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## Dima Hasao Administration Reviews Preparations for Assam Special TET 2026

**Haflong, June 25:** Ahead of the Assam Special Teacher Eligibility Test (TET), 2026, scheduled to be held on June 28, the Dima Hasao district administration convened a preparatory meeting at the District Commissioner's Office, Haflong, on June 24 to review arrangements and ensure the smooth conduct of the examination. The meeting was chaired by District Commissioner Gayatri Devidas Hyalinge, IAS, and attended by the Additional District Commissioner, Additional Superintendent of Police, Assistant Commissioners, Treasury Officer, officials from the Education Department, Samagra Shiksha Assam (SSA), and representatives of various line departments. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the logistical, administrative and security arrangements required for the successful conduct of the examination. Emphasis was laid on maintaining transparency, ensuring the timely deployment of personnel, facilitating smooth movement of candidates and officials, and strengthening coordination among the departments involved. The District Commissioner directed all concerned departments to work in close coordination and make necessary preparations to ensure that the Assam Special TET 2026 is conducted in a peaceful, fair and efficient manner. The meeting concluded with a review of the preparedness of all stakeholders and a collective commitment to ensuring the successful conduct of the examination in the district.



## CEM Debolal Gorlosa Holds Series of High-Level Meetings with Assam Ministers to Accelerate Dima Hasao's Development



**Guwahati, June 23:** In a significant push towards accelerating the development of Dima Hasao, Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC), Debolal Gorlosa, held a series of high-level meetings with senior ministers of the Government of Assam to discuss key developmental priorities, budgetary support, education, and environmental conservation. During his visit to Guwahati, CEM Debolal Gorlosa called on Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma in the esteemed presence of Cabinet Minister Biswajit Daimary. The meeting witnessed extensive and constructive deliberations on a wide range of issues concerning Dima Hasao, with particular emphasis on budgetary provisions for the forthcoming Assembly session, peace and development initiatives, and the district's long-term growth and infrastructure development. The Chief Minister was apprised of the region's developmental requirements and ongoing initiatives aimed at ensuring inclusive progress for the people of Dima Hasao. CEM Gorlosa was accompanied by Haflong MLA Rupali Langthasa, Executive Member of DHAC Monjit Naiding, and Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) as well as Vice-Chairman of the District Planning Board, Dhriti Thaosen. On the same day, the CEM also met Assam's Minister for Education, Plain Tribes and Infor-

mation Technology, Dr. Ranaj Pegu, and extended his heartfelt congratulations on his second term in office. The meeting focused on strengthening the education sector in Dima Hasao through improved educational infrastructure, enhanced teaching and learning standards, and expanding opportunities for students across the district. The discussions also explored measures to improve the overall quality of education and ensure better academic facilities in remote areas. Expressing gratitude, Debolal Gorlosa thanked Dr. Ranaj Pegu for his valuable time, guidance, and positive assurance towards the comprehensive development of education in Dima Hasao.

The delegation during the meeting with the Education Minister included MLA Rupali Langthasa, Projith Hojai, and MAC & Vice-Chairman of the District Planning Board, Dhriti Thaosen. Earlier, on the DHAC Chief Executive Member attended a review meeting chaired by Assam's Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Jayanta Mallabaruah. The meeting was attended by MLAs Rupali Langthasa, Paniram Brahma and Lunsing Teron, along with MAC Dhriti Thaosen, Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Ritesh Enghi, Special Chief Secretary of the Forest Department M.K. Yadav, and senior officials of the Forest Department. The review meeting focused on forest conservation, environmental protection, and the effective implementation of various departmental initiatives across the state. The minister shared valuable guidance and policy directions aimed at strengthening conservation efforts while promoting sustainable development in the hill districts. The series of meetings reflects the DHAC leadership's proactive engagement with the State Government to secure greater support for Dima Hasao's development, with renewed emphasis on infrastructure, education, environmental sustainability, and overall socio-economic progress.



**Dima Hasao Police, in two separate operations conducted within 24 hours, seized 252 cartons of illegal IMFL (Indian Made Foreign Liquor) of various brands from the Haflong and Langting Police Station areas. Two trucks were impounded, and three persons were arrested in connection with the recoveries.**

## Intellectual Meet, Exhibition and Pad Yatra Mark 12 Years of Modi Government in Haflong

**Haflong, June 25:** As part of the nationwide celebration marking 12 years of Service, Good Governance, Development and Public Welfare under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, an Intellectual Meet and Exhibition showcasing the achievements of the Government of India was organised at the Cultural Hall Institute in Haflong on Thursday. The programme was attended by MLA Rupali Langthasa, Chairman of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council Mohit Hojai, Executive Members Niranjana Hojai and Amien Lienthang, DHAC MAC Ramgalunge Zeme, distinguished guest speaker Dinesh Tiwari, programme convener Kulbindra Bathari, along with party leaders, karyakartas and other invited guests. Addressing the gathering, the speakers highlighted the transformative journey of the nation over the past 12 years, emphasizing significant achievements in governance, infrastructure development, public welfare initiatives and nation-building. The distinguished invitees shared their



views on strengthening the nation and working collectively towards a developed, self-reliant and prosperous India. An exhibition displaying key achievements and flagship initiatives of the Modi Government was also showcased, drawing the attention of participants and visitors. Following the Intellectual Meet, the dignitaries, party leaders, karyakartas and participants enthusiastically took part in a Pad Yatra through Haflong town. The march symbolised public outreach and reaffirmed the collective commitment to the ideals of service, development, inclusive growth and the vision of a developed India. The programme concluded with a renewed pledge by all participants to continue contributing towards the nation's progress and welfare, in line with the principles of good governance and inclusive development.

## District Task Force Reviews Preparedness Against JE, Dengue and Other Vector-Borne Diseases in Dima Hasao

**Haflong, June 23:** A meeting of the District Task Force under the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDPC) was held on Tuesday at the Officer's Conference Hall of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC), Haflong, to strengthen preventive measures against Japanese Encephalitis (JE), Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES), Dengue and other vector-borne diseases in the district.

The meeting deliberated on enhancing surveillance activities and adopting effective strategies for the prevention and control of JE and Dengue, particularly in view of the heightened risk of transmission during the ongoing monsoon season. Emphasis was laid on coordinated efforts among departments to curb the spread of these diseases through timely intervention, awareness generation and improved field-level



monitoring. The meeting was chaired by Partha Sarathi Ja-

hari, ACS, Principal Secretary of NCHAC, and was attended

by Rebecca Changsan, ACS, Joint Secretary, NCHAC. Senior officials from the district health services, Public Health Engineering Department, Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Department, Social Welfare Department, Agriculture Department, Education Department, Municipal Boards and other line departments were also present and shared their inputs on strengthening the district's preparedness and response mechanism.



# Amit Shah says Centre 'relooking' at NDPS Act to plug loopholes, seeks states' suggestions

New Delhi, June 26: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the Centre is "re-looking" at the NDPS Act to plug loopholes exploited by narco syndicates and underlined the need for a ruthless approach towards drug peddlers and suppliers. Addressing the 10th apex-level meeting of the Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) on Friday, Shah asked the states to share their suggestions with the Centre on amending the law. The home minister also spoke about the success achieved by agencies in tackling the drug menace in the country. "During 2004 to 2014, 26 lakh kilograms of synthetic drugs were seized. In contrast, from 2014 to 2026, we seized 1.18 crore kilograms of synthetic drugs. This shows that our campaign is steadily progressing towards success," he said. Shah said the value of the drugs seized between 2004 and 2014 was approximately Rs 40,000 crore, whereas the value of the drugs seized between 2014 and 2026 was approximately Rs 1.84 lakh crore. This reflects the remarkable increase in the effectiveness and scope of the government's actions, he said. Shah said the Union Ministry of Finance is "relooking" at the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act to strengthen it and asked states to share their suggestions.

He said the directors general of police can send their suggestions to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the chief secretaries to the Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance. During the event, Shah unveiled a three-pronged approach against drug trafficking



-- detect, disrupt and destroy. He said a ruthless approach should be adopted against traffickers and operatives and a sympathetic approach towards the victims.

The minister called for an approach based on four pillars of enforcement, intelligence collection and dissemination and operations; control against precursors and synthetic drugs; demand reduction and awareness among people; and capacity building, coordination and monitoring by the anti-narcotics agencies. Shah asked the state governments to ensure real-time information sharing under all circumstances. "For this, the Narcotics Control Bureau has developed several portals. I urge all chief secretaries and police chiefs to upload crime details for their respective states to these portals in a time-bound manner. This will enable the government of India to review these cases and provide you with necessary feedback and suggestions," Shah said.

He urged all chief secretaries and police chiefs to move towards making NCORD meetings result-oriented. "The number of meetings is certainly increasing, but it is

also essential that they are result-oriented. Is effective implementation taking place of the decisions taken in the meetings? Are those decisions reviewed in the next meeting? Is there a rigorous and serious analysis of them? Efforts made at the state level in the direction of making meetings result-oriented alone can lead us to success," he said. Shah said the country stands at such a delicate juncture in the battle against narcotics that the coming three years will determine "whether addiction conquers us or we conquer addiction". "For the future of our nation over the next 100 years, we must collectively fight this with unwavering resolve. For this, all governments must come together on a single platform. We must also include seers who guide the public, youths who shape the future, and the power of mothers in this endeavour," he said.

