

Western Times

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News Brief

Assam CM visits Dighalipkuri amid protest over tree cutting in Guwahati

Guwahati, Nov 6 (IANS) Amid protests by opposition and eminent citizens over tree cutting in Guwahati for building flyovers in the city, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday visited Dighalipkuri area in the city, which has become a bone of contention for the past several days.

Sarma visited the site with PWD officials and took stock of the situation. He assured that the government is committed in preserving the heritage of the city.

The state government has planned to build a flyover from Dighalipkuri to Noonmati locality in the city and due to this the authorities marked some 200-year-old trees for felling in Dighalipkuri. The Chief Minister said: "I want to assure you that the government is deeply committed to preserving our city's heritage and environment while advancing infrastructure."

Assam: AIUDF expels three leaders for supporting BJP candidate in bypolls

Guwahati, Nov 6 (IANS) Hours after announcing support for the BJP candidate in the upcoming by-election, three All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) leaders were expelled from the party on Tuesday.

Three opposition leaders--Saddam Hussain, Safikul Islam and Sadikur Rahman earlier in the day announced their support for the BJP candidate Diplu Ranjan Sarma in Assam's Samaguri assembly seat defying the AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal's direction.

Hussain and other leaders told reporters: "We cannot go with the Congress candidate Tanzil Hussain. His father Rakibul Hussain contested against our chief Badruddin Ajmal in Dhubri constituency in the Lok Sabha polls. This was a betrayal and hence we cannot support the Congress candidate in Samaguri."

ISKCON finally cancels plans to hold untimely Rath Yatra

Bhubaneswar, Nov 6 (IANS) The ISKCON has announced that the society will not hold the proposed Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath in Houston city of US on November 9. The organisation took the decision following widespread resentment among the devotees over the untimely celebration of the Rath Yatra by the organisation.

He further informed that the decision was conveyed by National Communications Director, Yudhistir Govinda Prabhu after his discussion with Anuttama Prabhu, the member of ISKCON's Governing Body Commission & Communications.

Responding to criticisms against it, the society through the statement clarified, "ISKCON is not a Christian organisation or promoting Christianity in name of Sanatan Dharma."

US Election: Trump clinches win in 3 swing states

Washington, Nov 6 (IANS) Republican candidate Donald Trump has clinched three out of seven key swing states and is leading in three others, giving him a critical advantage over Democrat Kamala Harris in the closely watched US presidential election, according to the latest trends.

Donald J Trump was elected the 47th president of the United States on Wednesday, defeating incumbent Vice President Kamala Harris after months of campaigning on a promise to restore the 'American dream' and improve the country's economic conditions.

Trump, who was backed by billionaire Elon Musk, exited the White House four years back after losing the elections to Democratic rival Joe Biden. In 2024, he will be back in the White House after securing a landslide victory, proving his critics wrong.

The seven decisive swing states -- Arizona, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Georgia, North Carolina, Michigan, and Nevada -- are pivotal as they lack consistent Democratic or Republican dominance, often determining the outcome of the election.

Trump narrowly



claimed victory in North Carolina, where he received 2,852,981 votes compared to Harris's 2,676,410, and in Georgia, winning 2,643,396 votes against Harris's 2,528,271. He also won Pennsylvania; however, he fell short by three electoral votes in winning the presidency, as per media reports.

He could easily win the race to the White House by securing a win in any other swing state.

To reach the necessary electoral count, Trump could achieve the majority by winning either Pennsylvania or a combination of Michigan and Wisconsin.

Other potential paths to victory include combinations involving Wisconsin, Arizona, and Nevada.

The contest has intensified in the so-called "Blue Wall" states -- Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania -- which have traditionally been Democratic strongholds but flipped to Trump in 2016, contributing to his victory over Hillary Clinton.

Both Michigan and Pennsylvania hold 16 electoral college votes each, making them critical targets.

For either candidate to secure the presidency, 271 of the 538 electoral college

votes are required. Over 82 million Americans cast their ballots before Election Day, either in person at early voting stations or through postal voting -- a turnout surpassing 51 per cent of the 158 million votes cast in 2020 during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Harris and Trump ended their campaign with rallies in Pennsylvania and Michigan, respectively, also both battleground states. Unlike others, these swing states are neither solidly Democratic nor Republican, and they can swing between the two and are, therefore, also called the Swing States.

Assam: 4 rhino poachers arrested in Darrang; arms, ammunition recovered

Guwahati, Nov 6 (IANS) The Assam Police on Wednesday arrested four suspected rhino poachers at Orang National Park and recovered arms, ammunition and other materials from their possession, top police official said.

