

6 NATION

- Fuel price hike among world's lowest outside Gulf nations: BJP
- Centre will blame West Asia conflict for all its failures: Bhagwant Mann on fuel price hike

7 NORTHEAST

- Church leaders offer to broker peace in Manipur
- Nagaland tourism dept presents its key initiatives to gov Yadav

Centre unveils major Brahmaputra development push with ₹4,800 crore waterways plan

Brahmaputra emerging as economic lifeline of NE: Sarba

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 19: The Centre on Tuesday unveiled an ambitious roadmap to transform the Brahmaputra River into a major economic and connectivity corridor for the Northeast, with plans to invest nearly ₹4,800 crore in inland waterways infrastructure over the next five years.

The roadmap was discussed during the 14th meeting of the High-Powered Review Board (HPRB) of the Brahmaputra Board held in Guwahati under the chairmanship of Union Jal Shakti Minister C R Patil.

The meeting was attended by Union Minister for Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister of State for Jal Shakti Raj Bhushan Choudhary, ministers from northeastern states, technical experts and senior officials.

Addressing the gathering, Sonowal described the Brahmapu-

tra as a "critical national asset" and said the river was emerging as an economic lifeline for the Northeast through sustainable inland water transport and enhanced regional connectivity.

He said the Inland Waterways Authority of India has been actively developing the Brahmaputra, designated as National Waterway-2, to improve cargo and passenger movement via the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route connecting the Northeast with Kolkata and Haldia ports.

According to officials, projects worth nearly ₹751 crore have already been completed in Assam, including terminals at Pandu, Dhubri and Jogighopa, floating jetties and improved shore infrastructure.

Works worth more than ₹1,100 crore are currently underway, including fairway development, ship repair facilities, tourist jetties and



a Regional Centre of Excellence in Dibrugarh.

The proposed ₹4,800 crore investment plan includes construction of community jetties, cruise terminals, dredgers, cargo vessels and urban water transport systems aimed at improving logistics effi-

ciency and last-mile connectivity across riverine areas of the Northeast.

The meeting also witnessed the launch of the State Water Reforms Framework (SWRF), a national initiative aimed at strengthening water governance reforms across

states and Union Territories.

Patil said water security remains central to India's development vision and stressed the need for robust governance systems, institutional reforms, technological innovation and community participation in sustainable water management.

The SWRF framework includes 75 indicators across five dimensions covering policy and regulation, infrastructure, digitalisation, project monitoring and community engagement.

The initiative is intended to encourage states and Union Territories to undertake measurable reforms in areas such as groundwater regulation, floodplain zoning, wastewater reuse, river basin planning and institutional strengthening.

During the HPRB meeting, officials reviewed ongoing river basin management (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Tuliram slams Oppn for spreading misinformation on UCC



HT Bureau

DIPHU, May 19: Tuliram Ronghang on Tuesday said the proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Assam would not affect the Sixth Schedule districts of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong.

Ronghang made the remarks while addressing the BJP's "Vijay Utsav" programme at Taralango for the Diphu Legislative Assembly Constituency, where BJP candidate Niso Terangpi secured victory in the recently concluded Assembly elections with a margin of 49,740 votes over APHLC-backed Independent candidate JI

Kathar.

Addressing party workers and supporters, Ronghang accused Opposition parties, including the Indian National Congress and All Party Hills Leaders Conference, of spreading misinformation regarding the proposed UCC.

"The opposition parties are misleading people by claiming that Scheduled Tribes will lose their indigenous beliefs once the UCC is implemented. They are falsely stating that traditional sacrificial worship practices and Christian worship services in churches will be prohibited," Ronghang said.

He asserted that such allegations were baseless and assured that the Karbi community and other indigenous groups would continue practising their traditional customs and religious beliefs without interference.

Commenting on the BJP's victory in all five Assembly constituencies (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Govt gives in to protest by Tiwa community

Survey for Morigaon satellite township project cancelled

MORIGAON, May 19: Following protests by tribals, the Assam government has shelved an ongoing survey work to develop a 'satellite township' near the Tata semiconductor project in Morigaon district of the state, said an official order.

The Tiwa and Bodo community people have been protesting for the last three days against the proposed township comprising Sindhisar, Naldhara and Bihita villages near Jagirao, and were demanding an immediate halt to the project.

Morigaon District Commissioner Anamika Tewari, in a public notice, said that, considering objections from different organisations against the satellite township, the administration has immediately cancelled the survey work.

The district administration was carrying out the survey in the Tiwa villages to prepare a relocation and rehabilitation proposal, she added.

The government's plan to set up the township created resentment among the tribal people of the area.

The All Tiwa Students' Union (ATSU) and other tribal organisations resorted to protest rallies during the last three days against the proposed eviction of those three villages in Gobha tribal belt for establishing the satellite township in the area.

The organisations have demanded full cancellation of the township project, not just the survey works.

With an investment of Rs 27,000 crore, the upcoming facility of Tata Electronics' Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) is expected to produce up to 48 million semiconductor chips per day, employing advanced packaging technologies like flip chip and Integrated System in Package (ISIP). (PTI)

Naxalism eradicated from country before March 31 deadline: Shah

JAGDALPUR, May 19: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said Naxalism has been completely eradicated from the country ahead of the March 31 deadline due to the valour, courage and supreme sacrifice of the security forces.

Addressing a press conference here, Shah said certain dates hold historical significance in the "Naxal-Free India Campaign" -- December 13, 2023, when the BJP government in Chhattisgarh took oath, the resolute campaign for the complete eradication of Naxalism began.

The second date is August 24, 2024, when a meeting of the directors general of police (DG) from all states was convened to resolve to make the country Naxal-free by March 31, 2026, Shah said.

"The third date, which you all know - March 31, 2026 (deadline set by the Centre to eliminate Naxalism from the country). Due to the valour, courage, and supreme sacrifice of the security forces, Naxalism

has been completely eradicated from the country ahead of the set deadline," Shah told reporters.

The home minister said he could say this without any hesitation that many non-BJP governments in different states have helped the Union government in its plans to eliminate Naxalism, but the previous Congress government in Chhattisgarh did not provide help.

"It was after December 2023, when the BJP government was formed in Chhattisgarh, that we could eliminate Naxalism in Bastar," he said.

The minister said some intellectuals have been arguing for years that "Naxalism flourished because development could not reach these areas."

"But the truth is exactly the opposite... Development could not reach these areas because Naxalism was there," he said.

The home minister said that due to the Naxalites, the entire region had been deprived of development.

"They neither received ration cards, nor benefited from the free grain scheme, nor availed the benefit of health insurance up to Rs 5 lakh. Employment was nowhere to be seen," he said.

He said there were many areas in the country that were even more backward than the Naxal-affected regions, but there was no Naxalism there.

"Therefore, those areas gradually progressed on the path of development. On the other hand, Bastar and other Naxal-affected areas remained deprived of development due to violence and fear," he said.

The current situation, Shah asserted, was that as of May 19, 2026, the areas that were in the grip of Naxalism at one point will witness a new vision of comprehensive development taking shape.

The home minister gave details of development programmes being launched in the region.

"To free the vast Bastar division from (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Atul Bora allotted Parliamentary Affairs Dept as 'interim arrangement'



GUWAHATI, May 19: Minister Atul Bora has been entrusted with the Parliamentary Affairs Department as an interim arrangement, ahead of the first session of the new assembly, an official order said.

Bora is among the four ministers inducted in the second Himanta Biswa Sarma-led government and were sworn-in together with the Chief Minister.

Ahead of the first sitting of the new assembly from Thursday,

Bora has been given the responsibility of the Parliamentary Affairs Department.

"The Governor of Assam, on the advice of Chief Minister, is pleased to allow Shri Atul Bora, Minister, Panchayat and Rural Development, Implementation of Assam Accord, Border Protection and Development, Excise departments to also look after the matters pertaining to Parliamentary Affairs Department, as an interim arrangement," (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Two girls rescued from Delhi-bound train

DIPHU, May 19: Two girls were rescued from a Delhi-bound train in Assam's Bongaigaon district, and three suspected traffickers were arrested, police said on Tuesday.

The girls, both residents of Diphu, were brought back along with the arrested trio on Monday night, they said.

The girls -- students of classes 10 and 12 at a government school in Diphu -- had been reported missing by their parents last week after they failed to return home from school.

A coordinated operation by the Assam Police and the Government Railway Police led to the rescue of the girls from the train in Bongaigaon and the arrest of the three accused, officials said.

The arrested youths, aged between 18 (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Thunderstorms, heavy rain likely in Assam over next few days: Officials

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, May 19: Assam is likely to witness widespread thunderstorms, lightning and heavy rainfall over the next several days, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issuing warnings for multiple districts across the state, officials said on Tuesday.

According to the district-wise weather forecast issued by the Regional Meteorological Centre in Guwahati, several parts of Assam are expected to experience thunderstorms accompanied by lightning, gusty winds and isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall between May 20 and May 25.

Officials said districts in western Assam, including Dhubri, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Barpeta, are likely to witness thunder-

storms with lightning and heavy rain from May 21 onwards.

In some areas, gusty winds with speeds of 30 to 40 kmph are also expected.

The IMD forecast further stated that isolated places in districts such as Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Chirang and Barpeta may experience heavy to very heavy rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and gusty winds on May 23 and 24.

In central Assam, districts including Nagaon, Hajo, Morigaon and Darrang are likely to receive scattered rain and thunderstorms during the week, while parts of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong could witness thunderstorms with lightning at isolated places.

The weather office also predicted intensified rain activity in upper

Assam districts such as Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Majuli and Charaideo.

Officials warned that isolated places in these districts may receive heavy to very heavy rainfall along with thunderstorms and gusty winds reaching speeds of 30 to 40 kmph between May 22 and May 24.

In southern Assam, including Cachar, Hailakandi, Sribhumi and Dima Hasao districts, thunderstorms with lightning are also likely at isolated places during the forecast period.

The IMD has advised people to remain alert during thunderstorm activity and avoid taking shelter under trees or near electric poles during lightning strikes. Authorities have also asked district administrations to (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Transport Minister urges people to reduce private vehicle use amid rising fuel prices

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, May 19: Assam Transport Minister Charam Boro on Tuesday appealed to people to reduce the use of private vehicles and rely more on public transport in view of the rising prices of petrol and diesel.

Speaking to reporters shortly after assuming charge of the department, Charam Boro said the government is reviewing measures to ease pressure on commuters and improve public transport facilities across the state.

He said people should make collective efforts to minimise fuel consumption during the present situation by opting for buses and trains instead of using personal vehicles wherever possible.

"The public should also think about the situation. If people use buses and trains instead of private vehicles, even to a small extent, it will help us deal with the present circumstances," the minister said.

The minister stated that he had formally taken charge of the office only recently and had not yet conducted detailed meetings with officials.

However, he added that he would begin reviewing

the functioning of the department and examine the existing transport infrastructure and policies.

"I took charge only yesterday. I have not yet held detailed meetings, but I will review everything and start working on the issues step by step," he said.

Referring to the growing number of vehicles on city roads, the minister acknowledged concerns over traffic congestion and said the government does not want commuters to suffer because of excessive traffic jams caused by the increasing number of buses and private vehicles.

"We do not want a situation where passengers suffer due to traffic congestion in the city. We will frame rules and take necessary steps to manage the situation properly," Boro added.

The minister also pointed out that the state government has already started reducing unnecessary movement of official convoys and departmental travel.

He said many departmental meetings are now being conducted online to save fuel and reduce travel requirements. "Even ministerial convoys and district visits have been reduced. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

India rejects allegations of violation of human rights; cites constitutional values

OSLO, May 19: For the second time in three days, India has categorically rejected allegations of human rights violations, highlighting the country's constitutional values of justice, liberty, and freedom of expression.

Sibi George, Secretary (West) in the Ministry of External Affairs, made the remarks while responding to Norwegian journalist Helle Lyng Svendsen's question about why India should be trusted given its alleged human rights violations.

The senior diplomat was addressing a press conference on Monday night to brief the media on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bilateral talks with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store.

Earlier, Svendsen unsuccessfully attempted to ask a question to the Indian prime minister after he and Store made their media statements. The media was already told the two leaders wouldn't take questions at the joint interaction.

Subsequently, the Indian Embassy in Norway responded to Svendsen's social media post on the issue and said she was "most welcome to come and ask your questions" at a press briefing organised by the mission.

The Embassy is organising a press briefing

on the Prime Minister's Visit this evening at 9:30 pm at hotel Radisson Blu Plaza hotel. You are most welcome to come and ask your questions there, it said.

George had faced similar questions on Saturday evening from two Dutch journalists in The Hague on the perceived slide in freedom of expression in India.

Modi reached Oslo after visiting the Netherlands and Sweden.

In answering Svendsen's, he elaborated on why India has been a trusted partner of so many countries globally and cited New Delhi's successful hosting of the G20 summit, the Voice of the Global South summits and the recent AI Impact Summit.

The diplomat also made a mention of India sending vaccines to over 100 countries during the Covid-19 pandemic and argued that the country is "trusted" globally for its rich contribution in addressing pressing challenges.

"India is a civilisational country which offered something unique to the world and it continues to offer," he said.

George said India's Constitution guarantees a sovereign, socialist, secular democratic republic, and ensures (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

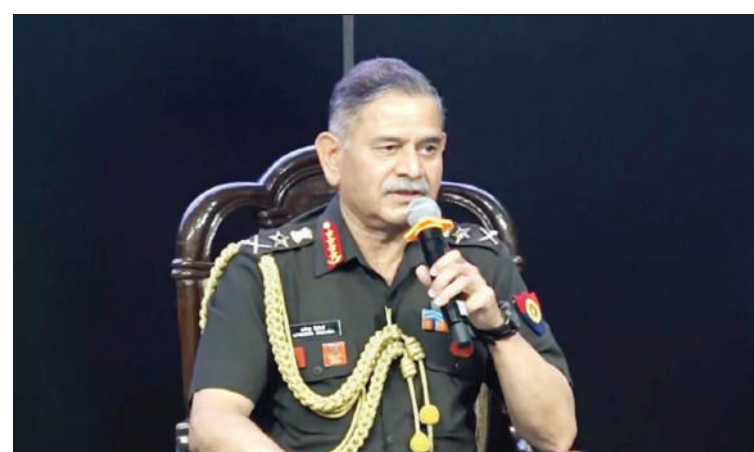
'We were promised a world where prosperity would make power politics obsolete'

Op Sindoor reflected smart power: Army chief

NEW DELHI, May 19: Under Operation Sindoor, Indian forces dismantled terror infrastructure, punctured a long-standing strategic assumption, and then stopped "deliberately and purposefully," and it reflected "smart power" in its most complete expression, Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi said on Tuesday.

In his address at a seminar hosted at the Manekshaw Centre here, he also said that twelve months ago, India offered the world a "partial answer" to the so-called smart power question.

"On the intervening night of May 6-7 in 2025, Bharat acted. In a precisely defined 22-minute operation window, Operation Sindoor delivered military precision, information control, diplomatic signalling and economic resolve, as one coherent national act. We struck deep, dismantled terror infrastructure, punctured a long standing strategic assumption, and then stopped, deliberately and purposefully," the Army chief said



"The deliberate thought after 88 hours, was smart power in its most complete expression, knowing exactly which instrument to apply, at what intensity, and precisely when to convert a military moment into a strategic one," he asserted.

The seminar, titled, 'Security to Pros-

perity: Smart Power for Sustained National Growth', hosted by defence think-tank Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), was attended by senior military officials, various retired Army officers and representatives from several countries.

Gen Dwivedi said today, the "world

around us is sending a more complex signal -- disorder, distrust, and dichotomy in alliances".

"We were promised a world where prosperity would make power politics obsolete... instead, we have a world where power politics is being used to reorganise prosperity," he argued.

In his address, he asked the audience if smart power is the "defining currency" of sustained national growth, or has the "raw calculus of hard power", once again reclaimed the centrestage of the global order.

But to answer it, one must first read the world as it is, not as one wishes it to be, the general officer cautioned.

"The 21st century opened with a confident thesis that forces of trade, supply chains, additional connectivity, would make nations too interdependent to conflict. Paradoxically same forces that promised binding nations together, have progressively become instruments of coercion," the Army chief said. "Semiconductors (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Dubai Chamber sees nearly 4,000 new Indian companies join in Q1 2026

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 19: Dubai Chamber of Commerce has announced that 3,995 new Indian companies joined the chamber during the first quarter of 2026, reflecting the strengthening economic relationship between India and Dubai. According to the chamber, the total number of Indian companies registered as active members reached 84,088 by the end of March 2026, making India the largest foreign business community in Dubai.

Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah, President and CEO of Dubai Chambers, said the continued rise in Indian companies demonstrates growing trust in Dubai as a stable and reliable platform for interna-

tional business expansion.

He stated that Dubai offers infrastructure, connectivity and policy support needed by businesses to navigate evolving global economic conditions.

Lootah also emphasised the long-standing cultural and economic ties between India and Dubai and said Dubai Chambers would continue supporting Indian investors and enterprises seeking to expand through the emirate. Joy Alukkas, Chairman and Managing Director of the Joyalukkas Group, said the UAE has remained a launchpad for the group's global expansion over the last 39 years.

He credited the UAE leadership for providing continuity, stability and strong support to businesses

even during global uncertainties.

Siddharth Balachandran described Dubai as a stable economic environment supported by forward-looking policies and continuous engagement between the government and the business community. Similarly, Nilesh Ved, Chairman of AppCorp Holding and owner of Apparel Group, said Dubai has evolved into a major global city offering businesses a stable environment, strong banking ecosystem and investor-friendly policies.

The chamber noted that Dubai's business ecosystem continues to benefit from advanced infrastructure, transparent regulations, logistics capabilities and financial incentives.