The NCORD meeting brought together key stakeholders from 44 central ministries and departments, along with representatives from state governments and drug law enforcement agencies in hybrid mode. The discussions focused on further strengthen-

ing the government's efforts to achieve a drug-free India. Challenges posed by synthetic drugs, darknet-enabled trafficking and expanding the reach of rehabilitation centres for drug users over the next three years were also discussed.

Shah also released a vision document on narcotics control for three years (2026-2029) prepared through wide-ranging consultations with central government departments, drug law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders. The document will provide a shared road map for addressing the "demand-reduction, supply-reduction and harm-reduction" aspects of the drug menace. The road map envisages a network-centric enforcement approach, clearly defines responsibilities, timelines and measurable targets for all stakeholders and integrates enforcement, demand reduction, rehabilitation, public awareness, capacity building and inter-agency coordination. Earlier, a government statement had said, "This vision document will serve as a guiding framework for policy formulation, implementation and institutional strengthening across the country to curb the menace of drugs." Shah also released the Narcotics Control Bureau's annual report 2025 and inaugurated the agency's zonal offices in Jammu and Guwahati. He e-inaugurated the Drug Disposal Fortnight Campaign, under which approximately 2,09,500 kg of drugs worth Rs 6,000 crore will be destroyed across India by various central and state law enforcement agencies.

# West Bengal to implement UCC, follow Assam & Gujarat roadmap: CM Adhikari



Kolkata, June 26: West Bengal Chief Minister Suven- du Adhikari on Friday said his government would implement the Uniform Civil Code in the state by following due legal procedures, similar to the process adopted by Gujarat and Assam. Speaking on the sidelines of a government programme to celebrate the 189th birth anniversary of literary icon Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay at College Street in north Kolkata, Adhikari said the state would adhere to the prescribed process for implementing the UCC. "There is a procedure for UCC implementation, and we will adhere to that. This will be similar to Gujarat and Assam," he said, referring to the two states that have initiated legislative and administrative steps towards adopting a Uniform Civil Code, governing issues such as marriage, divorce and inheritance.

The BJP government in West Bengal is likely to introduce the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill in the assembly on Monday during its ongoing budget session, much ahead of the party-stated six-month deadline, a source in the Suven- du Adhikari-led cabinet said. The matter was discussed and finalised in a Business Advisory Committee meeting held in the

assembly on Thursday evening, he added. The development could mark one of the most consequential legal and social policy shifts in Bengal in recent times, with the BJP holding the UCC as representing both a major governance promise and a politically significant reform. Ahead of the 2026 assembly elections, the BJP had pledged in its manifesto that the UCC would be implemented within six months of coming to power in the state. The promise was prominently highlighted by Union Home Minister Amit Shah while unveiling the party's election manifesto, or 'Sankalp Patra', in April. "Several states, including Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, have already implemented the UCC proposals. Bengal will now also implement it in line with other BJP-ruled states as we had promised ahead of the elections," a minister in the Adhikari cabinet said. During the programme, Adhikari paid floral tributes to Chattopadhyay, the composer of the national song 'Vande Mataram'. The chief minister announced that the state government would build a national-level 'Vande Mataram' museum as part of the celebrations marking 150 years of the song.

# Congress Seeks SC Probe into Ram Temple Donation Scam

Congress alleges BJP-RSS exposed by Ram Temple donation theft claims, seeks accountability



New Delhi, June 26: Amid the controversy over the alleged embezzlement of donations received at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, the Congress on Friday demanded a Supreme Court-monitored in-

vestigation and the dissolution of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, accusing the BJP-RSS of betraying the faith of devotees. The opposition party alleged that those claiming to be protectors

of Hinduism had been exposed by revelations of the alleged theft of temple donations. Congress general secretary KC Venugopal said the BJP and RSS had first used Ayodhya for divisive politics and then "looted" the donations made by ordinary devotees. Venugopal also questioned the handling of the case by the Uttar Pradesh Police, alleging that the Special Investigation Team (SIT) had only named lower-level office bearers while sparing the trustees responsible for managing temple funds. He claimed that an independent investigation headed by a sitting Supreme Court judge was necessary to uncover the full extent of the alleged scam.

Addressing a press conference, senior Congress leader Rajeev Shukla alleged there had been a "horrific loot" of donations and offerings made by devotees, particularly those from villages and economically weaker sections. He questioned how such a large-scale theft could have occurred without the involvement of senior officials, especially if CCTV cameras were switched off. Shukla further alleged that cash donations were under-reported and records of jewellery offerings were not properly maintained, calling it a betrayal of public faith. He also accused the BJP and RSS of attempting to control temple trusts and using donations for political purposes.

The Congress demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi ensure a Supreme Court-monitored probe and called for the dissolution and reconstitution of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust with seers, saints and religious figures replacing political representatives. Meanwhile, eight persons named in an FIR related to the alleged embezzlement have been arrested. The FIR was registered on the complaint of Krishna Mohan, a member of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, following recommendations made in the preliminary report of an SIT constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government to investigate the allegations.



## BJP Leaders and Karyakartas Pay Rich Tributes to Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee on Balidan Diwas in Haflong

**Haflong, June 23:** Paying homage to one of the foremost nationalist leaders of modern India, BJP leaders and party workers in Haflong observed the Balidan Diwas of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee with solemnity and reverence, remembering his immense contribution to the unity and integrity of the nation. Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and the ideological pillar of the Bharatiya Janata Party, is remembered for his unwavering commitment to national unity and his sacrifice in defence of the country's constitutional and territorial integrity. Speakers at the programme recalled that his courage, patriotism and steadfast adherence to



principles continue to inspire generations of Indians. The commemorative programme was convened by Konjit Kemprai, while the keynote address was delivered by Kulendra Daulagupu, who highlighted Dr. Mookerjee's

vision of a strong and united India and urged party workers to imbibe his ideals in public life and service to society. The programme was graced by the presence of Dima Hasao Autonomous Council Executive Member Don-

painon Thaosen, Vice-President Liton Chakraborty, Executive Member Niranjana Hojai, Haflong Mandal President Shambunath Hojai, along with a large number of dedicated BJP Karyakartas. Floral tributes were offered to the portrait of Dr. Mookerjee, with participants reaffirming their commitment to uphold the values of nationalism, selfless service and dedication to the nation that he espoused throughout his life. Remembering the great son of Bharat on his Balidan Diwas, the gathering noted that Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee's sacrifice will forever remain etched in the nation's history and continue to serve as a guiding force for future generations.

## DC Dima Hasao Interacts with Villagers on Proposed 1200 MW Pumped Storage Project



**Haflong, June 25:** District Commissioner of Dima Hasao, Gayatri Devidas Hyalinge, IAS, along with Additional District Commissioner Shaurya Sharma, ACS, and officials conducted a site vis-

it and interaction programme with the residents of Moti Hojai and Moti Lampu villages on June 24 in connection with the proposed ASSAM/PSP-04 (1200 MW) Open Loop Pumped Storage Project of

the Assam Power Distribution Company Limited (APDCL). During the visit, the District Commissioner engaged in detailed discussions with villagers from both localities regarding the proposed project. The interaction provided an opportunity for local residents to share their views, concerns and suggestions related to the development initiative. The programme was aimed at fostering community participation and ensuring that the perspectives of the affected villages are taken into consideration during the planning and implementation stages of the project. Officials present during the visit highlighted the signifi-

cance of the proposed 1200 MW Open Loop Pumped Storage Project, which is expected to contribute substantially to power generation and strengthen the state's energy infrastructure. The District Commissioner emphasized the importance of maintaining open communication with local communities and assured the villagers that their feedback would be duly considered. The interaction concluded with a constructive exchange of ideas between the administration and the residents, reflecting a collaborative approach towards sustainable development in the region.

## Three-Day Census 2027 Field Trainers' Programme Concludes in Haflong



**Haflong, June 25:** The three-day training programme for Field Trainers on Houselisting and Housing Census (HLO) under Census 2027 (Phase-I) concluded successfully at the Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office, Haflong, on Thursday. The training programme, which commenced on June 23, was organised to enhance preparedness and strengthen the capacity of Field Trainers for the upcoming Census operations across Dima Hasao district. Participants were provided with comprehensive knowledge and practical skills required for conducting the House listing and Housing Census efficiently and accurately. District Commissioner Gayatri Devidas Hyalinge, IAS, Additional District Commissioner, and other district officials were pres-

ent during the concluding session of the programme. Addressing the trainees, the District Commissioner expressed confidence in the capabilities of the Field Trainers and hoped for the successful and timely completion of the Census-related tasks entrusted to them. She emphasized the importance of accurate data collection, which plays a crucial role in planning and implementing developmental programmes and policies. The training covered various operational aspects of Census 2027 (Phase-I), equipping the participants with the necessary tools and understanding to carry out their responsibilities effectively in the field. The programme concluded with a renewed commitment from the trainees to ensure the successful conduct of the House listing and Housing Census across the district.

