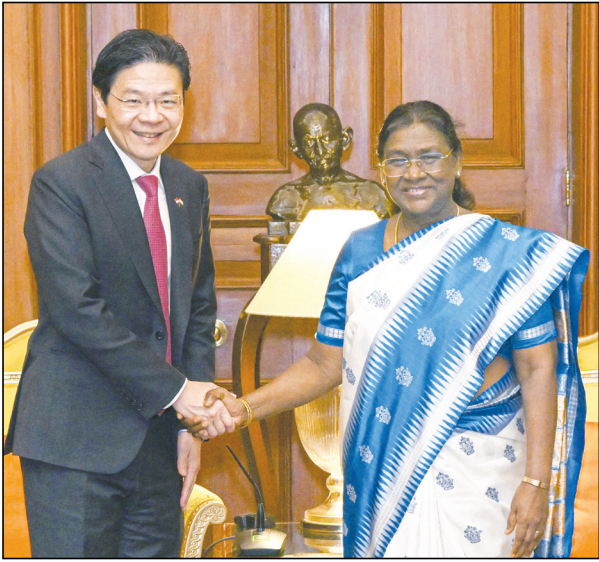


# Singapore key partner in India’s Act East Policy, vision for Indo-Pacific: President Murmu

**NEW DELHI:** Singapore is a key partner in India’s Act East Policy and vision for the Indo-Pacific region, President Droupadi Murmu said on Thursday while emphasising different aspects of the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. Murmu said Singapore is a major source of investments for India and Singaporean investments in the country are also growing. She highlighted the expanding defence cooperation, which includes bilateral exercises and training. Welcoming Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, who called on the president at the Rashtrapati Bhawan here, Murmu also appreciated the important role played by the large Indian diaspora in Singapore, which has contributed immensely to fostering cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. She said India and Singa-



pore are important partners for each other, and “Singapore is also a key partner in India’s Act East Policy and vision for the Indo-Pacific”. The president said 2025 is of special significance as it marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Singapore’s President Tharm Shanmugaratnam visited India in January. Six senior ministers, including Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, participated in the 3rd India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable held in Delhi just a few weeks ago, according to a statement issued by the presi-

dent’s office. Murmu further highlighted that the India-Singapore relationship was elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Singapore last year. The president was happy to note that Wong and Modi jointly laid out a roadmap for this partnership on Thursday, truly reflecting the depth and expanse of the bilateral cooperation. Murmu said the bilateral agreements concluded on Thursday will boost the co-operation between the two countries in new and emerging sectors like green economy, space, civil aviation, fin-tech and skill development. Both leaders agreed that regular interactions at the highest political levels are a hallmark of the India-Singapore relationship. They expressed confidence that India-Singapore relations will continue to thrive in the future, the statement said.

# Students to chant mantras, practise yoga as NDMC schools adopt ‘Guru-Shishya’ form of learning

**NEW DELHI:** Chanting mantras, practising yoga and meditating -- that is how students will begin their day in NDMC schools while teachers impart education following the classical Guru-Shishya model. This is part of the ‘Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi’ curriculum launched by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta at the Talkatora Stadium here on Thursday, the eve of Teachers’ Day. Fifteen teachers were felicitated at the event for their contribution to education. The ‘Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi’ initiative seeks to integrate India’s cultural heritage into modern education that would benefit more than 28,000 students across NDMC-run schools. According to the curriculum document, students will now recite Sanskrit mantras such as the Gayatri Mantra, Saraswati Vandana, Guru Mantra and Shanti Path during daily assemblies. Each has a defined educational purpose -- the Gayatri Mantra to enhance concentration and clarity, Saraswati Vandana to cultivate intellec-

tual focus, the Guru Mantra to instil respect for teachers, and the Shanti Path to encourage peace and harmony, according to the document. The curriculum notes that chanting mantras fosters mindfulness, positivity and compassion, while teaching humility, discipline and ethical responsibility. It emphasises that education must nurture wisdom and values alongside academic knowledge. Another key feature is the integration of yoga and meditation into the school timetable. Breathing practices like Anulom-Vilom and Bhramari are aimed at boosting lung capacity, immunity and mental focus. Postures including Tadasana, cat-cow stretch and ‘Bhujangasana’ will be taught to improve flexibility, posture and motor coordination. Mindful meditation techniques such as gratitude reflections, five-senses awareness and body scans are designed to help students regulate emotions, reduce stress and build resilience. The curriculum lists outcomes such as im-