Assam's Director General of Police Gyanendra Pratap Singh appreciating the personnel of Darrang district police, said in a post on the X: "Four persons arrested by Darrang Police in connection with the planning for rhino poaching at Orang National Park." The suspected rhino poachers were identified as Nur Hussain, Abul Hussain, Jaffar Ali and Nur Islam. One .303 Rifle with ammunition, three mobile

handsets, five motorcycles and camping stores were recovered from their possession. "They were planning to go inside the park for poaching," the DGP said. On October 26, a rhino poaching attempt was thwarted through quick action by the police and forest department personnel in Assam's Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR), a UNESCO world heritage site. KNPTR Director Sonali Ghosh said that police personnel of Biswanath district and the forest department arrested two poachers, identified as Rasidul Haque (28) and Sibe Ali (36). "Based on intelligence inputs regarding miscreants planning to hunt a rhino, two individuals were arrested. They were planning to hunt the rhino in collaboration with additional miscreants in Kaziranga National Park. An investigation is underway to apprehend other culprits linked to the case," she had said. According to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Kaziranga and other reserved and protected habitats of the one-horned rhino in Assam recorded an 86 per cent drop in poaching of the animal since 2016. Sarma recently said poachers have killed 190 rhinos between 2000 and 2021. As per Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "commitment to promoting and preserving animals," the state government has

made efforts to protect rhino, an animal that has been "synonymous to the identity" of Assam, the Chief Minister had said. More than 2,850 rhinos were recorded in various national parks and protected habitats during the last census of the animal in 2022. The KNPTR, measuring about 1,300 sq km, is home to more than 2,613 one-horned Indian rhinos followed by the over 38 sq km Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary (107) and the 279.83 sq km Orang National Park (101). India's seventh (fourth in natural) UNESCO World Heritage site, the KNPTR is spread across several districts of Assam, including Golaghat, Nagaon, Sonitpur, and Biswanath.

SC asks NCP's Ajit Pawar faction to publish disclaimer on 'clock' symbol

New Delhi, Nov 6 (IANS) The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the NCP's Ajit Pawar faction - which has been recognised by the Election Commission as the "real" NCP - to give wide publicity to its interim orders requiring the addition of disclaimers in party advertisements that the allocation of the party's clock symbol is sub judice and subject to the outcome of proceedings pending before the top court.

A bench, headed by Justice Surya Kant, asked the Ajit Pawar side to publish fresh disclaimers regarding the clock symbol in newspapers, including in Marathi, within 36

hours. The apex court was dealing with an application filed by the Sharad Pawar faction demanding that the Ajit Pawar camp be temporarily allotted a new symbol for the Maharashtra Assembly elections instead of the clock.

Pulling up Ajit Pawar's side over the delay in publishing the disclaimer in newspapers, it directed that the disclaimer should be published within 36 hours. In an earlier hearing, the Supreme Court had stressed that the parties should meticulously comply with its orders and asked both sides not to violate the March 19 interim direction.

In that order, the SC had asked the Ajit Pawar-

led party to issue a public notice in English, Marathi, and Hindi editions, stating that the usage of the clock symbol reserved for the NCP is subject to the final outcome of proceedings pending before the Supreme Court.

"Such a declaration shall be incorporated in every pamphlet, advertisement, audio, or video clip to be issued on behalf of the respondents (Ajit Pawar-led party)," it had said.

The SC had clarified that the National Congress Party-Sharadchandra Pawar (NCP-SP) - having the 'Man Blowing Turha' symbol - will also follow court orders and not use the clock symbol.



NAGPUR, Leader of Opposition and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at Samvidhan Sammelan, in Nagpur, Maharashtra on Wednesday. UNI

Finance Ministry tells banks to give more loans for agri-allied activities

New Delhi, Nov 6 (IANS) The Finance Ministry has asked public sector banks to increase credit availability for animal husbandry, dairying, and fisheries to ensure that targets are met for the current financial year.

The progress of credit disbursement to these agri-allied activities was reviewed at a high-level meeting held by Secretary, Department of Financial Services (DFS), M. Nagaraju, according to a Finance Ministry statement issued on Wednesday.

The meeting was attended by top officials of public sector banks, NABARD, and state/UT Level Bankers' Committee. Representatives of state governments/UTs, the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, and the Department of Fisheries also participated in the discussions. The Secretary also stressed the state governments to facilitate banks in improving the flow of credit to these sectors. He underscored the importance of the allied sector in driving agricultural growth and its employment potential in rural areas and highlighted the trend of regional disparity in credit dis-

bursement in allied activities. He directed banks to conduct regional-level meetings to ensure disbursement of credit in all areas as all regions have huge potential in allied activities. The Secretary also directed NABARD to coordinate with state line departments and LDMs in the identification of fish farmers and providing them with benefits of the KCC scheme.

Nagaraju underlined the Centre's focus on

seamless access to affordable credit to the allied sector and urged all stakeholders to take necessary steps to increase credit flow to the sector, the statement added.

As part of the Centre's thrust to boost rural incomes, the Union Budget 2024-25 has hiked the allocation for the Department of Fisheries by 54 per cent to Rs 2,616.44 crore from Rs. 1,701 crore (revised estimate) during 2023-24.

IAF helicopter makes emergency landing near Rajasthan

Jaipur, Nov 6 (IANS) An Indian Air Force helicopter made an emergency landing in Merta town in Rajasthan's Nagaur due to a technical fault, said an official.