Transporters' strike: Gadkari discusses issue with Delhi CM; hopes for a resolution soon



NEW DELHI, May 19: Amid transporter union AIMTC's decision to strike against the Delhi government's decision to hike the environment compensation cess on commercial vehicles, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday said he is hopeful of resolving the issue soon after discussion with Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

The Transporters' body All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) on Tuesday called for a three-day strike across Delhi and the surrounding national capital region beginning Thursday, seeking rollback of an increased environment compensation cess on commercial vehicles and revoking ban on those with BS IV or earlier-stage emission standards.

Addressing a press conference here, Gadkari said, "I discussed this issue (collection of environment compensation cess) with CM Gupta. We will soon find a solution to this issue".

The transporters' body said the strike call is against the unjust and unfair policies imposed by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM).

Last month, the Delhi government increased the environment compensation cess (ECC) on commercial vehicles by over 50 per cent and decided to implement a 5 per cent annual fee hike.

Effective April 19, the fee on light commercial vehicles and two-axle trucks has been increased from ₹ 1,400 to ₹ 2,000, while the charge for three-axle

trucks and heavier vehicles has been raised to ₹ 4,000 from ₹ 2,600.

AIMTC, which claims to represent 95 lakh truckers and 26 lakh private bus, taxi and maxi cab operators, as well as state-level transport unions across the country, said these measures have caused serious socio-economic consequences, severely impacting the transport sector and livelihoods of operators.

It said that CAQM and the Delhi government have indiscriminately imposed the ECC on all Delhi-bound goods vehicles, rather than charging only the transit vehicles in line with the Supreme Court's order.

It pointed out that ECC is levied even on vehicles carrying essential items into Delhi, as well as on the empty vehicles, which come to Delhi for loading.

AIMTC stated that ECC is also being levied on BS VI vehicles, which are cleaner vehicles allowed by the CAQM even during the enforcement of the stricter pollution control restriction, Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP-IV).

It also alleged that the proposed ban on the entry of BS IV commercial vehicles in Delhi lacks a scientific basis and legal rationale.

The transporters' body demanded that BS-VI vehicles, those carrying essential commodities as well as the empty vehicles, be exempt from the ECC levy.

Citing news reports, it said of the ₹ 1,753.2 crore of ECC collected till December 4, last year, the government spent only ₹ 781.4 crore, while the remaining ₹ 971.8 crore, 55.4 per cent, remained unused.

It said that the CAQM's proposed ban on BS-IV commercial vehicles from 1 November 2026 will severely impact the livelihood, financial stability, and sustenance of more than 17 lakh truckers and their families in Delhi-NCR.

Banning vehicles solely based on registration category is not scientifically justified, as in light of urban traffic, BS-IV and BS-VI diesel vehicles have nearly similar tailpipe emissions, it said, suggesting the enforcement based on actual tailpipe emissions as provided in the Motor Vehicles Act. (PTI)

Peak power demand hits all-time high of over 260 GW on May 19

NEW DELHI, May 19: India's peak power demand surged to an all-time high of 260.45 GW on Tuesday, mainly due to increased usage of cooling devices such as air-conditioners and desert coolers amid intensifying heat wave conditions, according to the power ministry.

"Today, the peak power demand (solar hours) of 260.45 GW was met successfully at 15:40 hrs. This is a new high surpassing yesterday's peak demand (solar hours) of 257.37 GW, which was also successfully met," the Ministry of Power said in a post on social media platform X.

The ministry also stated that Yesterday (Monday) at 15:42 hours, the peak power demand of 257.37 GW was met without any shortfall.

This peak demand was a new high, surpassing the previous record of 256.1 GW, which was met on April 25, 2026, it said.

Monday's peak demand

eclipsed the previous all-time high of 256.11 GW recorded on April 25 at 15:38 hrs.

The power ministry has projected that the peak power demand would reach 270 GW this summer.

Meanwhile, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast the continuation of the heatwave this week in large parts of northwest and central India, as the mercury inched towards the 45-degree mark in many places on Monday.

Isolated pockets of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi are expected to witness heatwave conditions between Monday and May 24, while severe heatwave conditions are set to hit parts of Uttar Pradesh from Tuesday onwards, the weather office has said.

Bhatinda in Punjab reeled under intense heat with the temperature touching a high of 47 degrees Celsius during the day on Monday, while parts of Haryana and Rajasthan also witnessed the day's

temperature above 46 degrees Celsius.

Parts of Delhi have seen the mercury touching 44 degrees Celsius on Monday, and the city is staring at an extended spell of punishing heat in the upcoming week.

The country's peak power demand has risen with temperatures from April onwards and further intensified in May.

Experts said demand and consumption of electricity may rise further due to rising temperatures, more frequent use of air-conditioners, air coolers, and other appliances by domestic and commercial consumers.

Last summer, the peak power demand was 242.77 GW, recorded in June, 2025, but stayed below the government's estimate of 277 GW. In May 2024, the peak power demand reached 250 GW, a record at that time and exceeding the previous all-time peak of 243.27 GW set in September 2023. (PTI)

Slice Bank launches AI-powered 'Slice One' banking terminal in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 19: Slice Bank has introduced "Slice One", an AI-powered banking terminal designed to integrate multiple branch banking services into a single digital platform aimed at improving accessibility and operational efficiency.

The platform offers services including instant account opening, debit card printing, cash deposits and withdrawals, QR-based banking interactions, NFC payments, biometric authentication and assisted onboarding.

According to the company, additional services such as credit products, cheque issuance and expanded banking workflows will be integrated gradually.

Slice Bank stated that the initiative is intended to make branch banking more intelligent and efficient through AI-assisted workflows and API-led banking infrastructure, enabling banking teams to focus more on customer and merchant support.

The company said the platform has been designed for scalable deployment across metro cities, semi-urban regions and remote locations without requiring extensive infrastructure investments.

Its modular architecture is aimed at facilitating faster rollout while maintaining seamless banking services.

UPI-based infrastructure remains central to the platform, with the company positioning Slice One as a merchant-focused banking system integrating onboarding, payments, servicing and cash management.

The launch event in Guwahati was attended by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Ashok Singhal.

Dilip Asbe, Managing Director and CEO of the National Payments Corporation of India, also attended the programme and spoke about the role of UPI-led infrastructure in expanding digital payments and banking access across the country.

Slice Bank said it plans to expand Slice One across its branch network as part of its broader strategy to build technology-driven banking infrastructure tailored to the evolving requirements of merchants and businesses across India.

MUMBAI, May 19: The rupee slipped to a record low of 96.60 against the US dollar before settling at 96.52 (provisional) on Tuesday, weighed down by soaring crude oil prices, persistent foreign capital outflows, and a resilient dollar buoyed by global risk-aversion.

The rupee is Asia's worst-performing currency in 2026, having tumbled to a historic intraday low of 96.60 against the US dollar. The currency has depreciated 1.5 per cent this month and more than 7 per cent this year.

Forex traders said the rupee remains vulnerable to rising crude oil prices and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 96.38 against the US dollar, then lost further ground and touched a record low of 96.60, before settling at 96.52 (provisional), registering a fall of 32 paise over its previous close.

On Monday, the Indian rupee settled at a record low of 96.20 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias amid a strong dollar and rising US treasury yields. Ongoing geopolitical tensions and FII outflows may also put pressure on the rupee.

"However, any intervention by the RBI and certain restrictions on the import of gold and silver may support the rupee at lower levels. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 96 to 96.60," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Commodities Research, Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 99.24, higher by 0.05 per cent due to simmering Iran tensions.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading down 1.92 per cent at USD 109.95 per barrel in futures trade.

Moreover, emerging market economies, including India, continue to feel the pressure of rising crude oil prices, as elevated rates accelerate the outflows of US dollars, along with the withdrawals of funds by foreign portfolio investors, traders said.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump has said he halted fresh strikes on Iran at the request of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, asserting that serious discussions were underway with Tehran that could lead to an acceptable deal. (PTI)

Steel product maker Jindal India completes ₹ 1,500 cr expansion in Bengal

KOLKATA, May 19: Jindal (India) Ltd on Tuesday announced the completion of its ₹ 1,500-crore capital expenditure programme in West Bengal with the commissioning of a new high-speed continuous colour coating line at its manufacturing complex in Howrah district. The commissioning comes months after the company operationalised a galvanising coating line, cold rolling mill and pickling facility in February, as part of its expansion project in the state.

It manufactures coated flat steel products, pipes and aluminium foil from its facilities in Howrah.

The company, part of the BC Jindal Group, said the newly commissioned facility at Ranihati is expected to produce 2,75,000 tonnes annually and would signifi-

cantly enhance its downstream steel manufacturing capacity. Its production capacity is projected to rise to 60,000 tonnes per month, which could help revenue grow by 75 per cent in FY'27, a company statement said. "The commissioning of this new line, a part of our larger expansion strategy, mirrors our unwavering commitment to cater to India's evolving infrastructure needs," Jindal (India) Ltd said in the statement.

The company said coated flat steel products account for around 70 per cent of its total production.

The new colour coating line is equipped to manufacture a wide range of coated steel products using polyester, epoxy, PVC and Teflon paint coatings, the statement added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Brahmaputra emerging as

initiatives, flood and erosion control projects, drainage development, springshed rejuvenation and digital transformation measures across the Northeast and West Bengal.

The Board noted that 76 river basins and sub-basins covering the Brahmaputra and Barak systems have been identified for preparation and updating of master plans using technologies such as GIS, remote sensing, LIDAR and hydrological modelling.

The meeting also discussed plans to transform the Brahmaputra Board into a technology-driven River Basin Organisation and reviewed proposals for revitalisation of the North Eastern Hydraulic and Allied Research Institute (NEHARI) and redevelopment of the Brahmaputra Board office complex at Basistha in Guwahati. (With inputs from PTI)

Tuliram slams Oppn

of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong — Bokajan, Howraghat, Diphu, Rongkhang and Amri — Rongkhang thanked voters for their continued support.

"Our victory is the people's victory. We thank the people of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong for their continued faith in the BJP. It is now our responsibility to raise the region's issues and developmental needs in the State Assembly," he said.

Rongkhang further stated that BJP legislators from the region, including himself, Surjyo Rongphar, Lunsing Teron, Habbey Teron and Niso Terangpi, would continue pressing for implementation of Article 244(A) of the Constitution to grant Autonomous State status.

He also appreciated BJP workers, including Shakti Kendras, local committees and mandal committees, for strengthening the party's support base in the hill districts and urged them to maintain the same momentum ahead of the forthcoming KAAC and Municipal Board elections.

Addressing the gathering, Niso Terangpi described her victory as a milestone for women in the region.

"It is for the first time that a woman candidate has won an Assembly election from Karbi Anglong. The BJP's slogan of 'Nari Shakti' has truly been reflected," she said.

Terangpi also thanked Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Tuliram Rongkhang for their support during the election campaign.

The programme was attended by Amarsing Tisso, MLAs Lunsing Teron, Surjyo Rongphar and Habbey Teron, along with KAAC Executive Members and BJP-EKADC president Roland Killing.

Atul Bora allotted

said the notification dated May 16, shared with the press on Monday.

Besides Bora, the other three ministers in the cabinet are Rameswar Teji, Ajanta Neog and Charan Boro. The four-day assembly session will end on May 26, and Sarma had said the cabinet will be expanded after it. (PTI)

Naxalism eradicated from

Naxalism, the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India had established about 200 security camps here, out of which about 70 camps... i.e. nearly one-third of the camps will be converted into 'Veer Shahid Gundadhur Seva Dera', he said.

He said the objective of the 'Veer Shahid Gundadhur Seva Dera' vision is to connect the entire Bastar region with development and service.

Shah said a Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) will also be established here, and a village dairy will also be set up in the region.

"Every tribal woman will be able to bring milk to the dairy. By utilising this service, we are going to provide every tribal citizen in Bastar with one cow and one buffalo, through which they will be able to market their milk across India in a cooperative model," he said.

The home minister said the forest's non-timber produce will also be linked in a cooperative model, and ensure that its entire profit reaches the tribal people.

"We have launched the 'Bastar Pandum'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji had called for special efforts to formulate schemes to preserve and promote tribal culture," he said.

Under the initiative, a very large platform has been provided for all dimensions of tribal culture, including dance, song, language, attire, cuisine and handicrafts, Shah said.

He added that two Bastar Olympics have already been organised here, in which 3.94 lakh players had participated, including a very large contingent of Naxals who had accepted rehabilitation. (PTI)

Two girls rescued

and 19 years and hailing from Bihar and Delhi, had allegedly befriended the girls through social media and were taking them to the national capital on the promise of jobs, they said.

"We suspect the involvement of a trafficking network. The three arrested persons were brought to Diphu last night. More details will emerge after interrogation," an official said. (PTI)

Thunderstorms, heavy

stay prepared for possible localised flooding, waterlogging and disruptions caused by heavy rainfall and gusty winds.

Recently, in southern Assam, heavy waterlogging and urban flood were reported following moderate downpour.

Transport Minister urges

Departmental meetings can also be conducted online. In the same way, people may also think about reducing the use of private vehicles during this period of high fuel prices," Boro said.

The minister added that discussions would soon be held with the department and further directions would be taken in consultation with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

India rejects allegations

justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship as well as equality of opportunity through the fundamental rights and principles.

"We are one-sixth of the total population of the world, but not one-sixth of the problems of the world," he said.

"People have no understanding of the scale of India. They read one or two reports published by some God-forsaken, ignorant NGOs and then come and ask questions. Don't worry about it. We are proud to be a democracy; we are a democratic society for centuries," he said. (PTI)

Op Sindoor reflected

and their selective availability have become tools for hedging. The Strait of Hormuz has become a zone of active contestation. Global defence spending has crossed USD 2.7 trillion, exceeding the entire UN budget for Sustainable Development Goals," he added.

The boundary between security and prosperity, is "no longer a boundary" at all. Contemporary conflicts now impose sustained demands, not only on armed forces, but also on industrial production, research systems, and governance structures, the general officer underlined.

Gen Dwivedi in his address emphasised that security is no longer a cost that prosperity must bear, it is the precondition for prosperity to commence its progressive journey.

"So in this world, fractured, fast moving, and unforgiving, what must be the architecture of India's smart power. He cited Joseph Nye, who gave the concept of smart power -- describing it as the strategic intelligence to know which instrument to deploy, with what intensity and towards what end.

"For India, it means, using national strength with strategic wisdom to secure peace, accelerate growth, and shape the global environment in our favour," Gen Dwivedi said.

In his address, the Army chief offered a moniker of 'SMART' and explained what each component of it stood for, and how it can help as a strategic design to navigate the present geostrategic landscape.

"I use the word 'SMART', the acronym not as a management construct, but a living framework for how we must think, prepare, and act in the world we now confront under the umbrella of the new normal of hard power," Gen Dwivedi said.

"The first is 'S' or statecraft. In a world that rewards those who simultaneously operate across the DIME (Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic) construct, we must master the art of deploying each instrument of national power with precision and coherence," he underlined.

The second is 'M' or manufacturing depth. As supply chains get fragmented and technology gets leveraged, if not weaponised, a nation that cannot produce what it needs will eventually lose the ability to decide what it wants, the general officer cautioned.

The third one is 'A' or accelerating innovation as part of the prime minister's clarion call of JAI (jointenes, amanirbharta and innovation), and the fourth is 'R' that is resilience, the Army chief said.

"And, the last one is 'T' that is technology primacy. Whoever commands the technology stack in the next decade, will take to command the conflict outcomes. We must not merely absorb emerging technologies. We must indigenise, operationalise, and lead in them," he asserted. (PTI)

CONSTRUCTION OF STAFF QUARTERS

E-Tender Notice No. SCL-ENGG-33-2026 Dated: 16-05-2026. Works tenders through "E" Tendering system for and on behalf of the president of India are invited for the works as detailed below:- **SN-1. Brief Description of Item:** Construction of Staff quarters (Type-II), Total 15+15 = 30 units in replacement of dilapidated old MG quarters in Silchar under SSE/W/Silchar. **Tender Value:** ₹8,75,48,464.13/- **Earnest Money:** ₹17,51,000/- **Date & time of closing tender:** at 15.00 hrs. of 15-06-2026 & opening at 15.00 hrs. of 16-06-2026. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 15-06-2026 in the website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (Works), Lumding at Silchar
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

ENGINEERING WORKS AT LUMDING DIVISION

E-Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/34 of 2026; Dated: 18-05-2026. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN-1. Brief Description of Item:** Painting of All Tunnel (Total length-12.862 KM) surface upto a height of 2M from drain level including trolley refuse in Lumding-Badarpur section. **Tender Value:** ₹97,11,845.13; **Earnest Money:** ₹1,94,200.00. E-tenders will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 08-06-2026 and opened at 15:00 hrs. on 09-06-2026. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 08-06-2026 in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.

DRM/Works, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

DECLARATION FOR CHANGE OF NAME AND GENDER

I, Dipa Das, daughter of Narayan Das and Purnima Das, resident of Rabar Bagan Lane No-6, Kamar Gaon, P.S.- Mahabhairab, P.O.- Tezpur, District- Sonitpur (Assam) do hereby inform the general public that I have renounced my former name "Dipa Das" and female gender, and from today I have adopted the new name "Dip Das" and shall henceforth be known and identified as a male. Henceforth, in all my records, documents, bank accounts, educational certificates, and in all government and non-government matters, I request that my new name "Dip Das" and gender "Male" be recognized and recorded accordingly.
Dip Das

NAME CHANGE

I, have changed my name from MOHAMMED KOBIR AHMED TO KOBIR AHMED by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar, Hojai (Assam) KOBIR AHMED S/O- ATAUR RAHMAN Vill-Uttar Dimrupar, PO-Kapashbari, PS-Murajhar, Dist-Hojai (Assam)

NAME CHANGE

I, have changed my name from MOHAMMED ATAUR RAHMAN TO ATAUR RAHMAN by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar, Hojai (Assam) ATAUR RAHMAN S/o- Late Abdul Nur Vill-Uttar Dimrupar, PO-Kapashbari, PS-Murajhar, Dist-Hojai (Assam)

NAME CORRECTION

I, Fikirchan Biswas, DOB 1/1/1997, S/O Ashananda Biswas, Vill- Barunguri, P.O.- Dunganar P.S.- Bhuragaon, Dist- Morigaon, Assam, PIN 782121, Aadhaar No. 420992454303 have corrected my name from Abhijit Biswas, DOB 01/01/1996 to Fikirchan Biswas, DOB 01/01/1997 through an Executive Magistrate, Morigaon on 07/05/2026. Fikirchan Biswas, DOB 01/01/1997 and Abhijit Biswas, DOB 01/01/1996 is the same and one person..

