14 at noon, followed by a registered users' pre-sale on May 16 at noon. General ticket sales open for all on May 18 at noon.

"Sunburn Festival has always been built with the audience at its core, evolving each year into a defining cultural tradition for India's music community," said Karan Singh, CEO of Sunburn.

"As we enter our 19th edition, every decision — from moving to a venue like Mahalaxmi Racecourse to reimagining the festival format — has been made with a clear focus on enhancing how fans experience the festival," he added. (PTI)

Vin Diesel to executive produce 'Fast & Furious' series

The series on Universal's acclaimed action movie franchise "Fast & Furious" is in development at Peacock with Vin Diesel attached to executive-produce it.

The actor made the announcement on stage at the NBCUniversal upfront presentation on Monday, according to the entertainment news outlet Deadline.

"Peacock is launching four shows in the Fast and the Furious universe," he said.

The pilot will be written by Mike Daniels. Other details about the project are kept under wraps.

With the release of the first film in 2001, the franchise has gone on to spawn eleven films that have earned more than USD 7 billion at the worldwide box office to become Universal's most profitable and longest-running franchise.

This year, Universal announced a new chapter—"Fast Forever", which is slated to release in theatres on March 17, 2028.

Over the years, the "Fast and Furious" franchise has attracted stars such as Dwayne Johnson, Jason Statham, Eva Mendes, John Cena, Kurt Russell, Jason Momoa, Helen Mirren, Brie Larson and Charlize Theron. The first film, "The

Fast and the Furious", will also be screened at the ongoing Cannes Film Festival.

The screening will occur on May 13 at the Grand Lumiere Theatre of the Palais des Festivals, the Festival de Cannes, and will be attended by stars Vin Diesel, Jordana Brewster, producer Neal H. Moritz, and Meadow Walker, the daughter of the film's late actor Paul Walker. A high-octane thriller set amid the street-racing culture of Los Angeles, the Universal Picture film was produced by Neal H. Moritz, directed by Rob Cohen, and featured Diesel as Dominic Toretto, Walker as Brian O'Conner, Brewster as Mia and Michelle Rodriguez as Letty. (PTI)



TribeVibe Entertainment sweeps WOW Awards 2026 with five wins

TribeVibe Entertainment, one of India's fastest-growing live entertainment companies, was honoured with five prestigious accolades at the Shows of India Conclave 2026 — among the industry's most respected benchmarks for excellence in live experiences and entertainment — notching up as many as five WOW Awards across categories.

TribeVibe Entertainment sweeps WOW Awards 2026 with five wins, cementing its position as a defining force in India's live entertainment landscape.

Spanning music tours, non-music formats, brand integrations and cultural events, the wins underscore TribeVibe's evolution into a full-spectrum live entertainment powerhouse known for creating large-scale, audience-first experiences across the country.

The recognition comes at a defining phase of growth for the company. Over the past year, TribeVibe has rapidly expanded its footprint across India, delivering a diverse portfolio of high-impact live events at scale while consistently raising the bar on creativity, production value and commercial innovation. This momentum has further cemented its reputation as a trusted partner for artists, brands and fans alike, shaping the future of India's live entertainment ecosystem.

A CLEAN SWEEP ACROSS CATEGORIES:

- Global Live Honours Award - Promoter of the Year (Maximum Shows in the Year): The most coveted recognition in the industry for a live promoter, awarded to TribeVibe in acknowledgement of unmatched throughput, managing and delivering the highest number of live shows across formats and geographies in the year

- Gold - Branded Live IP of the Year (Visa Presents Vishal-Sheykhar Live Tour): A landmark collaboration that brought together iconic music, premium brand storytelling, and national-scale tour execution. The Visa



Presents Vishal-Sheykhar Live Tour set a new standard for what branded live show can achieve in the Indian market

- Gold - Non-Music Tour of the Year (Papa Yaar by Zakir Khan): Zakir Khan's Papa Yaar tour, became one of the year's most talked-about live comedy experiences — demonstrating TribeVibe's ability to translate an artist's creative voice into a large-format touring property with consistent audience resonance across cities

- Silver - Brand Integration for a Live Show (Papa Yaar by Zakir Khan - Vicks Integration): Recognised for crafting an organic, audience-relevant brand integration within a live comedy format, the Vicks partnership within the Papa Yaar tour set a strong precedent for how brands can authentically connect with live en-

tertainment audiences without disrupting the experience

- Silver - Cultural Live Event of the Year (Radiance Dandiya Navratri Utsav 2025 with Falguni Pathak): A celebration of cultural heritage at scale, The Radiance Dandiya Navratri Utsav 2025 brought thousands together for a meticulously produced festival that beautifully balanced community tradition with production excellence. Headlined by the Queen of Dandiya, Falguni Pathak, the event was Co-produced by TribeVibe, Purple Blue Events and Alphonso Studios

Commenting on the achievement, Shoven Shah, Founder & CEO, TribeVibe Entertainment Pvt. Ltd. said, "These awards are a reflection of the ambition, conviction and consistency that drive everything we do at TribeVibe. The live entertainment landscape

today is evolving at an incredible pace with audiences, artists and brands all expecting more from the ecosystem. We have always believed in pushing boundaries, taking bold creative bets and building for the long term. Whether it is through larger-scale productions or stronger collaborations, we remain committed to pushing boundaries and creating more meaningful live experiences for audiences across India. To our artists and sponsors, thank you for trusting us to take your vision further and connect it with audiences at scale. These awards are both a celebration of how far we've come and a reminder of the ambition that continues to drive us forward."

