

**6 NATION**

- 'Revealing chat with fellow anti-national Soros agents'
- ISI asks terror sympathisers to join national political parties to escape crackdown: Officials

**7 NORTHEAST**

- Arunachal: BJP backs Khandu amid CBI probe, rejects resignation rumours
- Rio seeks Centre's intervention for release of 6 Naga men in Manipur

## Assam fisheries scam: Vigilance Department arrests 9 till now ● Raids conducted in several places

### State's development dominates discussions

#### Ex-Project Director of AFDCL arrested from Puri

#### Himanta meets Rajnath, Jaishankar and Sonowal

**GUWAHATI, May 31:** Another accused in the alleged financial irregularities in Assam Fisheries Development Corporation Ltd has been apprehended in Odisha, marking the ninth arrest in the case, officials said on Sunday.

They said Padma Kanta Hazarika was apprehended in Puri on Saturday and will be brought to Guwahati on a transit remand, while raids were also conducted in his flats here.

"Ref. ACB PS Case No. 30/2023 registered in con with misappropriation of funds of Assam Fisheries Dev. Corporation Ltd. One key accused of the case namely Padma Kanta Hazarika, the then Project Director of the AFDCL has been arrested in Puri, Odisha by @DIR\_VAC\_ASSAM yesterday," the Vigilance Department said in a post on X.

"He was produced before the court in Puri last night by the team



of @DIR\_VAC\_ASSAM and the court granted 4 days transit remand for bringing the accused person to Guwahati," it added.

A statement from the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption here said raids were conducted in three flats belonging to Hazarika in Guwahati on Saturday.

Last week, at least eight government officials, including two from the Assam Civil Services (ACS) cadre, were arrested in the same case in connection with financial irregularities, the Vigilance Department said on Tuesday.

The Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC), in a statement, had said that the arrests were made from multiple locations, including Guwahati, Belsor (Nalbari), Gauipur (Dhubri) and Raha (Nagaon).

Among those previously apprehended are ACS officers Anuradha Adhikary Sarma and Naren Chandra Basumaty, both former managing directors of the AFDCL, and two former executive engineers of the AFDCL -- Jyotish Saikia and Birinchi Adhikary.

Other AFDCL employees -- Jyoti Prasad Saikia (then assistant executive engineer), Saburuddin Ahmed (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

All the flats are in the Hatigaon area of the city.

"A large number of incriminating documents, five seals of different organisations/councils and a bank note counting machine, among other items, were seized in connection with the case," the statement added.

"Met Assam CM, @himantabiswa Ji. Discussed the progress of the semiconductor plant at Jagiroad. We aim to start production from this plant within this financial year," Vaishnav said in a post on social media platform X.

The union minister said the National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT) for training young citizens in semiconductor manufacturing technologies is also shaping well.

The Assam chief minister said it was always a pleasure to meet the "erudite" and very knowledgeable union minister.

"We exchanged notes on expanding the overall railway network and



rail infrastructure in Assam - which includes work on ongoing 1,300+ km of track expansion and 50+ Amrit Bharat stations," Sarma said.

The Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Pvt Ltd (TSAT) at Jagiroad in Assam is set to become one of the country's premier manufacturing sites, aligns with the nation's broader goal of establishing a self-sufficient semiconductor ecosystem.

With an investment of ₹ 27,000 crore, the Jagiroad facility is expected to produce up to 48 million semiconductor chips per day, employing advanced packaging technologies such as flip-chip and Integrated System in Package (ISIP).

This facility is designed to cater to essential sectors such as automotive, electric vehicles, telecommunications, and (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

**NEW DELHI, May 31:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday held three back-to-back meetings with Union ministers Rajnath Singh, S Jaishankar and Sarbananda Sonowal, and discussed with them various issues related to the state's development.

In his meeting with Defence Minister Singh, Sarma discussed ways to position Assam as a key player in the country's defence ecosystem.

In his meeting with External Affairs Minister (EAM) Jaishankar, the chief minister discussed ways to strengthen the Centre's Act East Policy while exploring Assam's potential role in enhancing trade and tourism ties with neighbouring countries.

Sarma's meeting with Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sonowal focused on accelerating the state's development journey under the vision of a 'Viksit Assam'.

The chief minister said it is always enriching to meet Singh and lauded his experience as an administrator, public servant and party worker.



"He is a powerhouse of wisdom and knowledge. We have so much to learn from his vast experience as an excellent administrator, a dedicated public servant and a veteran karyakarta," he said.

Sarma also thanked Singh for his campaign efforts during the Assam Assembly elections and sought his blessings and guidance for the state's future development.

He discussed with Singh the need to position Assam as a major player in the defence sector in the years ahead, in line with the state's growing focus on industrial development and strategic infrastructure, an official statement said.

The meeting comes amid the Centre's push to strengthen defence manufacturing and enhance indigenous production (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Assam ministry to be expanded on June 5

**GUWAHATI, May 31:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said his ministry would be expanded with the swearing in of new ministers on June 5.

Sarma was sworn in as the chief minister for the second consecutive term on May 12 by Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several Union ministers, chief ministers of NDA-ruled states and other top dignitaries.

Along with the chief minister, four other ministers had taken oath -- the BJP's Ajanta Neog and Rameswar Teli, Asom Gana Parishad's (AGP) Atul Bora and Bodoland People's Front's (BPF) Charan Boro.

"I am pleased to inform that the Council of Ministers of the Government of Assam will be expanded on June 5, 2026," Sarma said in a post on X.

He did not mention the number or names of new ministers to be inducted.

Among the ministers who took office on May 12, Neog, Bora and

Boro were retained from the previous ministry, while Teli, a former Union minister of state, was inducted in the state Cabinet for the first time as he returned to the Assembly.

Bora, the AGP president, was allotted Implementation of Assam Accord, border protection and development, panchayat and rural development, and excise portfolios.

Former state finance minister, Neog, has been given charge of the tourism, women and child welfare departments.

Boro was allotted transport, and the welfare of Bodoland departments, while Teli was given transformation and development, labour welfare and tea tribes and adivasi welfare portfolios.

All other departments, not yet allotted, are held by the chief minister.

The BJP-led NDA came to power for a third successive term in the state, bagging 102 out of the total 126 seats. The saffron party had secured 82 seats, and its allies AGP and BPF won 10 each. (PTI)

## Jagiroad semiconductor plant to start production this fiscal

**NEW DELHI, May 31:** The semiconductor plant at Jagiroad in Assam is expected to start production within this financial year, I&B and Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said.

Vaishnav said this after his meeting with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday evening.

"Met Assam CM, @himantabiswa Ji. Discussed the progress of the semiconductor plant at Jagiroad. We aim to start production from this plant within this financial year," Vaishnav said in a post on social media platform X.

The union minister said the National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT) for training young citizens in semiconductor manufacturing technologies is also shaping well.

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This facility is designed to cater to essential sectors such as automotive, electric vehicles, telecommunications, and (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Centre moves two CoBRA battalions to Manipur

**NEW DELHI, May 31:** The Centre has ordered deployment of two battalions of the CRPF's jungle warfare unit CoBRA for operational duties in Manipur, official sources said on Sunday.

The state administration and the Union government have been working to bring long-lasting peace in Manipur as more than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

Officials told PTI that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved a proposal of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to deploy two CoBRA battalions in Manipur--battalion no 207 based in West Bengal and 210 located in Assam-- for operational duties.

"The two CoBRA battalions will undertake specific operations against the armed groups that undertake violence in Manipur," an senior security officer

said, adding the earmarked units will move in the state over the next few weeks.

The Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) was raised by the CRPF in 2008-09 to tackle the menace of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) that was raging in multiple Indian states apart from insurgency in certain states of the north east.

CoBRA has a total of ten battalions at present and they are mostly deployed in the anti-Naxal operations theatre.

Each CoBRA battalion has a strength of about 1,000 commandos.

The commandos of this battalion are credited by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) with undertaking successful intelligence-based jungle warfare and guerilla tactics operations against Naxals leading to the end of Maoist violence from the country this March.

Officials said that with the operations (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Nepal PM's comments about 'encroaching' Indian land sparks controversy

**KATHMANDU, May 31:** Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah on Sunday said he has learnt about his country "encroaching" territories in India, as he sought to answer questions in the parliament on a long-running border dispute.

In his maiden appearance in the ongoing parliament session that started on May 11, Shah further said India and Nepal have agreed to take the help of historians, surveyors and experts to seek a resolution, adding that Kathmandu has also taken up the matter with China and the United Kingdom.

Nepal and India have had an old boundary dispute over Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani, with both countries claiming the areas. India maintains that the territories are part (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Gen Subramani takes charge as India's new CDS

**NEW DELHI, May 31:** Gen NS Raja Subramani, widely known as an expert on Pakistan and China, on Sunday took charge as India's new Chief of Defence Staff with a primary mandate to implement the ambitious military theaterisation plan and bolster tri-services synergy.

He succeeded Gen Anil Chauhan, who signed off after completing his tenure as the country's senior-most military commander on Saturday.

Gen Subramani was serving as the Military Advisor at the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS). He retired as the Vice Chief of Army Staff on July 31 last year.

The military officer, shortly after taking charge, said transformation of the armed forces and organisational reforms to enhance tri-services synergy and integration will be his primary focus.

He will accelerate the develop-



ment, induction and integration of indigenous weapons in our armed forces, he said in a brief media statement.

"Our armed forces consistently demonstrated professionalism and operational decisiveness in safeguarding our national interests. We are committed to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country," he said.

"I assure citizens of India that armed forces will continue to serve the nation with dedication, courage, honour and professionalism," he

added.

Gen Subramani also noted that he would also work towards accelerating the development, induction, and integration of indigenous weapon systems into the armed forces.

As Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Subramani's primary task will be to implement the theaterisation model by rolling out integrated military commands.

In his illustrious career spanning over 40 years, Gen Subramani served across a wide spectrum of conflict and terrain profiles and held a host of Command, Staff and Instructional appointments.

He served as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff from July 1, 2024 to July 31, 2025 and was General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Central Command from March 2023 till July 2024.

The officer is a graduate of the National (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## India-Bangladesh border talks in Delhi next week; 1st after new BNP govt

**NEW DELHI, May 31:** India and Bangladesh are expected to hold their bi-annual DG-level border talks in Delhi next week, the first such meeting after the BNP government took charge in Dhaka early this year.

Issues related to border fencing, attacks on BSF personnel, checking infiltration and cross-border crimes and handing over of illegal Bangladeshi migrants are likely to be part of the agenda for the talks, sources said.

A delegation of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) led by its Director General (DG) Maj Gen Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui is expected to be in the national capital between June 8 and 11 for the talks with their counterpart Border Security Force (BSF).

The Indian side will be led by BSF DG Praveen Kumar.

India shares a 4,096 km-long international border with Bangladesh, out of which about 860 km remains unfenced, including 174.51 km of the "not feasible for fencing" gap.

Officials told PTI that the BSF-BGB DG-level talks are to be held between June 8-11 at a BSF base in

Delhi.

They said that issues related to cross-border crimes and mutual cooperation are expected to be the crux of discussions, as the agenda of talks between the two countries, by and large, remains the same.

A joint record of discussions will be signed between the two sides on June 11, they said.

Sources in the security establishment noted that this will be the first top-level border meeting between the two forces after the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was elected to power in February this year.

The last meeting between the two sides was held in Dhaka in August 2025, when an interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus was in power in Bangladesh.

The forthcoming meeting assumes significance as the Modi government, through the public speeches of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, has underlined that India will not allow illegal infiltration of Bangladeshis and Rohingyas. The government asserted that all such people who were present in the country will face a graded 3D action of 'detect, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Back from brink: India's vultures stage comeback

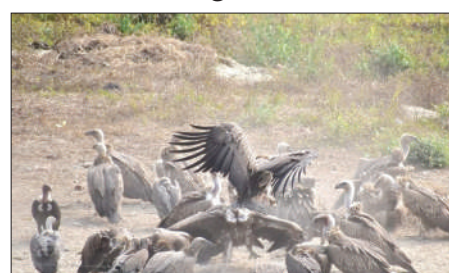
**MUMBAI, May 31:** Two decades after toxic veterinary drugs cleared India's skies of its ultimate scavengers, vultures are making a comeback with more than 700 birds bred in captivity and phased wild-release programmes turning protected tiger reserves into their new safe havens.

Led by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and state governments, the recovery initiative for the critically endangered white-rumped, long-billed, and slender-billed vulture species has entered a vital new phase with experimental releases across Haryana, West Bengal, Maharashtra, and Assam, BNHS director Kishor Rithe said.

Moreover, monitoring through GPS and GSM transmitters has already shown encouraging survival and dispersal patterns, with a long-billed vulture released from Pench travelling 750 km to Nashik, Maharashtra, in 17 days.

Rithe, however, noted that long-term success would depend on the availability of safe food sources beyond protected areas, such as sanctuaries, national parks and conservation reserves.

"The breeding and release programme can succeed only when a safe environment is created for vultures beyond protected areas. Eliminating harmful NSAIDs and ensuring safe



food sources remain critical for the recovery of these species," he said.

The BNHS first documented the sharp decline in vulture populations across the Indian subcontinent in 1999, and subsequent research established that diclofenac, a veterinary non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), was responsible for mass mortality among the birds.

This finding prompted a ban on the drug in 2006, followed by subsequent prohibitions on other toxic variants like ketoprofen, aceclofenac, and nimesulide, Rithe said.

To prevent total extinction, the BNHS and state forest departments, with the support of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), established four Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centres at Pinjore (Haryana), Rajahatkhawa (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## PM interacts with record-breaking sprinters in Mann Ki Baat

**NEW DELHI, May 31:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday had a lively conversation with sprinters Gurinder Singh and Animesh Kujur, both of whom recently broke national records, and said the men's 100-metre race at the National Senior Athletics Federation Competition is being widely discussed across the country.

The interaction took place during his monthly radio broadcast, Mann Ki Baat, in which Modi highlighted the performance of athletes who set new national records across different events at the recently concluded competition in Ranchi, Jharkhand.

During the event, he said, four national records were broken in four different events. "Gurinder Singh, Vishal TK, Tejaswin Shankar, Dev Meena, and Kuldeep Kumar -- these friends set new records in different categories. First of all, I extend my heartiest congratulations to all of them," he said.

"One event that is being widely discussed across the country is the 100-metre race. Within just two days, the national record in the men's 100-metre



race was broken three times. The two athletes who achieved this feat are Gurinder Singh and Animesh Kujur," he said.

The two athletes then spoke about their sporting journeys and experiences during the radio programme.

"It has been a very special interaction with Gurinder Singh and Animesh Kujur, offering a glimpse of why the future of Indian athletics is very bright,"

Modi said.

Referring to a swimming club run by Saji Valasheri at Aluva, Kerala, Modi said more than 15,000 people, including specially abled individuals, have learnt swimming there.

"Saji ji has also taught swimming to Divyang children. Lying behind this effort, there is a hidden pain too," he said.

The prime minister said Saji started the initiative after a boat tragedy a few

years ago, where several students had died.

"That incident shook Saji ji deeply. He thought, if the children knew how to swim, perhaps many lives could have been saved, and that's where his campaign began," he said.

Referring to the Chola-era copper plates returned by the Netherlands during his recent five-nation tour, Modi said he had been receiving messages from people in India and abroad regarding them.

"There is a lot of curiosity among people about these copper plates. Hence, today I would like to share some information related to them. These include 21 large and 3 small copper plates. They primarily relate to King Rajendra Chola the first, fulfilling a vow made by his father, King Rajaraja Chola," he said.

Modi said the plates mention the donation of the village of Anaimangalam to a Buddhist monastery and also document the achievements of the Chola dynasty.

"They reveal how formidable the Chola Empire's (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Policy meet: RBI likely to maintain status quo on rates, adopt cautious approach amid West Asia crisis

**MUMBAI, May 31:** The Reserve Bank is expected to leave the key policy rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent this week and adopt a cautious stance that factors in the possible headwinds to inflation and growth trajectory amid the West Asia turmoil, experts opined.

With surging energy prices, continuing supply chain woes and a depreciating rupee, primarily driven by external challenges, some experts are of the view that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may raise its inflation forecast and lower its GDP growth estimate at its bi-monthly monetary policy meet from June 3 to 5.

After three days of deliberations, the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), headed by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, will announce its decision on June 5.

In April, the Reserve Bank had kept its key policy rate unchanged, adopting a cautious wait-and-watch stance as policymakers assessed the fallout from the West Asia conflict on energy supplies, inflation and growth.

A research report from the SBI's economic research department expects the RBI to maintain status quo in June policy against volatile backdrop. Going by the growth-inflation spiral, the report expects the consumer price index (CPI) trajectory (as of now) may indicate more than 5 per cent inflation for the next three quarters (current quarter at 4 to 4.1 per cent).

It also expects Q4FY26 real GDP growth closer to 7.2 per cent and FY26 GDP growth at 7.5 per cent.

"Our nowcasted full year FY2027 GDP growth rate of 6.6 per cent, however, with the continued geopolitical uncertainties, the numbers will be revised as more data comes in.

"Our call is along 'hold the rates' with a data-driven future dependency. However, an inflation targeting central bank can always use interest rate tools like Operation Twist that address market microstructure," the report said.

It also emphasised that the MPC needs to debate the role of exchange rate as a policy anchor beyond its mandate of pure inflation targeting.

Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist at Bank of



Baroda, also does not expect any change in the repo rate or stance next week.

"However, the tone will be cautious, leaning towards being hawkish. We can expect RBI to increase their inflation forecast towards 5 per cent and lower that on GDP more towards 6.5 per cent from 6.9 per cent," he said.