## Prohibitory order u/s 163 BNSS Imposed Around Examination Centre for Assam Special TET 2026 in Haflong

**Haflong, June 25:** In view of the Assam Special Teacher Eligibility Test (TET), 2026, scheduled to be held on June 28, the District Magistrate of Dima Hasao, Gayatri Devidas Hyalinge, IAS, has promulgated a prohibitory order under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, to ensure the smooth and fair conduct of the examination. According to an official order issued on Thursday, the district administration apprehends a possible breach of peace and law-and-order issues during the examination. To prevent any disruption and maintain a conducive environment for candidates, the entry of all persons, except examinees and officials engaged in conducting and monitoring the examination, has been prohibited within a radius of 100 metres of the examination centre. The restriction will be enforced in and around PM Shri Government Girls' Higher Secondary School, Ha-

fong, the designated examination centre for the district. The order, however, will not apply to police personnel, army personnel and magistrates on official duty. The District Magistrate stated that the prohibitory order has been issued under the powers vested in her under Section 163 of BNSS and has been passed ex-parte considering the urgency and necessity of the situation. Any person aggrieved by the order may approach the competent authority seeking modification, waiver, alteration or rescission of the directive. The order will come into force from 7:00 AM on June 28, 2026, and will remain effective until the completion of the entire examination process. The district administration has appealed to the public to cooperate with the authorities in ensuring a peaceful, transparent and fair examination environment for all candidates appearing in the Assam Special TET 2026.

## TSF Protests, Seeks SC/ST Recruitment Drive

**Agartala, June 24:** The Twipra Students Federation (TSF) on Wednesday staged a protest in Agartala demanding immediate steps to fill long-pending vacant reserved posts meant for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) candidates in various government departments. The demonstration was held near the Circuit House area, where TSF members gathered from 11 am to 3 pm, raising slogans and pressing for a Special Recruitment Drive to clear the backlog of reserved vacancies.

According to the student organisation, a significant number of posts earmarked for SC and ST communities have remained unfilled for years, depriving eligible candidates of employment opportunities and affecting their representation in government services. Addressing reporters during the protest, TSF Vice President John Debbarma said the organisation was seeking implementation of existing reservation provisions rather than any new

policy initiative. "Our primary demand is the launch of a Special Recruitment Drive to fill the backlog vacancies reserved for SC and ST candidates. We consider this a constitutional entitlement and expect the government to take immediate action," he said.

TSF leaders alleged that despite repeated appeals over the years, the issue has not received adequate attention from the authorities. They maintained that timely recruitment against reserved vacancies is essential to uphold the objectives of social justice and inclusive representation in public employment. The organisation further stated that filling the backlog posts would help ensure that reservation policies are implemented in both letter and spirit. Protesters urged the state government to conduct a comprehensive assessment of vacant reserved positions and initiate a dedicated recruitment process without further delay. The demonstration brought renewed focus to



concerns surrounding recruitment delays, vacancy management and the implementation of reservation norms in government services. TSF leaders warned that they would continue their democratic movement if concrete measures are not taken to address the issue.

The student body has called upon the state administration to announce a clear roadmap for filling the pending vacancies and ensuring equitable employment opportunities for members of the SC and ST communities.



## Editorial

## From Paddy to Prosperity — Reimagining Assam's Agricultural Future

Assam stands at a defining moment in its agricultural journey. Agriculture Minister Pijush Hazarika's call for a strategic shift from traditional paddy cultivation to high-value horticulture is more than a policy suggestion—it is an invitation to rethink the future of rural Assam. For a state where nearly 75 lakh people depend directly or indirectly on farming, the stakes could not be higher.

Rice has been the backbone of Assam's agriculture for generations. It is deeply rooted in the state's culture, food security, and identity. Yet, the economic realities of modern farming cannot be ignored. Rising input costs, shrinking landholdings, erratic weather, and limited market returns have made paddy cultivation increasingly less profitable for many farmers. If agriculture is to become a sustainable source of prosperity rather than mere subsistence, diversification is no longer optional—it is essential.

The minister's emphasis on high-value crops such as areca nut, litchi, black pepper, spices, fruits, and vegetables reflects a global trend where value addition and market-oriented farming generate significantly higher incomes than conventional cereal production. Assam's fertile soil, abundant rainfall, and favourable agro-climatic conditions provide a natural advantage for horticulture. The state has the potential to emerge as a leading producer of premium fruits, spices, floriculture products, and medicinal plants.

Equally significant is the call for achieving self-sufficiency in eggs, fish, poultry, pork, pulses, and edible oils. Despite possessing enormous natural resources, Assam continues to rely heavily on supplies from other states. This dependence not only drains the state's

economy but also represents a missed opportunity for local farmers and entrepreneurs. Expanding allied sectors such as fisheries, livestock, and horticulture can create year-round employment while strengthening food security.

However, diversification cannot succeed through announcements alone. Farmers cannot simply abandon paddy without confidence that alternative crops will provide stable returns. The transition demands a comprehensive support system that includes quality seeds and planting materials, irrigation facilities, scientific guidance, affordable credit, crop insurance, modern storage infrastructure, processing units, efficient transportation, and assured markets. Without these foundations, the risks of switching crops may outweigh the promised rewards.

The minister's observation that only about 24 per cent of Assam's agricultural land is irrigated deserves urgent attention. Reliable irrigation remains one of the greatest challenges facing agriculture in the state. Climate change has made rainfall increasingly unpredictable, making irrigation infrastructure indispensable. Investments in micro-irrigation, water harvesting, and efficient water management must accompany any roadmap for agricultural transformation.

The active participation of Assam Agricultural University, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, scientists, financial institutions, and allied departments offers hope that policy and science can work together. Research institutions must develop region-specific, climate-resilient crop varieties and farming techniques tailored to Assam's diverse ecological zones. Scientific innovation should not remain confined to laboratories but reach every

farmer's field through effective extension services.

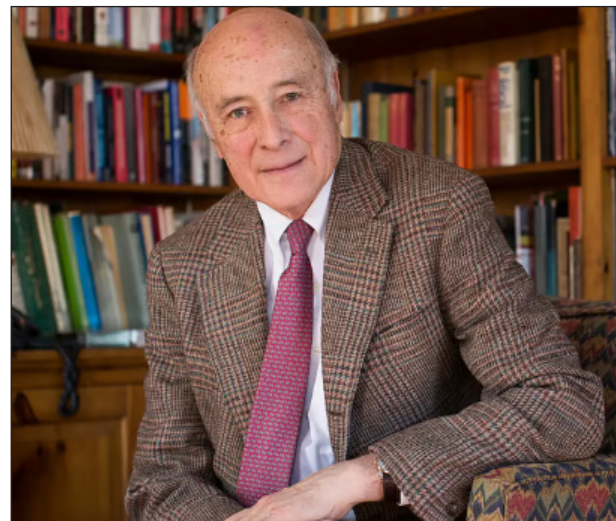
Yet, policymakers must also strike a careful balance. Paddy cultivation remains vital for food security and cultural continuity. The objective should not be to replace rice cultivation entirely but to optimise land use by encouraging farmers to diversify where conditions permit and profitability justifies the transition. A balanced agricultural economy can simultaneously ensure food security while enhancing rural incomes.

The broader vision is clear: agriculture must evolve from a survival occupation into a profitable enterprise. Value-added processing, branding, organic certification, export-oriented production, digital marketing, and farmer-producer organisations can transform Assam's agricultural economy and create opportunities for rural youth who increasingly seek livelihoods beyond conventional farming.

Assam possesses the land, climate, biodiversity, and human resources necessary to become one of India's leading horticultural and agri-business states. What is required now is sustained political commitment, scientific innovation, infrastructure investment, and market connectivity. If implemented with careful planning and farmer-centric policies, the proposed shift toward high-value agriculture could usher in a new era of prosperity for rural Assam.

The future of Assam's agriculture lies not in abandoning its traditions but in building upon them with innovation, diversification, and vision. The seeds of change have been sown. It is now time to cultivate a future where every farmer shares in the fruits of Assam's immense agricultural potential.

## Harder battle for hearts & minds



The idea of soft power—popularised by political scientist Joseph Nye in 1990—has come under renewed scrutiny as experts debate whether traditional cultural influence still holds the same value in today's fragmented digital world. Soft power, once expressed through books, cinema, magazines and cultural exchanges during the Cold War era, was seen as a subtle tool for shaping global opinion. Scholars note that it played a major role in 20th-century geopolitics, as countries like the United States, the Soviet Union, India and China competed for “hearts and minds” through cultural outreach and media influence. Over time, the concept evolved into “smart power,” combining diplomacy, defence and development, while modern statecraft increasingly incorporated strategic communication and psychological operations. Analysts say this blending of influence and information strategy has made the boundaries between persuasion and propaganda increasingly blurred.

During the Cold War, initiatives such as US cultural exhibitions in the Soviet Union and publications like Reader's Digest and Sputnik were widely regarded as tools of influence, shaping perceptions across ideological divides. However, scholars argue that such structured cultural diplomacy is far harder to replicate in the current digital ecosystem. With the rise of social media and online information networks, experts say the global information space has become more chaotic and fragmented, often described as an “infotrash vortex,” where narratives compete rapidly and uncontrollably. This has raised questions about whether soft power in its traditional form has diminished or merely transformed. Some analysts suggest that influence today is less about curated cultural exchange and more about algorithm-driven visibility, digital narratives and hybrid forms of strategic communication. Amid these changes, observers ask whether any distinct form of power—soft, hard or smart—remains clearly defined, or whether modern geopolitics has blurred all categories into a single, continuous struggle for influence.

## Tracing the family tree of trees

The reported death of the iconic Major Oak in Sherwood Forest has sparked renewed discussions about the relationship between history, mythology, and cultural memory. Believed to be around 1,200 years old, the ancient oak is closely associated with the legend of Robin Hood, who is said to have hidden inside its massive trunk with his band of Merry Men. Although the tree failed to produce foliage this spring and is believed to have died, its legacy is expected to live on through acorns that have been planted in different parts of the world.