As India's live entertainment industry continues to scale rapidly across music, comedy, theatre, cultural festivals and branded experiences, the demand for companies that can deliver consistently across formats and at scale has never been greater. TribeVibe's continued growth reflects this shift, with the company building a diversified portfolio that spans large-format music experiences, comedy tours, cultural events and branded live IPs.

Over the years, TribeVibe has collaborated with some of India's most celebrated artists and leading brands, creating experiences that resonate deeply with audiences while delivering strong cultural and commercial impact. The recognition at the Shows of India Conclave 2026 further reinforces the company's growing influence within the industry, alongside its active role in shaping the future of live entertainment in India.

About TribeVibe Entertainment Pvt. Ltd.:

TribeVibe Entertainment Pvt. Ltd., a BookMyShow company, is the driving force championing India's homegrown music artists and comedians. We're redefining how Gen Z experiences live events, moving beyond the ordinary to deliver high-impact perform-

ances across music, comedy, and culture nationwide. Since our inception in 2019, TribeVibe has transformed the college festival landscape through a massive nationwide Campus Ambassador Programme, partnering with 850+ colleges across 85+ cities and curating unforgettable performances by some of the country's top artists. Over the years, we've scaled into a dynamic multi-vertical ecosystem, from multi-city artist tours and branded IPs to campus activations and our flagship Gen Z festival, Vibin'.

The numbers tell the story: with a roster of 200+ artists and a track record of executing 4000+ shows (including 3000+ across campuses), TribeVibe connects artists and brands directly with India's vibrant student community. Every year, we engage over 4 million students on-ground, powering marquee tours and projects that define the live entertainment landscape. Its marquee projects include Vir Das' Sounds of India tour, Prateek Kuhad's 10-city run, Zakir Khan's Papa Yaar comedy tour, Anuv Jain's Dastakhat Tour, Vishal-Sheykhar's Super Hit Tour, Anirudh Ravichander's XV show in Hyderabad, Kartik's South India Tour, Sanam's India Tour, McDowell's Soda Yaari Jam shows across multiple cities, and cultural showcases such as Aditya Gadhi and Navratri with Falguni Pathak.

As the industry decentralizes beyond metro cities, TribeVibe is at the forefront of expansion across Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets. We're building scalable, hyperlocal experiences that bridge the gap between high-demand audiences and top-quality live acts. Backed by the scale and expertise of BookMyShow, TribeVibe continues to fuel India's next wave of live entertainment. We're doubling down on youth culture, greenfield markets, and cutting-edge touring formats, ensuring the future of live experiences reaches every corner of the country. (PTI)

As an owner of Dublin team, I want Ashwin to have freedom to take cricketing calls: Dravid

NEW DELHI, May 12: As a coach in franchise cricket, Rahul Dravid has had the experience of interacting with various types of owners -- some passionate to the core and a few non-interfering and observant from a distance.

As he wears a new hat -- as an owner of Dublin Guardians franchise in European T20 League (ETPL), Dravid believes that he will refrain from getting into the cricketing side of the team as he wants skipper Ravichandran Ashwin to have complete freedom while taking decisions.

Asked what kind of an owner he would like to be, Dravid could only laugh.

"So we'll only know when that happens. We'll only know how I will be because it's going to be my first opportunity and experience," he told PTI in an interview.

Despite his vast cricketing knowledge having been involved with top flight cricket for 30 years, Dravid has understood that

in his new role, he needs to maintain a distance.

"I think honestly, the plan is for me to not actually get involved in the cricketing side of things. So to put together a good team that can do the job on a day-to-day basis. You certainly won't see me in the dugout. And I'm not someone who's going to be there at every practice session. Or for that matter, not there for even every game," Dravid was very clear about what kind of team owner he wants to be.

Having signed Ashwin as the captain of Dublin Guardians, Dravid believes that the legendary off-spinner needs to be given space to operate.

"But I will certainly be supportive. I think we're lucky to have signed on someone like Ashwin as a captain and a mentor. And we'll put a team around him that will allow him to lead the team and run the team in the way that he wants to," Dravid said.



"My job will really be to put together a team both on the field and of course there's a lot of work that needs to be done at a franchise

level off the field. Which for me will be the priority and the focus. And sort of let Ashwin and the experts (support staff) that we pick,

let them manage and run the cricket.

"So that is certainly the direction and the plan and the role that

I see for myself," the former India head coach was very clear about how he wants to operate.

Owning a franchise is a new domain and Dravid knows that he has a lot to learn.

"Obviously, it's a new frontier. It's new and it's something that obviously I'm excited about, but I do understand that I have a lot to learn. I have a lot to grow.