The helicopter is ZD 4150 Hindustan Aeronautics Rudra of the Indian Air Force. Merta DSP Ramkaran Malinda said the helicopter was flying from Jodhpur to Jaipur. "A technical glitch was suspected and hence it made an emergency landing in a field near Jasnagar," he added. Defence officials also confirmed the incident with IANS, adding that a technical team has

been deputed to the site. He added that the emergency landing happened after the chopper developed a minor glitch during a routine training exercise. "All occupants, including Wing Commander Pal Singh, are safe, and the helicopter has been secured on the ground. The local administration has provided full support. The helicopter is likely to take off after getting checked," said a Defence official. Locals said that there were two IAF choppers while one headed towards its destination, the other had to land due to technical problems.

K'taka LoP demands CBI investigation into Rs 900 crore excise scam

Bengaluru, Nov 6 (IANS) Karnataka Leader of the Opposition (LoP) R. Ashoka on Wednesday demanded a CBI probe into the alleged Rs 900 crore corruption scam in the Excise Department while also asking the Minister for Excise R.B. Thimmapur to resign.

Ashoka alleged that Minister Thimmapur collects Rs 18 crore weekly, accumulating to Rs 900 crore annually. "The Wine Merchants Association had detailed bribes received by officials at all levels, reportedly shared systematically. The details of rates fixed for different posts are also given," he said. Ashoka further criticised Chief Minister Siddaramaiah for lacking transparency and integrity. "His administration is marred by corruption," he said. He also emphasised that alcohol sales drive the government's revenue, warning that liquor outlets might shut down in protest of extortion. He ridiculed the ruling Congress government for alleged failures across sectors, stating it has brought "difficult times" for officials, contractors, farmers, and the general public. Ashoka referred to recent suicides by government employees allegedly due to bribes, accusing the government of being "merciless." He

noted a tragic case of a second-grade assistant in Belagavi who sent a final message before committing suicide, ignored by senior officials.

Ashoka urged action against Minister for Women and Child Welfare Lakshmi Hebbalkar and questioned the government's lack of response. Ashoka said that the slogan on Vidhana Soudha, "government work, God's work," should be updated to "Congress's money-filling

work." On Tuesday, Karnataka BJP attacked the state government over an alleged liquor scam following the Karnataka Wine Merchants' Association writing a letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and demanding his resignation.

The Wine Merchants' Association has alleged that Minister for Excise R.B. Thimmapur is collecting Rs 500 crore in bribes from wine merchants and bar license holders. The association has also

charged that without money no transfer is made or promotion is given.

It's also alleged that Rs 15 to Rs 20 crore is collected from 12,500 license holders every month as monthly payments by officers. The wine merchants are facing a severe crisis due to rampant corruption. The Minister Thimmapur should be dropped and the Excise ministry should be handled by the minister who also holds the Finance portfolio.

Cabinet okays PM-Vidyalaxmi scheme to provide financial aid to meritorious students

New Delhi, Nov 6 (IANS) The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved the PM-Vidyalaxmi scheme to provide financial support to meritorious students in a mission mode.

The mechanism will facilitate and drive the extension of education loans to meritorious students who get admission in the top 860 quality higher educational institutions of the nation, translating to covering more than 22 lakh students every year. These students will be eligible to get collateral-free, guarantor-free loans from banks and financial institutions to cover the full amount of

tuition fees and other expenses related to the course.

According to the Cabinet, for loan amounts up to Rs 7.5 lakh, the student will also be eligible for a credit guarantee of 75 per cent of outstanding default. "This will give support to banks in making education loans available to students under the scheme," it said. In addition, for students having an annual family income of up to Rs 8 lakh, and not eligible for benefits under any other government scholarship or interest subvention schemes, 3 per cent interest subvention for loans up to Rs 10 lakh will also be provided

during the moratorium period."

The interest subvention support will be given to one lakh students every year. Preference will be given to students who are from government institutions and have opted for technical/professional courses," according to a Cabinet note. An outlay of Rs 3,600 crore has been made from 2024-25 to 2030-31, and seven lakh fresh students are expected to get the benefit of this interest subvention during the period. This is in addition to the full interest subvention already being offered to students with up to Rs 4.5 lakh annual family income.

PM-Vidyalaxmi is another key initiative stemming from the National Education Policy, 2020, which had recommended that financial assistance should be made available to meritorious students through various measures in both public and private higher education institutions (HEIs). The scheme will be applicable to the top quality higher educational institutions of the nation, as determined by the NIRF rankings - including all HEIs, government and private, that are ranked within the top 100 in NIRF in overall, category-specific and domain-specific rankings; state government HEIs ranked in 101-200 in NIRF, and all Central government governed institutions.



SRINAGAR, BJP Legislatures shouting slogans protesting against the passing of resolution of special status by the ruling NC in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on Wednesday. UNI

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आगणना पाना वांचवा भाटे
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