The Major Oak has long served as a symbol of the enduring Robin Hood legend rather than as a verified historical monument. Historians have never been able to prove that Robin Hood existed or that he ever sought refuge in the tree. Nevertheless, the

story of the outlaw who robbed the rich to help the poor has survived for centuries, illustrating how myths often derive their strength from shared belief rather than historical evidence.

The article draws a parallel between the Major Oak and the philosophical “Ship of Theseus” paradox, which asks whether an object remains the same after all its original parts have been replaced. In the case of heritage trees, authenticity becomes difficult to define. Is a tree authentic because of its age, its biological lineage, or the cultural significance people attach to it? This question is reflected in the history of the Mahabodhi tree at Bodhi Gaya, under which Gautama Buddha is believed to have attained enlightenment. The original tree was destroyed several times over the centuries. The present Mahabodhi

tree was planted in 1881 by Alexander Cunningham, founder of the Archaeological Survey of India, using a cutting from Sri Lanka's Jaya Shri Mahabodhi, itself grown from a branch believed to have been carried there by Emperor Ashoka's daughter Sanghamitra in the third century BCE. Genetic studies later suggested that another nearby Bodhi tree planted by Cunningham for Hindu worshippers may actually belong to an older lineage, further complicating the notion of authenticity.

A similar example is found in England, where the apple tree associated with Sir Isaac Newton's discovery of gravity has also been replicated. The tree standing today at Trinity College, Cambridge, was grafted in 1954 from the original tree at Woolsthorpe Manor, Newton's childhood home. Although it is not



the original tree, it continues to symbolize one of the greatest scientific breakthroughs in history.

The article concludes that heritage often survives through memory, symbolism, and cultural continuity rather than physical permanence. In an era increasingly shaped by identity politics and competing historical narratives, the debate over authentic heritage remains unresolved.

Whether considering the Major Oak, the Mahabodhi tree, or Newton's apple tree, these living monuments demonstrate that stories can endure even when their physical origins are uncertain. Their continued significance lies not only in biology or documented history but also in the collective imagination of generations that preserve and pass on their legacy.



## Flipkart brings Glam Up Fest to Guwahati as Northeast drives beauty market growth

**Mumbai:** Flipkart has expanded its flagship beauty and lifestyle platform, Glam Up Fest 2026, to Guwahati for the first time, reflecting the Northeast's emergence as one of India's fastest-growing and most trend-forward beauty markets. The initiative highlights the company's strategy to strengthen its presence in high-growth consumer markets beyond metropolitan cities.

According to Flipkart, consumers in the Northeast are leading adoption of Korean beauty products, ingredient-led skincare solutions such as face serums and premium fragrances. The region is also witnessing strong growth in male grooming, with men emerging as the fastest-growing beauty consumer



launches by Villain and The Derma Co, creator-led sessions in regional languages and interactive experiences focused on K-Beauty, skincare and sun care. In a significant move, Flipkart introduced Korean beauty brands Beauty of Joseon, TirTir and d'Alba to Guwahati for the first time, responding to rising consumer demand for global beauty trends in the region.

The company also showcased technology-driven features such as AI-powered skin diagnostics, Virtual Try-On and Live Video Commerce. Flipkart will further engage consumers through its nationwide Glam Up Sale from June 19 to 27, offering curated collections, new launches and promotional deals across beauty and personal care categories.

## Sunrise Pure taps Meghalaya's cultural roots, names Stella Rica Khongsni as Northeast brand ambassador

**Shillong:** ITC Ltd.'s Sunrise Pure marked World Music Day with a cultural event titled 'Ka Rympei Ki Sur' at Police Bazaar in Shillong on Saturday, celebrating Meghalaya's rich musical heritage while strengthening the brand's presence in the Northeast.

The event brought together music enthusiasts, community leaders and government officials, including Frederick Roy Kharkongor, Commissioner and Secretary, Arts and Culture; D.B.S. Mukhim, Assistant Commissioner, Food Safety; and B. Rani, Director, Agriculture and Horticulture. Inspired by the Khasi concept of 'Rympei'—the traditional hearth that serves as the centre of family life—the programme highlighted the importance of culture, community and shared traditions.

A key highlight of the evening was the announcement of Ms. Stella Rica Khongsni as Sunrise Pure's Brand Am-



bassador for the Northeast. The company said the association reflects its growing commitment to Meghalaya and its efforts to deepen engagement with consumers across the region.

Addressing the gathering, Piyush Mishra, Business Head, Spices, ITC Ltd., said the initiative was a tribute to Meghalaya's vibrant musical traditions and community spirit. Khongsni said she was

honoured to be associated with a brand that celebrates regional tastes and cultural heritage.

Shillong continues to be an important region for consumer brands seeking growth in the Northeast, driven by a strong preference for quality food products and deep-rooted cultural traditions. Industry observers note that community-centric initiatives such as 'Ka Rympei Ki Sur' help brands build stronger local connect while expanding their footprint in Meghalaya's evolving retail landscape.

The event also featured performances by popular local bands Snow White and Colours, along with audience engagement activities, contests and interactive brand experiences. Sunrise Pure said the initiative underscores its long-term focus on building meaningful relationships with communities across the Northeast through culture-led engagement.

## Medanta brings advanced shockwave technology to tackle complex heart blockages

**Dimapur:** As cardiovascular disease continues to remain one of India's leading causes of death, Gurugram-based Medanta-The Medicity has introduced an advanced treatment technology, Shockwave Intravascular Lithotripsy (IVL), to safely manage complex heart artery blockages caused by severe calcium deposits.

According to Medanta, calcium build-up inside coronary arteries can make angioplasty and stent placement difficult, increasing the risk of complications. Shockwave IVL uses controlled ultrasonic pressure waves delivered through a balloon catheter to break hardened calcium deposits within artery walls without damaging surrounding healthy tissue, allowing doctors to place stents more ef-

fectively.

Padma Shri awardee Dr. Praveen Chandra, Chairman of Interventional Cardiology at Medanta Gurugram, said the technology has significantly improved the treatment of heavily calcified coronary artery disease by enhancing stent expansion and long-term outcomes. Associate Consultant Dr. C Manpa Phom said the procedure is helping doctors treat patients who previously had limited treatment options while improving the safety and success of angioplasty procedures.

In Dimapur, the introduction of advanced cardiac care solutions and Medanta's growing engagement with Nagaland is expected to improve access to specialised healthcare services for patients in the

state, reducing the need for long-distance medical travel. The development also reflects increasing demand for advanced healthcare facilities across the Northeast region. Medanta has signed an MoU with the Government of Nagaland for accreditation under the Chief Minister's Health Insurance Scheme (CMHIS) and has partnered with IDAN and the Department of Youth Resources and Sports to promote health awareness. The hospital has also launched a dedicated Northeast helpline offering assistance in Assamese, Bengali, Nagamese, English and Hindi.

Nagaland residents can consult Dr. C Manpa Phom from Dr. Praveen Chandra's team at Faith Hospital, Dimapur, on June 20.

## Ultraviolette enters Northeast with first experience centre in Aizawl

**Aizawl:** Electric motorcycle manufacturer Ultraviolette Automotive has entered the Northeast market with the launch of its first UV Space Station in Aizawl, marking a key step in the company's retail and service network expansion across India.

The new experience centre, established in partnership with MSS Motors, will offer customers access to sales, servicing, test rides, accessories and merchandise under one roof. The facility is aimed at strengthening

customer access to Ultraviolette's electric motorcycles in the region.

According to the company, the centre will showcase its performance-oriented electric motorcycles, including the X-47 Crossover and the F77 series. The motorcycles feature a 40.2 hp powertrain, 100 Nm torque, acceleration from 0-60 kmph in 2.8 seconds and an IDC-certified range of 323 km on a single charge from a 10.3 kWh bat-

tery. Ultraviolette CEO and Co-founder Narayan Subramaniam said the Northeast has a strong motorcycling culture and growing interest in electric mobility, making Aizawl a strategic choice for the company's first experience centre in the region.



The launch comes amid Ultraviolette's broader efforts to promote electric vehicle adoption, including its recently introduced "Kill the Petrol Bill" programme, which offers benefits of up to ₹30,000 to eligible customers upgrading to the company's electric motorcycles based on their previous riding history.

The UV Space Station is located at Ramhlun North near Zangena Petrol Pump in Aizawl.

## Life insurers urge long-term view as industry payouts cross ₹6.3 lakh crore

**Guwahati:** The life insurance industry has called for a more balanced assessment of life insurance products, stressing that their long-term benefits significantly outweigh isolated concerns such as instances of mis-selling.

The Insurance Awareness Committee—Life Insurance (IAC-Life) said life insurance should be viewed primarily as a long-term financial protection tool rather than judged solely on short-term returns or immediate outcomes. According to the committee, life insurance provides financial security, family protection and disciplined savings, benefits that become more apparent over the full policy lifecycle.

"Life insurance is designed to deliver value over time through financial security, protection for families and disciplined savings," said Kamlesh Rao, Chairperson of IAC-Life. While acknowledging that mis-selling concerns exist and need to be addressed, Rao said such cases represent only a small portion of an industry that serves millions of policyholders.

The committee highlighted that life insurance remains the only financial instrument offering a free-look period, allowing customers to review and return policies within a stipulated timeframe if they do not meet expectations. It also noted that the industry paid more than ₹6.3 lakh crore in claims during FY 2024-25, including death benefits, maturities, annuities and withdrawals.