Sabnavis also does not expect any specific foreign exchange measures, though there will be an explanation of developments.

In its annual report released on Friday, the RBI said it will be reviewing and improving GDP growth and inflation forecasting during the current financial year. RBI said that the outlook for the Indian economy in 2026-27 remains positive, supported by strong macroeconomic fundamentals, although a prolonged West Asia conflict may pose downside risk.

According to the report, inflation in 2026-27 is likely to remain aligned with the target on the back of adequate foodgrain stocks, sufficient reservoir levels and stable agricultural prospects despite possible El Nino conditions and above-normal summer temperatures.

However, the evolving upside risks to inflation may emanate from multiple other factors such as a spike in global fuel and commodity prices amid geopolitical tensions, it added.

The government has set the consumer price index (CPI) based headline inflation target at 4 per cent with the upper tolerance level of 6 per cent and the lower tolerance level of 2 per cent for the central bank.

On expectations from the MPC, Dipti Deshpande, Principal Economist, Crisil said the RBI is likely to maintain the policy repo rate and retain a neutral policy stance.

"Inflationary pressures at present are largely supply-driven, stemming from elevated fuel and input costs, along with a weaker rupee. As such, the MPC may choose to look through these supply-side pressures in its policy assessment," she said. Deshpande further said the prolonged disruption around the Strait of Hormuz had heightened upside risks to the inflation outlook, and the MPC is therefore expected to closely monitor the magnitude and pace of pass-through from higher global energy prices to domestic headline inflation. "The MPC is also likely to closely assess the impact of the evolving El Nino conditions on the upcoming monsoon season and the consequent implications for food inflation dynamics," she added.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA, opined that with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) striking a sombre note on the monsoon and El Nino, along with continuing uncertainty around the longevity of the ceasefire in West Asia, "we expect the MPC to remain cautious and maintain rates and stance unchanged..."

According to the IMD, the southwest monsoon seasonal (June-September) rainfall over India is expected to be below normal. It also stated that rainfall is likely to be 90 per cent of the long-period average with a model error of 4 per cent.

Vinay Pai, MD and Head of Fixed Income, Equirus Capital, said that market expectations currently price in a potential 25-50 basis point rate hike, though recent RBI actions suggest a preference for liquidity management and currency stabilisation over immediate tightening.

"For the upcoming June policy, the RBI is expected to maintain rates, while possibly adopting a more hawkish forward guidance stance, though the official policy stance is likely to remain unchanged in the near term. A rate hike remains contingent on sustained macro stress," he said. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Ex-Project Director

(then assistant engineer), Bhogirath Das (then project manager) and Rabindra Narayan Deka (then assistant technical officer) -- have also been arrested. (PTI)

## State's development dominates

capabilities under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative, it said.

"Met with the Chief Minister of Assam, Shri @himantabiswa ji in New Delhi. I am confident that he will continue the good governance trajectory of Assam and fulfil people's aspirations. My best wishes to him for another successful tenure ahead," Singh said on X after the meeting.

In his meeting with Jaishankar, Sarma discussed ways to strengthen the Centre's Act East Policy while exploring Assam's potential role in enhancing trade and tourism ties with neighbouring countries.

Sarma described the interaction as insightful and said Jaishankar's perspective on global affairs and India's approach to current geopolitical challenges is always enlightening.

"This morning, I had the pleasure to call upon Hon'ble External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar ji. His perspective on global affairs and how India is navigating current geopolitical headwinds is always enlightening," he said in a post on X. Sarma said he thanked the EAM for sharing his insights on further strengthening India's Act East Policy, a key initiative aimed at deepening India's engagement with countries in Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

The chief minister also expressed hope for continued guidance from Jaishankar on how Assam can contribute to strengthening trade and tourism linkages with neighbouring nations, leveraging the state's strategic location as a gateway to the northeast and Southeast Asia, an official statement said.

"Pleased to meet Assam Chief Minister @himantabiswa. Congratulated him on the impressive election victory. Assured fullest support for Assam's further growth and development," Jaishankar said in a post on X.

The discussions come amid ongoing efforts to boost regional connectivity, cross-border commerce and economic cooperation under the Act East framework, with Assam expected to play an increasingly important role in advancing these objectives, the statement said. During his meeting with Sonowal, Sarma held discussions on accelerating the state's development journey under the vision of a 'Viksit Assam'.

Sarma said every interaction with Sonowal was an opportunity to deliberate on the future of Assam and review the state's progress. "Every meeting with Shri Sarbananda Sonowal Dangoriva is an opportunity to discuss and deliberate on building a #ViksitAssam. Today's meeting with him in Delhi was no different -- one where we discussed the progress made in the last decade and how to accelerate Assam's growth journey," Sarma said.

Sonowal said he was glad to meet Sarma and they had a productive discussion on strengthening the development roadmap of the state.

"#TeamAssam is committed to ensuring a continuous era of peace, progress and prosperity," he said.

The meeting focused on reviewing developmental gains achieved over the past 10 years and exploring strategies to further strengthen Assam's economic growth, infrastructure development and overall progress.

Both leaders are understood to have exchanged views on key initiatives aimed at transforming Assam into a developed and prosperous state, an official statement said.

The interaction reflects the continued coordination between the state and the Centre in advancing developmental priorities and realising the vision of a 'Viksit Assam', it said. (PTI)

## Centre moves two

in the LWL theatre now being reduced to seeking and destroying hidden improvised explosive devices (IEDs) apart from general security of the area, it was planned by the CRPF to move two CoBRA units to Manipur where restoration of complete peace is a task in a "work in progress."

"There are other CoBRA and CRPF units that can serve the Naxal violence hit areas post the end of armed Naxalism in the country.

"One or two CoBRA units may also move to Jammu and Kashmir for full fledged operations once a final decision is taken," a second officer said. (PTI)

## Jagiroad semiconductor

consumer electronics. The unit goes beyond technological development as it brings significant socio-economic benefits by generating 15,000 direct and 11,000-13,000 indirect jobs, contributing to regional economic growth in Assam and nearby areas.

As a high-capacity production site, the facility's daily output will serve both domestic and international markets, positioning India as a competitive force in the global semiconductor supply chain. (PTI)

## Nepal PM's comments

of Uttarakhand and has said the issue should be addressed through bilateral dialogue.

New Delhi did not immediately respond to the Nepal PM's comments on Sunday. But earlier this month, while rejecting Nepal's objection to the upcoming Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through the long-established Lipulekh Pass, India had dismissed Kathmandu's territorial claims over the region as an "unilateral artificial enlargement" that New Delhi finds "untenable."

Shah told the parliament on Sunday: "The Nepal government has officially sent a diplomatic note to India, mentioning the issue of encroachment of territories by India, including Lipulekh, and we have already received their response."

"Both the countries have agreed to resolve the issue sitting together with the help of historians, surveyors and concerned experts through diplomatic means," he said.

When specifically asked by a lawmaker about the government's view on the dispute concerning the Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani areas, Shah said it is not only India that has "encroached" land in Nepal, the latter too had done the same with its southern neighbour.

"You will be surprised to know about a fact, which I have learnt recently, only after becoming the Prime Minister. India has not only encroached Nepalese territories, but Nepal has also encroached India's territories in many places," said the prime minister, who came to power after a sweeping election victory earlier this year. "Now both countries should study the facts and sit together as friends and resolve the issue."

The three places are located near the trijunction of India, Tibet and Nepal. Shah said Kathmandu has also taken up the matter with China and the United Kingdom. He said he raised the matter with the UK because it dates back to a period when the British government left the region.

Shah's comments about Nepal encroaching Indian territories have triggered a controversy. Opposition lawmakers, including Basana Thapa of the Nepali Congress and Ramesh Malla of the Nepali Communist Party, objected to Shah's remarks and demanded that they be expunged from the parliamentary record. (PTI)

## Gen Subramani takes

Defence Academy and the Indian Military Academy.

He was commissioned into the eighth battalion of the Garhwal Rifles on December 14, 1985.

Gen Subramani is an alumnus of the Joint Services Command and Staff College, Bracknell (UK), and the National Defence College, New Delhi. He holds a Master of Arts degree from King's College, London, and an M Phil in Defence Studies from Madras University. (PTI)

## India-Bangladesh

delete and deport'. More than half of the over 4,000 km India-Bangladesh border is shared by the state of West Bengal (2,216.7 km) where a new BJP government led by Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari has taken charge recently.

Adhikari too has reiterated the Union government's 3D approach against illegal infiltrators present in the state, even as his government has handed over large tracts of land to the BSF for the erection of a strong fence. According to government data of August 2025, a total of 1,647.69 km of the 2,216 km border in West Bengal has been fenced and out of this, 112.78 km cannot be fenced as it is non-feasible due to geographical features like water bodies and the Sunderbans mangrove area. A total of 456.22 km is feasible for fencing works.

Four other states share a border with Bangladesh -- Tripura (856 km), Meghalaya (443 km), Assam (262 km) and Mizoram (318 km). (PTI)

## Back from brink

(West Bengal), Rani (Assam), and Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh).

These facilities currently house 740 vultures. The programme has supplied 80 birds and released 110 vultures into the wild as part of reintroduction efforts.

The reintroduction efforts have already shown remarkable milestones, such as captive-bred white-rumped vultures released in Haryana in 2020 have begun breeding naturally in the wild. Meanwhile, 31 birds released from West Bengal have dispersed safely across India, Nepal, and Bhutan with zero reported NSAID-linked mortalities. Maharashtra has emerged as a major centre for vulture reintroduction, with releases taking place in Pench, Tadoba-Andhari and Melghat Tiger Reserves.

Recent conservation focus has shifted heavily toward secure tiger reserves, such as Pench, Tadoba-Andhari, and Melghat, where large landscapes offer abundant natural carrion free from domestic cattle drugs.

As many as 20 vultures were transferred to Maharashtra from Haryana in 2024 and another 34 birds in 2025 for phased release programmes, while Assam initiated its first soft-release of slender-billed vultures in the Kaziranga landscape this March. (PTI)

## PM interacts with

maritime power was. They also provide information about their relations with Southeast Asian countries," he said.

The prime minister said astronomy has fascinated generations of Indians and highlighted that the Bangalore Astronomical Society has launched a mission to popularise the subject in rural areas.

"Gazing at the stars at night is an entrancing experience in itself. An organisation called Astro Kerala organises night observation camps and workshops. Here, young people learn to make telescopes and use star maps.

"The Big Bang Astronomy Club of Rajkot has organised numerous astronomy events -- from the Gir forests to the Rann of Kutch," he said.

Modi further spoke about educator Girija Amma from Nagercoil in Tamil Nadu, who runs 15 schools, including the Jaigopal Garodia Hindu Vidyalaya in Chennai. The prime minister said her patriotic spirit inspires every Indian.

"Inspired by Mann Ki Baat, she pledged to contribute to many soldiers in the country. To do this, she inspired the students of all her schools. She asked the children to contribute one rupee every day for the brave soldiers. This means that each student collected 365 rupees in a year. Through these small contributions, approximately 40 lakh rupees were collected," he said.

Modi said Girija Amma later handed over a cheque for the entire amount. "This reflects her deep dedication to Mother India," Modi said. (PTI)

## Govt cuts windfall tax on petrol, diesel, ATF exports

**NEW DELHI, May 31:** The government has halved windfall gains tax on export of petrol to ₹ 1.5 litre, while reducing the levy on diesel to ₹ 13.5/litre and aviation turbine fuel to ₹ 9.5/litre effective June 1.

The finance ministry in a notification said road and infrastructure cess will be nil on export of petrol and diesel.

Also, there is no change in the existing duty rates on petrol and diesel cleared for domestic consumption.

The special additional excise duty (SAED) on petrol at ₹ 3/litre was imposed on May 16 and the fortnightly review slashed it to ₹ 1.5/litre from June 1.

The duty on export of diesel has been reduced to ₹ 13.5 per litre, from ₹ 16.5 per litre, and aviation turbine fuel to ₹ 9.5 per litre, from ₹ 16 per litre from June 1.

The government had on March 26 imposed an export duty of ₹ 21.50 a litre on diesel, and ₹ 29.5 a litre on ATF. In the review on April 11, the duties were hiked to ₹

55.5/litre and ₹ 42/litre. In the April 30 review, they were cut to ₹ 23/litre and ₹ 33/litre, and further slashed to ₹ 16.5/litre and ₹ 16/litre on May 16.

The windfall tax was levied to increase domestic availability of the fuel amid the US-Israel and Iran war.

It was also aimed at not allowing exporters to take undue advantage due to price differences as globally crude oil prices had risen since the beginning of the war.

On February 28, the United States and Israel launched military strikes against Iran, triggering sweeping retaliation from Tehran.

Crude oil prices have remained above USD 100 per barrel over the past week, from the about USD 73 per barrel before the war.

The windfall tax was to ensure domestic availability of petroleum products by disincentivising exports against the backdrop of the West Asia crisis, the ministry said. (PTI)

## Centre reviews legal metrology reforms in northern states, UTs

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, May 31:** The Department of Consumer Affairs on Sunday reviewed the implementation of legal metrology reforms across northern states and Union Territories, with a focus on simplifying compliance procedures, promoting trust-based regulation and strengthening consumer protection.

The review meeting, chaired by Nidhi Khare, covered Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Ladakh.

It forms part of a nationwide series of regional consultations aimed at facilitating the implementation of the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026 and recommendations of the High-Level Committee on regulatory reforms.

Senior officials of the Department interacted with Controllers and Legal Metrology officers from participating states and UTs to assess progress on reforms designed to reduce regulatory burden, improve ease of doing business and create a more transparent and efficient compliance framework.

A key focus of the discussions was the transition from the existing licence-based regime to a registration-based system for manufacturers, dealers and repairers of weights and measures.

The Department emphasised that registrations should be granted automatically upon submission of prescribed documents, thereby reducing delays and simplifying regulatory processes.

The meeting also reviewed the implementation of the newly introduced "Improvement Notice" mechanism under the Jan Vishwas reforms.

The provision allows businesses to rectify first-time procedural violations before punitive action is taken, encouraging voluntary compliance and reducing litigation.

Progress on verification and stamping of weights and measures was another major agenda item. The Department urged states and UTs to notify Government Approved Test Centre (GATC) Rules at the earliest and expand the use of self-verification and third-party verification systems to improve service availability and reduce turnaround time. Officials also discussed digitisation initiatives, including the e-Maap portal, capacity-building programmes for Legal Metrology officers and measures to strengthen verification infrastructure.

Participating states shared updates on amendments to enforcement rules and efforts to align their regulatory frameworks with the new reforms.

The Department reiterated that while compliance requirements are being simplified and regulatory processes made more industry-friendly, consumer protection will remain paramount. It stressed that strict action against fraud, tampering and deliberate violations affecting consumers would continue under the Legal Metrology framework. The ongoing consultations reflect the Centre's efforts to build a modern, transparent and efficient legal metrology ecosystem that supports ease of doing business, encourages voluntary compliance and enhances consumer confidence.

## FSSAI asks Blinkit to explain consumer illness linked to curd order

**NEW DELHI, May 31:** Food regulator FSSAI has sought explanation from quick commerce firm Blinkit on a complaint by a person who allegedly fell sick after consuming curd ordered from the platform, sources said.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has received a written complaint from a person who allegedly had to seek medical help after falling sick following the consumption of curd bought from e-commerce platform Blinkit, it added.

Medical prescription has also been attached in the complaint registered with FSSAI.

According to sources, FSSAI has written a letter on May 29 to the CEO of Blink Commerce Pvt Ltd), apart from person in-charge of operations after it received a complaint from a person who had ordered curd through the Blinkit mobile application.

The complainant allegedly developed severe stomach ache and diarrhoea shortly after consumption of

the curd and had to seek medical help, it added.

Of late, FSSAI has received several complaints, either through social media or representations, regarding supply of unhygienic, spoiled or damaged food by sellers through the Blinkit E-commerce platform, sources said.

The FSSAI has directed Blinkit to provide an explanation and also submit a comprehensive Action Taken Report (ATR).

As per the food safety law and FSSAI regulations, e-commerce Food Business Operators (FBOs) are required to comply with the provisions under Section 26 and Section 27 of the FSS Act, 2006, which stipulates that a food business operator shall be responsible for the safety of any article of food manufactured, stored, or distributed by them.

Earlier this month, the FSSAI had sought an explanation from Blinkit regarding consumer complaints about the sale of poor-quality eggs on its platform. (PTI)

## Soul Aesthetics & Academy celebrates first anniversary in Guwahati

Centre reflects on a year of growth in aesthetics, wellness and professional training since inauguration by Urmila Matondkar



HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, May 31:** Soul Aesthetics & Academy, located at FFORT Complex in Kachari Basti, Guwahati, has celebrated its first anniversary, marking a year of growth and achievements in the fields of aesthetics, beauty, wellness and professional training.

Founded by Vikas Aggarwal, the academy was inaugurated last year by Bollywood actress Urmila Matondkar.

The management said her presence at the launch helped inspire the institution's vision of bringing advanced aesthetic and wellness services to Assam and the Northeast.

Over the past year, the academy has expanded its services to include advanced skin care, scalp and hair treatments, laser procedures, permanent makeup, nail services

and wellness therapies.

The institution credited its growth to the trust and support of its clients and students.

The centre functions under the guidance of Dipanjali Boro, Mimangsha Kalita and Indrani Dutta, supported by a team of trained professionals.

According to the management, the focus remains on providing safe, personalised and result-oriented treatments while maintaining high standards of client care.