"I've been lucky that I've been given this opportunity and a chance to be able to do something new, to be able to learn and grow in another field, in another area."

There are way too many T20 franchise league cricket happening around the world at the moment but Dravid is confident that ETPL can make its own space.

"There is a rich history and a culture and a tradition in this part of the world, in Ireland, Scotland and Netherlands and in parts of Europe. Cricket is played by the

local population as well and has been played for a long time. There are a lot of clubs here in Ireland and including a lot of Indian professionals have come here and played in Ireland."

"So there's already a captive audience. There's already a captive followership. There's already a captive talent pool that we can hope to sort of build on."

The ETPL which includes three nations -- Scotland, Ireland and the Netherlands provides them with a huge canvas, said Dravid.

"So it's not only about Ireland, but combining Scotland and Netherlands and the rest of Europe as well gives us a much bigger area to work with.

"And then the quality of the kind of people involved both at the league level and at the ownership level, I feel, would be something that that would be quite fun and exciting to work with in trying to build something in this part of the world," he signed off. (PTI)

Nahid Rana takes 5 wickets as Bangladesh beats Pakistan by 104 runs in 1st test



DHAKA (BANGLADESH), May 12: Fast bowler Nahid Rana claimed a five-for as Bangladesh secured a 104-run victory in the first cricket test against Pakistan on Tuesday.

Chasing a target of 268, Pakistan was bowled out 163 for with Nahid registering career-best 5-40 in a stellar display of fast bowling.

In a three-over burst after tea, he dismissed Saud Shakeel, Mohammad Rizwan and Noman Ali in 18 balls, conceding just five runs.

Fellow fast bowler Taskin Ahmed, who took 2-40, gave Bangladesh the first breakthrough when Imam-ul-Haq edged behind for two.

Two debutants -- Azan Awaiz and Abdullah Fazal -- stood firm in a repeat of their first innings resistance, sharing 54 runs.

Offspinner Mehdi Hasan, however, produced an arm-ball to baffled Awaiz, who made 15 following his 103 in the first innings.

Nahid was a bit erratic in his

first spell but got into the act with the wicket of captain Shan Masood, leaving Pakistan on 68-3.

Fazal steadied the innings with Salman Agha, but Bangladesh bounced back after the tea break with two wickets in quick succession.

Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam broke through with the wicket of Fazal who made 66, ending the 51-run partnership before Taskin claimed Salman (21) with a back-of-length delivery with Pakistan at

121-5.

Shakeel and Rizwan gave Pakistan hope again but Nahid returned for his fiery spell with three wickets in three overs. He then wrapped up the Pakistan innings and completed his second five-for by dismissing Shaheen Shah Afridi.

Earlier, skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto hit 87 as Bangladesh set Pakistan 268 for victory on Day 5. Bangladesh declared its second innings at 240-9 after resuming the day at 152-3 and with an overall lead of 179 runs.

The hosts showed an aggressive intent to set a challenging target with Shanto leading from the front.

After losing Mushfiqur Rahim early to the bowling of Hasan Ali, Shanto struck seven boundaries in his knock before being trapped lbw by left-arm spinner Noman Ali (3-76).

Mehdi Hasan scored 24 at almost a run-a-ball to take the lead past 250. Hasan Ali (3-52) had Taskin caught by Imam before Bangladesh declared the innings with 76 overs remaining.

Bangladesh was bowled out for 413 in its first innings, before taking a 27-run lead, dismissing Pakistan for 386 with offspinner Mehdi Hasan taking five wickets.

The second test is in Sylhet, starting on Saturday. (AP)

WC-bound Iraq gets FIFA approval for 2 new players

ZURICH, May 12: World Cup-bound Iraq has two new players for possible selection after FIFA approved eligibility for Nashville SC midfielder Ahmed Qasem and Dundee United defender Dario Naamo.

Both comply with FIFA rules for a binding change of national eligibility because of family ties to Iraq. The national team qualified in March for its first World Cup in 40 years despite travel problems during the Middle East conflict.

It's in a tough World Cup group that includes France, Norway and Senegal, who all feature stellar forwards in Kylian Mbappé, Erling Haaland and Sadio Mané.

Iraq coach Graham Arnold previously led his native Australia at the 2022 World Cup and now can pick two more players nurtured in Europe.

The 22-year-old Qasem was born in Sweden and represented that country at youth level through the Under-21s.

He moved to Major League Soccer team Nashville last year from Elfsborg.

The 20-year-old Naamo was born in Finland and was still playing for its Under-21 team in March. (AP)

Satwik-Chirag win in Thailand Open



BANGKOK, May 12: Top seeds

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty survived a stiff challenge before defeating Indonesia's Muh Putra Erwiansyah and Bagas Maulana in a thrilling three-game opener of the men's doubles competition at the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament here on Tuesday.

The world No. 4 Indian pair registered a 21-19, 21-23, 21-10 win over Muh and Bagas in 64 minutes.

The Indian pair found themselves trailing 11-16 in the first game before reeling off seven straight points to turn the tide.