LOST

I, Miss Iamlong Sajem, daughter of Marwell Rupsi, resident of 134, Shangpung Mission, P.O. Jowai, District West Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya - 793150, have lost my original HSLC Certificate issued by the Board of Secondary Education Assam somewhere in Haflong Market. Any person finding the said document is kindly requested to return it to the undersigned or contact at the earliest convenience. The finder will be highly appreciated.

NAME CHANGE

I, Kriyansh Sangmai Khanikar son of Shri Prasanta Khanikar and Smt. Moonlight Sangmai Khanikar resident of Dewan Basti, ward No.3 Diphu, would like to mention that, I have changed my name from Kavya Sangmai Khanikar to Kriyansh Sangmai Khanikar.

Refinery inks first post-expansion commercial deal with Progressive Fertichem Pvt Ltd NRL signs historic sulphur supply agreement

HT Correspondent

JAGIROAD, May 19: A significant chapter commenced on Monday in the commercial history of Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) with the signing of a historic agreement between NRL and Progressive Fertichem Private Limited (PFPL), Jagiroad.

Under the agreement, 52,500 metric tonnes (MT) of sulphur will be sold annually from the Numaligarh Refinery. According to refinery authorities, this marks the very first commercial agreement signed for any product to be manufactured following the massive NRL Expansion Project. With this, the company has achieved a major market breakthrough in its post-expansion phase.

It has been reported that a dedicated team of officers from NRL's Marketing and Finance departments had been working continuously for nearly four years to bring the agreement to fruition. By efficiently managing prolonged discussions, resolving commercial and financial complexities and



sorting out procedural issues, the team finally succeeded in executing the contract. The refinery management highly praised the coordination and perseverance of the officers involved.

The agreement is expected to secure a long-term and assured off-take arrangement for the sulphur to be produced at the refinery.

The development clearly reflects NRL's readiness to enter the market with products from its expanded capacity at the right time, sources said. They further added that the well-planned and value-accretive commercial partnership

would pave the way for increasing the company's revenue.

NRL authorities stated that the agreement is not merely a commercial transaction, but also a bright reflection of the company's expanded capacity and value-accretive partnerships. It is expected to send a positive message to the industrial sector of Assam and the entire Northeast in the coming days.

Economic experts have opined that the historic agreement will add a new dimension not only to Numaligarh Refinery but also to the industrial landscape of the state.

Air Raid Mock Drill held in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 19: In a significant step towards enhancing emergency preparedness, an Air Raid Mock Drill was conducted on Monday evening near V-Mart, Kokrajhar, as per the instructions of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India in coordination with Civil Defence, the District Administration and various line departments to assess preparedness and strengthen coordinated response mechanisms during emergency situations.

The exercise began with the sounding of an air raid siren for two minutes, followed by a temporary blackout in the designated area to simulate emergency conditions.

A mock air strike scenario was enacted, prompting an immediate response from Civil Defence volunteers along with Fire and Emergency Services, Police, medical teams, among others. Search and rescue operations, fire response measures, evacuation procedures and emergency medical assistance were carried out as part of the simulation. The mock exercise was aimed at evaluating operational readiness, enhancing inter-agency coordination and sensitising the public on emergency safety protocols, including blackout procedures, siren response and precautionary measures during crisis situations.

Eviction drive clears encroachments at Ghanshimuli market in Dalgaon

Administration removes illegal structures to restore blocked footpaths

HT Correspondent

DALGAON, May 19: The district administration on Tuesday carried out a bulldozer-led eviction drive at Ghanshimuli Market in Dalgaon to clear illegal encroachments from both sides of the footpaths.

According to reports, a section of people had allegedly occupied public footpaths for a long period by setting up shops and commercial establishments illegally. As the pathways became completely blocked, pedestrians were forced to walk on the main road, often leading to traffic congestion and increasing the risk of accidents.

Local residents had repeatedly raised complaints before the concerned authorities regarding the issue. Acting on the grievances, the District Commissioner directed officials to restore the footpaths for public use.

Following the directive, the Dalgaon Revenue Circle Officer, with assistance from police and paramilitary personnel, launched the eviction operation at Ghanshimuli



Market. The administration removed the unauthorised structures and reopened the footpaths for smooth movement of pedestrians.

Officials warned that strict legal action would be taken against anyone attempting to re-encroach on

the cleared areas in the future.

The administration's initiative was welcomed by local residents, who expressed hope that the reopening of the footpaths would improve traffic movement and ensure safer public transit in the area.

Manja shuts down as KSA protests against trader, demands O/C transfer

HT Bureau

DIPHU, May 19: Shops and business establishments in Manja town remained closed on Tuesday following a protest demonstration organised by the Karbi Students' Association (KSA-Inglongpho), Manja Head Branch, demanding the deportation of businessman Sukur Ali from Karbi Anglong and the transfer of Officer-in-Charge Sorbon Kr Engti from Manja Police Station.

During the protest, KSA Central Executive Committee (CEC) vice-president George Timung alleged that Ali, who runs a fish and meat business in the Manja daily market, does not possess a valid trading licence issued by the Taxation Department of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).

Timung questioned how the Manja Town Committee had permitted Ali to continue his business operations without the required licence.

He further alleged that Ali had been dumping garbage in front of the premises of Jari Teron English Memorial English LP School and Jari Teron Memorial High School in Manja, creating health hazards for students and teachers.

According to Timung, the school authorities informed the KSA Manja Head Branch about the issue, following which KSA members requested Ali not to dump waste near the educational institutions.

"Despite repeated requests, Ali continued dumping garbage in front of the school campus. On Monday, when KSA members confronted him over the matter, an altercation took place," Timung said.

Ali later lodged an FIR at Manja Police Station, accusing KSA members of physically assaulting him.

Timung alleged that O/C Engti was protecting Ali and allowing him to continue business activities in the area.

"We demand the immediate transfer of O/C Engti from Manja Police Station, the closure of Ali's business by the KAAC Taxation Department and his deportation from Karbi Anglong," Timung stated.

He added that the protest would continue until the demands of the KSA are met.

Meanwhile, Sarsing Teron, headmaster of Jari Teron Memorial High School, said two schools — Jari Teron English Memorial English LP School and Jari Teron Memorial High School — function within the same campus.

He said garbage dumped near the school premises emits an unbearable foul smell and children are unable to tolerate it, creating serious health hazards.

He added that the matter had been brought to the attention of the KSA Manja Head Branch for necessary action to stop dumping of garbage near the schools.

DHR Literature Festival 2026 concludes successfully



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 19: The Northeast Frontier Railway announced the successful conclusion of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) Literature Festival 2026, organised by the DHR in collaboration with the creative collective Poets of Community. The three-day literary and cultural festival, held from May 15 to 17, concluded on May 18 with a grand valedictory and certificate distribution ceremony celebrating the enthusiastic participation of students, youth, and members of the local community.

The festival successfully fulfilled its vision of bringing together the industrial heritage of the UNESCO World Heritage Darjeeling Himalayan Railway with the rich oral and literary traditions of the Himalayan region. Through a vibrant blend of literature, music, storytelling and community interaction, the festival created a meaningful cultural platform that highlighted the region's diverse artistic heritage.

The festival events were organised across Kurseong and Darjeeling and witnessed active participation

from writers, artists, students and literature enthusiasts.

On the opening day at Victoria Boys' School, Kurseong, noted author and IIT Roorkee alumna Megha Mittal conducted an engaging workshop titled "Why Poetry Is Boring?" encouraging students to explore poetry as a contemporary and expressive art form.

The second day featured the unique "Rail & Rhythm: The Open-Deck Experience", combining a scenic steam locomotive journey aboard the heritage Toy Train with live musical performances by regional artists. The programme was followed by an interactive folklore and storytelling session at Café De Central, Kurseong, celebrating the oral traditions of the Himalayan communities.

The concluding day at Café House, Darjeeling, showcased multilingual literary performances in Nepali, English and Hindi, where writers and artists reflected upon the cultural heritage, identity and contemporary realities of the Himalayan region through poetry, storytelling and spoken-word presentations.

To mark the successful completion of the festival, a special certificate distribution ceremony was organised on May 18. Certificates of appreciation and participation were presented to children, students, performers and community members who actively contributed to the workshops, storytelling sessions and cultural performances.

Sloth Bear rescued from Jorhat village compound

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, May 19: A fully grown male sloth bear, found early Tuesday morning in a bamboo thicket inside a villager's compound at Pukhuria Dekagaon, Doklongia under the Mariani range of Jorhat Forest Division was successfully rescued by a team from the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC), Borjuri near Kaziranga National Park.

CWRC project head Dr Bhaskar Choudhury said that early in the morning, the team received information from the Forest Department, Mariani, seeking assistance to rescue a bear that had entered the compound of a villager Mukul Saikia.

Dr Choudhury said that subsequently a three-member team led by a veterinarian was sent to the spot, where they successfully tranquilised the animal and brought the sloth bear to CWRC.

He said that the animal was in a healthy condition and is likely to be released back into the wild in its natural habitat after necessary observation.

It is to be mentioned that Asiatic black bears are found more commonly in Assam than sloth bears, which are mainly found in Kaziranga, char chapori areas, and the Karbi Anglong foothills.

It is also noted that in the past few days, an adult bear had been sighted in the north-western and north-eastern outskirts of Jorhat, creating fear among local residents. Though the Forest Department had earlier found paw prints of the animal, it could not locate it.

Whether the sloth bear rescued is the same one sighted earlier could not be ascertained.

Jogendra Kumar Basumatary remembered on 107th birth anniversary

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 19: The 107th birth anniversary of Jogendra Kumar Basumatary, noted writer and freedom fighter fondly remembered as "Boro Bijwngni Phaiikhi", was observed with due reverence at Nijwmpuri, Basugaon in Chirang district on Tuesday.

The programme was organised by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha at his cemetery, where floral tributes and homage were paid in recognition of his immense contribution towards the growth and development of Bodo language and literature.

Jogendra Kumar Basumatary was one of the greatest personalities of Bodo society — a distinguished freedom fighter, visionary educationist, social reformer and one of the strongest pillars of modern Bodo literature. Through his relentless dedication, courage and sacrifice, he played a historic role in shaping and strengthening the identity of the Bodo people.

At a time when preserving and promoting Bodo language and literature was an immense challenge, he stood firmly for the cause and worked tirelessly to give recognition, direction and strength to the Bodo literary movement. His contributions paved the way for the

Bodo people to assert their linguistic identity, land rights, socio-economic and political rights and overall development.

A prolific writer and intellectual, he authored several important literary works, including his autobiography Sangram, which reflected his life journey, struggles and commitment to society. His literary contributions laid a strong foundation for future generations in the fields of education, literature and social awakening.

He served as the President of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha from 1983 to 1990 and inspired generations through his visionary leadership and unwavering dedication towards the advancement of Bodo language and culture.

Jogendra Kumar Basumatary was also a brave freedom fighter who actively participated in India's struggle against British rule. Even during his teenage years, he fearlessly hoisted the Indian National Flag at Dhubri Police Station and was imprisoned before Independence for his patriotic activities. His courage, sacrifice and love for the nation continue to inspire generations.

In recognition of his lifelong service to humanity and society, he was honoured as the first recipient

of the UN Brahma Soldier of Humanity Award — a fitting tribute to a life devoted to social service, human values and the upliftment of the people.

His legacy will forever remain a guiding light for the Bodo community and the nation as a whole. Bodo Sahitya Sabha general secretary Nilokanta Goyary recalled the contributions of Basumatary, who dedicated his life towards the welfare and upliftment of Bodo language and literature. He said that the Bodo Sahitya Sabha and the entire Bodo community would remember the dedication and contributions of Basumatary in the years to come. He described Basumatary as one of the highest-ranking authors and thinkers of the Bodo community.

"Today, on this august occasion, we pay our deepest tribute and heartfelt homage to 'Boro Bijwngni Phaiikhi' Jogendra Kumar Basumatary on his 107th birth anniversary. He was a towering personality in Bodo society — a distinguished freedom fighter, visionary educationist, social reformer and one of the strongest pillars of modern Bodo literature. He played a historic role in shaping and strengthening the identity of the Bodo people.

Sankardev School students felicitated for HS exam success

HT Correspondent

HOJAI, May 19: Hojai's Sankardev Senior Secondary School was lauded on Monday as five of its students received special recognition during a felicitation programme organised by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) in Guwahati for their exceptional performance in this year's Higher Secondary Examination 2026.

Students Yuvraj Singh and Chirag More jointly clinched the first position in the overall Assam rankings, while Rounak Agarwal secured second place. Bipul Goswami finished third and Gitika Agarwal secured the fifth position, bringing pride to both the school and Hojai district.

The achievers were honoured in a ceremony attended by AASU dignitaries, school authorities, teachers, guardians, members of the student body and local well-wishers. Speakers at the event praised the students' dedication and perseverance and acknowledged the role of Sankardev School's faculty in guiding and motivating them.

Tapan Kar, Principal of Sankardev Senior Secondary School, informed this correspondent on Tuesday that the school expressed heartfelt gratitude to AASU for organising the special programme and for its continued efforts to recognise meritorious students across the state. He said the recognition would inspire current and future students to aim high and hoped that the student organisation would continue supporting academic talent in the years ahead.

The felicitation highlighted the combined impact of hard work by students and sustained mentorship by teachers in producing top academic results and was hailed as a moment of immense pride for Hojai.

District prepares for 8-day saturation drive under PM JANMAN and DA-JGUA

Sonitpur launches orientation for 'Jan Bhagidaari – Sabse Door, Sabse Pehle' campaign

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 19: A district-level orientation cum launch programme on the upcoming "Jan Bhagidaari – Sabse Door, Sabse Pehle" campaign under PM JANMAN and DA-JGUA was held on Monday at Conference Hall-I of the Office of the District Commissioner, Sonitpur, under the chairmanship of District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das.

Addressing the gathering, the District Commissioner stressed upon all stakeholder departments to utilise the campaign as an opportunity to take government welfare schemes and essential public services to the last beneficiary and ensure 100 per cent saturation in the identified tribal villages. He directed all departments to maintain close coordination during the campaign period and instructed Circle Officers and Block Development Officers (BDOs) to closely monitor the effective conduct of the camps along with ensuring

active public participation.

During the orientation, CDC, Dhekiajuli-cum-Project Director, ITDP, Tezpur, Manas Jyoti Nath presented a detailed roadmap and execution plan for the intensive eight-day Jan Bhagidaari campaign scheduled from May 18 to 25, 2026. The presentation highlighted the operational timelines, departmental responsibilities, awareness activities and field-level implementation strategy across the district.

It was informed that operations across the 20 identified Adi Sewa Kendras (ASKs) will be conducted in two phases on May 19 and 20, 2026, with five camps each at 10:30 AM and 1:30 PM respectively on both days.

The identified Adi Sewa Kendras include Sopai GP Office, Batachpur Old GP Office, Mazrowmari GP Office, Garmara GP Office, Bhotpara GP Office, Bhalukmari GP Office, Rangajan GP Office, Ghoramari GP Office, Mansiri GP Office,



Kolony GP Office, Naharbari GP Office, Bamun Pukhuri GP Office, Chariduar GP Office, Pirakata GP Office, Paschim Bargaon GP Office, Bargaon GP Office, Pub-Bargaon GP Office, Bandarmari GP Office, Pachim Murhadol GP Office and Dakhin Murhadol GP Office.

The campaign will focus on saturation of welfare schemes and awareness generation through coordinated field activities by key departments including Health & Family Welfare, Rural Development, PHE (Jal Shakti), Women & Child Development, APDCL (Power & Renewable En-

ergy), Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and Education. The departments have been entrusted with targeted services and awareness activities relating to Ayushman Bharat registration, Sickle Cell screening, PMAY-G, Jal Jeevan Mission, Poshan Abhiyan, PM-KISAN, school enrolment drives, electricity connectivity, water quality awareness, and other beneficiary-oriented schemes.

The orientation further informed that Jan Sunwai (public hearings) will be held simultaneously at all 20 Adi Sewa Kendras from May 21 to 23, 2026, from 10:00 AM onwards for grievance redressal, service verification and public interaction.

The meeting was attended by ADC Tridib Roy, ADC James Aind, Circle Officers, Joint Director of Health Services, BDOs, DIPRO, officials from PHE, Women & Child Development, Agriculture, APDCL, SSA and other concerned departments.

KAAC extends tenure of municipal chairpersons and ward commissioners

HT Bureau

DIPHU, May 19: In a significant administrative decision, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) has officially extended the terms of all current nominated Municipal Board and Town Committee Chairpersons alongside Ward Commissioners across the region. The extension spans a duration of six months, providing stability and administrative continuity to urban local governance within the district. The formal order, issued on Tuesday under reference number KAAC/TCA/Memorandum/2021-22/193 was enacted by order of the Executive Committee. It directly follows the adoption of EC Resolution No 12 during the 26th Executive Committee Meeting of the 13th KAAC, which was convened on May 14, 2026.