In Guwahati, increasing financial awareness and rising middle-class incomes are driving greater interest in life insurance products across Assam and the Northeast. The region continues to offer significant growth potential as insurers focus on bridging India's protection gap, particularly among younger consumers.

The IAC-Life, formed under the aegis of the Life Insurance Council in 2019, said India still faces a substantial life insurance protection gap, affecting 87% of the population and exceeding 90% among individuals aged 18 to 35. The committee urged insurers, intermediaries and consumers to align expectations with the long-term nature of life insurance and recognise its broader role in financial planning.



## TVS Motor marks World Motorcycle Day with nationwide safety ride initiative

**Guwahati:** TVS Motor Company celebrated World Motorcycle Day by bringing together more than 1,000 riders across 17 cities in India for a nationwide ride aimed at promoting safe and responsible motorcycling. The initiative saw participation from members of the TVS Apache Owners Group (AOG) and TVS Ronin riding communities, highlighting the company's focus on fostering a strong riding culture while encouraging road safety awareness.

The rides were centred on key safety messages, including the use of protective riding gear, adherence to traffic rules, responsible riding behaviour and respect for local communities and public spaces. TVS Motor said the campaign reflected its belief that the spirit of motorcycling extends beyond adventure and performance to include safety and discipline on the road.



Speaking on the occasion, Vimal Sumbly, Head – Premium Business, TVS Motor Company, said motorcycling represents freedom, responsibility and camaraderie, and noted that the celebration coincides with the 20th anniversary of the TVS Apache brand. The company said TVS Apache now has a global customer base of over 6.5 million riders, while its riding community has crossed 500,000 registered members. Bengaluru hosted the flagship ride with participation from more than 100 customers and community members. The event featured rider interactions, curated experiences and discussions with experienced motorcyclists.

The initiative is expected to resonate strongly in Guwahati, where motorcycle ownership and riding communities have grown steadily in recent years. With increasing awareness about road safety and responsible riding among young riders in Assam and the Northeast, campaigns led by major manufacturers such as TVS Motor could help strengthen safe riding practices while further expanding engagement within the region's growing premium motorcycle market.

## Kraus Jeans enters Northeast market with first Guwahati store

**Guwahati:** Women's apparel brand Kraus Jeans has expanded its retail presence into Northeast India with the launch of its first store in Guwahati, marking the company's 31st exclusive brand outlet across the country.

The new outlet, located at Roodraksh Mall on G.S. Road in Guwahati, was inaugurated on June 20 and spans 550 sq. ft. To mark the launch, the company is offering customers a promotional deal of "Buy 2 or More and Get 40% Off" on selected styles.

The store will showcase some of Kraus Jeans' popular collections, including Super Wide Leg, Straight Fit, Wide Leg denim, the Linen Collection and Baby Tees. The brand, known for its denim-led fashion and contemporary casualwear for women, said the expansion is aimed at strengthening its presence in emerging fashion markets across the country. Ravi Punjabi, Founder of Kraus Jeans, said the company sees Northeast India as a growing retail destination with increasing demand for contemporary apparel and branded fashion. He noted that Guwahati's position as the commercial

hub of the Northeast makes it a strategic market for the brand's expansion plans. Guwahati has emerged as one of the fastest-growing retail markets in Northeast India, driven by rising disposable incomes, expanding mall infrastructure and a growing preference for branded fashion. The arrival of national apparel brands such as Kraus Jeans reflects increasing consumer demand for organized retail and trend-focused clothing in the city. Kraus Jeans currently operates exclusive brand outlets across several states, including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Chhattisgarh, and plans to further expand its retail footprint across India.



## HCLFoundation opens applications for Rs 24 crore HCLTech Grant to support rural development projects

**Noida:** HCLFoundation has invited applications for the 12th edition of the HCLTech Grant, announcing a total funding commitment of ₹24 crore for non-governmental organisations working on sustainable rural development projects across India.

The grant programme, one of the largest CSR-led initiatives supporting grassroots organisations, will fund projects in four key sectors — water, biodiversity, health and education. Under Edition XII, four winning NGOs, one

from each category, will receive grants of ₹5 crore each, while eight additional organisations will be awarded ₹50 lakh each to implement their proposed projects.

Applications for the grant can be submitted through the HCLFoundation website until June 30, 2026.

Announcing the initiative, Dr. Nidhi Pundhir, Director of HCLFoundation, said the programme seeks to empower grassroots organisations that are closely connected with local communities and

capable of driving sustainable, community-led change. She said the grant aims to help NGOs scale innovative solutions and contribute meaningfully to India's development journey.

According to HCLFoundation, projects supported under the HCLTech Grant have impacted more than 2.3 million people across 61,000 villages nationwide. The initiatives have also contributed to the plantation of over three lakh saplings, rejuvenation of more than 68,300 hectares

of land and a reduction of over 67,000 tonnes of carbon emissions.

Since its inception, HCLFoundation has committed over ₹203 crore through the HCLTech Grant programme. The organisation also announced a series of Pan India Symposiums in Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Nagpur and Delhi to facilitate discussions among NGOs, policymakers, government representatives and corporate leaders on the role of CSR in nation building.

## India sends 15 skilled youth to Australia for global skills challenge ahead of Shanghai WorldSkills

**Guwahati:** India has stepped up preparations for the WorldSkills Competition 2026 in Shanghai by sending a 30-member contingent to participate in the Global Skills Challenge (GSC) 2026 in Australia. The team comprises 15 competitors and 15 experts who will represent the country at the international skills simulation event scheduled from June 23 to 29.

Organised by WorldSkills Australia, the Global Skills Challenge serves as a full-scale rehearsal of the WorldSkills Competition, allowing participating nations to assess readiness, benchmark performance and gain exposure to international standards. Nearly 600 competitors, experts, translators and officials from member

nations are expected to take part in the event.

Speaking at the send-off ceremony, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Secretary Debashree Mukherjee said the challenge would provide Team India with valuable international experience and help competitors sharpen their skills ahead of Shanghai. National Skill Development Corporation CEO Arunkumar Pillai said the participants had earned their place through a rigorous selection process and urged them to remain focused and determined in the final phase of preparation.

India will compete in 15 skill categories, including cloud computing, additive manufacturing, automobile technology, web technolo-



gies, graphic design, beauty therapy and industrial mechanics. The event is expected to enhance technical preparedness and familiarise participants with international evaluation systems.

In Guwahati, the initiative is significant for the Northeast's growing skilling ecosystem. With increasing

investments in vocational training, digital technologies and industry-linked education, exposure to global competitions could inspire more youth from Assam and neighbouring states to pursue specialised skills, strengthening the region's contribution to India's workforce and employment landscape.

## Yoga diplomacy strengthens India's global influence through cultural outreach

**Guwahati:** India's efforts to promote yoga on the global stage have emerged as one of the country's most successful examples of cultural diplomacy, with the ancient practice evolving into a worldwide movement for wellness and international engagement over the past decade.

The transformation began in 2014 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed the idea of an International Day of Yoga at the United Nations General Assembly. The proposal received unprecedented support from 177 countries and was adopted within 90 days. Subsequently, the United Nations declared June 21 as the International Day of Yoga, marking a significant diplomatic achievement for



India.

Since then, yoga has expanded far beyond its traditional roots, becoming a shared global practice. Through coordinated efforts by the Ministry of AYUSH, the Ministry of External Affairs and Indian missions abroad, large-scale yoga events are now organised annually at iconic locations such

as Times Square in New York, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Great Wall of China and Argentina's Olympic Park. Indian diplomatic missions have also introduced year-round yoga training programmes, academic centres and yoga chairs at foreign universities, while yoga guidelines have been translated into the six official UN languages.

In Guwahati, the growing international acceptance of yoga has also boosted awareness of India's wellness and AYUSH sectors. Industry observers believe the trend is creating opportunities for wellness tourism, traditional healthcare products and yoga-based enterprises, benefiting businesses in Northeast India that are increasingly positioning themselves within the expanding wellness economy.

Officials say yoga diplomacy has helped project India's philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" while enhancing the country's soft power and promoting global well-being amid rising concerns over stress and lifestyle-related illnesses.



## Yoga unites world as International Day celebrations draw massive participation

**Guwahati:** The 12th International Day of Yoga (IDY) was celebrated across the globe on Sunday with large-scale participation from people of diverse nationalities, underscoring yoga's growing influence as a global movement for health and wellness.

This year's celebrations were held under the theme "Yoga for Healthy Ageing," promoting active and healthy lifestyles across age groups. While the main national event in India took place in Kolkata, yoga sessions were organised at more than 2,500 historic and public venues worldwide through the coordinated efforts of over 210 Indian missions and embassies, supported by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

In the United States, hundreds participated in a yoga session at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., attended by India's Ambassador to the U.S., Vinay Kwatra. Special Ayurveda corners were also set up to highlight traditional wellness practices. In New York, a major yoga gathering at Times Square was led



by yoga expert H.R. Nagendra.

Similar events were organised in Shanghai, Toronto, Birmingham, Germany, Sweden and other countries. In Buenos Aires, a yoga festival at Olympic Park featured special sessions for persons with disabilities alongside exhibitions of Indian cuisine and traditional attire.

Participants across continents practiced yoga and pranayama through the Common Yoga Protocol, now available in all six official United Nations languages. The widespread celebrations reflected yoga's transformation from an ancient Indian tradition into a global wellness movement embraced by communities worldwide.