During the year, the academy also introduced gut microbiome testing and probiotic supplement solutions aimed at improving digestive health and overall well-being.

Professional nail extension services were added to meet increasing customer demand.

Speaking on the occasion, Aggarwal expressed gratitude to clients, students, well-wishers and team members for their continued support.

He said the completion of the first year represents both a milestone and a foundation for future growth, innovation and service excellence.

As it enters its second year, Soul Aesthetics & Academy said it remains committed to offering advanced treatments, expert consultations, modern technology and quality customer service, while continuing to expand its role in beauty, health, wellness and professional education.

## Health camp and screenings conducted as part of World No Tobacco Day observance Tobacco awareness programme across rehab centre and colleges

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, May 31:** World No Tobacco Day was observed at the Salvation Foundation Rehab Centre in Kokrajhar on Sunday. The programme was organised by the District Health Society, Kokrajhar in collaboration with Assam Cancer Care Foundation (ACCF), Kokrajhar and Care India Foundation, a Targeted Intervention NGO.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Kaushik Das, Nodal Officer, Tobacco Control. Among those present were Dr Wasim Akhtar Bari and his team from ACCF, Ranjit Basumatary, Manager of Salvation Foundation, ICTC staff of RNB Civil Hospital, Kokrajhar, NTEP staff and inmates of the rehabilitation centre.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Wasim Akhtar Bari highlighted the harmful effects of tobacco and explained the various types of cancer linked to tobacco use. Dr Kaushik Das appealed to the younger generation to stay away from tobacco products and illegal drugs in order to lead healthy lives.

The vote of thanks was delivered by Subhendu Brahma.

Following the meeting, a health camp was organised for the inmates of the rehabilitation centre. A portable X-ray machine arranged by NTEP, Kokrajhar was used to conduct health screenings. A total of 61 inmates underwent chest X-ray examinations and were also tested for HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C.

The programme aimed to raise awareness about the dangers of tobacco use and promote healthy lifestyles among the participants.

**Our Nagaon Correspondent adds:** World No Tobacco Day was observed in Nagaon on Saturday under the initiative of the Nagaon District Administration and the District Tobacco Control Cell in collaboration with the District Legal Services Authority.

As part of the observance, an awareness rally was taken out across the town. The rally was flagged off from the Nagaon University campus by District Commissioner Devashish Sharma.

Addressing the gathering at the launch, DC Sharma said tobacco has caused extensive harm to society. "It begins with gutkha and later



leads to cigarettes, cannabis and eventually many become addicted to drugs. This is how a beautiful society heads toward destruction," he said. He appealed for everyone's cooperation in curbing the menace.

The District Commissioner also administered an oath to all present, pledging to refrain from using tobacco and to peacefully encourage others to do the same. He personally led the rally as it passed

through the heart of Nagaon town.

Later, an awareness meeting was held in the university's conference hall. District Legal Services Authority Secretary Jagat Das, District Tobacco Control Cell In-charge Dr Smitakshi Phukan, Nagaon University Acting Vice-Chancellor Dhrubajyoti Baruah, Tezpur Cancer Centre Superintendent Dr DJ Bora and District Information and Public Relations Officer Bikash Sharma, among others,

spoke on the harmful effects of tobacco use.

Dr Smitakshi Phukan explained various provisions of tobacco-related laws, while Dr Bora delivered a detailed PowerPoint presentation on cancer.

On the occasion, prizes were also distributed to the winners of an essay competition organised for school students.

**Our Demow Correspondent adds:** World No Tobacco Day, observed globally on May 31, was marked at HCDG College, Nitaipukhuri on Saturday at the college auditorium.

The initiative was undertaken by the National Service Scheme (NSS) Unit in collaboration with the Mental Health Club and the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of the college. The World Health Organisation (WHO) theme for World No Tobacco Day 2026 is "Unmasking the Appeal—Countering Nicotine and Tobacco Addiction".

An awareness programme was conducted for the students of the college in which faculty members and non-teaching staff were also

present and cooperated in its successful completion. The welcome address was delivered by Jaspreet Kaur Sagoo, Programme Officer of the NSS Unit.

Dr Birinchi Kumar Borah, Principal of HCDG College, acted as the resource person and delivered an awareness talk highlighting the importance of avoiding tobacco consumption and nicotine addiction. He informed the students about its harmful effects and also suggested measures to prevent its use.

Along with the awareness talk, a speech competition and a poster-making competition were conducted among the students to assess their understanding of the significance of the day. The students performed excellently in both competitions.

Dr Leena Dutta, Gauri Shikha Gogoi, Dr Indrakshi Phukan and Panchurika Changmai, faculty members of the college, served as judges for both competitions.

At the end of the programme, the vote of thanks was delivered by Dr Rashmi Rekha Duwarah, Coordinator of the Mental Health Club, HCDG College.

## NFR RPF intensifies safety and anti-crime operations

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 31:** The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway continued its sustained efforts towards ensuring passenger safety, preventing unlawful activities and safeguarding railway premises through a series of successful operations conducted across the zone on May 25 and 26, 2026.

During anti-crime drives and surveillance operations conducted on May 25, 2026, RPF personnel achieved significant success in detecting the unlawful transportation of liquor and narcotic substances. Several consignments of unclaimed liquor bottles were recovered from trains and railway stations under the Alipurduar, Katihar and Dalkhola areas. In separate operations conducted at Agartala railway station, RPF teams recovered over 16 kg of ganja and handed over the seized items to the concerned authorities for further legal action.

On the same day, RPF personnel also apprehended offenders involved in unlawful activities, including ticketing irregularities and theft-related offences on railway premises. Rescue operations were simultaneously carried out at Rangapara and New Bongaigaon railway stations, where minors were rescued and safely handed over to Child Welfare Committees for proper care and rehabilitation.

As part of its humanitarian initiatives on May 26, 2026, RPF teams rescued several minors from Guwahati, Silchar, New Bongaigaon and Dibrugarh railway stations and ensured their safe custody through coordination with Child Welfare Committees and child assistance agencies.

In another important initiative carried out on May 26, 2026, RPF personnel, along with railway engineering officials, conducted an eviction drive in the Amingaon Eco Park area to remove unauthorised encroachments from railway land, ensuring operational safety and security.

Northeast Frontier Railway remains committed to ensuring a safe, secure and passenger-friendly railway environment through continuous vigilance, coordinated operations and public safety initiatives undertaken by the Railway Protection Force.

## Ribwbidima Ethnic Cultural Convention concludes in KA

*Sixth edition of Sunpura ethnic meet highlights unity, traditions and cultural harmony*

**HT Correspondent**

**HOWRAGHAT, May 31:** With an aim to foster brotherhood, bonds of affection, unity, peace and progress through a blend of traditions among indigenous communities in the greater Sunpura area of Karbi Anglong, the 6th annual session of the Ribwbidima Ethnic Cultural Convention concluded successfully on Saturday. The mega event featured a vibrant day-long programme held on the premises of Sunpura Dimasa Village Primary School.

As per the schedule, the main entrance gate dedicated to the memory of late Ramani Phonglosa was inaugurated at 8:00 AM by Jatin Phonglosa, Gaonburha of Sunpura Dimasa Village. The main flag of the convention was hoisted by Hari Narzary, president of the central committee of the Ribwbidima Ethnic Cultural Convention.

Simultaneously, flags representing various ethnic communities were hoisted by distinguished local personalities. The ethnic community flag was hoisted by Jetsing Rongpi, a social worker from Bakaliaghat Bahni Adarsha; the Bodo community flag by Khagen Basumatary, a social worker from West Sunpura; the Assamese community flag by Prosen Rajbongshi, a social worker from No 1 Udali and the Dimasa community flag by Jatin Bodosa, a social worker from Sunpura Dimasa Village.

Following the flag hoisting, a tribute session (Smriti Tarpan) was led by Kamal Basumatary, a social activist from Howraghat Tinali. The main stage and pavilion, dedicated to the memory of late Sarthe Bey was inaugurated by Phulmon Langthasa, a social worker from

Sunpura Dimasa Village.

A plantation drive was carried out by social workers including Babuchan Phonglosa (Chunpora Dimasa Village), Devakanta Phonglosa (Bakaliaghat), Biren Swargiary (Garjaga Village) and Nareswar Nath (No 1 Udali).

The open session began at 11:00 AM under the presidency of Hari Narzary. The introductory session was anchored by general secretary Thanoram Nath. The session was inaugurated by Paramananda Talukdar, retired headmaster of Rajapather Tinali Higher Secondary School.

The festival showcased the composite culture of the region with performances including Karbi community's Ritnong Chingdi, Bodo community's Bagurumba dance, traditional Dimasa dance and Assamese community's Jeng Bihu.

The event saw participation from several distinguished guests, including writers Bhabesh Rajbongshi, Toshiwar Nath, Biren Choudhury, Kamsing Hanse, Rabina Bhuyan and Bikash Dibragede, along with social workers Tinku Uzir and journalists Dharmendra Khakhlyar, Narayan Baruah and Ratna Kanta Pathak.

During the programme, a felicitation ceremony honoured local achievers including Amit Phonglosa, Biren Langthasa, Rahul Kemprai, Hemari Singnar, Chahandi Phonglosa, Kusum Basumatary and Premkanti Basumatary.

The event concluded with a cultural evening dedicated to the memory of late Joykrishna Kemprai, which was inaugurated by retired principal Atul Chandra Bora.

## Three more held in Mahamaya timber smuggling case

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, May 31:** The investigation into the large-scale illegal felling of valuable sal trees in the Mahamaya Forest area under Parbatjhora subdivision of Kokrajhar district has intensified, with three more alleged timber smugglers arrested by forest authorities.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Bahar Ali, Rabial Ali and Pashan Ali all of whom are accused of involvement in illegal logging and timber-related activities in the region. The latest arrests come days after the arrest of Abul Sheikh, Chairman of Jalabila VCDC and a senior leader of the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), who was taken into cus-

tody on Thursday night for his alleged involvement in the illegal felling of valuable sal trees in the Mahamaya forest area.

The case has drawn widespread attention following reports of extensive destruction of mature sal trees within the Mahamaya Forest under the Parbatjhora Forest Division. According to local sources and eyewitness accounts, large quantities of illegally felled timber were openly transported from the forest using pony carts, suggesting the existence of an organised timber-smuggling network. The alleged large-scale depletion of valuable forest resources has raised serious concerns among environmentalists, local residents and forest officials.

## Northeast Cultural Festival draws huge response in Vancouver Event showcases the rich cultural heritage of Northeast India in Canada

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, May 31:** The first Northeast Cultural Festival, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Northeast India was successfully held in Vancouver, British Columbia on Saturday.

The one-day festival was organised by Saptaranga Cultural Society and attracted over 500 people from various communities.

Speaking about the event, Indrajit Guha, president of Saptaranga Cultural Society, said that the festival featured songs and cultural performances representing the diverse traditions of Northeast India. "Songs and cultural traditions of

Northeast India were showcased at the festival. Artists performed a variety of songs from the region. More than 500 people from different communities attended the programme with great enthusiasm. Although this was the first time we organised the festival, it was a huge success as people appreciated our efforts," said Guha.

He added, "Our aim is to promote the artists of Northeast India. We want to provide a global platform for artists from the region to showcase their rich cultural traditions." Guha further stated that the organisers are planning to hold the festival on a larger scale in the fu-

ture. "Delegates from various places attended the programme and we are planning to organise it in a bigger way next time," he said.

Indrajit Guha hails from Dibrugarh, Assam and is currently a resident of Canada. Founded in Vancouver, Saptaranga Cultural Society is a non-profit organisation that serves as a bridge connecting cultures through music, dance and shared heritage. Established by members of the Northeastern Indian diaspora, the organisation aims to ensure that the cultural legacy of the "Seven Sisters and One Brother" of Northeast India finds a vibrant place within Canada's multicultural landscape.

## 20-day RSS Karyakarta Vikas Varg concludes in Hojai

**HT Correspondent**

**HOJAI, May 31:** The 20-day Karyakarta Vikas Varg (Pratham, Samanya) organised by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Assam Kshetra, concluded in a grand and inspiring atmosphere at Geetashram, Hojai on Sunday. A total of 102 trainees from various states of Northeast Bharat participated in the training camp. The disciplined and impressive physical demonstrations presented by the trained swayamsevaks during the valedictory ceremony impressed the audience.

Addressing the gathering, chief speaker and Assam Kshetra Baudhdik Pramukh Shankar Das Kalita said the RSS has been continuously engaged in organising Hindu society and nation-building for the past hundred years. He said distortions of Indian history, culture and traditions during the colonial period led many young people to become disconnected from their cultural roots.

He further noted that Western materialism, excessive individualism and consumerism have challenged traditional family and social structures. Kalita said Bharat is the youngest nation in the world and that various ideological forces are attempting to influence its youth. He stated that the so-called reductionist approach seeks to



divide society along caste, language, region and other narrow identities, thereby weakening social cohesion. He also alleged that ideologies promoted under the banner of Scientific Socialism and tendencies associated with Urban Naxalism encourage artificial divisions and a culture of conflict within society.

Referring to the situation in Assam, Kalita said that while globalisation is widely advocated, simultaneous attempts are being made to divide society into categories such as Upper Assam and Lower Assam, Barak and Brahmaputra, Assamese and Bengali-speaking communities, Hindi-speaking and non-Hindi-speaking groups and various ethnic identities. He stressed that diversity should serve as a foundation for social harmony and cultural enrichment rather than conflict. He also cautioned against allow-

ing issues related to language and script to become instruments of social division.

He further said the RSS works to unite society on the basis of the eternal values of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (The World is One Family), "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah" (May All Be Happy) and "Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti" (Truth is One, the Wise Describe It in Many Ways), thereby fostering social harmony and universal brotherhood.

In his address, Habapan Syn Syiem, Deputy Raja of the traditional Khasi State of Hima Khyrim in East Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, elaborated on the philosophy of Seng Khasi and expressed confidence that the ancient values of indigenous faith will help establish peace in society and the nation. Thousands of swayamsevaks, well-wishers and distinguished citizens from various parts of Assam attended the closing ceremony. The training camp was conducted under the guidance of PVS LN Murti, Varg Sarvadhikari and Dineshwar Singh, Varg Karyavah. Dr Umesh Chakravarty was also present on the occasion. The programme concluded with a renewed pledge of patriotism and dedication towards leading Bharat to the pinnacle of national glory and prosperity.

## Breast cancer awareness event 'UNSTOPPABLE 2.0' held

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 31:** Over 200 people gathered at Aniyaa Edition with one heartbeat and one purpose — to stand beside women cancer survivors and celebrate their extraordinary journeys of resilience, strength and rebirth.

"UNSTOPPABLE 2.0 – Bold Brave Beautiful", an initiative by Unstoppable Welfare Trust and Illumis Aesthetic Pvt Ltd, curated by Dr Reema Das Mallik and Nabish Alam, emerged as a stirring evening of awareness, empowerment, healing and celebration.

The event featured an insightful and engaging panel discussion on breast cancer awareness, where experts discussed myths surrounding cancer, early detection, emotional healing and the latest technological advancements in treatment and care. The session sparked meaningful conversations and encouraged attendees to view survivorship not through sympathy, but through strength and dignity.

One of the most emotional highlights of the evening was the on-stage felicitations of more than 20 women

cancer survivors, whose stories moved the audience deeply and reminded everyone that courage has a human face. Among those honoured were Dr Urmila Mahanta Baruah, Kadambari Kashyap, Juri Goswami, Dr Anjana Goswami, Dr Biju Choudhury, Barshashri Das and Ritika Limbu. Their presence transformed the evening into more than an event; it became a movement of hope.

The evening opened on a soulful and culturally rich note with a performance by Satriya artiste Dr Mallika Kandali. The audience was further enthralled by performances from Gorisha Nath, a musical act by cancer survivor Sagarika Sharma and a dance presentation by actress Archita Agarwal. The event was anchored by actress Barasharani Bishaya, whose warmth and emotional connect elevated the spirit of the evening.

The organisers reiterated that "UNSTOPPABLE" is not merely a programme, but a continuing mission to create conversations around health, healing, awareness and emotional support while celebrating the indomitable spirit of survivors.

## Abhijeet Gogoi's poetry translation 'Murmur in Wilderness' released

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 31:** 'Murmur in Wilderness', a collection of Assamese poems by poet Abhijeet Gogoi translated into English was released on Friday at the Purbayan Publication office in Pan Bazar.

Eminent literary figure Dr Dhrubajyoti Borah attended as chief guest, while noted translator Nirendranath Thakuria formally unveiled the book as special guest.

The volume has been translated by Dr Anand Barmudoi, Bibekanda Choudhury, Dr Bibhas Choudhury, Nirendranath Thakuria and Dr Sudhir Kumar Das. It also carries critical appreciation from Sahitya Akademi awardee Dr Anamika, poet-scholar K Satchidanandan and poet-educator Badri Narayan.

In his address, Dr Dhrubajyoti Borah underscored the importance of translating Assamese literature into English, Hindi, Bengali and South Indian languages, observing that Assamese writing stands on par with literature in other languages when rendered in translation. Emphasising the author's dedication to study and perseverance, he described Abhijeet Gogoi as a poet embodying those qualities.

## Four minors from Jorhat tracked to Guwahati after going missing

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, May 31:** Four minors, including two girls from the Pulibor area in Jorhat, who went missing since Saturday have been tracked to Guwahati by the police, though their exact location is yet to be confirmed. As per a police source, three of the four minors, including one of the girls have passed HSLC this year, while the other girl is a Class 7 student.