According to the official release signed by Ibon Teron, ACS, Joint Secretary of the Department of Housing & Urban Affairs, the extension is granted in strict accordance with the statutory provisions of Section 6 (1)(a) and 6 (1)(b) of the Mikir Hills District (Constitution of Town Committees) Rules, 1958. This legislative framework empowers the Council to govern and regulate town committee tenures dynamically to prevent any administrative vacuum in urban setups.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

There's no use doing a kindness if you do it a day too late. -Charles Kingsley

Bid to curb oil consumption

India's continuous hesitancy to curb the retail oil consumption pattern despite a worldwide surge in fuel prices is inexplicable, if not unacceptable. The government, the biggest benefactor of large domestic fuel use by way of imposition of levies close to 50 percent of the retail oil prices, is not prepared to ration fuel consumption despite the fact that the country is nearly 90 percent crude oil import dependent. Last Friday, India's state-run fuel retailers raised petrol and diesel prices for the first time in four years by a little over three rupees per litre to recoup some of the losses incurred by oil marketing companies due to higher global crude oil prices. The country is one of the last major economies to raise retail fuel prices following the disruption to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz by the war started by US-Israeli attacks on Iran. Most of the countries have already raised domestic oil prices. Others have adjusted local fuel subsidies to control the retail cost. Following the Iran-US conflict, nations worldwide-particularly in South Asia and Southeast Asia-have been forced to constrain and ration domestic oil consumption due to severe supply disruptions and skyrocketing prices. The government of tiny Sri Lanka has implemented strict fuel rationing via the National Fuel Pass QR system, limiting the amount of petrol per vehicle, and declared Wednesdays as public holidays to cut down on commuting.

Interestingly, the Reserve Bank of India is actively championing the need to curb oil consumption. Faced with a "crude oil shock" from the West Asia conflict and the rupee touching record lows (past Rs.95 per dollar), the central bank has stepped in to manage foreign exchange reserves and combat imported inflation. The RBI is tackling this challenge through both macroeconomic interventions and direct appeals to the public. To reduce the immediate drain on forex reserves, the RBI has instructed state-owned oil refiners to curb spot dollar purchases and instead utilize special credit lines for their import needs. The RBI Monetary Policy Committee has maintained a "lower for longer" stance but stands ready to raise interest rates if energy shocks lead to entrenched inflation.

To preserve the country's current foreign exchange reserves, the central bank and the government are pushing for reduced reliance on fossil fuels through work-from-home mandates, higher use of public transport, and accelerated electric vehicle (EV) adoption. Beyond immediate crisis management, the central bank continues to support a long-term transition away from fossil fuels. Through the Green Deposit Framework, banks channel capital directly into renewable energy and green transportation to enhance India's structural energy security. It seems the country prefers indirect actions and creation of strong public awareness of the need for cutting fuel consumption to imposing higher taxes on petrol and diesel or rationing to cut fuel consumption.

BJP's big win: Regional powerhouses topple

The democratic fabric of India has always been defined by its volatile predictability, a landscape where public mandate can swiftly elevate new forces while dismantling deeply entrenched establishments. The recently concluded 2026 Assembly elections have provided perhaps the most definitive testament to this characteristic of Indian politics. In a series of breathtaking electoral contests, three of the country's most prominent and formidable chief ministers faced unexpected defeats. The political maps of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala have been radically redrawn, creating an unprecedented wave that many in the political arena recognise as both a challenging and essential part of the democratic process. Winning and losing are undoubtedly common in the cyclical nature of politics, yet these specific results reflect seismic structural shifts rather than mere routine incumbency changes. Following closely on the heels of major historical shifts, such as the high-profile defeats of Arvind Kejriwal and Uddhav Thackeray, these latest outcomes highlight significant political transitions that heavily impact regional power dynamics and alter national equations altogether.

Among the most stunning outcomes of this electoral cycle was the dramatic conclusion of the high-stakes battle in West Bengal. Mamata Banerjee's loss to the Bharatiya Janata Party's Suvedu Adhikari in a fiercely contested seat marks a pivotal moment in West Bengal politics, effectively drawing the curtains on the historic era that began with her monumental 2011 victory over the Left Front. This decisive upset has instantly raised pressing questions regarding her political future, her regional leadership dynamics, and the long-term viability of the All India Trinamool Congress on its home turf. Despite the gravity of the setback, what comes next for Mamata Banerjee is likely a return to her familiar terrain of grassroots struggle. Political analysts anticipate that she will continue her signature protests and work tirelessly to remobilise her party cadre, aiming to remain a vital and vocal part of the national opposition INDIA coalition. Nevertheless, many loyal supporters and seasoned political commentators express deep concern about her future political trajectory amid the growing dominance of the BJP in the state. The saffron party's victory in West Bengal, coupled with its successful retention of control in Assam, signals a massive eastward expansion and a growing central influence that directly challenges regional parties and thoroughly reshapes the overall power balance in Indian politics.

Concurrently, a historical shift of a different nature occurred on the southern coast, spelling an unprecedented crisis for India's ideological Left. The final results from Kerala indicate a monumental transition, marking the very first time since 1977 that the state will not be ruled by a communist government when transitioning away from the right-wing or alternative coalitions. The loss of Left control in its final stronghold of Kerala highlights a

ascending to power. In a series of chaotic late-night developments, AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami, initially unaware of the rapidly evolving counter-strategies, began high-level discussions with Udhayanidhi Stalin. Simultaneously, separate reports revealed that senior AIADMK leaders S.P. Velumani and C.V. Shanmugam were actively working to rally 33 of their party's 47 elected legislators to align with Vijay's TVK, attempting a sophisticated legal strategy to circumvent the strict provisions of the anti-defec-

both the DMK and the AIADMK risk permanently losing their traditional voter bases to emerging alternative forces. This necessity for immediate survival is not unique to these states alone; across the country, several regional entities are grappling with severe existential crises. The Shiv Sena continues to struggle with crippling internal divisions, and the Akali Dal faces immense difficulties in regaining its former glory. Similarly, parties like the Nationalist Congress Party and the Janata Dal (Secular) are steadily losing their traditional spheres of influence, while the Janata Dal (United) appears to be in a consistent state of decline. Furthermore, organisations such as the Bharat Rashtra Samithi and the Bahujan Samaj Party are confronting deep structural challenges, a reality that remains incredibly frustrating and disheartening for their loyal supporters.

As these states undergo these massive transitions, the immediate focus shifts entirely onto the quality of leadership that the new administrations will provide. For a newly minted leader like Vijay, who remains relatively unknown and untested within the complex arena of state administration, the greatest challenge will undoubtedly be managing the day-to-day operations of a coalition government. He faces an inherent risk that his ideologically diverse allies could use their leverage to pressure or blackmail his administration at any given time, potentially stalling legislative progress. Additionally, he must move swiftly to fulfil the expansive and ambitious campaign promises that captured the imagination of the electorate. In sharp contrast to these fragile regional equations, the BJP occupies a significantly stronger and more consolidated position nationally, having successfully expanded its ideological territory into West Bengal while smoothly retaining its firm control over Assam. These profound changes can be incredibly tough for regional parties, which have historically played a vital role in preserving the federal character of Indian democracy. Recognising the intense feelings and anxieties of their supporters during this massive transition fosters a necessary sense of empathy and societal understanding. Ultimately, the entire opposition block must now sit down together, look past immediate mutual rivalries, and carefully chalk out a comprehensive future strategy if they intend to survive and remain relevant in an era increasingly defined by central consolidation. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi

step institutional decline, prompting deep reflections on its past achievements, its structural failures, and how the BJP and traditional rivals have outmanoeuvred its cadre-based machinery. This collapse stands in stark contrast to the historical influence the Left Front once wielded, evoking memories of the era when iconic figures like Jyoti Basu nearly became the prime minister of the nation. Following its previous exit from its thirty-four-year rule in West Bengal and subsequent defeats in Tripura, the complete erosion of the Left's governing footprint requires the Communist Party of India (Marxist) to urgently regroup, introspect, and energise its grassroots base if it wishes to maintain any semblance of relevance in the contemporary public sphere. Following this shift from Left control, the victorious Congress party has secured a major position in the state, though it has not yet formally named its new chief minister. Observers are closely watching K.C. Venugopal, a highly trusted and close aide to Rahul Gandhi, who has emerged as a potential candidate to lead the state through this crucial period of governance.

While the old guard faced severe turbulence, the state of Tamil Nadu witnessed a fascinating and dramatic political drama that brought an entirely new perspective to regional politics. The political situation in Tamil Nadu grew intensely complex as the election results delivered a fragmented mandate. The newly formed Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, led by actor-turned-politician Vijay, pulled off an extraordinary feat by winning 108 seats. Despite this remarkable debut, the party found itself exactly ten seats short of the 118 required to secure an absolute majority in the 234-member assembly. This deficit triggered frantic behind-the-scenes political manoeuvring starting on May 4, as established forces scrambled to respond. Rumours began circulating wildly that the traditional Dravidian rivals, the DMK and the AIADMK, might actually consider an unprecedented alignment to form a stable government just to keep the newcomer from



As these states undergo these massive transitions, the immediate focus shifts entirely onto the quality of leadership that the new administrations will provide.

Ultimately, the momentum shifted decisively in favour of the debutant. With the crucial parliamentary support of national and regional entities including the Congress, the CPI, the CPI(M), and the VCK, a consensus emerged indicating that Vijay should lead the state government. Even though the TVK lacked enough seats to govern entirely on its own, these alliances successfully bridged the gap. Following a tense four-day period of continuous negotiations and meetings with the governor to establish a stable coalition framework, Vijay was officially sworn in as the Chief Minister on Sunday. While older regional parties are experiencing a visible decline in their absolute dominance, the meteoric rise of the TVK introduces a highly dynamic and unpredictable element to the state's traditional bipolar political spectrum.

The broader implications of these elections extend far beyond the immediate winners and losers, serving as an urgent wake-up call for regional political parties across the nation. Established organisations such as the Trinamool Congress, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, and the Left must immediately introspect on their recent electoral failures and correct their strategic mistakes. If they fail to address their internal vulnerabilities and administrative shortcomings, the BJP will undoubtedly solidify its newly found position in Bengal, while

The role of Co-curricular activities in education

Education confined within the four walls of a classroom creates a kind of monotony and mental exhaustion in students. Sitting in one place for long hours merely listening to the teacher or taking notes suppresses the natural liveliness and curiosity of children. In contrast, co-curricular activities provide them with the opportunity to come out into an open environment and work according to their interests. This free atmosphere brings freshness to students' minds and rekindles their lost interest in studies. Mental health experts opine that the increasing stress and depression among students in present times are mainly due to the lack of games and creative activities. Co-curricular activities help in the release of a hormone called "endorphin" from the brain, which keeps the mind cheerful

Education does not merely mean acquiring knowledge from a few prescribed textbooks or passing examinations with high marks; education is a lifelong process of the complete development of the innate potential of a human being. In this process, the role of co-curricular activities is extremely important and indispensable. Whenever we speak about education, the image of a classroom, a blackboard, and books and pens usually comes to our minds. But real education stands far above these limitations. A radical transformation has become necessary in the present education system, and the central point of this transformation is the holistic development of students. It would be wrong to consider a school merely as a centre for the transmission of information; rather, it is a sacred place for shaping future generations. Here, students do not come only to learn about the world, but also to master the art of living in it. Co-curricular activities play the principal role in helping them acquire this art of living.

The process of human development is extremely complex and multidimensional. A child's mental world cannot be influenced only by mathematical formulas or historical facts; emotions, feelings, imagination, and creativity also have their place in it. Our traditional education system generally gives more importance to the development of the left side of the brain, that is, logic and analysis, while neglecting the development of the right side of the brain, that is, creativity and emotional intelligence. Co-curricular activities maintain a beautiful balance between these two aspects. When a student participates in music, painting, acting, or sports, different parts of the brain become active. This not only helps the student become a better examinee but also assists him or her in becoming a sensitive and thoughtful human being. At a time when the younger generation is in danger of losing human values under the grip of mechanisation, there is no alternative but to rely on co-curricular activities to resist this tendency.

Education confined within the four walls of a classroom creates a kind of monotony and mental exhaustion in students. Sitting in one place for long hours merely listening to the teacher or taking notes suppresses the natural liveliness and curiosity of children. In contrast, co-curricular activities provide them with the opportunity to

come out into an open environment and work according to their interests. This free atmosphere brings freshness to students' minds and rekindles their lost interest in studies. Mental health experts opine that the increasing stress and depression among students in present times are mainly due to the lack of games and creative activities. Co-curricular activities help in the release of a hormone called "endorphin" from the brain, which keeps the mind cheerful. Therefore, even from a strategic perspective, giving importance to co-curricular activities is necessary for improving academic performance.

The contribution of co-curricular activities in socialisation and in building human relationships is unparalleled. In today's age of globalisation, people are gradually becoming self-centred. Excessive use of technology has isolated people from society. In such a situation, the school remains the only place where children get the opportunity to interact directly with their peers. But this interaction does not become complete merely by sitting in classrooms. When students play games in groups or participate in dramas, they understand the importance of cooperation. They learn that victory is not only about individual success, but that sacrifice and mutual understanding are necessary for the success of the whole team. They practically learn to respect each other's opinions, extend help during difficulties, and understand mutual dependence. These social skills become extremely essential in future professional and personal life. The foundation of the tolerance necessary for peaceful coexistence in society is laid through co-curricular activities.

Character building is one of the principal objectives of education. A person cannot become truly great merely by being intelligent if his or her character is not pure. Co-curricular activities teach students discipline, punctuality, and a sense of responsibility. Following the rules of the playground, arriving on time for practice sessions, and obeying the instructions of the team captain unknowingly sow the seeds of discipline within students. Moreover, the mental strength to accept victory and defeat with ease can only be gained from the playground or debate competitions. Life may bring failure, but co-curricular activities teach students how to accept it as a challenge and move forward again. While mistakes made in class-



rooms are corrected by teachers or penalised through marks, mistakes made in co-curricular activities teach students self-analysis. This self-analysis gradually makes a person refined and mature.

Co-curricular activities provide a fertile ground for developing leadership qualities. In future, our nation will require leaders not only in politics but also in science, literature, business, and social service. Leadership is not an inborn quality; it is cultivated through practice. When responsibilities for organising various school programmes are entrusted to students, they acquire problem-solving skills. They learn the techniques of bringing together people of differing opinions and guiding them towards a common goal. The ability to take proper decisions even in difficult situations develops within them. A student who can successfully organise a small school function today may be capable of carrying the responsibilities of the nation tomorrow. Therefore, considering co-curricular activities merely as entertainment is a mistake; they are the first step towards creating future leaders.

Without physical fitness, no kind of mental or intellectual development is possible. The saying "A healthy mind resides in a healthy body" is eternally true. Unfortunately, the burden of books in today's education system is so heavy that children hardly get time to play. As a result, diseases such as obesity, poor eyesight, and diabetes are appearing at an early age. Physical exercise, yoga, and sports included within co-curricular activities keep students physically strong and energetic. These activities not only increase disease resistance but also help improve concentration. Research has proven that students regularly involved in sports possess better memory and concentration than others. Physical exercise increases the supply of oxygen to the brain, making it easier to understand complex subjects. Thus, physical activities are indispensable even for achieving academic excellence.

Creativity is the principal driving force behind

the progress of human civilisation. The ability to invent something new or find innovative solutions to old problems cannot emerge through rote-based education alone. Co-curricular activities allow the imagination of students to spread its wings. Literary practice, poetry writing, science exhibitions, or making useful objects from discarded materials teach students to think "outside the box." Every child possesses some unique talent. Someone may find mathematics difficult but may be highly skilled in painting. Co-curricular activities recognise such talents and save students from feelings of inferiority. When a student realises that he or she also possesses a special quality that earns appreciation from society, confidence increases manifold. This confidence inspires them to succeed in other spheres of life as well.

The cultural heritage of our nation is immensely rich. Yet, the younger generation today is on the verge of forgetting its roots due to blind imitation of Western culture. Cultural programmes organised in schools introduce students to their own language, literature, songs, traditions, and heritage. Bihu dance, folk songs, classical music, or theatrical practices do not merely entertain; they keep our identity alive. The role of co-curricular activities in generating love and respect for one's own culture is undeniable. Through these activities, students understand the idea of unity in diversity. By presenting the dances and songs of different cultures on the same stage, respect for other cultures also develops in their minds. In strengthening national integration, this acts as a powerful medium.

Time management is one of the greatest challenges of the modern age. Many parents fear that involvement in co-curricular activities will reduce the time available for studies. In reality, however, the opposite is observed. Students who remain engaged learn to utilise every moment of time properly. They understand that their time is limited and therefore concentrate fully during study hours. This prevents them from becoming lazy and teaches them to lead an organised life. They ac-

quire practical knowledge of how to divide time in such a way that every task can be completed efficiently. This skill helps them maintain balance amidst the pressures of future life.

The relationship between teachers and students should not remain confined within the formalities of the classroom. Co-curricular activities provide a new dimension to this relationship. On the playground or in cultural arenas, teachers work as friends and guides to students. This removes unnecessary fear of teachers from students' minds and gives them the confidence to communicate openly. When teachers appreciate a student's qualities beyond academics, respect towards teachers increases. This emotional bond makes the learning process more effective. Students listen more attentively to teachers who value them not merely as students but as individuals.

In today's professional world, people possessing multifaceted talents are valued more than those who merely hold academic degrees. During recruitment, major companies do not only examine marks; they also assess communication skills, teamwork experience, and problem-solving abilities. These "soft skills" cannot be found in textbooks; they can only be acquired through co-curricular activities. Debate competitions teach logical speaking, drama improves body language and expression, while sports or programmes like NCC cultivate endurance. All these together prepare a student completely for the struggles of life. Therefore, co-curricular activities should not be considered an "extra" part of education but rather its "inseparable" component.

The decline of moral values is a matter of concern in present society. Schools are not merely factories for producing doctors, engineers, or officers; they are places for shaping good human beings. Through co-curricular activities such as social service, tree plantation drives, and cleanliness campaigns, a sense of social responsibility can be awakened among students. When students work to help the poor or disaster-affected people, feelings of compassion and kindness emerge within their hearts. Reading moral instructions in books is far less effective than getting practical opportunities to implement them through co-curricular activities. Such real-life experiences strengthen their moral foundation.