## Trinity Business Park plans 3 million sqft commercial hub in Guwahati



**Imphal:** Trinity Business Park has announced the launch of a large-scale integrated commercial development in North Guwahati, a project that aims to create one of Northeast India's largest organised business ecosystems. Spread across 16 acres in Amingaon, the development will feature more than 3 million square feet of built-up space, bringing together retail, office, hospitality and exhibition facilities within a single campus.

The project is being positioned as a strategic destination for multinational corporations, technology firms and leading Indian enterprises seeking a commercial base in the Northeast. According to Trinity Business Park, growing trade activity, regional consumption and infrastructure expansion are driving demand for organised commercial infrastructure in Guwahati, which is increasingly emerging as a key economic and logistics hub for the region.

The development has already attracted interest from trade bodies and business communities, including members of the Assam Textile Merchants' Association, who have committed significant retail space. The project will feature 16-foot-high showrooms, 12-foot-high office spaces, 18 goods elevators, 25 passenger elevators and parking facilities for more than 3,000 vehicles. Additional amenities include a 22,000 sqft food court, grand atrium, amphitheatre, outdoor dining spaces and landscaped public areas.

The proposed commercial hub is expected to have a wider impact across Northeast India, including Imphal, where businesses continue to seek stronger regional supply chains and organised commercial infrastructure. Improved connectivity with Guwahati could help enterprises in Manipur access larger markets, attract investments and participate more actively in trade exhibitions, networking events and distribution opportunities offered through the new business ecosystem.

Partners Hemant Agarwal and Ravi Agarwal said the project is designed to support long-term business growth and operational efficiency for a wide range of occupiers. Construction is progressing steadily, with the first phases expected to become operational from 2027 onwards.

## Trinity Business Park aims to transform Northeast's commercial landscape

**Shillong:** Trinity Business Park has announced the launch of a large-scale integrated commercial development in North Guwahati, a project expected to become one of the largest organised business ecosystems in Northeast India.

Spread across 16 acres in Amingaon and offering more than 3 million sq. ft. of planned built-up space, the development will combine retail, office, hospitality and exhibition facilities within a single campus. The project is being positioned as a strategic base for multinational corporations, technology firms and leading Indian enterprises seeking expansion opportunities in the Northeast.

According to Trinity Business Park, the development has already attracted strong interest from business communities, with members of the Assam Textile Merchants' Association committing significant retail space. Discussions are also underway with trade associations from multiple sectors.

The project will feature 16-foot-high showrooms, 12-foot-high office spaces, 18 goods elevators, 25 passenger elevators and parking ca-

capacity for more than 3,000 vehicles. Additional amenities include a 22,000 sq. ft. food court, premium outdoor dining spaces, landscaped zones, an amphitheatre and dedicated areas for business networking and events.

Partner Hemant Agarwal said the project would provide organised commercial infrastructure at a scale previously unavailable in the region, while partner Ravi Agarwal noted that growing demand for future-ready developments beyond metropolitan centres is creating new opportunities for cities such as Guwahati.

The project could also benefit Shillong-based businesses and entrepreneurs by providing a large commercial hub within the Northeast region. Companies from Meghalaya looking to expand retail, distribution, professional services or corporate operations may find easier access to organised infrastructure and larger markets through Guwahati's growing business ecosystem, strengthening regional trade and economic integration.

Construction is progressing steadily, with the first phases expected to become operational from 2027 onwards.

## Renault expands Kiger line-up, makes turbo SUV more accessible

**Guwahati:** Renault India has expanded the variant portfolio of its compact SUV Kiger, introducing four new variants across naturally aspirated and turbocharged powertrains in a move aimed at making premium features and turbo performance more accessible to customers in the highly competitive B-SUV segment.

With the latest update, the Renault Kiger Turbo now starts at Rs 7.89 lakh (ex-showroom), making it the most accessible turbo-powered SUV in the entry B-SUV category. The company has also introduced a new Evolution+ variant across Naturally Aspirated (manual and AMT) and Turbo (manual) versions, with prices starting at Rs 6.99 lakh (ex-showroom).

The Evolution+ variant adds several premium features including a Smart Access Card with Push Start/Stop, Auto-



matic Climate Control, Wireless Smartphone Replication, Driver Seat Height Adjustment and light embossed fabric upholstery.

Renault has expanded its turbo range from three to five variants and introduced a 5-speed manual transmission option in the Techno Turbo variant, offering customers greater flexibility and affordability. The naturally aspirated range has also been widened from six to eight variants.

Commenting on the development, Francisco Hidalgo,

Vice President – Sales and Marketing, Renault India, said the company remains focused on making innovation, performance and advanced features more accessible while enhancing the overall ownership experience.

The Kiger continues to offer segment-leading features such as a 100 PS turbocharged petrol engine, 205 mm ground clearance, 405-litre boot space and spacious interiors, reinforcing its position as a value-driven offering in the B-SUV segment.

## Sumeet Industries launches ₹199.75 crore rights issue to fund expansion and cut debt

**Guwahati:** Surat-based Sumeet Industries Limited has launched a ₹199.75 crore rights issue to support capacity expansion, debt reduction, working capital requirements and renewable energy investments as part of its long-term growth strategy.

The polyester manufacturer, engaged in the production of PET chips, Partially Oriented Yarn (POY), Fully Drawn Yarn (FDY) and Polyester Texturized Yarn, will issue 16.84 crore equity shares at ₹11.86 per share. The rights issue opened on June 22 and will close on

July 20, with shareholders entitled to receive eight rights shares for every 25 shares held as of the June 12 record date.

The company plans to utilise ₹100

A key component of the expansion strategy includes operationalising an additional 140,000 tonnes per annum Polyester Chips plant in Surat, acquired from Nakoda Limited. The

ing operational efficiency, enhancing energy security and reinforcing its balance sheet. The company has also approved Phase-I expansion of its polyester yarn capacity by 15,000

polyester-based fabrics continues to grow. Industry observers believe enhanced production capacity and improved supply chain efficiencies may help ensure stable availability of polyester products in emerging markets such as Assam and neighbouring states.

Sumeet Industries, which came under the management of the Eagle Group following an NCLT-approved resolution process in July 2024, reported revenue of ₹1,053.81 crore, EBITDA of ₹60.77 crore and profit after tax of ₹27.33 crore in FY26.

**Sumeet INDUSTRIES LIMITED**

crore from the net proceeds towards working capital support, ₹49.90 crore for integrating assets acquired from Nakoda Limited, ₹23 crore for debt repayment and ₹22 crore for establishing a 6.5 MW solar power plant.

project involves a total investment of ₹90 crore and is expected to be re-commissioned in the first quarter of FY28. Sumeet Industries said the investments are aimed at strengthening manufacturing capabilities, improv-

tonnes per annum with an investment of ₹30 crore.

In Guwahati, the expansion could create opportunities for textile traders and synthetic yarn consumers in the Northeast, where demand for



## Air India Express to launch first direct Guwahati-West Asia flights



**Guwahati:** Air India Express has announced the launch of direct flights connecting Guwahati with Dubai and Abu Dhabi, becoming the first airline to offer non-stop services between Northeast India and West Asia. The Guwahati-Dubai service will commence on August 4, while the Guwahati-Abu Dhabi flight will begin operations on August 7, expanding international travel options for the region.

The airline said the new services mark its first international operations from Guwahati, one of the largest stations in its network with nearly 120 weekly flights. The direct links to the UAE's two major commercial and travel hubs are expected to strengthen tourism, trade and cultural exchanges while improving access to global markets for travellers and businesses in Northeast India. Bookings have opened through the airline's website, mobile app and other booking platforms.

According to the schedule, the Guwahati-Dubai flight will depart every Tuesday at 12:25 pm and arrive at 4:10 pm local time, with the return flight leaving Dubai at 5:10 pm and reaching Guwahati at 12:25 am. The Guwahati-Abu Dhabi service will operate every Friday, departing at 11:30

am and arriving at 3:15 pm, while the return flight will leave Abu Dhabi at 4:15 pm and land in Guwahati at 11:30 pm.

The launch is expected to enhance Guwahati's position as the aviation gateway to Northeast India by improving international connectivity for business travellers, exporters, students and tourists. Direct access to Dubai and Abu Dhabi could boost trade with the Gulf region, support the tourism and hospitality sectors, and provide greater convenience for the large number of people from the Northeast travelling to the UAE for employment and business opportunities.

With the addition of the two UAE destinations, Air India Express will operate more than 290 weekly flights from four Northeast stations—Dibrugarh, Dimapur, Guwahati and Imphal. The airline also highlighted its 'Tales of India' initiative, featuring traditional Northeast motifs such as Assam's Gamosa and Jaapi, Nagaland's Tsungkotepü, Manipur's Akyobi, Moirang Phee and Saphee Lanphee, Arunachal Pradesh's Idu Mishmi, Meghalaya's Khneng and Mizoram's Puanchei on aircraft tail designs to showcase the region's cultural heritage globally.

## Norton rolls out first Atlas motorcycle from TVS Hosur plant ahead of global launch

**Guwahati:** Norton Motorcycles has rolled out the first Atlas motorcycle from TVS Motor Company's manufacturing facility in Hosur, marking the British brand's entry into the global middleweight adventure motorcycling segment. The Atlas and Atlas GT are scheduled for an official global launch next month, with sales expected to begin later in the third quarter.