All four reportedly left their homes for school on Saturday but did not attend classes. Later, it was found that they had not reached the school. The families of the girls lodged a police complaint at the ISBT Police Outpost, alleging kidnapping, while the parents of the boys did not file FIRs but informed the police outpost about the matter.

A police source said that investigation is underway and the four have been tracked to Guwahati. Assistance from Guwahati Police has been sought to locate and bring them back.

## BU VC refutes allegations on PhD degrees

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, May 31:** Bodoland University Vice-Chancellor Professor BL Ahuja addressed a press conference at the university regarding the controversy that arose following reports published in a section of the media concerning doctorate degrees at the university.

Speaking at the press conference held in the conference hall of Bodoland University on Saturday, Vice-Chancellor Ahuja said that reports claiming the doctorate degrees of 127 faculty members of Bodoland University were invalid and that the University Grants Commission (UGC) had summoned university authorities to Delhi were part of a conspiracy to damage the image of Bodoland University, which is progressing steadily.

He stated that Bodoland University has been maintaining academic standards in accordance with the policies and guidelines of the University Grants Commission.

The Vice-Chancellor alleged that baseless and false news reports were being circulated and broadcast with the intention of damaging the reputation and dignity of Bodoland University.

Referring to reports published on May 26 regarding an alleged summons by the UGC, Ahuja clarified that it was not a summons. Instead, he said, it was a meeting convened by the University Grants Commission to discuss academic and other related matters face-to-face with authorities from different universities across the country.

## Science exhibition fair held at Lahowal High School

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, May 31:** A Science Exhibition Fair was organised on Saturday at Lahowal High School under the supervision of assistant teacher Mrinallee Sharma and with the cooperation of the Mathematics and Science teachers. Students from Classes VI to X enthusiastically participated in the event. Held within the school premises, the exhibition featured science-based models, innovative projects and educational displays prepared by students of different classes. The exhibition showcased several attractive presentations on topics such as environmental conservation, the use of solar energy, water conservation and modern systems of science and technology. The creativity and scientific thinking demonstrated by the students greatly impressed the parents, teachers, and local residents present at the event.

Speaking to the media, the Headmistress of the school, Pompi Gogoi, said that such programmes help increase students' interest in science and also encourage the development of innovative ideas and creative thinking. She further encouraged the students to move forward in the fields of science and research in the future.



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. — Eleanor Roosevelt

## Protecting Aravalli hills

Society has come to rely on the natural environment for its existence. Any destruction of the environment is sure to pose a threat to society. The case of Aravalli is one example of it. It has deep connections with those living around it, and faces a major threat from human kind, though the role it has played in shaping their lives is simply great. The Range has provided for meeting all their basic needs. The stability in their lives, with livelihood, space to live, and also clothes are all the gifts of the same. It is simply immeasurable. So far as the controversies that are raised around it, the Supreme Court has sought a review of the existing one. For those who have realized the immense value of the range in their lives, it is beyond physical dimension. There has been hardly any reply, as even the definition provided by the Supreme Court, has been branded as too narrow in scope. Amidst all these controversies, the question is raised about what Aravallis are. The apex court has sought a new evaluation and a yardstick for defining the Range. It may be added here that the Range stretches over 600 km across four states and it is 2 billion years old. The Range represents India's oldest folded mountains.

The Supreme Court's recent decision to stay its past judgment accepting the controversial 100 metre-elevation definition for Aravalli hills has brought the controversy to the fore again. On May 15, the Supreme Court said not an inch of Aravalli would be allowed to be used for mining till an expert committee, to be constituted by the apex court, redefined what constitutes Aravalli hills and ranges. As lawyers appearing for mining lease holders and those aspiring to get mining leases said the process for renewal and grant of leases could proceed without their finalisation, a bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said, "We will not pass any order to allow resumption of mining activities in Aravallis." "We will not allow an inch of Aravalli to be used for any purpose unless we are satisfied with the new definition that will be proposed by the expert committee to be constituted by us, taking into account the names suggested by amicus curiae K. Parameshwar, Union government and parties," CJI said.

People living in Aravallis do not agree with the definition given by the Apex Court in the past. It commands a larger influence area. The controversial definition provided by the Apex Court had previously been stayed in December last year. Forest produce is the lifeline for those living in the Aravallis, with their livestock and water. Traditional water systems are central to survival. 'Johads', stepwells, nadis and baoris, are built and maintained collectively. The rainwater is harvested and groundwater is recharged. The water structures are their lifeline. They are protected not by law but by community ethics.

## Democracy is dying under Erdogan's autocratic rule in Turkey

By: Manish Rai

The Republican People's Party (CHP), the primary secular opposition party in Turkey, is presently embroiled in a significant political and democratic crisis as a result of an unprecedented court ruling on May 21, 2026, that invalidated the political party's leadership election in 2023. The fragile democracy of Turkey was put to the test when Turkish riot police invaded the CHP headquarters in the capital, Ankara, to remove its office bearers. Tear gas and rubber projectiles were fired inside the headquarters, where party officials and supporters, including leader Özgür Özel, were confined for days. The standoff between the CHP and Turkish police comes days after a court nullified Özel's 2023 election as the party's chairperson. Human Rights Watch has alleged that the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is attempting to "sideline the main political opposition in ways that profoundly undermine civil and political rights and Türkiye's democratic process."

In 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding father of Turkey, established the CHP, a center-left socialist party. Since 2024, the CHP has been subjected to an unprecedented legal crackdown, during which hundreds of its members and elected officials have been detained over corruption and other allegations that they deny. Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, the CHP's presidential candidate and Erdoğan's primary adversary, is among those arrested.

Despite appearing to have a significant following in Turkey, he was arrested. The repression directed at the CHP has a historically unprecedented character. The CHP is neither a left-wing party nor a Kurdish political movement, which has been violently suppressed throughout the Republic's history. It is the political party of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who established the modern Turkish Republic. Moreover, President Erdoğan has directed intense repression at Kurdish opposition leaders during his nearly two decades of rule.

Selahattin Demirtaş, along with numerous other Kurdish politicians, has been incarcerated since 2016. He is widely considered the most charismatic figure in the opposition, having previously served as the leader of the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HDP). The state has been appointing trustees (kayyum) to administer municipalities that were won by the HDP and its successor, the Democracy Party (DEM), for years.

Within months of their election, mayors are removed on terrorism allegations, and state administrators assume responsibility. The government extensively employs terrorism allegations to suppress civil society activists and opposition leaders. While the public frequently concentrates on high-profile cases such as Demirtaş or businessman Osman Kavala, millions of ordinary citizens, including teachers, academicians, civil servants, and small business owners, have also been the subject of terrorism investigations.

Turkey's political system has gradually evolved into an authoritarian regime over the years. President Erdoğan controls most of the media and effectively dictates judicial decisions. Turkey continues to suppress protests and persecute civil society groups, and it remains one of the most severe jailers of journalists. The government's threats to the opposition are increasing as political rights and freedoms continue to deteriorate.

A "collapse" of judicial independence is described by international observers, who have observed the dismissal or prosecution of thousands of judges and prosecutors, who are subsequently replaced by loyalists. The European Court of Human Rights has delivered several landmark judgments against Turkey that have identified systemic violations, such as violations of the right to a fair trial and inhuman or degrading treatment.

President Erdoğan has subverted the Turkish constitution to achieve his autocratic goals, in addition to prosecuting the leaders of the main opposition parties and making the judiciary subservient. Turkey's government system underwent a de facto semi-presidential transformation following the constitutional amendments in 2010. Subsequently, the referendum in 2017 resulted in a hyper presidential system that was devoid of checks and balances. (IPA Service)

## Mahapurush Madhavdeva - The cultural and spiritual legacy

The history of Assam's cultural and spiritual development cannot be discussed without acknowledging the towering contribution of Mahapurush Madhavdeva, one of the greatest architects of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement and a central figure in the shaping of Assamese identity. His life represents a rare combination of devotion, creativity, intellectual depth, and social commitment. While he is primarily remembered as the foremost disciple of Sankardeva, Madhavdeva's achievements stand independently as a monumental force that transformed Assamese society and culture. Living during a period marked by political uncertainties, social divisions, caste prejudices, and religious orthodoxy, he dedicated his entire life to spreading the ideals of devotion, equality, and moral discipline. His efforts went far beyond religious preaching. Through literature, music, drama, education, and community-building, he helped create a cultural foundation that continues to influence Assam even today. The Neo-Vaishnavite movement was not merely a religious phenomenon; it was a comprehensive cultural awakening that touched every aspect of public life. Madhavdeva emerged as one of its most powerful voices, ensuring that the message of devotion reached people across social and economic boundaries. His teachings encouraged individuals to seek spiritual fulfillment through sincere devotion rather than ritualistic practices. In doing so, he helped create a more inclusive and humane social order. The significance of his contribution lies not only in the institutions he strengthened or the literary works he composed but also in the enduring values he promoted. Compassion, equality, humility, discipline, and devotion became integral components of Assamese cultural consciousness largely because of the influence of Madhavdeva and the movement he represented. More than five centuries after his lifetime, his presence continues to be felt in the Namghars, Satras, Borgeets and literary traditions of Assam. His legacy remains a living force that connects generations of Assamese people to their spiritual roots and cultural heritage.



## DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

combined with his emphasis on equality and spiritual simplicity, deeply impressed Madhavdeva. After accepting Sankardeva as his spiritual guide, he devoted himself completely to the Neo-Vaishnavite cause. This transformation was not merely personal; it became the foundation for a larger cultural mission. Madhavdeva's exceptional organizational skills, literary talents, and spiritual dedication allowed him to expand the movement in ways that ensured its survival and growth. He travelled extensively, interacted with people from different communities, and worked tirelessly to spread the ideals of devotion and social unity. His commitment demonstrated that true spirituality was inseparable from social responsibility. Through his actions, he showed that religion could serve as a force for social cohesion rather than division. The lessons he learned during his early life and his association with Sankardeva ultimately shaped a vision that would influence Assamese society for centuries and establish him as one of the most respected spiritual leaders in the history of the region.

Among Madhavdeva's greatest achievements was his extraordinary contribution to Assamese literature, which remains one of the strongest pillars of his legacy. His literary works were not composed merely for artistic expression but served as powerful instruments for spiritual education and cultural transformation. The most celebrated among these works is Namghosha, a devotional masterpiece that occupies a unique place in Assamese literature and religious life. Through a series of deeply reflective verses, Madhavdeva articulated the principles of devotion, surrender, humility, and faith in a language accessible to ordinary people. The simplicity of expression combined with philosophical depth made the work immensely popular across different sections of society. Unlike scholarly texts that remained confined to educated elites, Namghosha entered the daily lives of common people and

became a source of spiritual inspiration. Another important contribution was Bhaktiratnavali, which further strengthened the philosophical foundations of Neo-Vaishnavism. Through these writings, Madhavdeva demonstrated remarkable mastery over language, poetic structure, and religious interpretation. His literary works enriched the Assamese language by expanding its expressive capacity and establishing standards that influenced later generations of writers. The significance of his literature extends beyond its religious content. His writings contributed to the development of a shared cultural consciousness among Assamese people. They provided moral guidance, promoted ethical conduct, and encouraged a deeper understanding of spiritual values. In an age when literacy was limited, the recitation and collective study of these works helped create strong bonds within communities. The literary heritage left behind by Madhavdeva continues to inspire scholars, writers, and spiritual seekers. His ability to communicate profound truths through elegant yet accessible language remains one of the defining characteristics of Assamese literary culture. Through literature, he succeeded in transforming spiritual teachings into a living cultural tradition that continues to influence the moral and intellectual life of Assam.

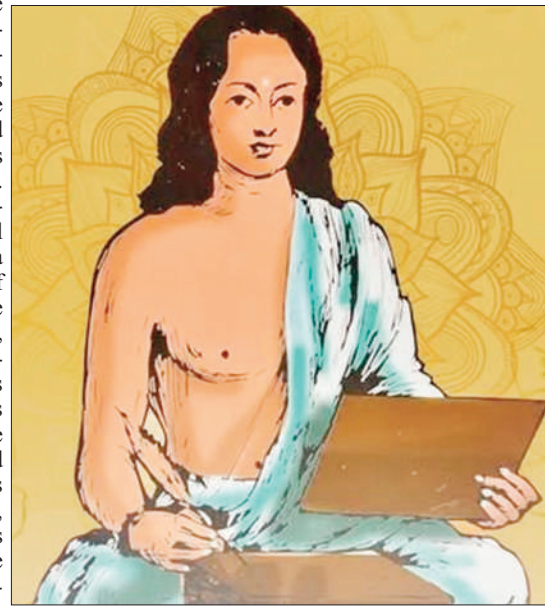
The contribution of Madhavdeva to Assamese music is equally remarkable and represents one of the most enduring dimensions of his cultural legacy. His Borgeets occupy a sacred place in the musical traditions of Assam and are regarded as masterpieces of devotional expression. These compositions are distinguished by their spiritual depth, lyrical beauty, and sophisticated melodic structures. Through Borgeet, Madhavdeva transformed music into a medium of devotion capable of touching the hearts of listeners regardless of their social background or level of education. The emotional power of these songs lies in their ability to express profound spiritual longing while maintaining artistic elegance and musical discipline. Unlike purely entertainment-oriented forms of music, Borgeets were designed to inspire reflection, devotion, and inner transformation. They became an integral part of religious gatherings and community worship, strengthening the emotional connection between individuals and their faith. The influence of Madhavdeva's musical creations extended far beyond the religious sphere. His compositions contributed significantly to the preservation and development of Assamese cultural identity. The traditions associated with Borgeet continue to be practiced and celebrated in Satras, Namghars, and cultural in-

stitutions throughout Assam. Their enduring popularity demonstrates the timeless quality of his artistic vision. In addition to composing songs, Madhavdeva helped establish a musical culture that emphasized discipline, collective participation, and spiritual purpose. Through music, he succeeded in making the teachings of Neo-Vaishnavism more accessible and emotionally compelling. The beauty of his compositions continues to resonate across

generations, reminding people of the deep connection between artistic expression and spiritual experience. His musical legacy stands as a testament to the power of art to unite communities, preserve cultural heritage, and elevate human consciousness beyond the limitations of everyday life. Another vital aspect of Madhavdeva's contribution lies in the field of drama and cultural performance. His Ankiya Naats and Jhumuras enriched Assamese theatrical traditions and provided innovative ways of communicating spiritual and moral teachings. These dramatic works combined storytelling, music, dance, and performance into a unified artistic experience capable of engaging audiences from all walks of life. At a time when formal education was not widely available, drama became an effective means of transmitting religious ideas and ethical values. Madhavdeva recognized the educational potential of performance and used it skillfully to communicate the principles of devotion, compassion, and righteousness. His dramatic works were not merely entertainment; they served as instruments of cultural education and social integration. The performances created spaces where people could gather, learn, and participate in shared cultural experiences. This communal aspect strengthened social bonds and reinforced the values promoted by the Neo-Vaishnavite movement. The influence of these theatrical traditions can still be observed in contemporary Assamese culture, where devotional drama remains an important element of community life. Beyond literature,

music, and drama, Madhavdeva's broader social contributions helped shape the moral character of Assamese society. He consistently opposed social discrimination and worked to promote the ideals of equality and human dignity. By encouraging people from different backgrounds to participate in common religious and cultural activities, he challenged barriers that had long divided society. His vision emphasized the essential unity of humanity under the guidance of divine truth. This message carried profound social implications and contributed to the emergence of a more inclusive cultural environment. The institutions strengthened by him, particularly the Namghar and Satra systems, became centres not only of worship but also of education, cultural preservation, and community organization. Through these efforts, Madhavdeva ensured that spiritual teachings were translated into practical social realities. The enduring significance of Mahapurush Madhavdeva lies in the extraordinary breadth of his influence and the timeless relevance of his ideals. His contributions transcended the boundaries of religion and became foundational elements of Assam's cultural identity. Literature, music, drama, education, morality, and social harmony all bear the imprint of his vision. Few historical figures have succeeded in shaping both the spiritual and cultural consciousness of a people as profoundly as Madhavdeva. His legacy is visible in the continued vitality of Assamese devotional traditions, the preservation of cultural institutions, and the enduring popularity of his literary and musical creations. More importantly, the values he championed remain relevant in contemporary society. In an age often characterized by division, intolerance, and materialism, his emphasis on humility, compassion, equality, and devotion offers important lessons for humanity. The cultural renaissance associated with the Neo-Vaishnavite movement would not have achieved its lasting impact without the dedication, creativity, and leadership of Madhavdeva. As the foremost disciple of Sankardeva and a visionary thinker in his own right, he transformed spiritual ideals into a vibrant cultural movement that continues to enrich the lives of millions. His life serves as a reminder that genuine cultural progress is inseparable from moral and spiritual growth. The story of Mahapurush Madhavdeva is therefore not simply the story of a cultural architect whose contributions helped define the identity of Assam. His cultural and spiritual legacy remains one of the greatest treasures of Assamese civilization and continues to inspire future generations with its message of devotion, unity and human dignity.

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## The Gulf turbulence: Decoding India's economic resilience

By: Lalit Nath

The global geopolitical landscape has entered a volatile and exceptionally delicate phase. Escalating armed confrontations in the Middle East involving Iran, Israel, and the United States, combined with growing threats to vital shipping lanes such as the Red Sea, have disrupted worldwide economic stability and created significant hurdles for India.