In conclusion, it can be said that co-curricular activities are not ornaments of education; they are the soul of education. The progress of a nation depends upon the physical, mental, and moral strength of its citizens. An intelligent brain alone cannot lead a nation forward if it is not accompanied by a sensitive heart and a healthy body. Co-curricular activities create harmony among these three aspects and transform students into complete human resources. Parents, teachers, and educational authorities should realise that it is wrong to destroy the childhood and creativity of students in the race for marks. Instead, they should be given the opportunity to become vast like the open sky, where they may shine with their individuality. Proper implementation of co-curricular activities can lead our education system towards a new horizon where education teaches not only the means of livelihood but also the art of living. Therefore, giving equal importance to co-curricular activities along with the curriculum in every school is the demand of the time and the necessity of the future. (References - Assistance has been taken from several books, multiple articles, and various writings available on the internet.)

Lessons on pride and forgiveness from Yayati, Devayani, and Sharmistha's tale from the Mahabharata

The moon hung low over the palace of Hastinapura, its silver light spilling across marble corridors and into the shadowed gardens where secrets bloomed like night jasmine. King Yayati, his royal robes trailing like a river of gold, walked in the shadowed grove beyond the royal chambers, deep in thought, the state's myriad issues weighing heavily on his mind. At the far end of the grove, a lone figure stood watching him. Sharmistha had followed the king with a purpose. Her raven hair cascaded like a waterfall, catching the moonlight, and her eyes burnt with a resolve that could ignite empires. It was now or never. As Yayati passed her, she came out of the shadows and stood in his path

By: Deepam Chatterjee

Once, Devayani, the proud daughter of Shukra – the powerful guru of the Asuras – was wandering in the forest with her friend Sharmistha, daughter of the Asura King Vishaparvan. During the walk, the two friends argued bitterly, leading to a deep rift between them. Sharmistha, angered by Devayani's condescension, pushed her into a well and left her there, stranded. It was the Chandravamsa king Yayati who chanced upon her and rescued her. As soon as Devayani saw Yayati, she was struck by his strength and nobility and became determined to marry him. She informed her father, Shukra, of her choice, and soon, Yayati and Devayani were wed.

Shukra sent Sharmistha as a companion to Devayani. He imposed only one condition: Sharmistha would serve Devayani in their household but would keep her distance from Yayati. Yayati honoured this condition, devoting himself to Devayani, and for a time their life together was harmonious.

Years passed, and Devayani bore Yayati's sons who grew up in a household filled with wealth and respect. Sharmistha, meanwhile, lived on the fringes of their life, watching silently as the years slipped by. As she matured, her longing for love and companionship intensified. She grappled

with her unfulfilled desires, seeing Devayani as a mother and wife while she remained bound to a life of duty.

The moon hung low over the palace of Hastinapura, its silver light spilling across marble corridors and into the shadowed gardens where secrets bloomed like night jasmine. King Yayati, his royal robes trailing like a river of gold, walked in the shadowed grove beyond the royal chambers, deep in thought, the state's myriad issues weighing heavily on his mind.

At the far end of the grove, a lone figure stood watching him. Sharmistha had followed the king with a purpose. Her raven hair cascaded like a waterfall, catching the moonlight, and her eyes burnt with a resolve that could ignite empires. It was now or never. As Yayati passed her, she came out of the shadows and stood in his path.

Startled, Yayati stopped in his tracks. Sharmistha didn't say anything, but her eyes were filled with desire. Yayati looked into her eyes and quickly averted his gaze. Hesitating, his royal mantle heavy with the weight of duty, he took a sharp breath, his heart stirred by the fire in her gaze. The cool jasmine-laden air did nothing to arrest the turmoil in his mind.

"Why do you linger here, Sharmistha?" Yayati's voice was a low rumble, like distant thunder. "This grove is no place for a servant at such an hour."

Sharmistha stepped closer, her

crimson uttariya (upper garment) shimmering like embers in the dark. "A servant?" she said, her tone sharp as a dagger. "I was a princess, Yayati, before Devayani's pride cast me low. I come not as a servant, but as a woman who demands her due. Will you deny me a future, a lineage, when your eyes betray your heart's desire?"

Yayati's breath caught once again, his fingers tightening around the hilt of his ceremonial sword. The air was thick with the scent of earth and betrayal. "You speak boldly," he said, his voice wavering. "I am wed to Devayani, bound by vows I made to her father. What you ask... it is a path of shadows."

"Shadows?" Sharmistha's laugh was a spark, fierce and unyielding. "I live in the shadows, Yayati, cast there by your wife's hand. Marry me, give me sons, and let my blood rise from this disgrace. Or do you fear the fire of a woman scorned?"

The king's resolve faltered, his eyes tracing the curve of her defiance, the storm in her stance. Sharmistha's demand was no mere plea – it was a challenge, a claim to her stolen dignity. The grove, with its gnarled banyan roots twisting into the earth like unspoken truths, bore witness to their pact. Yayati yielded, drawn not only by desire but by the weight of her will.

In the palace, Devayani moved through her days unaware, her

silken robes trailing like a river of jade. But her triumph over Sharmistha, having reduced a rival to a servant, and securing her marriage to Yayati had also planted the seeds of treachery. She remained a distant figure, her presence a quiet hum beneath the storm brewing in the shadows.

Months turned to years, and Sharmistha bore Yayati three sons – Druhyu, Anu, and Puru – their births cloaked in secrecy, their cries muffled in hidden chambers. Each child was a monument to betrayal, a silent rebellion against Devayani's dominion. Sharmistha's heart, though fierce, carried the weight of her deception, for every stolen moment with Yayati was a knife twisted in the trust of her mistress.

But secrets are as fragile as glass. One evening, as the sky burnt with the hues of the dying sun, Devayani stood at the grove's edge, her emerald eyes wide with the sting of truth. She had followed the whispers of the palace, the sidelong glances of servants, to this moment of reckoning. There, beneath the banyan's ancient canopy, she saw Yayati and Sharmistha, their intimacy a wound laid bare.

"You dare!" Devayani's voice cracked like a whip, the leaves trembling above. "Sharmistha, my servant, and Yayati, my husband, how could you weave this tapestry of lies?" Her hands clenched, nails biting into her palms, as tears glistened like dia-

monds on her cheeks.

Sharmistha faced her, un-bowed, her voice steady as stone. "You call it betrayal, Devayani, but I call it survival. You took my crown, my pride, and made me your shadow. I demanded of Yayati what you denied me. A name, a future. If you seek blame, look at your own cruelty."

Yayati stepped forward, his face a mask of guilt and defiance. "Devayani, I am the king, yet I am flawed," he said, his voice heavy as iron. "Sharmistha came to me, fierce and unbroken, and I could not refuse her. My heart remains yours, but my weakness has undone us all."

"Weakness?" Devayani's laughter was a jagged edge, cutting through the humid air. "You have shattered our honour, Yayati, and you, Sharmistha, have stabbed me in the dark. My father will judge you both."

She fled to Shukracharya, her sobs echoing through the palace's marble halls. The sage, his eyes blazing like twin suns, confronted Yayati in the royal court, where torches cast flickering shadows on silken banners. "Yayati, you have betrayed your vows and my daughter's trust," he thundered, his staff striking the floor like lightning. "For this, I curse you – may old age claim you now, your youth withered as your honour!"

Yayati fell to his knees, his golden crown glinting mockingly in the firelight. "Mercy, great sage!" he pleaded. "I faltered,



swayed by Sharmistha's fire, but I am not beyond redemption."

Sharmistha stood apart, her sons hidden in the palace's depths, her betrayal now a crown of thorns. Devayani, though wronged, receded into the background, her pain a quiet undercurrent to the clash of wills. The curse took hold, and Yayati's form crumpled, his hair turning to ash, his eyes dimming like fading embers. Desperate, he turned to his sons, begging them to bear his

burden. Only Puru, Sharmistha's youngest, agreed, a final act of loyalty amid the wreckage of trust.

The palace stood silent, its walls whispering of a servant who demanded a king's affection, a king who betrayed his queen, and a love that burnt too fiercely to endure. The banyan tree, its roots drinking deep from the earth, held the tale close, as if to guard its secrets for eternity. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Women can wait years for an endometriosis diagnosis. New tech could change that

By: Smitha Mundasad

For thousands of women, getting an endometriosis diagnosis can take years. Now, a new scan technique may help spot the condition earlier, a pilot study at Oxford University suggests.

The technique uses specialised CT scans combined with a molecular tracer to detect areas of early endometriosis, which is often missed by conventional scans.

If confirmed in larger studies, this could help give women an explanation for their symptoms earlier on, scientists say.

Endometriosis affects one in 10 women in the UK and is often a painful condition in which cells similar to those lining the womb grow elsewhere in the body. It can take an average of nine years to get a diagnosis.

Symptoms can be severe and wide-ranging - from very heavy periods to extreme tiredness and abdominal pain - often mimicking other conditions.

People frequently end up undergoing several tests, including ultrasounds and sometimes MRI scans.

But these standard scans do not always pick up on the disease and mainly detect changes that often appear with more advanced diseases, says Dr Tatjana Gibbons, lead researcher on the study.

"This means many struggle with symptoms, despite being told they have normal imaging results."

"Getting a diagnosis earlier can help people make decisions and plans about their life," Dr Gibbons adds. "A very long journey"

Gabriella Pearson, co-founder of the charity Menstrual Health Project, was diagnosed with endometriosis aged 23, after more than 10 years of worsening symptoms and a number of misdiagnoses.

The 33-year-old says that if she had been "listened to and diagnosed earlier she would have been in a very different position now".

Gabriella Pearson took 10 years for Gabriella Pearson, 33, to be diagnosed with endometriosis.

Endometriosis has affected her bowel, bladder and ovary and left her with lasting damage.

"Because of the pain and the complications I wasn't able to progress with my career and go to university," says Pearson.

"There is a knock-on effect in terms of mental health, finances, work and fertility. So I think if people are diagnosed earlier and have a better chance of prolonged quality of life at a younger age, it could really help."

Pearson was just 10 when her debilitating periods started, leaving her in agony.

Over the years she developed painful stomach issues with everything she ate.

She was told it was "part of being a woman", then it was put down to irritable bowel syndrome or stress.

She went back and forth to doctors for six years before finding a GP who said she was likely to have endometriosis.

"It has been a very long journey and we definitely need more accuracy when it comes to scans," says

Pearson.

"We deserve something that is more consistent and reliable for patients and is non-invasive as well."

"For me, I really struggled with an invasive ultrasound, which was very painful."

Her ultrasound was interpreted differently by different doctors.

Years later, she went on to have surgery - a laparoscopy - to get a definitive diagnosis because she felt she really needed to know what was going on.

New findings 'really exciting'

Though people can be offered some treatments without a definitive diagnosis, the only way to get a definitive diagnosis at the moment is through a laparoscopy - where a small camera is inserted through a small cut in the abdomen. This can take years to happen.

In the study, 19 people with confirmed or suspected endometriosis had a specialised SPECT-CT scan along with an injection of a molecular tracer called maraciatide. It attached to areas where new blood vessels were forming - thought to be a key part of early endometriosis growth.

The new technique was able to correctly detect the presence or absence of endometriosis in 16 women.

And it correctly picked up 14 of the 17 cases of endometriosis that were later confirmed by surgery.

Dr Gibbons says the findings are "exciting".

The technique "offers a highly promising diagnostic and monitoring tool, particularly for superficial peritoneal endometriosis [thought to be an early form of the disease] which is the most common and yet the hardest type of endometriosis to identify".

Dr Lucy Whitaker, gynaecologist and researcher at the University of Edinburgh, who was not involved in the study, says there is a "desperate need for new non-invasive imaging techniques".

"This is a really exciting preliminary data that needs further studies," she says. "If confirmed, that gives us a real opportunity to intervene at an earlier stage - and help people get a diagnosis and potentially consider treatment earlier on."

The new technique could have a role in investigating how the disease changes over time and how different treatment options work too.

Dr Whitaker adds that the scans and tracer involve exposure to radiation, which needs consideration and to be put in the context of the risks of having a laparoscopy for example.

The work is published in the journal *Lancet Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Women's Health* and led by the Nuffield department of women's and reproductive health at the University of Oxford and Serac Healthcare.

- Heavy periods
 - Extreme tiredness
 - Pain in the lower abdomen, back and pelvic area
 - Pain when urinating or pooing
 - Pain during or after sex
 - Pain or bleeding in other areas including the chest
 - Difficulties getting pregnant
 - Low mood.
- (Courtesy- BBC News)

Women's dreams cannot be imprisoned

The Supreme Court's remarks have sparked a debate on marriage, equality and women's freedom

By: Dr Privanka Saurabh

The recent observation by the Supreme Court of India is not merely a legal observation, but a historic message challenging the deeply ingrained mindset in Indian society that often limits a woman's identity after marriage to her husband, family, and domestic responsibilities. The Court stated unequivocally that a woman cannot be expected to abandon her career, ambitions, and dreams and remain merely an "obedient wife." This observation comes at a time when Indian women are achieving new heights in every field, including education, science, politics, administration, judiciary, military, sports, and business. Despite this, a large section of society still believes that a woman's primary responsibility after marriage should be limited to home and family.

This observation by the Supreme Court is significant because it not only reaffirms women's constitutional rights but also strengthens the concept of equality, dignity, and individual freedom in modern India.

Indian society has long been governed by a patriarchal structure. In this system, men were considered the decision-makers and economic center of the family, while women were presented as symbols of sacrifice, tolerance, and dedication. From childhood, girls were taught that marriage was the ultimate goal of their lives, and that after marriage, they should adapt to the wishes of their husbands and families. This is why, even today, in many families, girls' education is not taken as seriously as that of boys. If a woman is highly ambitious, prioritizes her career, or wants to make her own life decisions, she is often criticized as "anti-family" or "too modern." This mindset not only violates women's rights but also limits society's progress.

Expecting women to give up their careers or compromise after marriage has been considered normal in Indian society. If the husband's job requires a change of city, the wife is expected to give up her career without question. If balancing family and work is difficult, the responsibility for sacrifice is often placed on the woman. After motherhood, women are burdened with so much domestic responsibilities that millions are forced to leave their jobs despite their abilities and talents. This situation is not only unfair on an individual level but also detrimental to national development. A country that fails to fully utilize the talents of half its population can never reach its full potential.

The Supreme Court's observations also reinforce the fundamental spirit of the Indian Constitution. Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees equality to all citizens. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, and Article 21 guarantees every individual the right to live with dignity. Expecting a woman to abandon her dreams and career simply because she is married is contrary to these constitutional values. The Court has made it clear that marriage cannot be a means of eliminating a woman's independent identity. A wife is not a subordinate person, but an independent citizen with equal rights.

Today, Indian women are achieving remarkable successes in every field. From space to fighter aircraft, from the judiciary to the startup world, women are demonstrating their potential. PV Sindhu, Mirabai Chanu, Saina Nehwal, Falguni Nayar, Nirmala Sitharaman, Gita Gopinath, and many others have proven that

given the opportunity, women can excel in any field. Ironically, despite these achievements, traditional thinking about women's roles in society has not completely disappeared. Even today, in many educated families, it is believed that a wife's success should not "exceed" her husband's. Women's economic independence and self-reliance are often seen as a challenge to male ego. This is why problems like gender discrimination, pay disparity, and mental stress still exist in the workplace.

Women's economic independence is a crucial foundation for the true progress of any society. When women are financially independent, they are able to make their own decisions with greater freedom and confidence. Economic independence also empowers them to speak out against domestic violence, mental harassment, and unequal treatment. Therefore, a career is

not just a means of earning income, but also a symbol of dignity and self-reliance. If a woman is forced to sacrifice her career in the name of marriage, her freedom is actually being limited.

The Supreme Court's observations reject this thinking and make it clear that a woman's career is not a "hobby," but a constitutional and human right.

However, judicial observations alone cannot bring about complete change in society. Real change will come only when families change their mindset. Even today, women are often burdened with the sole responsibility of household chores and childrearing. Men's domestic involvement is limited, while working women are expected to juggle every household responsibility alongside their jobs. This dual burden impacts women's mental and physical health. If husbands and wives share household responsibilities equally, women can pursue their careers and dreams without guilt. The foundation of modern marriage should be equality, cooperation, and mutual respect, not control and subordination.

Women's freedom in society is often opposed in the name of "culture" and "tradition." But it is important to understand that a culture is considered vibrant and progressive only when it provides equal opportunities and respect to its citizens. If women are suppressed in the name of tradition, their dreams are limited, and their freedom is curbed, then it becomes not a culture but a system of inequality. Indian civilization has always revered women. Goddess Saraswati was considered a symbol of knowledge. Lakshmi a symbol of prosperity, and Durga a symbol of power. However, in real life, society often falls short in providing equal opportunities to women. This contradiction remains one of the biggest challenges facing Indian society even today.

The new generation of women is now more aware of their rights and dreams. They consider

marriage an important part of life, but not at the cost of losing their identity. They desire relationships that reflect respect, independence, and support. The digital age and the expansion of education have increased women's self-confidence. Social media and global connectivity have allowed them to understand that the world is rapidly changing and women are leading in every field. However, a segment of society still has not been able to move beyond old thinking. This is why social tensions and conflicts often arise regarding women's freedom. At such times, the Supreme Court's progressive comments serve to guide society in the right direction.

Female labor force participation rates in India remain relatively low. A large number of women leave the workforce after marriage and motherhood. The situation is even more challenging in rural areas, where social norms and economic limitations impact women's independence. If India is to truly become a global power, it must fully utilize the talent and potential of women. Reports from the World Bank and various international organizations indicate that increasing women's workforce participation could significantly benefit India's economy. Therefore, providing women with opportunities for education, employment, and leadership is not only a matter of social justice but also a necessity for economic development.

This comment by the Supreme Court also holds an important message for men. Women's freedom does not mean competition, but partnership. When women advance, families, societies, and nations are all strengthened. A self-reliant and confident woman can make better decisions, provide better education and values to children, and bring positive change to society. Therefore, women's success should be seen not as a challenge, but as collective progress.