Muh and Bagas fought back to make it 18-18, but Satwik and Chirag held their nerve to take the opening game.

The second game remained closely fought, with both pairs engaged in long rallies before the Indians managed to take a slender three-point lead at the interval.

The Indonesian pair, however, dominated the exchanges

after the break and moved ahead 17-14. Despite a spirited fightback from the Indians, the match eventually went into a decider.

In the third game, Satwik and Chirag stamped their authority, racing to an 11-5 lead at the break before cruising through the remainder of the contest.

The Indian pair will face Malaysia's Bryan Jeremy Ginting and Muhammad Haikal next.

Earlier, Malaysia's Olympic bronze medalist Lee Zii Jia, who returned to action after recovering from a right ankle injury and back issues, defeated India's Manav Choudhary 21-19, 21-18 in a qualifying match.

In mixed doubles qualification, India's M Jaglan and L Jaglan lost 11-21, 18-21 to Chinese Taipei's Tsai Fu Cheng and Sung Yu Hsuan, while in women's singles qualification, Thailand's Y Ketkieng beat India's A Shahapurkar 21-5, 21-7. (PTI)

Southampton asks for more time to undertake review into spying controversy

SOUTHAMPTON, May 12: Southampton has asked for more time to complete an internal review after being charged with allegedly spying on Middlesbrough's practice sessions ahead of the teams' games in the Championship playoffs.

In a statement on Tuesday, Southampton said it was "fully cooperating" with English soccer authorities after being charged Friday with a breach of its regulations following accusations that unauthorized filming of Middlesbrough's training took place.

The English Football League requested an independent

disciplinary commission undertake a hearing "at the earliest opportunity."

The teams drew 0-0 in the first leg of the playoff semifinals on Saturday, with the return match taking place in Southampton on Tuesday. The winner will face Hull in the playoff final at Wembley Stadium on May 23, with a place in the Premier League -- and a windfall of at least 200 million pounds (\$270 million) in future earnings -- at stake.

"The club is fully cooperating with the EFL and the disciplinary commission, whilst also undertaking an internal re-

view to ensure that all facts and context are properly understood," Southampton CEO Phil Parsons said in the statement.

"Given the intensity of the fixture schedule and the short turnaround between matches, we have requested time to complete that process thoroughly and responsibly. We understand the discussion and speculation that has followed over recent days, but we also believe it is important that the full context is established before conclusions are drawn." (AP)

New mothers being helped in comeback world over: Sakshi Malik



NEW DELHI, May 12: Olympic bronze-winning grappler Sakshi Malik on Tuesday supported Vinesh Phogat in her tussle with the Wrestling Federation of India over coming back from retirement, saying that attempts are being made to block her at a time when countries world over are relaxing norms to help new mothers resume their careers.

A defiant Vinesh showed up at the National Open Ranking Tournament in Gonda even though WFI had declared her ineligible. While issuing a lengthy showcause notice to her, the WFI said she could not be allowed to compete due to the mandatory six-month notice period that athletes need to serve before returning from retirement under anti-doping rules.

Vinesh, who is the mother of a 10-month old son, has responded to the notice and refused to back down despite WFI's strict position. Sakshi was a close ally of Vinesh

during the highly-publicised protest against alleged sexual harassment by WFI's then President Brij Bhushan Singh Sharan but broke ranks after Vinesh joined the Congress party.

"I have been asked my views and I was contemplating for the last two-three days as Vinesh is an MLA from a political party and I have nothing to do with any political office. (But) I can give you plenty of examples of countries relaxing norms for their athletes, so that women can continue to play and win medals for the country even after becoming mothers," she said in a video clip on her social media page.

"But our federation has come up with rules to stop Vinesh from making a comeback. I would request the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi), the Sports Minister (Manuskh Mandavia) and the WFI to take Vinesh's trial so that she can also win medals for the country and be an example for women by winning medals after becoming a mother," she added.

Vinesh had quit wrestling after being shockingly disqualified from the finals of the 2024 Paris Olympics for being 100gm over the prescribed weight limit. The shattered Haryana grappler eventually joined politics and was elected from the Julana constituency the same year. (PTI)

PGA Championship at Aronimink is largely about the big slopes on big greens

NEWTOWN SQUARE (USA), May 12: Justin Thomas had his caddie place hole-sized discs on every corner of the 17th green at Aronimink, all of them perched on knobs.

Whether he was chipping or putting, it was a challenge.

Aronimink is marked by its 180 bunkers that frame the landing areas, except for the longest hitters. The first official day of practice for the PGA Championship brought a reminder that accuracy this week is more about shots into the green than avoiding bunkers or the healthy rough.

These are big greens with big slopes. "Off the tee it's not extremely challenging," said Keegan Bradley, who won on a soggy Aronimink in 2018 at the BMW Championship. "But the greens get really crazy, and they are really mounded and hilly just like a lot of Northeast courses. So to put the ball in the right spot is really important."