Among all the ripple effects of this crisis, the international crude oil market has suffered the most immediate and severe blow. In the current era of globalization, no nation can completely isolate itself from global economic events. Consequently, its impact is naturally reflected in India's domestic market too. The abnormal rise in fuel prices in the contemporary global market has brought a severe challenge to the Indian economy. Even in such a time of crisis, India has been able to maintain a strong position due to the country's visionary economic planning, robust political leadership and positive diplomatic policies. Despite such a complex global situation, India's skillful economic self-defense has now attracted the attention of the entire world. If we look back a little at the global fuel market, we will see that in the previous period, crude oil prices were somewhat controlled and stable. When global markets were gradually returning to normalcy after managing the economic devastation of the post-COVID pandemic era, this new conflict in the Middle East emerged just at that time. Before this new conflict in the Middle East arose, crude oil prices in the international market were within a controlled range of about \$70 to \$73 per barrel. During that period, India also managed to keep the prices of petrol, diesel and LPG stable in the domestic market for a long time by smartly

applying its diplomacy to import crude oil at affordable prices from various alternative sources, especially Russia. As a result, the country's inflation was also under control and the domestic industrial sector enjoyed a dynamic growth. In a word, this stability of the global market greatly helped a developing economy like India to move forward rapidly. But the military conflict and escalating tension in the Middle East suddenly disrupted the normal pace of the global market. Under the impact of this military conflict, the price of Brent crude has risen abnormally. Currently, crude oil prices in the international market are observed to be fluctuating within a dangerous range of \$81 to \$107 per barrel and at times even crossing \$110. Behind this unexpected price rise lies not only the fear of war, but a deep maritime crisis in the supply chain. If we analyze the main reason behind this global rise in oil prices, it appears that the issue of endangered waterway security and disruption of ship movements is intrinsically linked to it. About one-fifth of the world's total crude oil transport is handled solely through a narrow waterway called the 'Strait of Hormuz' adjacent to Iran. Due to the war-like situation in the Middle East, this most crucial commercial route is gradually becoming insecure and volatile.

Due to this severe insecurity in the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea, large oil tankers now have to avoid the traditional shorter routes and take an extremely long path via the Cape of Good Hope of the African continent. Importing oil to India by circumventing this distant sea route is a harsh reality. As a result, the travel time of the ships has increased by about 12 to 15 days. Because the journey has become so unpredictably long, maritime insurance costs have increased by up to 400 percent and the fuel expenses of

the oil tankers have also doubled. The unregulated price of crude oil in the global market is due to these massive additional transportation and insurance costs being added to the original price of oil. Simultaneously, with the expiration of the special discount on buying oil from Russia, Western sanctions have become stringent again, resulting in a sudden drop in oil supply in the international market. This global economic crisis has also had an unprecedented impact on the Indian currency, the 'Rupee'. As crude oil prices rise in the international market, India's demand for the Dollar has increased abnormally because import bills have to be paid in Dollars. As a result, the Dollar has become extremely strong and the value of the Indian Rupee has continuously depreciated, reaching its historic low. Currently, the exchange value of the Indian Rupee against per US Dollar has touched around 96 to 97 Rupees. Due to this historic depreciation of the Rupee against the Dollar, the country's import costs have increased significantly, which has a direct impact on the trade deficit and domestic inflation.

India is currently the third largest consumer of oil in the world. To meet the needs of the country's massive population, India has to import more than 88 percent of its required crude oil from abroad. Therefore, the rising value of the Dollar and the increase in crude oil prices have created a complex financial crisis in the Indian economy. However, to tackle this challenge, the Central Government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) are continuing active steps to control the situation by adopting timely policies, far-reaching plans and various financial safety measures. Firstly, the Reserve Bank is making correct use of the country's strong foreign exchange reserves. Currently, India has a massive forex reserve of about \$696.99 billion se-

cured in its hands. To prevent further depreciation of the Rupee and to bridge the shortage of Dollars in the market, the RBI has released Dollars into the market and has recently adopted some important monetary policies to regulate the Dollar-Rupee exchange. Secondly, the government has emphasized making the sources of crude oil import more diversified. Currently, about 70 percent of crude oil is being brought from secure countries outside the Strait of Hormuz.

The government's third and most visionary step is conducting international trade through the Indian Rupee. With the aim of reducing excessive dependence on the US Dollar, India has implemented a historic bilateral agreement with countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to purchase oil directly in local currency, i.e., Rupee instead of the Dollar, which has specially helped in increasing the stability of the Rupee in the international market. In parallel, to control non-essential imports, the government has increased import duties on goods like gold and silver so that the outflow of Dollars can be prevented and that money can be used for importing highly essential resources like oil. On the other hand, the government has stocked fuel capable of meeting about 74 days of domestic requirements in emergency strategic oil reserves located in places like Visakhapatnam and Mangalore. Most notably, even after price hikes created records in the international market, the Indian government has protected ordinary consumers by bearing the burden of subsidies itself and cutting fuel duties. Unlike the panic situations seen in Europe or other advanced Western countries, the government has continued subsidies on cooking gas and fertilizers essential for the agricultural sector so that no chaotic situation arises in India.

During this unprecedented global

economic hardship, the country's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made a highly important, visionary appeal for economic discipline to the citizens. He has clearly mentioned that we might not have control over external forces, but domestic consumption and awareness are in our own hands. The Prime Minister has urged citizens to cooperate mainly in three key areas. He has requested citizens to completely prevent the wastage of petrol, diesel and LPG in daily life. Small fuel savings made by every citizen can collectively reduce the country's import bill by thousands of crores of Rupees, which can be used to ensure the country's food security and developmental works. Furthermore, the Prime Minister has urged citizens to refrain for the time being from buying gold uncontrollably and unnecessarily, and from taking unnecessary foreign trips. This is because excessive import of gold drains the country's valuable Dollar reserves and increases economic scarcity. To protect the country's domestic economy and industrial sector, he has inspired citizens to use locally manufactured products and move towards alternative fuels like solar energy or electric vehicles.

The current crisis in the Middle East and geopolitical challenges have once again provided India a golden opportunity to prove its economic capability on the world stage. Even if there are temporary fluctuations in the value of the Rupee against the Dollar, the foundation of our country's overall economy is extremely robust. History has always proven that every crisis opens a new door of possibilities along with it. Taking the Prime Minister's call to heart, when the citizens transform fuel conservation and the use of alternative renewable energy into a social movement, this crisis will add special fuel to building India as a truly self-reliant nation in the days to come.

# End of Mamata Era: Dreams of Prime Ministership now a nightmare

By: Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

The political journey of Mamata Banerjee has always been marked by dramatic ambition, emotional mass appeal, relentless street politics, and fierce political survival. From fighting the mighty Left Front in West Bengal to establishing herself as one of the most powerful regional leaders in India, Mamata Banerjee's rise remains one of the most remarkable stories in contemporary Indian politics. Yet in recent years, a growing political question has begun to echo across national discussions: where exactly is Mamata Banerjee today in national politics, and is she still nurturing the dream of becoming the Prime Minister of India?

Many critics now argue that Mamata Banerjee has entered the most difficult phase of her political career. Allegations of corruption, administrative failures, internal party conflicts, and growing anti-incumbency have weakened the once invincible image of the Trinamool Congress leadership in West Bengal. The rise of the BJP as a strong opposition force has further intensified political pressure on her government. Critics believe Mamata's national ambitions have faded as she struggles to maintain political dominance within Bengal itself. However, Indian politics is unpredictable, and experienced leaders often stage remarkable comebacks. That Didi is politically "finished" is now on every lip. For more than a decade after defeating the Left Front in 2011, Mamata Banerjee appeared unstoppable. Her image as "Didi" transformed into a political phenomenon. She projected herself as the protector of Bengal's identity, culture, and regional pride while simultaneously attempting to emerge as a national opposition face against the Bharatiya Janata Party. Her aggressive political style, fiery speeches, welfare politics, and grassroots connection gave her enormous popularity among sections of the electorate. After her spectacular victory in the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections against a high-voltage BJP campaign, many political observers believed that Mamata Banerjee had become the strongest possible opposition challenger to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

A brief comparison of the political style and philosophy of Narendra Modi with Mamata Banerjee will make it more clear why her political dreams of being the Prime Minister now turn to nightmare after the 2026 election debacle. Narendra Modi emerged from the disciplined cadre-based structure of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Bharatiya

Janata Party. His political growth was shaped through organizational hierarchy, ideological training, and administrative experience in Gujarat. Mamata Banerjee, in contrast, evolved through street-level agitation politics in West Bengal. Her rise was marked by protests, emotional connect with ordinary people, and relentless opposition to entrenched political establishments. Modi's politics is deeply associated with structure, planning, long-term narrative-building, and centralized governance. Mamata's politics thrives on spontaneity, emotional energy, direct mass communication, and regional cultural identity. It has no certain philosophical base.

The difference between the two leaders becomes immediately visible in their public personalities. Narendra Modi projects the image of a statesman with a global vision, disciplined communication, and carefully curated symbolism. His speeches often focus on nationalism, development, civilizational pride, technological progress, and India's international stature. Mamata Banerjee projects herself as a grassroots fighter, emotionally connected to the poor, the marginalized, and the cultural soul of Bengal. Her speeches are often spontaneous, combative, and deeply emotional at times descending to vulgar slangs. Modi speaks as a national leader addressing the future of India; Mamata speaks as a protector of regional dignity and people-centric politics sometimes telling blatant lies and uttering illogical rhapsody of humpty dumpty flavour.

Their political communication styles also reveal polar differences. Modi's political messaging is highly strategic, technologically advanced, and nationally synchronized. Social media campaigns, carefully crafted slogans, visual symbolism, and centralized messaging machinery form the backbone of his political communication. Campaigns like "Make in India," "Digital India," "Swachh Bharat," and "Vocal for Local" are examples of large-scale narrative construction. Mamata Banerjee's communication style is more instinctive and personal. She relies heavily on direct interaction, local cultural references, emotional slogans, poetry, songs, and dramatic political language. Her appeal often emerges from authenticity rather than elaborate communication engineering. Another striking contrast lies in governance philosophy. Narendra Modi emphasizes strong centralized leadership and decisive governance. His supporters view him as a transformational leader capable of taking bold national decisions, whether in economic reforms, foreign policy, infrastruc-

ture development, or security matters. His political model values efficiency, scale, visibility, and centralized coordination. Mamata Banerjee's governance model focuses more on collection of money by any means for her ill planned welfare distribution, localized political management, and populist accessibility. Schemes aimed at women, students, rural citizens, and minority communities have not really strengthened her support base in Bengal. While Modi's governance seeks national integration through centralized programs, Mamata's governance emphasizes localized often mafia based cut money and syndicate raj connection. There are many complaints of illegal toll plaza and parking slots collecting money for non government funds. The Central funds are also diverted or levied with percentage of commission by Mamata's party people besides money earned through cattle smuggling and coal stealing.

The ideological gap between the two leaders is perhaps even wider. Narendra Modi's political framework is strongly associated with cultural nationalism and a broader civilizational narrative rooted in Indian identity. His supporters believe he has restored confidence, pride, and assertiveness to India's national consciousness. Mamata Banerjee positions herself as a defender of minority appeasement in the name of pluralism and federalism. Her strong advocacy of regional autonomy and refusal to give land for border fencing created grave doubts of her party connection with the jihadis in the border areas. She frequently accuses the BJP of excessive centralization and ideological polarization, while the BJP accuses her administration of appeasement politics and administrative favoritism.

The 2021 election was particularly significant because it was not merely a state-level victory and the post poll violence is still a nightmare. Mamata transformed it into a symbolic national battle. The slogan of Bengali identity versus "outsider politics" became central to her campaign narrative. She in a dramatic way called even the Home Minister and Prime Minister as outsiders and 'migratory birds'.

She displayed fake injuries during the campaign in Nandigram and in spite of the enormous organizational and financial pressure from the BJP machinery, she returned to power for a third consecutive term by using mafia to deprive people from their voting rights. False votes were cast and the voice of opposition was numbed. The Opposition leaders were numbed and the LoP was suspended. That victory was celebrated on the blood-washed path in the villages though this

elevated her stature across opposition circles. Leaders from various regional parties began viewing her as a possible architect of anti-BJP unity. Now that too is crumbling.

It was during this period that speculation regarding her prime ministerial ambitions intensified. Mamata Banerjee never openly declared herself a prime ministerial candidate in a straightforward manner, but her actions indicated larger national aspirations. She began traveling beyond Bengal more frequently, meeting opposition leaders, speaking on national issues, and attempting to position herself as a federal alternative to both the BJP and the Congress. The Trinamool Congress also tried to expand organizationally into states such as Goa, Tripura, Assam, and Meghalaya. These attempts achieved limited success, they clearly demonstrated that Mamata was looking beyond Bengal and all these are at the instruction of I Pac which is now accused of using illegally collected money. One of its Directors is now imprisoned.

Mamata Banerjee soon discovered the complexities of opposition unity. Several opposition leaders were unwilling to accept her leadership unquestioningly. The Congress party viewed itself as the natural pivot of anti-BJP politics, while regional stalwarts such as Arvind Kejriwal, K. Chandrashekar Rao, Akhilesh Yadav, and others also nurtured their own national ambitions. Moreover, Mamata Banerjee's political image outside Bengal remained uneven. Within Bengal too she relied only on a minority community for consolidated support. Her aggressive regional rhetoric sometimes limited her national acceptability. While she succeeded in projecting herself as a fighter, critics questioned whether she possessed the broader coalition-building temperament required for national leadership. The voice of her mafia raj is too loud in Bengal.

Another major obstacle emerged from the governance challenges within West Bengal itself. Allegations of corruption, recruitment scams, political violence, and administrative irregularities began damaging the moral image that Mamata once cultivated as a crusader against corruption. The school recruitment controversy and the arrest of several leaders associated with her party created embarrassment for the Trinamool Congress government. Opposition parties continuously attacked the administration over law-and-order concerns and alleged syndicate politics. These controversies weakened her attempt to present herself as a clean national alternative. After 2026 election debacle even her party leaders are blaming her nephew Abhishek and



Mamata too is being compared to the blind Dhritrashtra for keeping a strange silence on RG Kar Rape, Kamduni and Park Street incidents where women safety is a big question. The 26000 teachers were kicked out from their jobs because of the huge corruption and this was becoming a tornado blowing her party in 2026 election. She did not see the clouds gathering in the political firmament. People were not given justice after RG Kar. They finally claimed through poll EVM in 2026 election verdict.

Though the Trinamool Congress retained power comfortably in 2021, the BJP established itself as the principal opposition force in the state. The political polarization between the BJP and the Trinamool Congress intensified sharply. Mamata Banerjee increasingly found herself compelled to focus on protecting her home turf rather than building national momentum. A regional leader aspiring for the Prime Minister's office must first demonstrate stable dominance in her own state over a long period. The continuing BJP challenge in Bengal complicated that equation. The INDIA alliance, formed as a broad anti-BJP coalition before the parliamentary elections, also exposed the contradictions within opposition politics. Mamata Banerjee participated in alliance discussions but maintained a cautious and often independent posture. Seat-sharing disagreements, ideological inconsistencies, and personal rivalries weakened opposition cohesion nationally. She lost all credibility as a national leader.

She fought the Left Front for decades almost single-handedly before finally dismantling one of the world's longest-serving elected communist governments. Yet the Prime Ministerial dream requires more than resilience and charisma. It requires timing, national acceptability, strategic alliances, and an electoral map broad enough to produce parliamentary numbers. Here lies Mamata Banerjee's greatest challenge. The Trinamool Congress remains overwhelmingly dependent on Bengal for parliamentary strength. Without significant expansion into other states, it becomes difficult for Mamata to emerge as a realistic claimant to the Prime Minister's office. The Congress factor also remains crucial. Historically, non-BJP coalitions in India have often depended upon Congress support or ac-

commodation. Mamata Banerjee's relationship with the Congress has fluctuated between cooperation and confrontation. At times she has sharply criticized Congress leadership; at other moments she has joined broader opposition platforms. This ambiguity weakens opposition coherence and indirectly benefits the BJP.

Another factor affecting Mamata's national aspirations is the changing nature of Indian electoral politics. National elections are increasingly presidential in style, centered around strong centralized leadership narratives. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's political dominance has transformed electoral campaigns into personality-driven contests. Opposition leaders struggle not only against the BJP organization but also against a powerful leadership image cultivated across the nation. After Operation SINDOOR the Narendra Modi image was becoming unbeatable. In such a political environment, regional leaders face difficulty translating state-level popularity into national appeal.

Still, Indian politics remains unpredictable. Coalition eras can re-emerge unexpectedly under changing political circumstances. Economic distress, unemployment, social tensions, or regional realignments can dramatically alter national equations. Mamata Banerjee understands this unpredictability well. In many ways, Mamata Banerjee today resembles a leader caught between two political realities. One reality is the practical necessity of protecting Bengal, her strongest fortress. The other is the enduring temptation of national leadership. Balancing these two ambitions simultaneously has become increasingly difficult. Her attempts to expand nationally have faced setbacks, while Bengal itself has become more politically contested than before. For now, however, the dream of becoming Prime Minister appears distant rather than immediate. Dreams in politics rarely die completely. They wait, evolve, retreat, and sometimes return in unexpected forms. Mamata Banerjee now faces problems from her own party and even from the Abhishek fraction. (International Tagore Awardee Formerly Affiliated Faculty Virginia Commonwealth University & Retd. Head Post Graduate Dept of English Dum Dum Motijheel College. Glen Allen Mobile +1(804)-564-2383 email prof.ratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com)

## Religion and humanity - reconsidering faith in the age of science

By: MR Lalu

When we decide to follow the strict spiritual edifice of a religion the most intriguing thing we observe at times is the strange elements of its practices. All religions, for that matter, provide many complicated spiritual practices which they often proclaim to be the best, capable of taking you through the corridors of heaven. And those practices they invented through the passage of time for this purpose sometimes turn strange, terrible and difficult to comprehend. All, they declare, are designed to elevate man from his usual, normal being to that of the divine.