It's also worth noting that legal rights are incomplete without mental freedom. If society continues to burden women with guilt, social pressure, and family expectations, they will not be able to make their own decisions with complete independence. Therefore, the need is not only to change laws, but also to change mindsets. Schools, families, and social institutions must teach both boys and girls the value of equality and respect from childhood. Men must understand that household chores are not solely women's responsibility. Women must also be convinced that their dreams and ambitions are as important as those of men.

Ultimately, this Supreme Court observation serves as a moral compass for modern India. It not only speaks of protecting women's rights, but also envisions a society where marriage is about equality and respect, where women need not feel guilty for pursuing their dreams, and where no woman has to sacrifice her identity to prove herself a "good wife." The progress of any nation is measured by the status of its women. If India is to become a truly developed, modern, and just nation, it must provide its women not only with rights but also with opportunities, respect, and freedom. No society can progress by imprisoning women's dreams. Only when India's women can live their dreams without fear, coercion, and discrimination will the ideals of equality and freedom enshrined in the Constitution truly be realized. (Dr Priyanka Saurabh, PhD (Political Science) is a poet and social thinker.)

Fuel price hike among world's lowest outside Gulf nations: BJP

NEW DELHI, May 19: The BJP on Tuesday defended the 90-paise hike in petrol and diesel prices, triggered by the West Asia conflict and disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, saying the increase is among the lowest anywhere in the world outside heavily subsidised Gulf economies.

Petrol and diesel prices were hiked by about 90 paise per litre on Tuesday, marking the second increase in fuel rates in less than a week after state-run oil firms ended a nearly four-year freeze on revisions.

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

In a post on X, BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said consumers across the world have borne the impact of the crisis through steep increases in fuel



prices.

"Fuel prices have surged across the world. Brent crude has stayed above USD 100 a barrel," he said. "Even after the recent revision of 91 paise per litre, fuel prices in India have risen by only about 4 per cent, among the lowest increases anywhere in the world outside heavily subsidised Gulf economies," Malviya added.

Malviya said India has remained an exception as public sector oil

marketing companies absorbed substantial losses instead of immediately passing on the burden to consumers.

"For 76 days after the crisis began, Indian public sector OMCs absorbed massive under-recoveries, reportedly around ₹ 1,000 crore per day, instead of passing the burden directly to citizens," he said. He also shared comparative figures of fuel price increases in several countries, claiming that

petrol prices rose by 89.7 per cent in Myanmar, 56.3 per cent in Malaysia, 54.9 per cent in Pakistan and 52.4 per cent in the UAE.

According to him, diesel prices increased by 112.7 per cent in Myanmar, 71.2 per cent in Malaysia, 44.9 per cent in Pakistan and 86.1 per cent in the UAE.

Malviya said petrol prices rose by 44.5 per cent and diesel by 48.1 per cent in the United States, while the increases stood at 19.2 per cent and 34.2 per cent, respectively in the UK.

In France, petrol prices rose by 20.9 per cent and diesel by 31 per cent, while Germany saw increases of 13.7 per cent in petrol and 19.8 per cent in diesel prices, he added.

He claimed many critics deliberately ignore the larger global context while debating fuel prices in India.

Global crude prices have surged more than 50 per cent since US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28 and Tehran's retaliation, disrupting flows through the Strait of Hormuz, a key artery for global oil shipments. (PTI)

Centre will blame West Asia conflict for all its failures: Bhagwant Mann on fuel price hike

CHANDIGARH, May 19: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Tuesday attacked the Centre over fuel price hike, saying the Union government would now pin the blame for all its "failures" on the West Asia conflict to hide the "collapse" of its foreign and economic policies.

Questioning the Centre's repeated appeals for austerity, Mann said that no other country affected by the global crisis has asked its citizens to stop buying petrol, diesel, gas or gold, adding that the Narendra Modi government owes the nation answers on the actual status of India's reserves and not panic.

He alleged that the Centre was pushing the country into an "undeclared lockdown" while "hiding" the true state of the economy from people.

"They will increase it many times. In reality, (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi ji will now blame the war for everything. They will say the war is going on," Mann said while replying to a question on another increase in fuel rates.

The chief minister was speaking to reporters after launching a pilot project on underground electricity wires in Satoj village in Sangrur.

Mann demanded that the Centre disclose the stock of fuel and LPG to the people of the country.

He also flagged many Union ministers' claims earlier that there would be no increase in fuel prices.

"Now, immediately after the conclusion of the assembly elections in several states, they have now started speaking about saving the country. But before the elections, the country was doing fine," Mann said, as he ascribed the hike in fuel prices to failed economic and foreign policies.

"Gradually, they are restricting everything. They are asking car owners not to use cars, they are asking people

not to go to offices, not to buy gold, not to hold functions, and work from home.

"You should clearly say the country is to be locked down. It is the total failure of the central government," Mann said.

The Aam Aadmi Party leader said that the same leadership that once claimed India would become a "Vishwaguru" has reduced the country to a "Vishwachela." He alleged that the prime minister's foreign visits have yielded little for the masses, but a bounty for a handful of favoured industrialists who accompany him abroad for business deals.

Mann said that the country cannot be run in such an "irresponsible" manner where the prime minister urges people to observe austerity measures while himself indulging in "opulence."

"When he visits abroad, what does he do there? Has he ever informed us? Has he ever held a press conference in the past 14 years?" Mann said.

"The war is in Iran. The US, Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon are fighting. But why are restrictions imposed in our country? Why are such restrictions not imposed in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh? Why only India?" he said.

The chief minister warned the people that they will face more hardship in the coming days as fuel prices are expected to continue escalating.

"There will be no end to the agonies of the people as the Union government is suffering from an anti-people mindset. People will continue to reel under a massive burden as the Union government has just woken up from a deep slumber, as they were busy in election mode," he added. (PTI)

Tough times ahead; youth, small traders to be worst hit: Rahul



RAEBARELI (UP), May 19: Congress Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday claimed that an "economic shock" is coming and it will not hit "Adani, Ambani, or Modi," but the youth, labourers, and small traders.

"Very, very tough times are coming," the leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha told reporters here.

Gandhi said a major economic "storm" not seen for many years is on the way.

He also accused the prime minister of not following his own call for austerity.

"Instead of taking action, Narendra Modi is telling the country not to go on foreign trips, and Narendra Modi is making rounds across the world. This is the state," he said. Gandhi also alleged that

"Ambani-Adani structure" will not last long.

"The structure, which he (Modi) has made --- the one of Adani and Ambani, it will not remain intact, and will crumble. And, sadly, the loss will be felt by the common people. In other words, they will remain in their palaces, and the entire shock will be experienced by the youth and people of UP," he said.

On Tuesday, Gandhi, the Lok Sabha MP from Raebareli, landed at the Lucknow airport and for his constituency straight from there.

He was received by UP Congress chief Ajay Rai and Congress Legislative Party leader Aradhana Mishra at the airport. Gandhi is on a two-day visit to the party bastions of Raebareli and Amethi. (PTI)

Palaniswami chairs crucial AIADMK office bearers meet amidst challenge from rebels

CHENNAI, May 19: AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Tuesday chaired a meeting of frontline office bearers of the party, including district secretaries, against the background of demand from rebels, who have extended support to the TVK government, to convene the general council meeting.

The meeting, held for nearly two hours, was attended by about 80 district secretaries, former minister B V Ramana said. All the office bearers and cadres solidly stand with Palaniswami, and the party would work out a strategy to emerge victorious in the coming days.

"Over 80 district secretaries attended the meeting. A few could not attend as they were not able to arrive at the party headquarters on time," Ramana told reporters, emerging from the meeting.

Another senior leader, V V Rajan Chellappa, said the AIADMK has resolved to strive unitedly under the leadership of Palaniswami with unwavering dedication. "We will be steadfast in extending our full support and cooperation to strengthen the hands of our general secretary," Chellappa said on 'X'.

Meanwhile, AIADMK Praesidium Chairman, Tamilmagan Hussain, also extended his support to Palaniswami. The former chief minister extended an olive branch to dissenters on May 18 by asking them not to become fireflies, and began hearing the views of the top party functionaries at the party headquarters.

He had earlier announced that the meeting would be held at his Greenways Road residence here.

However, he arrived at the party headquarters accompanied by his followers.

The top AIADMK leader had replaced the secretaries of 26 districts, including 12 legislators who voted in favour of the TVK government during the floor test on May 13.

The breakaway group led by former state ministers, including C Ve Shanmugam, S P Velumani and Dr C Vijayabaskar, who have been stripped of their party posts,



are gearing up to convene the general council meeting, seeking to completely back Vijay-led TVK government, a move staunchly opposed by Palaniswami.

Accusing the troika -- Shanmugam, Velumani and Vijayabaskar -- of supporting the TVK government to get ministerial berths in return, former state minister R B Udayakumar, supporting Palaniswami, said, "The minister post is a recognition given by the party leadership based on our performance. I see it this way."

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Palaniswami called upon the party members to strive unitedly for the party's victory in the future. "Victory or defeat in an election is natural. We won 47 seats (in the April 23 Assembly election). People gave an unexpected verdict without favouring any single party with an absolute majority. Our leader urged us to remain together and be confident of the AIADMK returning to the helm," Udayakumar said.

O S Manian, a senior leader, said the meeting did not discuss Vijayabaskar's claim on obtaining signatures from 1,000 party members seeking the conduct of a general council meeting to discuss the poll debacle and take a "good decision."

To a question on the next plan of action, Manian replied "Our general secretary will decide." (PTI)

Plea challenging SHANTI Act: SC terms it 'very sensitive legislative policy issue'

NEW DELHI, May 19: This is a "very sensitive legislative policy issue", the Supreme Court said on Tuesday while hearing a plea challenging the provisions of a 2025 law that caps the liability at ₹ 3,000 crore in the event of any unfortunate incident at a nuclear power plant.

A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJ) Surya Kant and Justices Joydip Bagchi and Vipul M Panchohi observed that the issues raised in the plea challenging various provisions of the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025, touches on the "economic policy".

"Our concern is that if an unfortunate event or any accident takes place and any person suffers an injury or damage, do we have a robust compensatory mechanism for that purpose," the bench said during the hearing.

Representing the petitioners in the court, advocate Prashant Bhusan said there are three main issues, including the capping of the total liability.

"If a nuclear accident takes place, the damage done is hundreds of times higher than that," Bhusan argued, while referring to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident that occurred in Japan in 2011.

He argued that the government can do whatever it wants by way of a policy, but it cannot sacrifice the rights of citizens.

"This is a very sensitive legislative policy issue," the bench said. It also observed that technology has to come from outside and wondered that if the liability is not capped, then who will come to operate here.

It said the State will also compensate if any such unfortunate incident takes place.

The bench observed that the capping on liability does not tinker with the court's power to determine the compensation to be awarded to a victim of any such incident.

"Nobody can curtail the power of even a tribunal when the tribunal wants to assess compensation and suitably award it to a person who is entitled," it said.

Bhusan argued that the cost of setting up a nuclear power plant is much higher than that of setting up

a solar power plant.

"I am not asking the court to interfere with any policy of the government. But that policy cannot sacrifice the safety of the citizens," he said, alleging that some of the provisions of the Act are unconstitutional.

The bench said, "You tell us a single nation, whether developed or developing, who is not having production of power through nuclear power plants."

Bhusan said countries like Japan and Germany have stopped energy production through nuclear power plants and they have no cap on the liability.

He added that in the United States, the cap is ₹ 1.54 lakh crore, which is more than 100 times the cap imposed in India.

Bhusan claimed that the Act encourages foreign suppliers to cut corners on safety.

The bench said it would hear the matter in detail.

"Some of your apprehensions may require attention. We will try to clarify those apprehensions," it said while posting the matter for hearing in July.

While hearing the plea on February 27, the court said the main dispute raised was between an actual, visible and tangible national interest versus an unfortunate hypothetical loss.

Bhusan had then argued that the Act, which replaced the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act of 2010, allows private companies to set up civil nuclear power plants but exempts them from liability beyond ₹ 3,000 crore.

He had said in case of nuclear accidents, the loss is more than ₹ 10 lakh crore, as was the case of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident of 1986 and the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident of 2011.

Bhusan had said the Act goes against the absolute-liability principle for hazardous industries laid down by the Supreme Court in the Oleum gas leak case in 1987.

"The SHANTI Act, 2025, brought into force recently, while allowing private sector and foreign companies to operate nuclear power plants in India, has also capped the liability of these operators at an absurdly low level and exempted the supplier from any liability," the plea says. (PTI)

Kerala govt forms expert panel to prepare white paper on state finance

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, May 19: The UDF government on Tuesday announced the formation of a special committee to prepare a white paper on Kerala's financial position, following the first UDF Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister V D Satheesan.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting of senior Finance Department officials chaired by the chief minister.

According to a CMO statement, the committee will be headed by former Cabinet Secretary Dr K M Chandrasekhar. Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) K R Jyothish has been appointed as the Convener.

The panel will also include economist Dr Narayana and Centre for Development Studies (CDS) Director Dr Veeramani as members, the statement said.

The white paper is expected to provide a clearer picture of the state's financial health and help guide future policy decisions, the statement added.

The UDF has been alleging that the state's finances were in trouble due to mismanagement under the Left rule, an allegation that was strongly rejected by then Finance Minister K N Balagopal. (PTI)

Great Nicobar project endangers UNESCO-designated biosphere reserve: Cong

NEW DELHI, May 19: Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday said the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve now stands hugely endangered due to the "ill-conceived, commercially-driven" Great Nicobar project, which is being "bulldozed" by the BJP-led Centre.

In a post on X, Ramesh said the reserve is one of the 18 designated reserves recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), adding that one takes great pride in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India and rightly so.



"But what about the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves which are equally prestigious? Their objective is to preserve ecological and cultural

diversity," he said.

The former environment minister pointed out that India has 18 designated biosphere reserves, of which 13 are internationally recog-

nised and included in this world network.

"One of these thirteen declared in 2013 is none other than the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve that is now hugely endangered because of the ill-conceived, commercially-driven Great Nicobar Island Project being bulldozed through by the Modi government," Ramesh said in his post.

Ramesh has been claiming that the Great Nicobar project endangers the ecology of the region. The Centre has been claiming that the project is necessary for the country's strategic interests. (PTI)

Greater Noida dowry death: Postmortem reveals rupture of internal organs

NOIDA, May 19: The postmortem report of a 24-year-old woman, whose family alleged she was murdered over dowry demands in Greater Noida, has found a brain bleed, rupture of internal organs and multiple contusions on the body of the deceased.

Viscera samples of the deceased woman have been preserved for forensic analysis.

According to the postmortem report of Deepika Nagar, bleeding was present from the victim's left nostril and mouth. The report stated that a hematoma (blood leaking from large blood vessels) was present in the middle and left side of the brain.

The report, accessed by PTI, further stated that the liver, spleen and right kidney were ruptured.

The report also mentioned contusions on the arm and thigh.

The viscera has been preserved to ascertain the presence of any toxic substance, according to the report.

Earlier on Tuesday, police at the Ecotech-3 police station had said that the exact cause of death was not yet clear and doctors had not given a final opinion.

Deepika died on Sunday night after allegedly falling from the terrace of her three-storey matrimonial home in Jalpura village in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar district.

Her family, however, has alleged that she was murdered by her in-laws over dowry demands and

claimed it was neither a suicide nor an accident.

Police have arrested Deepika's husband Hrithik (26) and father-in-law Manoj, while efforts are underway to apprehend the remaining accused named in the FIR registered under provisions related to dowry death.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Shailendra Kumar Singh had earlier said that the case was registered on the basis of a complaint lodged by Deepika's father, Sanjay Nagar.

According to the complaint, Deepika had called her father on Sunday afternoon while crying and allegedly told him that her in-laws were assaulting her over dowry demands.

The family alleged that the in-laws were demanding a Toyota Fortuner SUV and an additional Rs 45-50 lakh in cash.

Sanjay Nagar claimed that he and some relatives had gone to Deepika's matrimonial home around 7 pm on Sunday in an attempt to resolve the dispute. He alleged that around 12.30 am, the family received a call from the in-laws informing them that Deepika had suffered a fall and asking them to reach Sharda Hospital.

"When I reached the hospital, I found my daughter lying dead," Nagar had said earlier, alleging that her body bore multiple injury marks and what appeared to be wounds caused by a screwdriver. (PTI)

Maharashtra govt signs MoUs of ₹ 6.5 lakh crore for nuclear energy projects

MUMBAI, May 19: The Maharashtra government on Tuesday signed memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with four companies to attract investments worth ₹ 6.5 lakh crore in the nuclear energy sector, with the projects expected to generate 25,400 MW of power and create 1,23,500 jobs.

The government signed the agreements with NTPC Limited, Adani Power Limited, Reliance Industries Limited and Lalitpur Power Generation Company Limited at a meeting held at Mantralaya, an official release said.

The statement quoted Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis as saying that the investments would support Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India an energy-rich nation and achieving zero carbon emissions.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a goal of making India an energy-rich nation and achieving zero carbon emissions. Maharashtra



is making every possible effort to fulfil this objective. Investments coming into the state's clean energy sector will certainly strengthen the country's journey towards becoming an energy-rich nation," Fadnis said.

Nuclear energy was a crucial component of clean energy generation and Maharashtra had signifi-

cant opportunities in the sector, he said.

"This investment will not only boost power generation in the state but also create substantial employment opportunities. Maharashtra will continue to remain at the forefront of clean energy generation in the country," the CM added.

The companies should move

swiftly to implement the agreements and undertake surveys of project sites, Fadnis said, adding that all state government departments concerned would extend full cooperation.

According to the state government, Reliance Industries Limited will invest ₹ 2 lakh crore to develop 7,200 MW of nuclear power capacity, with more than one lakh jobs expected to be generated.

Adani Power Limited will invest ₹ 1.5 lakh crore to set up projects with a capacity of 6,000 MW, creating an estimated 12,000 direct and indirect jobs.

NTPC Limited will invest ₹ 1 lakh crore to establish 7,200 MW of capacity, creating around 5,000 jobs.