The course was full, inside and outside the ropes, despite temperatures that struggled to reach 60 degrees Fahrenheit (15 Celsius), which can happen with the PGA Championship moving to May and being held in northern part of the United States. Bethpage Black was even colder in 2019 until it warmed as the week went on, and that's expected to be the case this week.

Thomas was among the few who made a scouting trip during one of his weeks off. It was a chance to get reacquainted with a course that has fewer trees than the last time he played in 2018, and was in perfect condition. The last day for member play was Nov. 2.

"It's pretty generous off the tee," Thomas said. "I don't remember, but it feels like at some point you can tell they took out a lot of



trees. The holes that feel open, the rough is healthy. But the greens have a lot of slope. It's going to be dependent on how firm and fast they can get."

There was another reason for an early trip to Aronimink. He could get in 18 holes without feeling as though he lost an entire day. That's typical in the days leading to a major championship.

"Practice rounds at the PGA are the most miserable ever," Thomas said after playing nine holes Monday morning as the first one out on the back nine. "Unbearably slow."

"More than the U.S. Open?" "Tied for last," he replied. And to emphasize the importance of the heavily contoured greens, Thomas said practice rounds look like players working on the short-game area with so much chipping and putting.

"It certainly seems like it's going to be distance control on your approach shots," Jordan Spieth said. "Because if you're able to really be hitting your mid- to short irons, controlling the spin and getting it into these tiers, you can actually ... have a lot of pretty close looks for birdie if you get in the right section. If you miss the section, they are going to be really difficult to either get up-and-down or to two-putt. Just lots of pitch on the greens."

Spieth has a lot to gain this week, as has been the case since he showed up at the PGA Championship in 2017. A victory would give him the final leg of the career Grand Slam, a feat achieved by only six players, most recently Rory McIlroy last year at the Masters. "If I can win one more tournament in my life, it would obviously be this one for that reason," Spieth said. "But the easiest way to

do that is to not try to, in a weird way. Just go out and get ready for the first hole, get a good game plan in and attack it the way it needs to be attacked."

Brandt Snedeker and Sudarshan Yellamaraju of Canada were the final two additions to the 156-man field at Aronimink. The 45-year-old Snedeker qualified by winning the Myrtle Beach Classic last week for his first PGA Tour title in eight years; Yellamaraju was added because the winner of the Trustee Championship, Kristoffer Reitan, already had qualified through his world ranking.

Tom Hoge got in as an alternate when Jake Knapp was forced to withdraw with a thumb injury.

The PGA Championship strives to have the top 100 in the world ranking, and it was close until Lucas Herbert won LIV Golf Virginia and Shaun Norris was runner-up (by 14 shots) on the European tour. Both cracked the top 100. Neither is at Aronimink.

Scottie Scheffler, the world No. 1 player and defending champion, played nine holes. That was the case for most players, with Matt Fitzpatrick being an exception. This is his first time at Aronimink, and he saw the entire course. One part stood out.

"The green complexes, yeah, for sure," Fitzpatrick said. "They are very severe in spots. It will be interesting to see where obviously the pins get put. There's certainly two or three holes where you can't have more than four pins."

"I look at the golf course that I just played, and it definitely favors length off the tee because a lot of the bunkers will be taken out of play," he said. "So I think for me, the greens are going to be the defense for the week." (AP)

RCB batters search solidity against KKR's in-form bowling unit

RAIPUR, May 12: Royal Challengers Bengaluru will require a significantly punchier batting effort to overcome Kolkata Knight Riders' in-form bowling unit and close in on an IPL playoffs berth here on Wednesday.

RCB are currently perched atop the points table with 14 points, but they will lose that spot to either Sunrisers Hyderabad or Gujarat Titans, who also have 14 points.

However, more than that temporary slip, the RCB management will be focussed on their batters, who would be expected to deliver the signature effort, which marked their campaign early this season.

The Bengaluru batting unit was a pale shadow of its fear-inducing self against Mumbai Indians while chasing a mid-dling 167 here.

They needed a determined half-century from Krnal Pandya and a six in the fourth ball of the final over from Bhuvneshwar Kumar to chase that down.

Patidar off the boil

Skipper Rajat Patidar's contribution is important in that aura-rebuilding exercise.

After a glorious run early in the tournament, punctuated by a shower of sixes, the right-hander seems to have slumped of late, managing just one fifty-plus score and one 20-plus score in the last six innings.

It has reduced the RCB's middle-order fire-power to a certain degree, but contributions from others batters like Devdutt Padikkal and Tim David have helped them stay above the water.

However, they will be up against a potent Knight Riders' bowling unit that has mystery spinners Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy, who have been well-supported by do-



domestic names like Kartik Tyagi, Vaibhav Arora and Anukul Roy.

Their superb outings have helped the Kolkatans register four wins on the trot after faltering initially.

If the Raipur pitch retains its tacky character from the previous match, then the RCB batters will have one heck of a job at hand against a competent set of KKR bowlers.

But the three-time champions are still eighth on the table with nine points from 10 matches, and a misadventure here will certainly push them closer to elimination from the play-

offs race.

To avoid that scenario, the Knight Riders batters will also have to chip in, effectively countering the RCB new ball operators -- Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Josh Hazlewood.