Religions, irrespective of their differences in the values they hold, always offer a heaven which they unanimously declare is the ultimate. There, they say, the most fascinating moments are waiting, moments which, while being on the green planet, are a sheer impossibility. So, for almost all religions across the world, life on planet Earth is a preparatory period for the more elevating and profoundly enlivening life beyond death, which they emphasize, is the most promising.

There is rarely a comparison possible between the religions that originated in India and those that originated elsewhere on this planet. While Indic religions do not discard the existence of a heaven, they proclaim that it is not the ultimate. Many others from the other side of the world declare that heaven is the ultimate, and in the process of gaining entry into the abode of their Lord, they are allowed to take even the most radical and ruthlessly inhuman paths. Wars are being fought, and constant instability and chaos are planned. Everything, to be precise, is done to impose the power and impact of a particular faith or tradition, or, for general understanding - a religion.

Religious practices that are often in discord with the existence of life on the planet need to be reformed and redesigned to suit the demands of the time. For instance, animal sacrifice in rituals and the slaughtering of millions of animals during the festivities of certain religions bring serious environmental consequences. Religions are humanity's most ancient institutions and are often credited for their ability to keep humanity together. They, of course, are intended to inspire their followers through deeper philosophy, compassion, and strong moral discipline.

Religions in India, as I said earlier, stand apart from the rest of the world, for they hold spiritual realization as their fundamental goal, and a personal search for ultimate reality through an ideological structure as their pattern

of practice. Principally, they profess to begin a journey inward rather than undertaking one toward the outside. This approach made them fundamentally inclusive, and there have always been multiple paths designed for the follower to choose from.

Religions hold a socio-spiritual framework that eulogizes the importance of sacrifice and surrender, while most of them, throughout their period of emergence, invested much of their time and energy in opposing other faiths. The main reason behind such conflicts was to forcefully establish their supremacy over other faiths. But they were not only in conflict with each other; they were also in conflict with life itself.

When faith becomes rigid and exclusionary, windows are automatically shut to the outer



world. Scientific and inclusive approaches are banned, while violence and hostility take center stage. Countries were captured by deliberately altering demography; generations were exterminated, while huge migrations altered societal equations in many parts of the world. Wars that can eliminate millions are fought even today, causing people to be displaced, relocated, and destabilized. Bloodshed and devastation caused by religious differences have erased the identities of many societies.

Ironically, religions advocate peace, but in effect their intention to manifest peace across the globe is doubtful. When a particular religion believes that it alone possesses truth and that the paths from the other side of the world are futile, meaningless, or at least inferior and distant shadows, conflict is bound to arise. Wars, persecutions, forced conversions, and all the chaotic methods such faiths imposed upon humanity made the world a vulnerable place, and the resulting impact was endless friction.

Identity conflicts have been known since ancient times. Crusades and sectarian rivalry, extremist movements, and radicalism in the name of God were the results of man placing his reli-

gious identity above humanity. There have also been instances where conflicts arose from within certain religions that imposed radical practices while rigid fundamentalist outpourings of ideology dictated morality. Their interference was coercive and explosive. They became punitive in action and suppressive in effect. They dictated what to eat and how their followers should dress. They imposed customs and practices that deliberately destroyed the moral framework of societies. They remained in conflict with all other faiths while ruthlessly suppressing rebellion from within. All, they said, was done to establish their superiority and animate the power of their God.

While humanity progressed through intelligent scientific discoveries, making life on this planet more exuberant and attractive, radical religions and faiths entered into an endless clash with science and scientific discovery. They discarded the most fundamental aspects of life that helped human civilization survive through inquiry, adaptation, and the willingness to revise understanding. These fundamental aspects were instrumental in man's progress through scientific thinking and logical reasoning.

They believed that what was discovered and decoded in their religious literature was ultimate, and that any attempt to revise it would destroy the philosophy itself, toppling the edifice upon which the faith was built. Except for Indic religions, those that hesitated to revise their understanding have caused tremendous damage to life on Earth. History is abundant with examples where religions and religious institutions blindly refused to accept science and scientific discoveries, while scientists faced persecution of the most ruthless kind.

Even today, religions rooted in superstition and rigid belief systems question medical assistance such as vaccination and healthcare. Environmentally, man, through his religious institutions, can be seen in dissonance with the planet itself. The future of humanity can also be seen as a confrontation between religious doctrines and science. It could become more progressive and peaceful if religions sensibly find reasons to mend and amend their radical ideas.

We need to fundamentally understand that Earth is our only shared home and finding reasons to create chaos and destabilize it could turn out to be very dangerous. Ideological independence through social interdependence, with man and nature coexisting and nurturing each other, should not remain a mere dream, but an achievable reality.

## Harnessing the Himalayas: Why strategic Hydropower is Northeast India's ecological and economic shield

By: Dr Atop Lego

The Himalayan ecosystem is undeniably one of the most dynamic and complex geological frontiers on the planet. For decades, the narrative surrounding development in this region—particularly in Northeast India—has been dominated by a fear of its fragility. While ecological preservation is paramount, a blanket paralysis on infrastructure development ignores the harsh scientific, climatic, and geopolitical realities of the 21st century. Today, large-scale, scientifically engineered hydropower projects in Arunachal Pradesh are not merely energy generators; they are essential instruments for flood mitigation, climate resilience, and national water security.

To understand the necessity of these projects, one must first look at the hydrology of the Brahmaputra River basin. Every monsoon, the unchecked ferocity of rivers like the Siang, Dibang, and Subansiri brings catastrophic flooding to downstream Assam. This is not a gentle inundation but a violently erosive force that alters river morphology, destroys agriculture, and displaces millions.

Scientifically, managing a river basin with such massive volumetric flow requires "reservoir storage" and "flood moderation" infrastructure. Multipurpose dams act as giant shock absorbers of flash floods. During periods of extreme rainfall or potential glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), these reservoirs can store excess runoff, reducing the peak discharge downstream to manageable levels. Without such interventions, downstream communities remain completely at the mercy of increasingly erratic, climate-change-induced monsoon patterns.

A prominent example of this essential intervention is the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP). Often misunderstood merely as a mega-dam for electricity, SUMP is fundamentally a strategic flood-control and water-security asset. The Siang River alone contributes nearly a third of

the Brahmaputra's total flow. By establishing a massive storage mechanism on the Siang, India can effectively regulate the river's flow, significantly blunting the devastating impact of annual floods in Assam while generating clean, renewable energy.

But what about the seismic risks? It is a well-documented fact that the Northeast falls under Seismic Zone V, indicating high tectonic activity. However, acknowledging this risk is where modern engineering begins, not where it ends. The science of seismology and structural engineering has evolved exponentially. Today's dams are not the rigid, unyielding walls of the 20th century.

Modern dam design incorporates "Dynamic Structural Analysis accounting soil foundation interaction and hydrodynamic forces on Dam" and utilizes probable Peak Ground Acceleration (PGA) to simulate the exact seismic forces, a specific site might experience. Engineers employ seismic retrofitting, flexible core materials, and deeply anchored foundations that allow structures to absorb and dissipate kinetic energy during an earthquake. One need only look at Japan—a nation situated on the highly volatile "Ring of Fire"—to see this science in action. During the catastrophic 9.0 magnitude Tohoku earthquake in 2011, Japan's meticulously engineered dams withstood massive seismic shocks with virtually no structural failure. Applying these world-class engineering parameters ensures that projects in Arunachal Pradesh are built to survive extreme geological events.

Furthermore, there is a pressing geopolitical reality that cannot be ignored: the doctrine of lower riparian rights. The Siang is the continuation of the Yarlung Tsangpo, which originates in Tibet. China is already aggressively pursuing mega-dam projects upstream on the Tsangpo, including a proposed super-dam at the Great Bend just before the river enters India.

In international water law, "prior appropriation" or establishing

"user rights" is critical. If India fails to build substantial storage and usage infrastructure on its side of the border, it risks losing its lower riparian rights. An upstream superpower could theoretically manipulate water flow—hoarding water during dry seasons to cause droughts, or releasing massive torrents during the monsoon to create artificial floods (often termed "water bombs"). Building SUMP is therefore a scientific and strategic imperative to establish India's rightful claim to the river's yield and to buffer against any upstream hydrological manipulation.

Finally, there is the global imperative of the clean energy transition. As India races toward its Net Zero emissions target by 2070, it is heavily expanding its solar and wind capacities.

However, solar and wind are inherently intermittent—they do not produce power when the sun sets or the wind stops. To maintain grid stability, a robust "baseload" power source is mathematically necessary. Coal provides this currently, but to phase out coal, hydroelectricity is the most viable, clean alternative. Hydropower provides rapid-response "inertia" to the power grid, capable of ramping up in minutes to stabilize energy supply.

The narrative that any massive intervention in the Himalayas is inherently disastrous is an outdated perspective that ignores modern scientific capability. Rivers left entirely to their own devices in an era of extreme climate change are becoming a source of unmitigated disaster for downstream communities.

Through rigorous geological surveying, cutting-edge seismic engineering, and precise hydrological modelling, infrastructure like the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project can be executed safely. By embracing science over apprehension, Northeast India can transform its untamed rivers from perennial sources of sorrow into the engines of its economic prosperity and ecological security. (The author is a retired Chief Engineer (PWD) and Seismic & Structural Consultant)

## ISI asks terror sympathisers to join national political parties to escape crackdown: Officials

**SRINAGAR, May 31:** In a move aimed at evading security crackdown and investigation into terror incidents, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has asked its established network of Over Ground Workers (OGWs) in Jammu and Kashmir to infiltrate mainstream national political parties, officials said on Sunday.

The ISI is also trying to recalibrate its strategy by making desperate attempts to revive dormant, locally-founded terror outfits from the early 1990s to give an "indigenous colour" to terrorist violence and mask the direct involvement by Pakistan, which is facing constant monitoring by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) -- the global watchdog on money laundering and terror financing.

According to officials of the central security agencies, recent interrogation of OGWs arrested by Srinagar police showed that some of them were part of national political parties.

By embedding terror sympathisers, who provide critical logistical support, recruitment and funding to terror outfits, in legitimate political structures, the ISI hopes to shield its assets from the ongoing operations

by security forces.

The officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said that the strategy stems from a sense of desperation and explained that the ISI is running out of options because their conventional terror groups are under intense pressure from security forces and the local support base for newer proxy outfits has shrunk significantly.

By trying to resurrect old names and blending their workers into mainstream politics, they are attempting to capitalise on a historical narrative to lure a new generation of youth while buying political immunity for their operatives.

According to officials, when an OGW is cornered during cordon and search operations, they often attempt to flash basic membership cards of national political parties in a futile bid to escape the dragnet.

Security officials have noted that this tactic has evolved over the decades as suspects routinely used voter identity cards to evade police in the late 1990s, and later tried to use Aadhar cards to dodge deep investigations.

The officials made it clear that no political leadership has ever stepped in to save such people.

In a related development, the OGW activities have been seen in reviving outfits that had become largely defunct after 1993.

The security agencies are now closely tracking the resurfacing of names of terror groups that defined the initial, bloody phase of the Jammu and Kashmir terror in the 1990s and early 2000s, including Al-Umar Mujahideen, Al Badr and Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen.

By attempting to revive these older, home-grown banners, the ISI aims to project a false narrative that the terror violence in Jammu and Kashmir is an internal, home-grown movement rather than a proxy war orchestrated from across the border, the officials said.

While the high command of these revived terror groups remains safely sheltered in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir, their ground-level networks are attempting to become active in propaganda, funding and radicalisation, they said.

The officials said that central intelligence agencies are maintaining a tight vigil on these developments and ensuring neutralisation of the logistical networks being spun by these resurfaced OGWs. (PTI)

## Rahul's dig at govt over CBSE OSM row

### 'Revealing chat with fellow anti-national Soros agents'

**NEW DELHI, May 31:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday targeted the Centre over the CBSE OSM row, sharing a video of his interaction with a group of students and describing them as brave young Indians who asked the Modi government simple questions but received "insults instead of answers".

Asserting that the students deserved a bright future, Gandhi said, "We will make sure they get it".

Posting the clip on his social media accounts, Gandhi described it as a "revealing chat with my fellow 'anti-national Soros agents'." "Vedant and his friends are brilliant, brave young Indians who asked CBSE and the Modi government simple questions -- but got insults instead of answers," Gandhi said in his post on X, accompanying the video.

"They deserve a bright and secure future. We will make sure they get it," he added.

Vedant, a Class 12 student, had recently alleged in a post on X that the Physics answer sheet uploaded by the CBSE under the revaluation process was not his. It went viral, after which several other students took to social media with similar



claims. In the video, Gandhi is seen having an informal chat with Vedant and other students about their ordeal. He also joked about how they were labelled "Pakistanis" and "deep state agents" after raising what he called legitimate concerns and issues.

"You are students. You are asking for your answer sheets, that's all. Now, suddenly, you have become anti-nationals. You have to accept the problem if you have to solve the problem. You are refusing to accept the problem and

blaming the poor kids and saying 'you are deep state, you are spies, terrorists'," Gandhi says in the video, attacking the government over the On-Screen Marking (OSM) controversy.

"Were you also called terrorists? Tell me!" Gandhi asks Vedant, his brother and some other students in the 90-second clip, apparently part of a larger interaction.

During the interaction, Gandhi also laughingly tells the cameraperson: "Bhaiyya, show the faces of these 'terrorists'!"

Several CBSE Class 12 students

had flagged mix-up cases after accessing scanned copies uploaded on the portal and finding that the answer sheets did not belong to them.

CBSE later reached out to them and shared their correct answer sheets. The board said that it had taken up on "top priority" the cases related to alleged mismatched answer sheets and other concerns faced by students in the revaluation process.

Experts from IIT-Madras and IIT-Kanpur, along with Digital Infrastructure Corporation of India (DICI), are examining the system and strengthening the portal and payment gateway integration, according to government sources.

Coempt, the company that did the OSM for the CBSE exam, has come under attack from Gandhi, who alleged that the firm was already mired in controversy under its old name, Globarena.

The leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha has demanded an independent judicial probe, as well as an SIT inquiry to unearth the truth behind the "entire scam", and asked why a firm that had a murky past in Telangana handed the contract to the board. (PTI)

## Elections are won by ploy, not development: BJP MLA

**HARDOI (UP), May 31:** BJP MLA from Uttar Pradesh's Gopnamp assembly constituency, Shyam Prakash, has asserted that elections are won through 'tikdam' (ploy) and not just by doing development work.

"One does not get votes because of development. I too have done development. The villages, where I got roads constructed, from those booths, I did not get votes. I am telling you a practical thing. Elections are won by 'tikdam' (ploy). Elections are not won by development," Prakash said on Saturday.

The BJP MLA was addressing village pradhans after the Uttar Pradesh government decided to appoint the outgoing gram pradhans (village heads) as the administrators of gram panchayats. He also told them to prepare for the next elections and win it using all the possible tricks ('saam', 'daam', 'dand', 'bhed'). The Uttar Pradesh government has decided to appoint the outgoing gram pradhans as the administrators of the gram panchayats. (PTI)

## Terror probe: 'Module planned attacks to avenge razing of mosque in Bandra anti-encroachment drive'

**MUMBAI, May 31:** Members of a Pakistan-backed ISI-underworld terror module, busted by Delhi Police, had planned to attack policemen and security forces in Mumbai to avenge the demolition of an illegal mosque in Garib Nagar area of Bandra here during a recent demolition drive, officials said.

The Delhi Police said on Saturday that they arrested eight suspected operatives, including a Nepali national, allegedly planning attacks on vital installations, security establishments and police personnel in Delhi and other cities.

The drive, conducted from May 19 to 23 to raze unauthorised structures at Garib Nagar near Bandra station, was marred by incidents of stone-pelting, leaving 10 persons, including policemen, injured.

The suspects had allegedly conducted a raze of the Garib Nagar demolition drive and sent videos and photographs of police deployment to their handlers in Pakistan,

a senior Mumbai Police official told PTI on Sunday.

Police personnel deployed during the demolition exercise in Garib Nagar and members of the Hindu community were among the intended targets, he said.

The conspiracy was allegedly planned by Pakistan's ISI, gangster Shahzad Bhatti, Yawar Khan, and underworld operative Munna Jhingada, a close aide of Chhota Shikheer, he said.

Based on specific intelligence, Delhi Special Cell arrested Sajid Mehboob Shaikh alias Arbaaz Khan from Kurla in Mumbai and Taqeer Rizwan Shaikh from Mumbra in Thane district on May 27, he said.

The investigation showed that the duo had surveyed a crowded bridge outside Dadar railway station as a potential target, the officer said.

Mobile phones seized from the accused persons contain videos of several locations in Mumbai, along

with chats and voice notes exchanged with their handlers in Pakistan and Dubai, he said.

A Mumbai-based suspect, identified as Huzafa, allegedly recruited local operatives into the module and is currently absconding, the officer said, adding that a search is on to trace him.

Citing preliminary findings, the officer said the module was tasked with carrying out grenade attacks and opening indiscriminate firing on police personnel, security forces, and key installations in Mumbai, he said.

Mumbai Police and Maharashtra ATS are on high alert and are investigating local links connected to the network, the officer said.