Lalitpur Power Generation Company Limited, part of the Bajaj Group, will invest ₹ 2 lakh crore to build 5,000 MW of capacity and generate about 3,000 jobs, it said. (PTI)

Teams to visit Kangpokpi and Senapati amid ongoing Naga-Kuki tensions

Church leaders offer to broker peace in Manipur

IMPHAL, May 19: As the problems between the Nagas and the Kukis continue to prevail in Manipur, two church organisations who met Manipur chief minister Yumnam Khemchand in Imphal "volunteered to broker peace", according to the chief minister's office. Deputy chief minister L. Dikho was present during the meeting.

A ten-member team of church leaders representing the Council for Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) and the Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) called on the chief minister to discuss the "tense situation between the two tribal communities", said a statement from the chief minister's office.

"The church leaders have volunteered to broker peace between the two communities," it said, adding, "Shri Khemchand Singh said that he feels touched by the church leaders meeting him and offering their help to bring peace". The state government lauded the role of the



church leaders and encouraged them to talk to both sides, it further added.

The church leaders will be engaging in two teams to work for peace. While one team will travel to Kuki dominated Kangpokpi dis-

trict, another team will visit Naga dominated Senapati district, informed the chief minister's office. The church leaders strongly feel that hostages on both sides need to be released on humanitarian ground urgently, the chief minister's office also stated.

The team that will travel to Kangpokpi will meet the family members of three deceased church leaders to express condolences. The state government has assured that ex-gratia will be provided to the three families. The team will then speak to the Kuki church leaders in Kangpokpi in a bid to bring peace, the chief minister's office also said.

The team, which plans to visit Senapati district will meet the Naga church leaders and members of the Naga civil society organisations to discuss the prevailing tense situation and hostage crisis, the statement further informed.

Meanwhile, Manipur Chief Minister, Yumnam Khemchand Singh lauded the role being played by the church leaders in trying to defuse the present crisis arising out of the hostage keeping incident in the aftermath of the killing of three church leaders on May 13 at Zero Point in between Kotlen and Kotzim under Kangpokpi district. (NNN)

Nagaland tourism dept presents its key initiatives to Guv Yadav

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, May 19: Nagaland tourism department presented an overview of its key initiatives, achievements, challenges and future plans to Governor Nand Kishore Yadav at a review meeting of the department at Lok Bhavan in Kohima on Monday.

During the meeting, secretary, tourism, Nchumbemo Lotha briefed the governor on the progress of tourism development in Nagaland, highlighting various initiatives aimed at strengthening the state's position as a leading destination for eco-tourism, cultural tourism and community-based tourism.

The department reiterated its vision of promoting sustainable tourism that preserves the state's rich cultural heritage while protecting its natural environment.

Widely known as the "Land of Festivals", Nagaland offers unique tourism experiences ranging from vibrant tribal traditions to scenic landscapes and biodiversity.

Officials highlighted several major tourist attractions, including Dzukou Valley, popularly



known as the "Valley of Flowers", Khonoma Green Village, recognised as India's first green village, Mount Saramati, the highest peak in the state and Diezephe Craft Village, known for its traditional handloom and handicrafts.

The meeting also highlighted the success of community-driven tourism initiatives in villages such as Khonoma and Dzuleke, where conservation and sustainable tourism practices have created livelihood opportunities for local communities.

Officials told the governor that Nagaland receives approx-

imately 2.25 lakh domestic tourists annually, while international tourist arrivals range between 2,000 and 5,000 per year.

The department also presented updates on key infrastructure development projects undertaken under the State Plan, DoNER/NEC schemes and the tourism ministry's Swadesh Darshan initiatives. These include the upgradation of tourism facilities at Kisama Heritage Village, development of tourist amenity centres, eco-tourism projects and tourism infrastructure across several districts.

Arunachal Education minister stresses quality infrastructure, timely completion of projects

ITANAGAR, May 19: Arunachal Pradesh Education Minister P D Sona on Tuesday stressed maximum utilisation of central funds, creation of high-standard infrastructure and timely completion of projects under RUSA and PM-USHA schemes for strengthening higher education in the state.

Chairing the ninth meeting of the Arunachal Pradesh State Higher Education Council (APSHEC) here, Sona thanked the Union Ministry of Education for financing key infrastructure projects in higher education institutions under the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) and Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA).

Describing Arunachal Pradesh as a resource-rich state, the minister emphasised the need for economical utilisation of funds while ensuring quality and quantity in project execution, officials said.

He also called for constant monitoring and timely completion of all RUSA and PM-USHA projects being implemented in the state.

Sona said that, as per government directions, all new projects would be assigned to a single executing agency, the Public Works Depart-

ment (PWD), to maintain uniformity in infrastructure development.

Earlier, director of higher and technical education Dr Milorai Modi, who is also the state project director (RUSA/PM-USHA), highlighted the role of APSHEC in the implementation of the schemes and said the statutory body plays a vital role in the holistic growth and development of higher education in the state. The director urged council members to provide valuable suggestions for further development of the sector.

State nodal officer for RUSA/PM-USHA Minto Ete, presented a detailed report on action taken on decisions made in previous meetings and the status of ongoing projects under the schemes.

State Education Commissioner Amjad Tak advised the council to provide constant guidance to ensure higher and technical education in the state continue moving in the right direction.

He also stressed the need for obtaining land allotment and land possession certificates for all higher education institutions at the earliest and called upon stakeholders to remain proactive in the implementation of key projects. (PTI)

Tripura to introduce drones to identify, repair faulty transmission lines: Power Minister

AGARTALA, May 19: Tripura State Electricity Power Corporation (TSECL) is set to introduce drones to identify and repair faulty transmission lines in remote areas of the state by next month, Power minister Ratan Lal Nath said on Tuesday. In the northeastern state, identification and repair of snapped transmission lines is a major challenge because of hostile terrains during the monsoon season, leading to disruption in power transmission for days.

"Chief Minister Manik Saha on Tuesday held a meeting with senior officials of the Power department to review the progress of ongoing works, addressing key challenges and ensuring timely implementation of important projects", Nath told reporters.

He said the TSECL has decided to introduce drones to identify and repair faulty transmission lines in the most remote areas by next month.

"We are also going to adopt a live wire maintenance system, which is not available in the northeast at present. Once the system is introduced, the repairs of faulty lines can be restored swiftly", he said.

Nath said the underground cable laying programme, which will be implemented in three phases in the state, is scheduled to be completed in the city by early 2028. (PTI)

Sikkim CEO holds meeting with representatives of political parties

GANGTOK, May 19: Sikkim Chief Executive Officer Raj Kumar Yadav held a meeting with representatives of political parties ahead of the commencement of SIR in the Himalayan state from May 30 and described the voter roll revision as a "participatory exercise". He said the booth-level officers (BLOs) will make house-to-house visits till June 28 to distribute enumeration forms among voters and collect these from them. The release of the draft electoral rolls will take place on July 5, Yadav said.

The claims and objections can be filed between July 5 and August 4.

The disposal of claims and objections can be made between July 5 and September 2, the CEO said, adding that the final electoral rolls will be released on September 6.

Yadav held a meeting on the implementation of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process with political parties' representatives at the conference hall of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer on May 18, following the direction of the Election Commission to conduct the voter roll revision exercise in 16 states and 3 Union Territories, an official statement said. (PTI)

ment (PWD), to maintain uniformity in infrastructure development. Earlier, director of higher and technical education Dr Milorai Modi, who is also the state project director (RUSA/PM-USHA), highlighted the role of APSHEC in the implementation of the schemes and said the statutory body plays a vital role in the holistic growth and development of higher education in the state. The director urged council members to provide valuable suggestions for further development of the sector. State nodal officer for RUSA/PM-USHA Minto Ete, presented a detailed report on action taken on decisions made in previous meetings and the status of ongoing projects under the schemes. State Education Commissioner Amjad Tak advised the council to provide constant guidance to ensure higher and technical education in the state continue moving in the right direction. He also stressed the need for obtaining land allotment and land possession certificates for all higher education institutions at the earliest and called upon stakeholders to remain proactive in the implementation of key projects. (PTI)

UNC denies Naga involvement in killing of Thadou church leaders

Naga body alleges 'intra-fold' conflict among Kuki groups behind May 13 killings

IMPHAL, May 19: In connection with the "cold blooded murder" of three Thadou church leaders on May 13, the United Naga Council (UNC) said that the "non-involvement of non-Kuki armed group(s) in the killing spree is beyond any doubt but the facts virtually unmask Kuki's involvement in the killing which has an intra-fold character- between two non-Naga tribes belonging to controversial Kuki fold".

In a lengthy statement, the UNC said it has been vehemently and unequivocally condemned by all Naga civil society organisations and the "Naga national organisations across the length and breadth of Nagalim". The Naga body said, "In this dark episode, Manipur has lost three noble warriors of peace and understanding within and between communities. The vacuum left by their departure will be really difficult to fill, it also said. "The UNC, on behalf of the Nagas and in the larger interest of the people of the state declares that we will lend support to all efforts to the course of law against the perpetrators of the heinous crime".

Following the "barbaric murder" of the three Thadou church leaders, the Kukis started accusing the Nagas of complicity in the murder and flooded social media platforms with the same standard tactics adopted by Kuki groups in the conflicts they have been engaged with the Meiteis since May 2023 and now with the Nagas from February 7, 2026 following the Nazi philosophy "Repeat a lie often enough and it becomes truth".

The Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM)'s condemnation released within 2 hours' time of the ambush/killing, categorically naming the ZUF-Kamson group and NSCN-IM as perpetrators was dated 6/5/2026, pointed out the UNC. The speed and the tone of certainty of that release indicate prior knowledge, the Naga body further pointed out. There has not been any corrigendum till date on the incongruous date seven days ahead of the actual bloodletting day. "It is therefore understood that the KIM condemnation letter was drafted well in advance and released almost immediately after the gruesome murder", alleged the UNC. "Does this not smack of complicity in the prior planning of the act?" it asked, adding, "It is now incumbent upon the KIM to furnish concrete proofs in the public domain on the complicity of Nagas in the murder as accused by them and to thereby prove absence of any prior knowledge of the crime and their absolute non-involvement in the heinous murder of the Thadou church leaders".

The UNC then said it also took strong exception to the manner of response and action of the security forces including the "mighty Indian

army" to the hostage taking incident immediately after the ambush on Thadou church leaders. The 57th Mountain Division at Leimakhong is located within 2 km of Kongsakul and Leilon Vaiphei villages and as their duty calls should have made hot pursuit after the Kuki militants and rescued the Naga hostages on May 13, 2026 itself, said the UNC. "We are also dissatisfied with the security arrangement for the vulnerable Naga areas, which are seen as discriminatory and highly inadequate in terms of numbers and strategic/security concerns", it added.

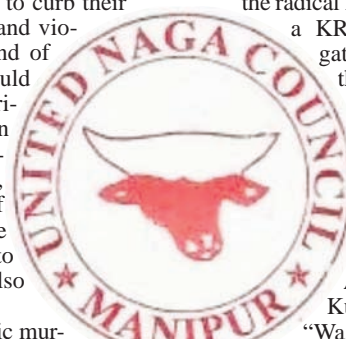
The UNC then said the State and the Central authorities should immediately disarm and confine the Kuki Suspension of Operation (SoO) militants to their designated camps as per the terms of the SoO agreement to curb their incessant lawless activities and violence against the Meiteis and of late against the Nagas. "Should such measures by the authorities be found not feasible on the ground due to the militants' inalcitrant defiance, the SoO agreement must of necessity be abrogated and the militants strictly subjected to the laws of the land", it also said.

With regard to the "barbaric murder" of Thadou church leaders on May 13, 2026, it is pertinent to take note of the facts placed by the Thadou Inpi Manipur (TIM) in their official statement dated May 17, 2026 on the matter of the murder of the Thadou Church leaders, the UNC said there has been nearly six decade-old controversy over the ethnonym "Kuki" and "Thadou", adding, "Each is ideological and goal-oriented". According to the UNC, the question and controversy surrounding the instances of alleged imposition of "Kuki" label on the Thadous and their forward rejection is a fact, and that Dr Rev Vumthang Sithou, a strong leader who stood for Thadou identity was considered a hurdle to the process of building an umbrella Kuki identity and politicization, is a fact. The UNC then said an attempt to stand away and above the Kuki label is considered outside the demand for "separate administration". The UNC further said KLA (L)'s warning to Kuki-Zo people not to meet the Chief Minister of Manipur in Churachandpur on May 15, 2026 is a fact.

The Naga body said the visit to Churachandpur for religious matters by the victim's party might have been perceived negatively as cordiality between the Thadous and the Zo people at that fluid instant juncture was considered as

an act of defiance, the visit being undertaken while an announced warning was in effect. The UNC also said the place where the ambush took place is Kuki and their militants-dominated area where no infiltration of non-Kuki armed groups is possible, is also a fact. The Naga body further said the killing was precise. "Rev Dr Vumthang Sithou's vehicle was hit the hardest. At least 15 bullets were recovered from his body. He was the primary target—a Thadou leader known for translating the Holy Bible 'in Thadou', for establishing Thadou fellowships outside Manipur and for publicly rejecting the May 9, 2026 'Kuki Zo Flag' hoisting where his name was misused without consent", the UNC added. The Naga body also said this rejection was an affront to the radical Kuki groups. The UNC then said a KRA/KNO "tax collection entry gate" sits just one kilometre from the ambush site, near an Army/Assam Rifles post. KRA/KNO is a Kuki SoO group that operates in the area, it further added.

The Naga body then said the question of "who has killed Nehkam Jomhao in Assam on August 30, 2025" confronts the Kukis and the purveyors of lies. "Was he not a strong crusader of peace in Manipur and Thadou identity which cost his precious life to the bullet of the miscreants?", it asked, adding, "It is perceived that the Thadou leaders are increasingly targeted by Kuki protagonists". Therefore, the UNC urged the Kukis in particular and those others who have been lured into believing them to discontinue forthwith the spread of lies without proof of Naga complicity and involvement in the highly appalling murder of innocent apostles of peace. "Against the above facts, the non-involvement of non-Kuki armed group(s) in the killing spree is beyond any doubt but the facts virtually unmask Kuki's involvement in the killing which has an intra-fold character- between two non-Naga tribes belonging to controversial Kuki fold", the UNC stated, adding, "We are encouraged by the emerging voices questioning the wild allegations hurled out without any substance and providing facts of events, situations and circumstances under which the crime took place". Revealing information is slowly but surely emerging from reliable sources and the clinching picture will be soon visible to the world at large, said the UNC. "The truth will prevail and the poisonous fangs of lies and deceit will inevitably meet their destined and deserving ends", it further added. (NNN)



6 militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, May 19: Six militants were arrested from different parts of Manipur, police said on Tuesday.

Three members of the People's Liberation Army were nabbed from the border town of Moreh in Tengnoupal district on Monday, they said. An active cadre of UNLF (Koirang) was apprehended on Sunday from the Yairipok Bazar in Thoubal district. He was allegedly involved in arms trafficking, and a 9 mm magazine was found with him, they added.

Two members of Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) were arrested from the Lamphel police station area in Imphal West district, police said. In another operation, a large cache of arms was recovered from the Imphal West district. The seizure was made from the foothills between Lamdeng and Kameng villages in the Lamsang police station area, they said.

Among the arms seized were three bolt-action single-barreled guns, a .22 pistol, four 9mm pistols and five magazines, they said. (PTI)

Governor stresses need for greater augmentation of MSMEs in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, May 19: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen K T Parnaik (Retd) on Tuesday stressed the need for greater augmentation of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), saying the sector can emerge as a strong pillar of the state's socio-economic development.

During an interaction with Santanu Srivastava, Managing Director and CEO of Ishan International in New Delhi, the governor highlighted the immense potential of Arunachal Pradesh for entrepreneurship and local enterprise development owing to its rich natural resources, tribal crafts, organic farming potential, forest produce, tourism opportunities and unique cultural heritage.

Parnaik said MSMEs can create sustainable livelihood opportunities for youths, women, artisans, farmers and self-help groups across the state, an official statement said here. (PTI)

Modi's Swedish honour reflects India's rising global stature: Khandu

ITANAGAR, May 19: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Tuesday described the conferment of Sweden's highest honour upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a proud moment for every Indian, stating that the recognition reflects India's growing global stature and the PM's exceptional leadership on the world stage.

King Harald V of Norway on Monday conferred upon Modi the "Grand Cross of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit" for his contribution to advancing the India-Norway relationship and his leadership.

"Proud moment for every Indian as Hon Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji is conferred the Royal Order of the Polar Star, Commander Grand Cross by Sweden, the highest honour bestowed upon a Head of Government," the chief minister said in a post on X.

Highlighting the significance of the recognition, Khandu said the honour marked yet another milestone in India's growing diplomatic and global influence under the leadership of Modi. "The 31st international honour be-



stowed upon him stands as a testament to India's growing global stature and PM Modi's exceptional leadership and statesmanship on the world stage," the chief minister added.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also congratulated the Prime Minister on another international recognition conferred by the Kingdom of Norway.

Describing the award as a reflection of the Prime Minister's leadership and India's growing international promi-

nence, Mein said the prestigious honour is a reflection of his visionary leadership and India's rising stature on the global stage.

He stated that the recognition underscored the PM's commitment to strengthening global partnerships and enhancing India's diplomatic engagement across nations.

"This recognition will further deepen the enduring friendship and strategic partnership between India and Norway," Mein added. (PTI)

No.DPRD/BTC/SOPD/WR/Bak-2/2025-26/31 Dated Kokrajhar the 18th May 2026

PRESS NOTICE

The Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for "Protection of Khunmabari area from the erosion of rive Beki on its R/B " under the Head of Account "4515" (Other Rural Development Programme) -00- (no Sub Major Head) 103 (rural Development) 13 Major Works 01 (Normal) during the financial year 2025-26 under Grant No. 56 (Construction Work Head) during the financial year 2025-26 under Grant No. 56 for an amount of Rs.4,94,79,210/- (Rupees four crore ninety four lakh seventy nine thousand two hundred ten) only from the registered contractors of Class - II (A,B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads) / (Building), BTC.