Skipper Ajinkya Rahane still has no grip on his craft this season but vice-captain Rinku Singh, Kiwi Finn Allen, Anukul Roy and Angkrish Raghuvanshi have shored up their batting in the last few matches.

Australian all-rounder Cameron Green too has shown massive improvement after a cold start, and it has helped bring some stability to KKR.

They will need an encore here for KKR to sustain their run and keep their slender chances of reaching playoffs alive.

Teams:

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Rajat Patidar (captain), Virat Kohli, Tim David, Jacob Bethell, Romario Shepherd, Josh Hazlewood, Nuwan Thushara, Devdutt Padikkal, Jitesh Sharma, Krnal Pandya, Rasikh Dar, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jordan Cox, Suyash Sharma, Venkatesh Iyer, Swapnil Singh, Jacob Duffy, Kanishk Chouhan, Abhinandan Singh, Mangesh Yadav, Phil Salt, Vicky Ostwal, Vihan Malhotra.

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

Match starts at 7.30pm. (PTI)

Shabnim Ismail reverses international retirement for women's T20 World Cup



JOHANNESBURG, May 12: South African pacer Shabnim Ismail on Tuesday reversed her international retirement as she was named in the country's 15-player squad for the Women's T20 World Cup 2026 in the UK from June 12 to July 5.

Aiming to inspire the future generations of women's cricket in the country, the Proteas squad, captained by Laura Wolvaardt, features the 37-year-old Ismail, who last represented SA in the T20 World Cup final in Cape Town in February 2023.

She brings a wealth of experience, adding 113 T20I caps and a national record of 123 wickets to the group.

She will be joined by Marizanne Kapp and Dane van Niekerk, who are back after recovering from illness and a calf injury, respectively.

Wicketkeeper-batter Karabo Meso also returns from a wrist injury that ruled her out of the recent T20I series against India and will link up with Sinalo Jafta in that department. South Africa had outplayed India in the recent five match series.

Kayla Reyneke is set for her first senior World Cup after enjoying a breakout international season. The former SA U19

Women's captain ended the 2025/26 campaign with a batting average of 53 and five wickets in her first nine T20Is.

The remainder of the squad includes Tazmin Brits, Sune Luus, Annerie Dercken, Nadine de Klerk, and Chloe Tryon. Meanwhile, the bowling attack features seamers Ayabonga Khaka and Tumi Sekhukhune, as well as spin queen Nonkululeko Mlaba.

After reaching the last three ICC tournament finals, South Africa will begin their latest T20 World Cup campaign in Group 1 against Australia on June 13 in Manchester, before facing Pakistan, India, the Netherlands and Bangladesh.

Proteas Women head coach, Mandla Mashimbyi, said: "The 4-1 series win against India gave us a lot of confidence, but there are still final touch-ups we need to make before the World Cup starts."

"Having someone like Shabnim back adds a lot of value to the group. We had good conversations and you could see the hunger she still has to represent South Africa and help this team achieve something special. We're also pleased to have players like Marizanne, Dane and Karabo available again. (PTI)

Bowlers have some catching up to do in T20 cricket: Dravid



NEW DELHI, May 12: World Cup winning former India head coach Rahul Dravid said the grammar of T20 batting has undergone a complete metamorphosis of late and bowlers have some serious "catching up to do."

Dravid, who guided India to its second T20 World Cup triumph in 2024 in the Caribbean, is marvelled at how the young guns like Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Ayush Mhatre, Priyansh Arya along with world's No. 1 ranked T20 batter Abhishek Sharma have entirely changed the approach in the Powerplay overs.

"In a sense, to see the quality of batting that has happened over the last two or three years, I think the bowlers in that format of the game will slowly have to do some catching up," Dravid told PTI in an exclusive interview from Dublin, where he was unveiled as the owner of European T20 Premier League (ETPL)'s Dublin franchise.

The former India skipper and one of India's most respected coaches raved about how batters are now hitting boundaries to parts of the ground which earlier seemed out of bounds.

"I think batsmanship and the ability to hit sixes and to access different parts of the ground has certainly improved leaps and bounds."

"Bowlers will have to keep working on their skills and keep developing. I am sure, some of them will be able to still stand out and hold their own," said Dravid, who has coached IPL teams like

Rajasthan Royals and Delhi Capitals.

However, he had no hesitation in admitting modern batters have adapted to the requirements of the T20 game better than the bowlers. However, Dravid was confident of a change.

"I think if you look at it in terms of balance, probably a lot more batsmen are able to cope with the requirements of the modern T20 game than, say, some of the bowlers have been able to at this point of time. That may change in two or three years," he added.

The scenario is, however, a bit different in Test matches where bowlers have had the upper hand in consistently producing result-oriented games.

"I mean, if you look at Test cricket today, nearly every Test match produces a result. So, I think bowlers are probably holding the sway in some of the Test matches that we are seeing."

"You know, two-day matches, three-day matches. So, bowlers have started holding the sway in Test cricket."

"So, it will be interesting to see over the next couple of years if bowlers are able to pull this back a little bit in T20s," Dravid said.