The name of Jhingada has cropped up as a conspirator.

Believed to be operating from Karachi, Jhingada was allegedly handling the operation and coordinating the attack plans, the officer said. (PTI)

## No proposal yet on Karnataka Cabinet under CM-designate Shivakumar: Kharge

**KALABURAGI (KARNATAKA), May 31:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said no proposal had yet been received regarding the composition of the new Karnataka ministry under Chief Minister-designate D K Shivakumar.

He also indicated that decisions on ministers, deputy chief ministers and key appointments would be taken only after consultations following the June 3 swearing-in ceremony.

Addressing reporters here, Kharge said discussions were underway on various aspects of the government formation process, but no formal proposal had been placed before the party leadership so far.

"We will have to see. No proposal has come yet (on the appointment of ministers). Once the proposal comes, discussions will be held on how many ministers and deputy chief ministers should be appointed, on whether important chairmanships should also be filled along with it," he said.

Kharge said the party would get clarity only after the swearing-in ceremony. "All these matters are under discussion. We will know after June 3. Right now, we have to wait," he said.

Referring to the possibility of expanding the cabinet in phases, he said, "Whether he (CM-designate) will appoint eight or ten ministers, we have not received their proposal. Once it comes, one phase may be com-

pleted first, and then after 15 days or a month, another phase may be taken up for the remaining (posts)."

Asked whether a framework for accommodating aspirants had already been worked out, Kharge said discussions were taking place, but no final decision had been conveyed to the party leadership.

"There is an idea that in another phase, the remaining members should also be accommodated. Such a discussion exists, but we still do not know what exactly the CM-designate is considering. Nothing has come to us yet," he said.

On the issue of appointing a new Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPC) president after Shivakumar assumes office as chief minister, Kharge said a change in leadership was a natural process, and the party was searching for a suitable successor.

"That is natural. Once the incumbent steps down, someone else will have to come. We are searching. We have to identify a good person and also consider the right combination," he said.

Stressing the need for a leader capable of strengthening the organisation ahead of future electoral challenges, Kharge said the party was looking for someone who could work collectively and rapidly.

"We now have only about 24 months; we need a leader who can work very fast and who can bring everyone together collectively," he said. (PTI)

## VP Radhakrishnan warns youth may follow 'cockroach' if positive news is ignored

**KOTTAYAM (KERALA), May 31:** Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Sunday said youngsters would end up following the "cockroach", in a veiled reference to the BJP, if positive activities and achievements were not reported adequately.

He stressed that constructive journalism is essential to guide society and strengthen public confidence.

Speaking as the chief guest at the celebrations marking the 140th anniversary of the Malayalam daily Deepika, Radhakrishnan said positive developments should receive greater attention in the media so that young people are exposed to the right information and role models.

"Positive activities should be reported well. Only then will youngsters receive the right information. Otherwise, they will lose interest and end up following the 'cockroach'," he said.

The vice president said he was not against freedom of expression, but questioned the tendency to give disproportionate attention to issues that may not stand the test of time.

Apparently referring to the social media buzz generated by the Cockroach Janata Party (a satirical social-media account), particularly among youngsters, he questioned whether something truly deserved so much attention in a single day.

"If something is genuinely good, people will continue to recognise its value after a week, 10 days, or even a month," he said.

"Nobody knows about them. All of a sudden,

they are everywhere. That cannot last," Radhakrishnan added, while stressing that noble ideas and positive messages should reach every nook and corner of society and contribute to nation-building.

The satirical platform emerged last week following a controversy around remarks attributed to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant regarding "cockroaches" and "parasites" during a court hearing on the "senior" designation of lawyers.

The CJI later clarified that his observations, directed at individuals entering the legal profession through "fake and bogus degrees", were misquoted.

What began as an online satire project has since evolved into a wider conversation on digital dissent and youth frustration, with the platform using memes and sharp political commentary to address issues, such as unemployment, exam-paper leaks and education.

Radhakrishnan emphasised that constructive journalism helps build confidence in society, encourages collective responsibility, and motivates citizens to contribute to national development.

By highlighting compassion, scientific progress, community service, environmental protection, and human achievement, newspapers can become powerful instruments of social change, he said.

The vice president also praised Deepika for promoting social harmony, spreading education, preserving cultural roots, and encouraging constructive public discourse. (PTI)

## Pak beaming rogue telecom signals to aid terror networks, penetrate jails in J&K: Officials

**SRINAGAR/JAMMU, May 31:** Pakistan is actively violating international telecommunication norms by deliberately beaming superfluous cellular signals across the border into Jammu and Kashmir aimed at providing a covert communication lifeline to terrorist groups operating in the Union territory, with a sharp focus on the Jammu region, officials said on Sunday.

Recent infiltration patterns, particularly in the south of the Pir Panjal range, indicate there has been a significant surge in telecom towers erected along the Line of Control (LoC) in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) whose signals reach various Jammu jails where hardcore terrorists are lodged. While the mountains of the Kashmir Valley naturally block most of these rogue signals, the flat topography of the Jammu plains allows the frequencies to penetrate deep into Indian territory.

Signal traces have been detected in border districts, including Kathua, Rajouri and Poonch, and as far inland as the highly sensitive Kot Balwal jail area in Jammu, the officials said.

The officials said that jammers used at present in some prisons in the terror-hit region have been unable to block the signals and choke illicit communication by inmates as smuggled mobile devices reportedly continued to function inside blanket prison zones.

There are 14 jails in Jammu and Kashmir, besides two correctional homes.

The officials said that since Jammu and Kashmir has a hyper-sensitive threat environment, further complicated by cross-border signals, drone-assisted devices and shifting telecom spectra, there was a need to install

next-generation facility rather than traditional, static jammers that risk compromising security while cutting off nearby civilian communities.

The officials said that the new technology is designed to pinpoint and neutralise active rogue devices within specific zones. In 2019-20, the security agencies had focused on rogue communication networks from across the border and successfully dismantled them after cracking the encryption, the officials said, adding that the present attempts will meet a similar fate.

The officials said that the strategic placement of telecom towers by Pakistan along the International Border and Line of Control violates Article 45 of the Constitution of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a United Nations body which mandates that all 193 member states take necessary steps to prevent the transmission of false, misleading or superfluous signals, and actively cooperate in locating unauthorised stations.

The ITU's Radiocommunication Bureau has previously reiterated that such transmissions are strictly forbidden. These installed towers utilise Code-Division Multiple Access (CDMA) technology, featuring high-grade encryption developed by a Chinese firm specifically tailored for YSMS operations.

Because CDMA allows multiple signals to occupy a single transmission channel, it severely complicates real-time electronic monitoring by security agencies.

The officials said that terror outfits are leveraging YSMS services, an advanced technology that merges smartphones with radio sets to facilitate encrypted, off-grid communication. (PTI)

## Election outcome being questioned when one loses election: WB Gov

**SILIGURI (WB), May 31:** West Bengal Governor R N Ravi on Sunday said that questions are being raised about the outcome of elections when someone loses. The governor said that while it is understandable that outsiders would make such attempts, some entities within the country are questioning the credibility of constitutional institutions.

"When a judgment does not go in someone's favour, they say the court is compromised," Ravi said while addressing a programme in this north Bengal city.

"It is fine when one wins the election, but if they lose, they claim votes were looted," the governor said, without naming anyone or any political party.

"This is an attempt to spread confusion and break the country's confidence," he said.

The governor asserted that enemies within are working in concert with external enemies in such attempts.

"Attempts are being made to destroy our self-confidence not only by outsiders but also by our own people," he said.

In the recently concluded assembly election in West Bengal, the BJP defeated the Trinamool Congress to form the saffron party's first government in the state.

After the election result was declared by the Election Commission of India, TMC chief Mamata Banerjee refused to tender her resignation as the chief minister, alleging that the West Bengal assembly poll verdict was "not a people's mandate but a conspiracy". (PTI)

## This is crucial juncture for space missions: Shubhanshu Shukla as he preps for second space voyage

**NEW DELHI, May 31:** He's been there, done that and is raring to get back into space, humankind's final frontier. Shubhanshu Shukla, India's first man on the International Space Station, says he is drawing from his background as an IAF test pilot in his training for the Gaganyaan mission.

Fly any new aircraft that comes in and prove that it has safe operational limits is the principle he followed then, and now too, said Group Captain Shukla. Shux to his friends, describing ISRO's first human spaceflight programme as a developmental or 'prototype' mission. "Globally, there is a lot of respect for the Indian space community, specifically ISRO... transitioning to a human space mission is a change of magnitude -- it is a big shift from what we have been doing and what we are going to do," Shukla told PTI Videos.

He said Gaganyaan will position India uniquely in the global race for space exploration.

Last June, Shukla was one of the four astronauts who travelled to space and spent 18 days aboard the

International Space Station as part of NASA's Axiom-4 mission. It marked the return of an Indian to space after 41 years -- Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma was the first to do so in 1984.

Exactly a year later, and Shukla is now based in Bengaluru, as one of the four astronaut-designates selected for Indian Space Research Organisation's Gaganyaan mission. He lives with his family in Bengaluru at the Human Space Flight Centre as he preps for a second space voyage.

Tentatively scheduled for mid-2027, the mission aims to demonstrate India's capability of human spaceflight by launching a team of three members to a low-Earth orbit of 400 kilometres for three days and bringing them back safely by landing in Indian sea waters.

Comparing Axiom-4, an international, commercial collaboration and Gaganyaan, India's indigenous, flagship programme, Shukla said, "I think in terms of outcomes, they're quite different, and especially, when India pursues this (Gaganyaan) and we are able to do



it successfully, it will give a lot of courage to other nations who are looking at doing something like this, because it feels possible. You're not able to relegate it to, OK, this is for somebody else."

The astronaut, who was at the Ashoka University in Sonapat to talk to students, is involved in the design and refinement of the design of the system that will carry the astronauts to space. Once finalised and frozen, mission specific training will commence. In April, ISRO

successfully conducted the second Integrated Air Drop Test (IADT-02) for Gaganyaan at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. IADT-02 is among the precursor, unmanned missions through which safety and reliability will be proven.

If successful, India will be only the fourth nation in the world to have shown a capability of doing manned space missions, after the US, Russia and China.

"I think it is monumental in terms

of capability that we as a country will possess when we are able to execute Mission Gaganyaan because it involves (the) development of a lot of new technologies which are otherwise not existing, with nations who do not pursue these missions," the Lucknow-born astronaut said. New technologies comprising engineering and human centric systems are being developed and realised for ensuring human safety, which is of paramount importance in Gaganyaan mission, ISRO said in a factsheet.

This a crucial juncture for space missions, said Shukla. "... especially as you see, there is a kind of race that is happening right now (of) going back to space and back to the moon and onwards."

In January, the 40-year-old was awarded the Ashoka Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award.

Discussing his unforgettable 18 days in space last year, Shukla said scientific experiments from India conducted during the Axiom-4 mission, including researching stem cells for preventing muscle damage

in space or looking at growth of microalgae in microgravity, were all curated with "a basic theme in mind that we want to execute our own human space missions in the future". "Living in space is exactly like going to school. You follow a timetable," he said. A typical day aboard the ISS started at 6 am. The first briefing of the day was at 7.30 am. Activities would start at 8 am and continue through the day till 6 pm. Evenings, sometimes after a 13-hour work day, usually involved sipping tea in a pouch and looking outside the window, next to where Shukla slept.

He described the experience of seeing both the Earth and Moon "surreal". Shukla said that while there are people on-board the space station to talk to and things to do, sometimes not being able to communicate exactly the unique, first-time experience of spaceflight to his loved ones made him feel lonely.

"Very few people have gotten a chance to see or feel that kind of perspective that you are getting to witness, and there is no good way to communicate it to your loved

ones back home. You can just talk, you can just speak to them, but it doesn't even come close to doing the justice of communicating of what it is exactly," he said.

Ever so often, the immensity of what is happening would hit him. "It's unbelievable, you know, after 41 years that we were able to send an Indian to space, and you happen to be that person who's going to space, so there are definitely emotional moments.

"There are times I tried to suppress them so that I could keep functioning normally and keep doing what I'm supposed to do, because sometimes the weight of emotions can be crushing, can cripple you, the weight that comes with just the sheer understanding of what is happening," said Shukla.

The fantastic crew helped a lot, he said. "... the conversations, talking to each other because you know it is a very similar place that they are also in from their own side, so it was very easy to communicate, talk to them about things, figure it out, and then move on and do things," he said. (PTI)

## Party says no leadership change discussion as CM faces court-monitored inquiry

# Arunachal: BJP backs Khandu amid CBI probe, rejects resignation rumours



**ITANAGAR, May 31:** The BJP in Arunachal Pradesh on Sunday backed Chief Minister Pema Khandu amid speculation over his political future following a Supreme Court-directed CBI inquiry, asserting that there is no question of a leadership change while an investigation is underway.

The party's comment comes a day after an Assam-based news portal reported that Khandu would resign in view of the ongoing CBI probe, triggering social media speculation across the state.

The Supreme Court had in April ordered a preliminary CBI inquiry

into charges that public work contracts worth approximately Rs 1,270 crore were awarded between 2015 and 2025 to firms allegedly linked to members of Khandu's family. The probe is currently underway.

Addressing reporters at the party's headquarters here, state BJP president Kaling Moyong said it would fully respect the judicial process and would not take any decision until the investigation reaches its conclusion.

"If the Supreme Court delivers a verdict against the chief minister, the party will take an appropriate

decision. But not now, as the investigation is still going on," Moyong said.

Senior BJP leaders in the state maintained that the party remains united and that there has been "no discussion on a change of leadership" despite attempts to fuel speculation through unverified reports circulating on social media and digital platforms.

Reiterating the support for the chief minister, BJP general secretary Tadar Niglar said all party legislators remained united under Khandu's leadership and dismissed speculations of division within the

ruling party.

"All 46 party MLAs are under one umbrella and under one leadership. There is no division within the party," Niglar said.

He warned that the party would initiate disciplinary action against those found to be involved in spreading misinformation regarding the chief minister's alleged resignation.

"However, if anyone from the BJP is behind this fake news, we will take stringent action against that individual," Niglar added.

BJP's another general secretary, Junty Singhpho, expressed confidence in the judicial system and the chief minister, stating that the truth would emerge through due process. "We believe in the judiciary, and we also believe in our chief minister. We are confident that he will come clean from these allegations," she said.

Meanwhile, the Itanagar district unit of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) on Sunday lodged a complaint at the Itanagar Police Station against the publication that carried the report on Khandu's alleged resignation.

According to a statement shared by the BJYM on its official Facebook page, the organisation accused the publication of "spreading false and misleading information with the intent to create confusion and destabilise the political atmosphere in Arunachal Pradesh, and sought legal action against those responsible. (PTI)

## Rio seeks Centre's intervention for release of 6 Naga men in Manipur

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, May 31:** Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio held telephonic discussions with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the Union home secretary and the director of the Intelligence Bureau, seeking their urgent intervention to trace and secure the safe release of the six Naga men abducted in Manipur.

Rio also urged them to identify those responsible for the abduction and ensure that the law takes its course. He said the matter has been accorded high priority by the concerned authorities.

In a letter dated May 30, he apprised United Naga Council (UNC) president NG Lohrii of this development and the efforts being made by the Nagaland government to secure safe release of the abducted persons, which has caused widespread concern and anguish among Nagas across the region.

Rio said he had a telephonic conversation with Amit Shah on May 29 and conveyed the deep concern of the Naga people over the incident.

During the discussion, he requested Shah's personal intervention and urged that all possible efforts be made by the Government of India to trace the abducted persons, bring the perpetrators to justice and secure the release of the six at the earliest.

Rio informed that Shah assured him that the matter would be accorded the highest priority and that all necessary measures would be undertaken by the concerned agencies to trace the abducted persons,



identify those responsible for the abduction and ensure that the law takes its course.

Rio further said he had also spoken to the Union home secretary and the director of the Intelligence Bureau, impressing upon them the urgency and sensitivity of the matter and requesting immediate and coordinated action by all concerned agencies.

"Both have assured me that the matter is being actively pursued," the letter read.

Rio appealed to the UNC to prevail upon the Naga volunteers who are reportedly keeping 14 Kuki individuals in their custody and facilitate their safe and unconditional release.

"At this critical juncture, it is imperative that we remain guided by the teachings of Christianity, the values of compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation also the long-cherished Naga tradition of protecting innocent lives and upholding human dignity," Rio stated.

## Manipur: Five kutcha houses gutted in arson, none injured

**IMPHAL, May 31:** Five kutcha houses were gutted in arson by suspected militants in Manipur's Kangpokpi district, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place at Kharam Vaiphei, a Kuki-Zo village on Saturday. No injuries were reported.

"Armed miscreants resorted to firing and arson at the village, but security forces brought the situation under control. No casualties were reported," a police officer said.

Locals claimed that armed persons from another tribal community attacked the village and set fire to the houses.

Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the apex body of Kuki tribes in the state, condemned the incident and called upon authorities to conduct a fair investigation, identify those responsible and take appropriate action. The organisation also called for measures to prevent further escalation and ensure the safety of civilians.

Police also dismissed "statements circulated on social media", which allegedly targeted the district SP.

Police said the allegations against the officer were "baseless," "grossly false" and "do not arise from the facts of the incident".

It also warned of legal action against those spreading disinformation through posts or statements.

Clashes have been reported between armed persons of Naga and Kuki-Zo tribes in Manipur since February this year. (PTI)

## Army organises medical camp in remote border area in Arunachal, CM hails initiative

**ITANAGAR, May 31:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Sunday lauded the Indian Army for organising a medical camp in a remote border area, saying such initiatives reflect the force's commitment to the welfare of local communities besides safeguarding the nation's frontiers.