The rollout ceremony was attended by Dr. Sutapa Choudhury, British Deputy High Commissioner for Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala, highlighting the collaboration between Norton's UK-based design and engineering teams and TVS Motor Company's manufacturing capabilities in India. Designed at Norton's Solihull headquarters, the Atlas is



powered by a 585cc liquid-cooled parallel-twin engine and features advanced rider-assistance technologies, including a Bosch six-axis IMU, configurable riding modes, adjustable KYB suspension, an 8-inch TFT display and smartphone connectivity.

TVS Motor Company said production at Hosur complements Norton's UK facility, which is currently focused on

manufacturing the Manx R superbike. The Atlas will be introduced in the Indian market later this year through TVS Paddock, the company's upcoming premium retail network.

In Guwahati, the launch could strengthen the premium motorcycle segment in Northeast India, where demand for adventure touring motorcycles has been rising due to improved road connectivity and increasing interest in long-distance riding. The arrival of the Norton Atlas through TVS' premium retail network may offer enthusiasts in Guwahati and the wider region access to a new global premium motorcycle brand, potentially boosting competition in the high-end motorcycle market.

## Manipal Hospitals expands healthcare awareness drive to Shillong with Anveshana programme

**Shillong:** Manipal Hospital EM Bypass, a unit of the Manipal Hospitals Group organised its healthcare awareness initiative 'Anveshana – Medical Education for Media' in Shillong, bringing together medical experts and journalists to discuss cancer care, preventive healthcare and emergency preparedness.

The programme featured sessions by oncology and emergency care specialists, including Dr. Sourav Datta, Director of Manipal Oncology Services and Senior Consultant-Head & Neck Oncology; Dr. Arindam Mondal, HOD and Senior Consultant-Surgical Oncology; Dr. Debdeep Samaddar, Associate Consultant-Medical Oncology; and Dr. Subhankar Chakrabarti, Consultant-Emergency. The experts highlighted advancements in cancer treatment, the importance of early diagnosis and the need for greater public awareness on health-related issues.

During the event, Manipal Hospitals also launched a Media Privilege Card

aimed at providing journalists with enhanced healthcare access and benefits across its network. A CPR and Basic Life Support training session was conducted for media delegates to improve emergency response capabilities during cardiac emergencies.

Doctors attending the programme pointed to Meghalaya's growing healthcare challenges, particularly the high incidence of cancer in East Khasi Hills district, which records cancer rates significantly above the national average. They stressed the importance of screening, timely intervention and access to advanced treatment facilities. The healthcare sector in Shillong is witnessing rising demand for specialised treatment, preventive healthcare services and medical awareness programmes. With increasing concerns over cancer and cardiovascular diseases,



healthcare providers are expanding outreach efforts in the city, while improved connectivity with Kolkata is enabling patients from Meghalaya and other Northeastern states to access advanced tertiary care facilities more conveniently.

Anveshana, which has previously been conducted in cities such as Jamshedpur, Aizawl, Agartala, Darjeeling and Nagaland, is part of Manipal Hospitals' ongoing efforts to promote healthcare education, early diagnosis and community preparedness across Northeast India.

## Shree Cement expands healthcare outreach in Meghalaya with eye screening and ambulance initiatives

**Shillong:** Shree Cement has intensified its healthcare outreach efforts in Meghalaya by launching community-focused medical interventions aimed at improving access to healthcare services in remote areas of the state.

As part of the initiative, the company organised a vision screening programme in villages surrounding its project area, providing comprehensive eye examinations to local residents. The screenings identified a significant number of individuals requiring corrective vision support, with spectacles prescribed to improve eyesight and enhance daily productivity. Residents requiring specialised medical care were referred for further treatment.

The programme seeks to address a critical healthcare gap in rural Meghalaya, where access to routine eye care services remains limited. Health experts have long highlighted the importance of early diagnosis and timely treatment in preventing vision-related complications and improving overall quality of life.

In a further step towards strengthening health-

care access, Shree Cement announced plans to deploy ambulance services for communities around its operational areas. The proposed service is expected to improve emergency medical response and facilitate transportation of patients to healthcare facilities, particularly in regions with limited medical infrastructure.

In Shillong, the company's growing investment in healthcare and social infrastructure reflects an increasing focus on corporate-led community development in Meghalaya. Industry observers note that such interventions can contribute to improved workforce productivity, better public health outcomes, and stronger socio-economic development across rural and semi-urban areas of the state.

The healthcare initiatives form part of Shree Cement's broader community development programme, which also includes support for solar village electrification, clean cooking solutions and solar-powered digital education infrastructure in partnership with local stakeholders and the GHE Foundation.

## Exim Bank study projects up to US\$ 1.5 billion export potential for Northeast by 2030

**Guwahati:** Export-Import Bank of India (India Exim Bank) has projected that exports from India's North-Eastern Region (NER) could reach between US\$ 929.2 million and US\$ 1.5 billion by 2029-30, provided targeted policy interventions, infrastructure upgrades and export diversification measures are implemented across the region.

The projection was outlined in a study titled \*'India's Northeastern States: Export Landscape and Policy Insight'\*, released on Monday during a joint seminar on "MSME: Growth Engine of Northeast Region" organised by India Exim Bank and North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFi) in Guwahati. The report was unveiled by NEDFi Chairman PVSLN Murty and IIT Guwahati Incubation Centre CEO Urmi Borgohain in the presence of senior Exim Bank officials.

According to the study, the Northeast's economy has grown steadily over the past decade, with its Gross State Domestic Product rising from ₹2.8 trillion in 2014-15 to ₹5.1 trillion



in 2023-24. Assam continues to dominate the regional economy, accounting for 63.5 per cent of the region's total economic output.

The report highlights the strategic importance of the Northeast under India's "Act East" and "Neighbourhood First" policies, noting its role as a potential trade gateway to neighbouring countries and ASEAN markets. It recommends diversifying exports beyond tea, strengthening agro-processing, improving quality-testing infrastructure, expanding multimodal transport networks and exploring the creation of a North-East Export Promotion Council to enhance the region's export competitiveness and economic integration with Southeast Asia.



# Vice President Radhakrishnan Releases 'VIP Culture In India' By former Arunachal MP Nabam Rebia

**Guwahati, June 24:** Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan on Wednesday released the book "VIP Culture in India: Power, Privilege and the Distance from Democracy", authored by former Member of Parliament Nabam Rebia and co-authored by Sandeep Kumar, at the Uprashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. Addressing the gathering, the Vice President reflected on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's oft-quoted statement, "Every Indian is special. Every Indian is a VIP," highlighting the importance of equality and inclusiveness in a democratic society.

Radhakrishnan observed that both visible privileges and perceptions of preferential treatment can erode public trust in institutions and create a sense of distance between citizens and those



in positions of authority. He emphasised that the strength of democracy lies in public service and accountability, noting that public office should be viewed as a responsibility rather than a

privilege. "Democracy flourishes when public office is regarded as a responsibility rather than a privilege," the Vice President said, underscoring the need for governance systems that remain ac-

cessible and responsive to citizens. The book examines the evolution of VIP culture in India and its implications for democratic values, governance, and public perception. It seeks to initiate a broader discussion on power structures, privilege, and the relationship between citizens and public institutions. Among those present at the event were former Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Nabam Tuki, former Rajya Sabha Member W. R. Kharlukhi, and several other distinguished guests from public life, academia, and civil society.

The release ceremony provided a platform for reflection on the role of democratic institutions and the importance of fostering greater trust, transparency, and citizen-centric governance in contemporary India.

## Lalduhoma Rules Out NDA Alliance



**Aizawl, June 24:** Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma has ruled out any possibility of the ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) joining the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), reaffirming the party's commitment to maintaining its independent regional identity. Speaking in Aizawl, Lalduhoma dismissed speculation about a formal political alliance with the NDA, stating that while the ZPM values a constructive and co-operative relationship with the Central Government, it has no plans to become part of the ruling coalition at the national level.

The Chief Minister revealed that both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah had extended invitations to the ZPM to join the NDA. However, he said the party had consciously chosen to remain outside the alliance in order to preserve its distinct regional character and political principles. "ZPM believes in maintaining cordial relations with the Centre for the benefit of Mizoram while retaining its independent identity as a regional political party," Lalduhoma said.

## Assam Withdraws Commercial LPG Restrictions

**Guwahati, June 25:** Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota announced on Thursday that restrictions on commercial LPG cylinders have been lifted with immediate effect. The decision follows an improvement in the West Asia crisis, which had earlier disrupted supply chains and prompted temporary curbs. Kota stated that the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoPNG) has reviewed the situation and communicated the relaxation to all states. He noted that the Government of India has decided to restore commercial LPG supplies to pre-crisis levels, ensuring availability for businesses and industries that rely on the fuel.

The move is expected to ease operational challenges faced by restaurants, hotels, and other commercial establishments that had been impacted by the restrictions. With the restoration of normal supply, stakeholders anticipate a return to stability in the sector.

## Assam Police Seized Intoxicating Substance Worth ₹2.34 Crore In Sribhumi, Three Arrested

**Guwahati, June 25:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said that police in Sribhumi district seized 11,695 bottles of an intoxicating substance and arrested three individuals in connection with a drug trafficking network. In a post on social media, the Chief Minister stated that the seized consignment was valued at approximately ₹2.34 crore.

He commended the efforts of the Sribhumi Police for carrying out the operation and taking action against those involved. Sarma reiterated the state government's commitment to its anti-drug campaign, asserting that Assam Police would continue its efforts against drug trafficking and related activities under the "Assam Against Drugs" initiative.