But is it possible for bowlers to pull things back if the pitches are as flat as they have been in recent times? Dravid agreed that some help is needed for the bowlers.

"They may need a little bit of support and I think the way is probably to have a little more challenging wickets to ensure that there is something in it for the bowlers, whether it is the tracks that turn or whether it is a little bit more pace and bounce that give the bowlers a little bit more of a chance."

"Because I don't think we can increase the size of the boundaries and already there is no space to go and increase the size of the boundaries," Dravid put forth his take. (PTI)

SAI announces 2030 CWG engagement initiatives for youngsters

NEW DELHI, May 12: In a bid to build momentum for the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) on Tuesday announced that three nationwide engagement initiatives will have been launched, including a reel-making contest for youngsters.

As part of the campaign, participants can take part in the 'Commonwealth Games 2030 Torch Design Contest', the 'CWG Reel Challenge', and the 'Commonwealth Games 2030 Quiz'.

The competitions are open to all MyBharat users and "seek to build awareness and excitement around the Games".

The 'Torch Design Contest' invites citizens to design a torch con-



cept inspired by "India's culture, heritage, innovation, sustainability, and sporting excellence."

"Entries may be submitted in digital or hand-drawn format along with an optional concept note of up to 200 words. The contest began on Monday and will end of May 20.

Selected winners will receive Fit India hampers and recognition cer-

tificates, while eligible participants will receive digital participation certificates.

The 'CWG Reel Challenge' will require participants to create "original reels showcasing India's evolving sporting culture, local sports infrastructure, and fitness".

The reel duration must not exceed 60 seconds. The challenge which began on May 7 will wind up on May 16, with one entry permitted per participant.

The 'Commonwealth Games 2030 Quiz' consists of 10 multiple-choice questions to be completed within 5 minutes. Participants must score at least 8 marks to qualify. Only one attempt per participant is allowed. (PTI)

DC captain Axar Patel fined

DHARAMSALA, May 12: Delhi Capitals skipper Axar Patel has been fined Rs 12 lakh after his team maintained a slow over rate in their win against Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League here.

Axar and David Miller scored counter attacking fifties to help DC defeat Punjab Kings by three-wickets and keep their slim Playoff chances alive here on Monday.

"Delhi Capitals (DC) Captain Axar Patel has been fined after his team maintained a slow over rate during the match Match No. 55 of TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 against Punjab Kings (PBKS) at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium, Dharamshala," said an IPL media advisory.

"As this was his team's first offence of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which pertains to minimum over-rate offences, Axar Patel was fined INR 12 lakhs," it added.

Currently seventh on the points table, DC next take on Rajasthan Royals at home on Sunday. (PTI)

Won't beat around the bush, I'll just say fielding and bowling again: Iyer after loss to DC

DHARAMSALA, May 12: Skipper Shreyas Iyer did not mince words after Punjab Kings slumped to their fourth successive defeat, blaming the team's bowling and fielding after failing to defend what he felt was a total "30 runs more" than par on a tricky pitch against Delhi Capitals.

PBKS lost by three wickets to Delhi Capitals in a home IPL game here on Monday.

"I won't beat around the bush, I'll just say fielding and bowling again," Iyer said.

Priyansh Arya hit half a dozen sixes in his whirlwind 33-ball 56 before DC pacers tweaked their lengths to limit Punjab Kings to 210 for five. Besides Arya, Iyer made 59 not out off 36 balls to push PBKS to 210 for 5 on a wicket that had something for the fast bowlers.

Aggressive knocks from David Miller (51 off 28) and skipper Axar Patel (56 off 30) allowed DC to gun down 211 in 19 overs for the highest chase at the HPCA Stadium.

Asked if he thought 210 was a good score on this wicket, Iyer said: "Absolutely, I feel that it was 30 runs more on this wicket considering how the ball was seaming and there was variable bounce."

Iyer said he thought of bringing in impact substitute Yuzvendra Chahal into the attack but changed his mind witnessing the assistance for the seamers from the pitch.

"There was absolutely a thought in my mind (on introducing Chahal), but the way ball was seaming and the way it was helping seamers, I think if we would have executed our line and length precisely, we could have been able to extract wickets, but unfortunately again, we didn't."

"I always say that the hard length - short of a hard length - is the best ball, especially when a new batsman is coming in. It's not easy to hit because if you keep repeating those balls, at least one ball gives a chance of mis-hitting and

you can get a wicket. We've been short of planning," he said.

Winning captain Axar Patel said DC executed their plans well in the crucial moments against Punjab Kings, an area where the side had previously fallen short.

"Since last time I have been saying we are losing the crucial moments. We are a good team, playing a good cricket but not winning those crucial moments. Really happy with the way we played and hopefully we continue playing like this," he said.

"The first 3-4 overs we went for 60 runs and we pulled things back. In the middle overs the way Madhav and Mukesh bowled were the winning moments."