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the Office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/-
Panchayat & Rural Development,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/244

No.DPRD/BTC/SOPD/WR/Bak-1/2025-26/30 Dated Kokrajhar the 18th May 2026

PRESS NOTICE

The Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for work "Protection of 3 No. Barpeta area from the erosion of rive Beki on its R/B " under the Head of Account "4515" (Other Rural Development Programme) -00- (no Sub Major Head) 103 (rural Development) 13 Major Works 01 (Normal) during the financial year 2025-26 under Grant No. 56 (Construction Work Head) during the financial year 2025-26 under Grant No. 56 for an amount of Rs.4,92,74,260/- (Rupees four crore ninety two lakh seventy four thousand two hundred sixty) only from the registered contractors of Class - II (A,B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads) / (Building), BTC.

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the Office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/-
Panchayat & Rural Development,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/246

KKR face must-win test; MI out to spoil party



KOLKATA, May 19: Their campaign hanging by a thread, Kolkata Knight Riders will have no option but to go all out against an already-eliminated Mumbai Indians in a crucial IPL match, here on Wednesday.

A defeat will officially end KKR's playoff hopes for the second successive season under Ajinkya Rahane after their disappointing eighth-place finish in 2025, a year after lifting the title under Shreyas Iyer.

Even a win, however, may not be enough for the Rahane-led side as KKR's fate will still depend on Punjab Kings' away match against Lucknow Super Giants on Saturday.

If Punjab win that game, KKR's final league fixture against Delhi Capitals here on Sunday will become a dead rubber.

As things stand, defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Gujarat Titans and Sunrisers Hyderabad have already sealed playoff berths, while Lucknow Super Giants and Mumbai Indians are out of contention.

That leaves five teams -- Punjab Kings (13 points), Rajasthan Royals (12), Chennai Super Kings (12), Delhi Capitals (12) and Kolkata Knight Riders (11) -- battling for the lone remaining playoff spot.

Among them, only Rajasthan Royals and KKR have two matches left.

Rajasthan have the simplest equation -- win both remaining games against LSG and MI to finish on 16 points and seal qualification.

KKR, on the other hand, not only need to win both their matches but also hope Punjab stumble against LSG, as Punjab can still finish on 15 points with a significantly superior net run rate.

In hindsight, KKR would rue their poor start to the season. The Shah Rukh Khan-owned franchise has now won five of its last six matches, but the turnaround came too late after a disastrous opening stretch of six-match winless run.

It took captain Rahane and coach Abhishek Nayyar nearly seven games to settle on a winning combination, something marquee overseas signing

Cameron Green also admitted after their victory over in-form Gujarat Titans in the previous match here.

"I think it just took us a while, maybe a bit too long, to figure out the right roles and get the right people in the right positions," Green had said.

Since registering their first win against Rajasthan Royals, KKR have looked a transformed side.

Finn Allen has rediscovered his form at the top, smashing a century and a blistering 35-ball 93 in his last three innings, while young keeper-batter Angkrish Raghuvanshi and Green have grown in confidence with every game.

Rahane has been the only weak link at the top, but vice-captain Rinku Singh has lived up to his finishing role in the middle order.

Green, who became one of the costliest overseas buys at ₹ 25.20 crore in the auction, has also contributed with the ball, while veteran spinner Sunil Narine continues to remain KKR's trusted match-winner.

KKR, however, have injury concerns over Matheesha Pathirana and Varun Chakravarthy.

The India star spinner played the previous match despite a hairline fracture in his left leg, something that reportedly has not gone down well with the BCCI.

For KKR, this phase could also shape their plans for the future.

While Green and Raghuvanshi have emerged as major positives, questions remain over whether the Rahane-Nayar captain-coach combination will continue beyond this season, especially after Rinku was appointed vice-captain at the start of the campaign.

MI look to spoil KKR's hopes

For Mumbai Indians, the focus will be on ending a disappointing season on a positive note and potentially spoiling KKR's playoff push.

The five-time champions are set to welcome back skipper Hardik Pandya, who missed the last three matches due to injury but trained at full intensity on Monday.

Hardik has endured an underwhelming season, scoring 146 runs from eight innings at an average of 20.85 while taking only four wickets at an economy rate of nearly 11.90.

It has been a forgettable campaign for MI, who have used three captains this season, with Suryakumar Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah also leading the side in Hardik's absence.

The biggest setback for MI has been the poor form of their India stars. Suryakumar has managed only 195 runs from 11 innings without a single fifty, while veteran Rohit Sharma and Tilak Varma have lacked consistency.

Bumrah, too, has had little support despite leading the pace attack. (PTI)

Chaliha enters women singles main draw; Amsakarunan-Arjun stun Popov brothers



KUALA LUMPUR, May 19: Indian shuttler Ashmita Chaliha defeated Pai Yu-po of Chinese Taipei in a tough three-game contest to qualify for the women's singles main draw of the Malaysia Masters Super 500 tournament here on Tuesday.

Chaliha, 26, beat Yu-po 21-23 21-16 21-16 in the qualification match that lasted 56 minutes.

She will take on world no. 56 Thalita Ramadhani Wiryawan of Indonesia in the opening round of main draw.

But it was curtains for Aakarshi Kashyap, who lost 21-15 20-22 7-21 against Park.

Ga Eun of Korea in her women's singles qualifying match.

The Indian men's doubles pair of Hariharan Amsakarunan and M R Arjun, meanwhile, progressed to the second round with a stunning 21-19 21-15 win over seventh seeds Christo Popov and Toma Junior Popov of France.

They will next play the winner of the match between Indonesia's Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin and Chinese pair of Hu Ke Yuan and Lin Xiang Yi.

India's Sathwik Reddy Kanapuram and Radhika Sharma also had a good day as they beat Malaysia's Datu Anif Isaac Datu Asrah and Clarissa San 21-15, 21-17 in mixed doubles qualifiers.

However, Canada's Jackie Dent and Crystal Lai ended the campaign for India's Ashwini Bhat K. and Shikha Gautam, beating them 21-15, 17-21, 21-17 in women's doubles. (PTI)

India squad in good shape for T20 World Cup: Smriti Mandhana

MUMBAI, May 19: Unwilling to divulge much about the Indian women's cricket team's preparations for the T20 World Cup next month, vice-captain Smriti Mandhana on Tuesday said all she can reveal is that the players are in good shape for the 12-team tournament.

The women's T20 World Cup will be played in England and Wales from June 12 with ODI World Cup winners India set to take on arch-rivals Pakistan in their tournament-opener on June 14.

"The camp has gone well and I would like to keep it at that. I would not like to say any specifics of what we have worked on because we are heading to a World Cup," Mandhana said at a press conference organised by feminine care brand Pee Safe here.

"But what I would say is that all the girls are looking in good shape, they have been practising really well and a lot of hard work has gone behind it," she added.



The 15-member Indian squad underwent a training camp at the Centre of Excellence (COE) in Bengaluru and is set to depart for

Cup and we will leave for a series before it. The preparations have been going well and I hope that we keep working hard and make India proud and bring the cup back home," Mandhana said.

Mandhana, who also interacted with school-going children here, said it is important for younger generation to know that there are career opportunities in sports.

"The questions that they ask at that age, I would not (have) known what they are asking. They really want to know what we go through which is extremely nice," Mandhana said.

"For me it's very important to give them a message firstly how sports and cricket have a career and you can actually make a career out of it.

"The other important thing for me which I try and tell is to enjoy the process and what they do...I just really want all the kids to enjoy and follow their passion so that's one message that I give to the young kids," she added. (PTI)

Pant dropped from India's ODI squad for Afghanistan series

GUWAHATI, May 19: Flamboyant wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant was on Tuesday removed as vice-captain of the Indian Test squad for the upcoming one-off match against Afghanistan and dropped from the ODI line-up for the ensuing three-match series against the same opponents.

KL Rahul replaced Pant as the vice-captain of the Indian Test team that is being led by Shubman Gill.

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah has been expectedly rested from both the Test and ODI assignments as part of his workload management but he will be back for the tour of England later this summer. Senior all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja has also been rested from the upcoming Test match by the Ajit Agarkar-led national selection committee.

The home assignments against Afghanistan include a one-off Test in Mulanpur starting June 6, followed by three ODIs scheduled from June 14 across Dharamsala, Lucknow, and Chennai.

"Bumrah will be back when we tour England. He is working on his workload,"

Agarkar told reporters after the selection meeting here.

Spin bowler Manav Suthar and pacer Gurnoor Brar have earned maiden call-ups to the Test squad. Both are teammates at IPL franchise Gujarat Titans, while Prince Yadav is the new face in the ODI line-up, with Ishan Kishan being the second wicket-keeper.



The Squads:

India's Test squad: Shubman Gill (captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul (vice-captain), Sai Sudharsan, Rishabh Pant, Devdutt Padikkal, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Manav Suthar, Gurnoor Brar, Harsh Dubey, Dhruv Jurel.

India's ODI squad: Shubman Gill (captain), Shreyas Iyer (vice-captain), Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Hardik Pandya, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Harsh Dubey, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Prince Yadav, Gurnoor Brar. (PTI)

MI's De Kock, Raj Bawa ruled out of remainder of IPL season

KOLKATA, May 19: Mumbai Indians wicket-keeper-batter Quinton de Kock and pace-bowling all-rounder Raj Bawa were on Tuesday ruled out of the remainder of the IPL season due to injuries.

Already eliminated from the playoff race, Mumbai Indians have two matches left this season -- against Kolkata Knight Riders here on Wednesday and Rajasthan Royals on Sunday.

De Kock has been ruled out with a tendon injury in his left wrist, which he sustained ahead of MI's home game against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Bawa, meanwhile, suffered a ligament tear in his right thumb during MI's previous match against Punjab Kings.

De Kock played three matches this season after beginning his campaign with an unbeaten 112 against Punjab Kings on April 16.

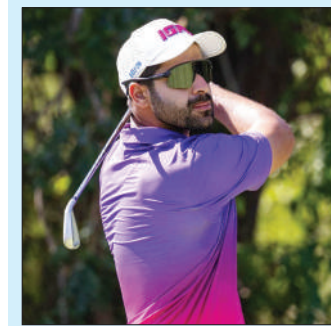
He last featured against Chennai Super Kings on April 23 before missing the SRH clash after being hit on the wrist during practice.

Bawa made three appearances for MI this season.

"Both Quinton and Raj Bawa will continue their rehab in their respective homes, with support and guidance from the Mumbai Indians medical team to help them return to play as soon as possible," MI said in a statement.

"Mumbai Indians wishes them a quick recovery and will announce replacements as per IPL guidelines," it added. (PTI)

Gill targets Asian Tour card after ADT title, says Indian golf returning to 'golden days'



NEW DELHI, May 19: Fresh from his breakthrough Asian Development Tour (ADT) title in Malaysia, Indian golfer Pukhraj Gill has now set his sights firmly on securing a full Asian Tour card, saying consistency over the remainder of the season will be key to achieving his biggest goal of the year.

The Chandigarh golfer currently sits third in the ADT Order of Merit and is also inside the top-65 on the Asian Tour rankings, leaving him well placed to qualify through either route.

"Either through the main Asian Tour Order of Merit of top-65, or if I play well on the ADT, either one of those will be able to get to my main goals till the end of this year," Gill told PTI during an interview.

The 24-year-old's rise has gathered pace over the last few months.

Apart from winning in Malaysia, Gill also impressed at the International Series Singapore earlier this season, finishing tied-22nd in one of the strongest fields he has faced in professional golf.

Return of 'golden days'

Gill believes Indian golf is slowly returning to its "golden days", with growing international exposure and new domestic pathways giving players the confidence to compete globally.

He said the increasing number of Indians competing abroad is a sign that the ecosystem is finally moving in the right direction.

"I do feel that we're getting back to the golden days," Gill said.

"Now naturally, once you get more Indians playing in all the

fields, we definitely know from our history that we have enough capability to get it done."

He said the partnership between the IGPL and Asian Tour had played a crucial role in accelerating his progress.

"That has been the reason where I've been able to have this international exposure. This partnership has worked out very well for me."

Gill also pointed to the growing number of Indians attempting Asian Tour qualifying as evidence of improved financial backing and opportunities within Indian golf.

"I think last year we had a bunch of 40 or 50 guys going (for Asian Tour qualifying), and this year we have a bunch of 60 or 70 people who want to go," he said.

"Participation is one of the main elements that has started going rightly. The more focus you have on an international circuit, the more comfortable those guys feel. Slowly, you start to feel that we are as good as anybody else."

Gill also offered his perspective on the Asian Games selection criteria.

India golf had relied on trials for selecting players for the continental event ahead of the Huangzhou edition, but world rankings are expected to carry more weight this time.

The Sports ministry-recognised Indian Golf Union has confirmed no on-course selection trials will take place this time.

Gill said both systems have shortcomings and admitted that the uncertainty around selection can be frustrating for players.

"I feel like there are pros and cons of both systems," he said.

"When you look at the world ranking part of things, it's very difficult to decide the world ranking points between somebody who's playing in Europe versus somebody who's playing in Asia and somebody who's only playing the national tour."

At the same time, he said trials can also become heavily dependent on short-term form. (PTI)

Trying to stay in the hunter mindset: Mo Bobat on RCB's charge to play-offs

BENGALURU, May 19: Royal Challengers Bengaluru director of cricket Mo Bobat says the defending champions' marauding run in the ongoing IPL is because of a "hunter mindset" which prevented complicity from creeping in after the team's maiden trophy win last year.

RCB was the first team to seal a berth in the knockout stage this year, garnering 18 points. With a game in hand, they will be eager to finish atop the points table. The side has logged nine wins in its 13 matches so far and will be up against Lucknow Super Giants in the final league stage engagement on May 22.

"I didn't want it to feel like we had climbed Mount Everest (winning the title last year). We wanted to just keep climbing, keep hunting. We've talked with that language a little bit internally, just trying to stay in that hunter mindset," Bobat told a select media gathering as part of the third edition of RCB Innovation Lab's Indian Sports Summit.

"For myself and even the senior players, quickly adapting, resetting mindsets and going, right, what are we going after next is really important," he added.

So, how easy was it to inculcate that mindset within the players? "Most of it is just that psychological shift really, just making sure that people are all aligned and motivated to go through the next thing. Now, sport is quite unforgiving. You win a trophy and very quickly the world moves on."

"You've got to balance enjoying and being proud of what you've achieved, but also shifting people's attention towards what's next. The same will be true this season however this season pans out for us. Obviously, we're keen to go all the way, but that might not happen," he said.

A key element of that moving forward process is to manage a variety of players in the dug-out -- from highly experienced pros to wide-eyed greenhorns.

"You could have a 19-year-old who's just been signed on his first IPL contract. You could have an Indian player who's in their mid-thirties, who's been there and done it all for his country and multiple franchises. (PTI)

CHENNAI, May 19: Chennai Super Kings' head coach Stephen Fleming acknowledged that Ruturaj Gaikwad is still a work in progress as captain after the side's playoff hopes in the ongoing IPL were left massively dented by a loss to Sunrisers Hyderabad here.

CSK suffered a five-wicket defeat to SRH here on Monday, leaving their playoff hopes dependent on a complex set of mathematical possibilities.

They now face a must-win final league game against Gujarat Titans on Thursday, while depending on other results to fall in their favour. SRH, on the other hand, sealed their playoff berth on Tuesday night.

"Ruturaj will be going through that (transition) as part of his development. It's a big transition from having one of the best captains (in MS Dhoni) at cricket scene running the franchise for such a long time to a new captain," Fleming said of 29-year-old Gaikwad, who has been CSK skipper for three seasons.

"So it's going to take a little bit of time. And he's doing a good job. He has a massive amount of respect with this group of players. And he's learning all the time and putting that into play."

"So going forward, I have no doubt he'll be a fine captain for this franchise," added



the New Zealander.

Gaikwad is averaging a modest 29 this season, managing only two half centuries in the 13 matches so far.

Fleming said the season has not been kind to the team, conceding that it was already a step behind other sides due to the changes made over the past year.

CSK overhauled their squad following a disappointing 2025 season, releasing mainstays such as Matheesha Pathirana, Rachin

Ravindra, and Devon Conway, while bringing in young, attacking talent, including Dewald Brevis, Ayush Mhatre, and Urvil Patel.

Rajasthan Royals' Sanju Samson was brought in to strengthen the top order, a move that necessitated parting ways with stalwart Ravindra Jadeja and overseas all-rounder Sam Curran.

"Yeah, it's been a challenge, we knew coming into the season we were a little bit behind in terms of other teams. We had made a lot of changes halfway through the first year of the cycle and then we made more changes going into this year."

"It would have been great to have started well, but we started poorly...and we just haven't been accurate enough."

Fleming, however, said he was pleased that the team had fought back after a poor start to the season.

"And then I was really proud of the recovery... to get back into the mix was really satisfying. There's some good performances from players, these young players that have emerged."

He said the team's rebuilding and change in strategy were also affected by injuries to several players, which halted the momentum.

"There was a style of cricket that we were developing that was cricking. But we had in-

juries to key players, which sort of stopped a bit of momentum and made us a little bit unsettled in terms of having to keep changing the team.

"Our performances under pressure in the last couple of games just haven't been quite up to it. If we'd been a little bit more accurate, a little bit more positive, then things could have been different."

Fleming said that the presence of Dhoni in the dugout, despite him not featuring in a single game while recovering from a lingering calf strain, has been a source of motivation.

"I know there's been a lot of talk about it (when Dhoni will play), but MS has been around a lot this year, which has been really important for the team, for a lot of young players in continuity. So he's been a big part. He hasn't played, but he's still had a big influence on the team."

Speaking about his future after another underwhelming season, the long-standing CSK coach said it was for the management to decide.

"There's a lot of good things we've done. We've introduced some new players that will be hopefully generation players for CSK, but I know we're judged on results. So, that's a management call. Not mine." (PTI)