## Sikkim Tourism Introduces E-Office to Enhance Transparency

**Sikkim, June 25:** Sikkim has taken another step toward strengthening digital governance with the launch of an e-office system in its Tourism and Civil Aviation Department. The web-based application, introduced on Wednesday, is designed to digitise and streamline the processing of official work, ensuring faster and more transparent public service delivery.

Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister Tshering T Bhutia, who formally launched the platform, said the initiative was rolled out under the direction of Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang. He explained that once documents are scanned and uploaded, the system allows real-time tracking and monitoring of



proposals, enabling officials to review and act on submissions digitally.

Bhutia described the platform as a time-saving measure that connects district tourism offices directly with the department's head office. He added that tourism information centres will also be integrated into

the system in the near future, further expanding its reach.

Highlighting the department's commitment to adapting to evolving technological requirements, the minister noted that the e-office system reflects a broader push for efficiency, transparency, and accountability in governance.

## Supreme Court Verdict Brings Relief: Tripura's Six Education Department Employees Regularized After Long Legal Battle

**Agartala, June 25:** The long wait for regularisation ended for six irregular employees of the Education Department as the process of granting them permanent service status was completed on Wednesday following a landmark Supreme Court verdict. The Education Department formally handed over the regularisation documents to the employees.

Advocate Purushottam Roy Barmann, who represented the employees in the case, said the six employees had been serving as Daily Rated Workers (DRWs) under the Secondary Education branch of the department for a long period. Seeking regularisation of their services, they had initially approached the High Court.

However, the High Court, while accepting the state government's posi-



tion, had ruled that their demand could not be considered due to the absence of any specific government scheme

for regularising such employees. Later, two more employees joined the original six and the group approached

the Supreme Court of India by filing a Special Leave Petition (SLP). In April this year, the Supreme Court directed the state government to regularise the services of all eight employees within three months.

Following the court's order, the regularisation documents were handed over to six employees on Wednesday. Meanwhile, one of the remaining two employees had passed away, while another had already retired from service.

The Supreme Court's decision is being regarded as an important precedent for irregular employees who have rendered long years of service. Receiving their documents, the employees expressed happiness and thanked the judiciary for delivering justice.



# Manjrekar: Pick What's Best for Indian Cricket, Not Individuals

Former India cricketer feels that when it comes to big players, taking such hard calls has not been straightforward in Indian cricket

**Chennai, June 24:** As Yashasvi Jaiswal found himself left out of the squad for the England ODIs a day after scoring his second hundred in last three outings, the focus has once again shifted towards Rohit Sharma and the way forward for the former captain with the Indian team. Sharma, since removed as ODI skipper post the Champions Trophy triumph, has made his desire to play the 2027 ODI World Cup. However, chief selector Ajit Agarkar and head coach Gautam Gambhir have remained non-committal about his future whenever asked. It is in this backdrop, Jaiswal was seen as the potential successor to open with skipper Shubman Gill. Jaiswal, already the Test opener, however, has had to bide his time. Last year, Kohli got injured and the left-hander made his ODI debut against England. Then Gill's injury allowed him to score his first ton against South Africa. The chance to open in the recent series against Afghanistan came because of Virat Kohli missing out. With both of them back in the squad — Kohli subject to fitness — Jaiswal has once again found himself out of the squad. Interestingly, Ishan Kishan has retained his place as the back-up keeper who could bat anywhere in the top five.



Former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar felt that the decision was harsh on the youngster. "He has two hundreds in the last three ODIs," Manjrekar said in a media interaction facilitated by Sony Sports Network. "Yes, a bit harsh on Yashasvi Jaiswal. I'll only say this on the issue that if the selectors have picked Rohit for this ODI squad, then I hope it's a long-term decision where they sort of expect Rohit to be part of the 2027 World Cup. That has to be the only reason for him to

be included. Because we don't want to be assessing Rohit's performance in the next 18 or 19 ODIs before the World Cup starts. I just hope the selectors have long-term plans with Rohit. Otherwise, that place should have been given to somebody else," he added. However, the lack of public commitment from either coach or chief selector on Rohit's future has added to speculations. Every time the 39-year-old has walked out to bat in the last year, one could sense the pressure he was under to

perform. And to be fair to Rohit, he has 552 runs at 50.18 average and 96.5 strike rate. He is only second to Virat Kohli (616 runs at 88 AVG and 106.39 SR) but questions continue to linger with his strike rate dropping 20 points. And every time he missed out on a big score, it has led to speculations over his future.

Manjrekar felt that when it comes to big players, taking such hard calls has not been straightforward in Indian cricket. He believed that the selectors have to acknowledge that

they are picking him because he will be there for the World Cup and if not, it is a bigger issue. "There is a certain culture that we have, and we have not been able to shake it off. When it comes to big name senior players, it's never as simple as taking a decision based on solid cricketing merit. And that clearly has come into play with Rohit, and this is something that plagues Indian cricket. It's just about the selectors believing whether Rohit can be your opening batter for the 2027 World Cup. "And that is what was in their mind, they should have said, and that is why we are selecting him. If they're just picking him because they're not courageous enough to drop him right now, then it is something that has happened in our Indian cricket culture forever, with all the big names. You talk about clarity, that will only happen when the whole culture of India changes. It's just how we handle our big-name iconic players. We just can't remain clinical. It's always about what's good for this guy, and the individual is thought about a lot. When it comes to selection, you must always think what's best for Indian cricket, rather than what's best for Virat Kohli, or what's best for Rohit Sharma, what's best for Bumrah, or anyone," said the Mumbaier.

## Lumumba Statue Fan Reaches World Cup

**Guadalajara, June 24:** Congo's famous living statue finally made his World Cup debut on Tuesday. Michel Nkuka Mboladinga, who gained fame during the Africa Cup of Nations for posing as a statue of Congo's assassinated independence leader Patrice Lumumba for the entirety of games, attended Congo's 1-0 loss to Colombia after missing its opener against Portugal because of Ebola quarantine requirements. Lumumba Vea, as the sharply dressed supporter is known for his resemblance to the slain leader, was at his seat about an hour before the game at Estadio Akron. He wore a bright red jacket and tie, yellow shirt and blue pants. When the game began, he stood motionless on a pedestal behind the Congo bench with his right arm raised. Nkuka Mboladinga was a few minutes late back to the pedestal after halftime, but he stood there until the end and even a few minutes after the final whistle.

He did not want to be interviewed but nodded and smiled



when asked if he was happy to have finally made it to the World Cup. Congo played Portugal to a 1-1 draw last week in Houston. Nkuka Mboladinga also missed Congo's World Cup playoff match against Jamaica earlier this year — when his nation secured a return to the tournament after 52 years — because he was unable to get a visa in time. He had traveled to Kenya and then Ethiopia in a bid to get a visa for the game, which was also played in Guadalajara. Nkuka Mboladinga became a social media sensation at the Africa Cup for posing as a statue of Lumumba on a pedestal with his right hand raised and standing still throughout games.

Lumumba was an activ-

ist who helped to end Belgium's colonial rule over Congo in 1960. He became the newly independent country's first prime minister and was seen as one of Africa's most promising leaders, but he was assassinated within a year during a struggle against a Belgian-backed secessionist movement in the mineral-rich Katanga region. A Belgian court in March ordered a 93-year-old former diplomat to stand trial for the slaying. Etienne Davignon, who previously denied wrongdoing, is the last living among 10 Belgians suspected of involvement in the killing and has been charged with "participation in war crimes" for his role in the "unlawful detention and transfer" of Lumumba.

## Asian Games qualification in mind, stars eye strong nationals finish

**Bhubaneswar, June 24:** There is quite a sprinkling of stars at the National Inter-State Athletics Championships that will begin at the Kalinga Stadium from Wednesday. The nationals assumes significance after the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) announced it as a qualifying event for the Asian Games to be hosted in Japan in September-October. Long jump star Murali Sreeshankar, former

national record holder in 100m and current NR holder in 200m Animesh Kujur, quarter miler Vishal TK, shot putter Tajinderpal Singh Toor would be among the star cast. Yet to hit his best form, Tajinder had won gold at the last Asian Games and could be one of the favourites to win a medal this time as well. Giving Sreeshankar competition would be national record holder Jeswin Aldrin, who is yet to cross the 8-m mark in the last three years. Javelin thrower Annu Rani too will be part of the competition. In the men's side of the event, the field is quite thin. Kishore Jenna who is struggling to clear 80m, is in the start-list. Rohit Yadav, Yashvir Singh who qualified for the Commonwealth Games, too will be competing. Double Olympic and world championships medallist Neeraj Chopra has been exempted from participating at the nationals. So was Tejaswin Shankar in decathlon. This was confirmed by planning commission chief Lalit Bhanot. National record holder in 100m

Gurindervir Singh too opted out to focus on Commonwealth Games.

All eyes will be on local boy Kujur when he scorched the newly-laid tracks. "Kalinga Stadium is one of my favourite grounds, at present I am doing well already qualified for the Commonwealth Games, I am eyeing to get back the fastest man of India tag in my name again here," he said during the press



conference. Asian Games qualification time for men's 100m is 10.16s. National record stands at 10.09s. Another local favourite Srabani Nanda who won gold at Asian Relays would be competing in only one competition — 200m. "I have reached Bhubaneswar today after winning the gold at the Asian Relays Championships at Chinese City so I will participate in the 200m event." Bhanot also said that the Asian Games team will be announced on the last day of the competition on June 28.