"Even with the bat, after my dismissal the way Miller, Ashutosh and Madhav batted it was great. The ball was swinging and seaming, we didn't bowl in the right areas in the first 3-4 overs but it was doing something right through, that's why I didn't use spin." (PTI)

No major changes despite losing streak, says PBKS spin bowling coach Bahutule



DHARAMSALA, May 12: Punjab Kings spin-bowling coach Sairaj Bahutule said the team will not be making any major changes despite losing their fourth game on the trot, while admitting that poor catching at crucial junctures is a major concern.

Punjab Kings had begun the season in dominant fashion, winning six matches in a row to sit atop the table during the opening phase of the league. But the Shreyas Iyer-led side has since hit a slump, losing their last four matches.

Fielding lapses -- particularly dropped catches -- have repeatedly hurt the team at vital moments. In the last two matches, Punjab have dropped five catches.

"Again, today unfortunately we dropped a few catches at the crucial time. We will reflect, but again, no time for us to really brood about it," Bahutule said at the post-match press conference.

"I think the team that has been doing so well. Yes, we have lost a few games. We will again reflect on certain areas only. There won't be any major changes, in the sense, everybody has been performing," he added.

In Punjab's three-wicket defeat to Delhi Capitals on Monday, the Kings dropped two catches, including one of Axar Patel, who went on to score a counter-attacking half-century.

"At the crucial time, we are dropping a catch, which unfortunately is breaking the momentum that we were getting. If we had caught those two catches, I don't think they would have maybe reached the target, but it would have been very difficult for them. But we will definitely look into it and see how we can just turn it around for ourselves."

"I think it's very important to just take the learnings from this game, whatever errors we've made, there were some unforced errors," he added.

Once the table toppers, Punjab have now dropped down to the fourth spot with 13 points from 11 games. (PTI)

Disruption after wrestlers' protest hurt career momentum: Deepak Punia

GONDA (UTTAR PRADESH), May 12: Asian Games silver medallist Deepak Punia believes the disruption caused by the wrestlers' protest at jantar man-tar and the resulting lack of international exposure derailed the momentum of several Indian wrestlers, including his own, as he attempts to revive his career this season.

Once considered India's most consistent wrestler in the 86kg category, Deepak has struggled to regain his earlier rhythm after narrowly missing out on a bronze medal at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. Since then, his only major podium finish has been a silver medal at the Asian Games in 2023.

The 26-year-old, who won the National Open Ranking Tournament here on Monday, however, remains ineligible for the May 31 selection trials for Asian Games as per the current Wrestling Federation of India policy, which does not consider this tournament for entry into trials.

Deepak said the long phase of uncertainty in Indian wrestling following the wrestlers' protest significantly impacted athletes by reducing international competition opportunities and exposure.

"After 2023, many tournaments stopped because of the protest and all that happened. We did not get chances to compete abroad like we used to earlier," Deepak told PTI during an interaction here.

"When you are competing internationally every second or third month, your shortcomings come out and you improve. But if you get only one World Championships or one Asian Championships in a year, there is a huge difference in performance," he said.

In 2023, India's prominent wrestlers Vinesh Phogat, Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik had led a prolonged



protest against the then WFI President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who has been accused of sexual harassment.

The WFI was suspended by the sports ministry and an ad-hoc panel ran and controlled the show for a long time. It had led to disruption of tournaments and wrestling activities like camps in India.

The matter is in court. When pointed out that he was also seen at the protest spot, Deepak said, "I would not like to dwell on those things now. Let it be."

The Haryana wrestler also linked his disappointing outing at the 2025 World Championships to inad-

quate training support and lack of quality sparring partners. He faded well before the medal round to finish 11th.

"I accept that I made mistakes in training. I did not get a sparring partner of that level before the World Championships. Sparring partners play a huge role," he said.

"I could not go abroad much and there was no proper camp setup there. Otherwise, I definitely believe I could have won a medal at the World Championships."

Despite the setbacks, Deepak said his focus remains firmly on winning gold at the next Asian Games in the

86 kg category.

"My target is to change the colour of my medal at the Asian Games," he said.

However, he will not be able to get into the national team reckoning for the Asian Games in Japan. He won the 92kg event in National Open in Gonda but since winners of this tournament will not be considered for Asian Games trials in Lucknow on May 31.

"I am here to earn a chance for Asian Games only, otherwise why am I here?. I will request the federation to consider me," he said. Also, the Asian Games has an 86kg category while he won the Gonda event in 92kg.

Reflecting on the changes in Indian wrestling, Deepak welcomed the return of foreign coaches, saying they bring a more scientific and tactical approach compared to the traditional Indian emphasis on hard work.

"Our Indian coaches focus more on hard work. Foreign coaches focus more on smart work. They work on small shortcomings, mindset, nutrition and recovery," he said.

Asked about the growing competition in the 86kg division, Deepak named youngsters like Mukund Dahiya among the emerging wrestlers but insisted his attention remains on self-improvement rather than rivals.

"My focus is only on my preparation and performance," he said.

Deepak also acknowledged that mistakes made in the last few years may have affected his career trajectory. He said he prefers not to think about missed chances.

"I have to move forward and not think about Tokyo Games heartbreak," he signed off. (PTI)