In a social media post on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day, Khandu commended the Sela Warriors of the Indian Army under Gajraj Corps, along with the civil administration of Thingbu for conducting the camp that benefited more than 200 villagers.

"Beyond safeguarding our borders, the Indian Army continues to make a meaningful contribu-

tion to the health and well-being of our border communities through such initiatives," he said in a social media post.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also called for collective efforts towards building a healthier, tobacco-free society. "On World No Tobacco Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to a healthier and tobacco-free society," he said in a social media post.

Describing tobacco use as a major public health concern, he said it remains one of the leading causes of preventable diseases and premature deaths.

"By choosing to stay away from tobacco, we take an important step towards protecting our health, our families, and our future," he added. (PTI)

## Nagaland minister Along urges institutions to impart skill-based education



**HT Correspondent**  
**DIMAPUR, May 31:** Nagaland higher education minister Temjen Imna Along on Saturday urged educational institutions to prepare students by nurturing innovation, adaptability and skills in them to face the realities of today's fast-changing world.

Inaugurating three major infrastructure projects at Dimapur Government College under the Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) scheme, Along described the newly inaugurated facilities as a significant milestone in the advancement of higher education in Nagaland.

He, however, stressed that educational infrastructure alone is not enough and that the real challenge lies in developing capable and employable human resources.

"Education today is no longer just about reading and writing. It has to be holistic and transformational," Along stated.

Along said government infrastructure projects in Nagaland are increasingly matching and even surpassing private-sector standards, reflecting the state's gradual transformation.

Speaking about unemployment in the state, he underscored the importance of skill-based education.

Referring to the newly inaugurated skill hub in the college, he said students should graduate not only with academic degrees but also with practical skills that would make them employable and self-reliant.

The newly inaugurated projects in the college include a modern academic building under the 'Grants to Strengthen Colleges' component, an incubation centre/skill hub aimed at enhancing employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for students, and a girls' hostel under the 'Gender Inclusion and Equity Initiatives' component of PM-USHA.

## ENPO accuses Nagaland govt of 'attempting to dilute' FNTA pact, convenes key meeting



**KOHIMA, May 31:** The Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO) has accused the Nagaland government of attempting to "dilute the core provisions" of the memorandum of agreement (MoA) on Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA), alleging that the state has taken a 'U-turn' on commitments made during the tripartite negotiation process.

The ENPO, in a statement issued on Saturday, expressed serious concern over what it described as attempts to alter key provisions of the February 5, 2026 MoA, which provides for the creation of the FNTA as a unique self-governing territorial authority with legislative, executive and financial autonomy within Nagaland.

The organisation said these provisions form the very foundation of the agreement and warned that any modification after the signing would amount to dismantling the essence of the MoA. It urged the state government to table and pass the FNTA Bill in the Nagaland Assembly without di-

luting any provision of the signed MoA, maintaining that the arrangement was intended to address the long-standing developmental and governance concerns of the people of eastern Nagaland. The ENPO alleged that the state government was now distancing itself from positions it had earlier endorsed during consultations on the proposed arrangement. It claimed that in its comments on the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) submitted by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2023, the state had agreed in principle to grant legislative, executive and financial autonomy to the proposed authority. The organisation urged the state government to honour the agreement in both letter and spirit and facilitate its smooth implementation for the peace, development and welfare of eastern Nagaland.

Meanwhile, the ENPO convened its central executive council (CEC) meeting at Tuensang on June 3 to deliberate on the matter.

In a separate statement, the organi-

sation informed all CEC members to attend the meeting as per the allotted strength of their respective tribes, frontal organisations and sub-units.

Rajya Sabha MP Phangnon Konyak has been invited to the meeting, while all 20 members of the Eastern Nagaland Legislators' Union (ENLU) have been requested to attend without fail. Former parliamentarians from eastern Nagaland have also been invited as special guests.

Prior to the CEC meeting, a consultative meeting will be held on June 2 at noon with political party leaders and workers from both national and regional parties from eastern Nagaland, along with presidents and secretaries of all six district units. The ENPO has requested all political parties concerned to depute three-member delegations, while tribal councils have been asked to send delegations comprising their president, vice-president and general secretary. The Nagaland government was yet to issue any clarification on the matter. (PTI)

## Army soldiers participate in yoga session at 9,000 feet in Arunachal

Troops mark Yoga Day 2026 run-up with high-altitude session in Shi-Yomi district

**ITANAGAR, May 31:** Indian Army soldiers on Sunday participated in a yoga session on the banks of Pasang Sonam Lake in Arunachal Pradesh's Shi-Yomi district, nearly 9,000 feet above sea level, as part of the month-long celebrations leading up to International Yoga Day 2026.

Troops deployed in forward areas enthusiastically took part in the session, performing yoga postures, breathing exercises and meditation techniques amid the pristine high-altitude surroundings, a defence communicate said.

The event underscored the role of yoga in enhancing physical fitness, mental resilience and overall well-being among soldiers serving in challenging terrain and remote border regions.

The practice was also aimed at improving flexibility, concentration and stress management while fostering teamwork and collective motivation among troops. The picturesque setting of

Pasang Sonam Lake provided an ideal backdrop for promoting inner balance, harmony with nature and a healthy lifestyle, reinforcing the Indian Army's emphasis on holistic wellness, discipline and operational readiness.

International Yoga Day is observed annually on June 21 following a United Nations resolution adopted in 2014 after a proposal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Since then, the day has evolved into a global movement promoting the benefits of yoga for physical, mental and spiritual well-being, with participation from millions of people across countries.

The yoga session in Shi-Yomi district reflected the Indian Army's continued commitment to national initiatives while highlighting the dedication of troops stationed in frontier areas to maintaining fitness, resilience and mental strength in demanding operational environments, the communicate added. (PTI)



## Sikkim lifts odd-even curbs on private vehicles across state, retains restrictions in Gangtok

**GANGTOK, May 31:** The Sikkim government on Sunday withdrew the odd-even restriction on the movement of private vehicles across the state, except within Gangtok town, according to an official notification. The decision was taken after the Food and Civil Supplies Department informed a review meeting that sufficient buffer stocks of petrol and diesel had been created to meet the state's current requirements.

A notification issued by Chief Secretary R Telang, the government stated that the odd-even restriction on private vehicles in all districts of Sikkim, imposed through a May 14 notification, stands withdrawn with immediate effect.

However, the odd-even traffic regulation for private vehicles within Gangtok town, introduced through a notification dated October 24, 2024, will continue to remain in force.

The notification also clarified that restrictions on the use of government vehicles will continue. The state government had earlier extended the odd-even rule to all districts as part of austerity measures aimed at conserving fuel amid supply concerns.

The move had been challenged before the Sikkim High Court through a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by the Citizen Action Party-Sikkim (CAP).

The petitioner argued that extending the restrictions across the state infringed upon citizens' freedom of movement and caused significant inconvenience to the public. (PTI)

## Preservation of culture requisite for progress, development: Manipur CM

**IMPHAL, May 31:** Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Sunday said the preservation of culture and traditions was requisite for taking a society to the path of progress and development, an official statement said.

Singh made the remarks after taking the oath as the president of the temple board of the Lainingthou Sanamahi Temple Complex. "The preservation of culture and traditions has been requisite for taking a society to the path of progress and development," he said.

The CM also assured people that he, too, will put in all possible efforts to take forward the state's culture and traditions.

He said requirements for proper maintenance of the temple complex can be looked into through discussion in the board meeting, and prayed for peace and progress of the state. (PTI)

## IPL Final Playoff

# Bowlers shine as RCB restrict GT to 155/8 to gain advantage

AHMEDABAD, May 31: Royal Challengers Bengaluru closed in on their second consecutive IPL title after bowlers exploited a slow pitch to perfection, restricting a lethargic Gujarat Titans to a sub-par 155 for eight in the final here on Sunday.

Shot-making was not exactly an easy proposition on the pitch No. 6 at the Narendra Modi stadium, a mix of red and black soil, and it aptly reflected in the GT batting.

Washington Sundar resisted the trend with an unbeaten 50 (37b, 5x4), but the damage around him was far too big to mitigate.

The fatigue of playing Qualifier 2 on Friday and a delayed departure because of inclement weather at Mullanpur also might have added to their list of woes.

But none of that should not take any credit away from the RCB bowlers who more often than not found the correct lengths on this deck.

The Titans needed skipper Shubman Gill and his opening partner B



Sai Sudharsan to fire upfront to pile a competitive total, but they failed in that endeavour.

A steady beginning was not alien to GT openers but Gill's swat off Josh Hazlewood (2/37) took the leading edge of his bat to create a simple catch for his opposite number Rajat Patidar.

Sudharsan, who was once saved

by DRS from being caught behind off Jacob Duffy, did not last long either.

The left-hander's woeful pull off a well-directed high and wide bouncer by Bhuvneshwar Kumar (2/29) did not travel beyond a running-in stumper Jitesh Sharma. Bhuvneshwar is now tied with Kagiso Rabada (28 wickets) in the

Purple Cap race.

Once their two batters, who have amassed over 700 runs each this season, the GT batting lost its rudders, ending an underwhelming Power Play phase at 45 for two.

There was no real fire or purpose in the rest of the batters to enact a recovery act.

Jos Buttler (19) and Washington, who brought up his fifty in 37 balls, tried to keep the innings of Titans together but they struggled to shake off their defensive mien.

The young pacer Rasikh Salam Dhar (3/27), who continued his impressive run behind lead bowlers Bhuvneshwar and Hazlewood, picked up the wickets of an out-of-sync Nishant Sindhu (20 off 18 balls) and Rahul Tewatia as the home side lost the cream of its batting line-up even before reaching 100. That the Titans had to wait till the 13th over for the first six off their innings — a mighty drag over mid-wicket off Krunal Pandya — underlined GT's turmoil on the night. (PTI)

## GDSA crowned overall champions at 28<sup>th</sup> All Karbi Anglong Athletics meet

Greater Diphu Sports Association tops medal tally with 33 gold medals at three-day championship

HT Bureau

DIPHU, May 31: The 28th All Karbi Anglong Athletics Meet, 2026 concluded at the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) Stadium on Sunday, with the Greater Diphu Sports Association (GDSA) emerging as the overall champion.

GDSA secured the Best Team title after winning 33 gold, 22 silver and 21 bronze medals during the three-day competition.

The athletics meet, organised by Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) and hosted by GDSA, began on May 29 and was inaugurated by Tuliram Ronghang, who is also the president of KASA.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by Niso Terangpi, Dhruvjayoti Kalita, KASA General Secretary Pankaj Teron and members of the family of late Paresch Chandra Rongphar, in whose memory the event was organised with support from Bokajan MLA and KAAC Executive Member Surjyo Rongphar.

A total of 350 athletes representing 17 sub-associations under KASA



participated in the championship.

The competition featured a wide range of field and track events across under-16, under-20 and senior categories for boys and girls.

Events included shot put, discus throw, long jump, javelin throw, relay races, mixed relay races and track events ranging from 60 metres to 10,000 metres.

The closing ceremony included the distribution of medals and certificates to winners.

The awards were presented by Alina Ronghangpi, wife of late Paresch Chandra Rongphar, and Nirola Bepyi, wife of MLA Surjyo Rongphar.

The programme was attended by KASA office-bearers, including General Secretary Pankaj Teron, Assistant General Secretary Propid Ronghang, Athletics Secretary Rajen Rongpi, Treasurer Kensing Engti and KASA member Melina Terangpi.

## Rulen Bey Memorial Football Championship begins at Howraghat

HT Correspondent

HOWRAGHAT, May 31: The inaugural Rulen Bey Memorial Invitational Prize-Money Football Championship commenced on Saturday at the Jirsong Thare Kiri Club playground under the aegis of the Rajapather Sports Association.

In the opening match, Disobai FC defeated Volongkam Aji FC 2-1 to secure a place in the next round of the tournament. Anil Bey and Kingson Kiling scored one goal each for Disobai FC, while Sanja Teron netted the lone goal for Volongkam Aji FC.

The programme began with the hoisting of the tournament flag by Jirsong Thare Kiri Club president Mindar Teron. Cultural activist and former Rajapather Sports As-

sociation president Dhansing Terang paid tribute to late Rulen Bey by lighting the ceremonial lamp before his portrait. The championship was formally inaugurated by Sharat Patar. The tournament is being sponsored by Longki Bey in memory of his elder brother, late Rulen Bey. Among those present on the occasion were Rupsing Terang and Rongbong Terang.

The matches are being officiated by referees Maheswar Singnar, Rama Ronghang, Robiram Tokbi and Lunshe Tokbi. The organisers have announced cash prizes along with trophies for the top two teams. The champions will receive a trophy and a cash award of ₹30,000, while the runners-up will be awarded a trophy and ₹20,000.

## PSG wins back-to-back Champions League titles after shootout victory against Arsenal

BUDAPEST, May 31: Winning the Champions League was so incredible Paris Saint-Germain had to do it twice.

PSG became back-to-back European champion by beating Arsenal 4-3 on penalties in a dramatic final in Budapest that ended 1-1 after extra time on Saturday. "It's incredible," captain Marquinhos said. "From the very first day of this season, the coach said it's hard to win, and winning twice is even more difficult. So we all had to get back to work. That was the mentality."

Arsenal defender Gabriel Magalhaes fired the last of his team's penalties over the bar to hand PSG the shootout win. The French giant

is only the second team to retain the trophy in the modern era after all-time king of Europe Real Madrid.

Luis Enrique became a three-time winner as a coach and has moulded a team that is simply too good even for the best of the continent has to offer. That includes an Arsenal team that won the Premier League last week and topped the first stage of the Champions League with a perfect winning record, finishing 10 points and 10 places ahead of PSG.

That mattered little in Puskas Stadium as PSG reaffirmed its status as the dominant force in European soccer. "It's even more special because we knew before the match how difficult it would be," Luis Enrique

said. "I think it's deserved over the course of the whole season, even if the final was very closely contested." After demolishing Inter Milan 5-0 in last year's final, PSG endured a tougher foe as Arsenal sat deep and relied on the best defense in the competition. PSG dominated possession but created little after going behind to a Kai Havertz goal in the sixth minute. It took an Ousmane Dembélé penalty in the 65th to level the score and take the final to extra time for the first time in 10 years.

By going back to back, Luis Enrique has achieved what his good friend Pep Guardiola could not after winning Champions Leagues at Barcelona and Manchester City. (AP)

## Sooryavanshi truly special, no one should play around with his natural instincts: Tendulkar

MUMBAI, May 31: Batting legend Sachin Tendulkar hailed teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi as a "truly special" talent, urging coaches and mentors not to interfere with the youngster's natural instincts as he continues his rapid rise in Indian cricket.

After becoming the youngest centurion in IPL history during his debut season last year, Sooryavanshi elevated his reputation even further this time with a string of fearless performances against some of the world's premier bowlers, including Jasprit Bumrah, Kagiso Rabada and Pat Cummins.

"Everyone is talking about Sooryavanshi, and I watched him bat - it was magnificent. I mean he is something truly special. And not just the ability to hit the ball, but what

also fascinated me was the wrist work that he has," Tendulkar said at Cricinfo Honours.

The 15-year-old from Samastipur in Bihar amassed 776 runs at a staggering strike rate of 237.31 in the IPL this season, establishing himself as one of the most exciting young prospects in the game. "To be able to play in all directions of the ground, you need good wrist work. And he is not logging the ball. He is just picking the line and length earlier than the rest of the guys and he is able to clear the rope comfortably."

Tendulkar said he has little doubt that Sooryavanshi possesses the talent to represent India in Test cricket in the future, but cautioned against placing excessive expectations on the teenager too early in his career. (PTI)



অসম চৰকাৰ

খাদ্য, বাজহুৱা বিতৰণ আৰু গ্ৰাহক পৰিক্ৰমা বিভাগ

বিনামূলীয়া

বৰ্তমান চলি থকা লেখানুদান বাজেটৰ পৰিৱেশিত 'সুলভ মূল্যত মচুৰ দাইল, চেনি আৰু নিমখ যোগান' আঁচনিখন ২০২৬ চনৰ জুন মাহৰ পৰা স্থগিত ৰখা হৈছে।

উল্লেখযোগ্য যে ২০২৬ চনৰ মে' মাহৰ অন্তিম দিনত বিতৰণ সম্পন্ন হোৱাৰ পাছত কিছুসংখ্যক সুলভ মূল্যৰ দোকানত অৱশিষ্টভাৱে থকা কিছু মচুৰ দাইল, চেনি আৰু নিমখ অন্ত্যোদয়া (AAY) পৰিয়ালক অগ্ৰাধিকাৰ প্ৰদানেৰে বিতৰণৰ বাবে উপলব্ধ কৰা হ'ব।

চলিত বৰ্ষৰ জুলাই মাহত নৱগঠিত চৰকাৰৰ দ্বাৰা পূৰ্ণকালীন বাজেট দাখিল আৰু অনুমোদনৰ পাছত আগষ্ট মাহৰ পৰা এই আঁচনিখন পুনৰ আৰম্ভ কৰা হ'ব।

অৱশ্যে এই সময়ছোৱাত ৰাইজৰ বাবে আৱণ্টিত বিনামূলীয়া চাউলৰ বিতৰণ প্ৰতিমাহে অব্যাহত থাকিব। সদাশয় ৰাইজৰ সহযোগিতা আন্তৰিকতাৰে কামনা কৰা হ'ল।