proved concentration, emotional balance, and overall well-being. The programme also expands learning beyond classroom walls. Nature walks, outdoor science labs, gardening and eco-art projects like leaf printing and nature mandalas are included to connect students with biodiversity and environmental conservation. According to the document, arithmetic will be taught by counting leaves and measuring garden spaces, while science classes will involve observing plants, birds and insects. Literature and art will draw inspiration from natural surroundings. “Learning beyond walls, wisdom beyond books” is described as a guiding principle of this approach. At its core, the curriculum revives the Guru-Shishya Parampara model, promoting respect for teachers and mentorship among peers. A house system based on great gurus -- Dronacharya (discipline), Vyasa (wisdom), Charaka (health) and Vashishtha (righteousness) -- will instil values through collective activities. The curriculum also highlights inclusivity, with buddy programmes pairing differently-abled and mainstream students, as well as intergenerational learning. Elderly citizens will be invited to share stories, skills and life lessons, while students will introduce them to modern tools and technologies. A 10-week Svachhta module forms another pillar of the programme. Students will practise waste segregation, water conservation, and plastic reduction through hands-on activities such as clean classroom competitions, poster-making and plantation drives. They will also be introduced to hygiene drills, food safety and eco-friendly alternatives like making cloth bags from old garments. The “Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi” document underlines that the initiative is aligned with the National Education Policy 2020 and NCERT syllabus, while drawing inspiration from India’s traditional wisdom.

# Uttarakhand HC seeks responses of RBI, telecom companies, communications ministry in ‘digital arrest’ fraud case

**NAINITAL:** The Uttarakhand High Court Thursday directed the Reserve Bank of India, telecom companies, the Union communications ministry and private banks operating in the state to file their responses within three weeks in a ‘digital arrest’ fraud case. Converting the petition of Haridwar resident Surendra Kumar into a PIL regarding the ‘digital arrest’ fraud, a division bench of Chief Justice Justice G Narendra and Justice Subhash Upadhyay scheduled the next hearing in the matter after three weeks. The bench directed that the Standard Operating Proce-

dures (SOP) or prescribed measures to curb cybercrime be circulated to every police station. During the previous hearing on August 27, the court had asked the petitioner to implead the RBI and banks as parties. Accepting them as respondents, the court issued notices and sought their replies. On Thursday, IG Law and Order Nilesh Anand Bharné and SSP Cyber Crime Navneet Bhullar appeared before the court through video conferencing. They informed the court that the department had already issued an SOP to prevent cybercrime. The court

instructed that this SOP must be circulated to all police stations in the state and that awareness campaigns should also be run so that the general public does not fall victim to fraudulent calls and messages. In his plea, Kumar stated that about a month ago, he received calls from two different phone numbers. The callers claimed that a non-bailable warrant had been issued against him by the court of the Additional District Judge, Dehradun, and demanded an immediate payment of Rs 30,000. To facilitate this, they even provided five separate QR codes in the name of the District judge.

# Delhi power discoms on alert with flooding in low-lying areas

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi’s power discoms are on high alert and working round-the-clock to maintain power supply in the low-lying areas, officials said on Thursday. Restoration is being prioritised strictly based on safety conditions and official clearance, while the discoms continue to work closely with civic authorities, the Flood Control department, and disaster management teams, they said. With the Yamuna in spate, several low-lying localities along the river, such as Yamuna Bazaar Ghat, Chabi Ganj, Mori Gate, Badarpur Khadar Village, Nanaksar Gurdwara, Pakistani Refugee Camp, Usmanpur Khadar Village, and Garhi Mandu Khadar Village, have been flooded. Some of the other areas facing inundation were Behlohpur Yamuna River Front in Nizamuddin, Jaitpur Part-2 Khadda Colony (I & J Block), D-1 Vishwakarma Colony in Sarita Vihar,



Geetanjali Enclave, and Tikri Kalan, officials said. Mundka, in particular, experienced flooding due to Mungeshpur drain breach along the Haryana border, which led to water entering parts of Geetanjali Enclave and Tikri Kalan, they said.

Power is on in relief camps, while restoration in affected areas has been kept in abeyance till water recedes, a spokesperson of BSES discoms BRPL and BYPL said. Electricity in these areas will be restored after a comprehensive electrical safety check is completed and

a clearance from the authorities, the person said. “BSES discoms have adopted a range of preventive and response measures to handle the flood situation effectively. These include 24x7 surveillance of vulnerable areas, regular patrolling, preventive disconnections in waterlogged localities, current leakage detection drives, and the deployment of sandbags at substations to minimise waterlogging,” he said. Temporary connections are being provided at relief camps to ensure continuity of essential services, he said. According to the spokesperson, the BSES is strengthening its infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events. Substations in flood-prone areas have been elevated, motorised ring main units (RMUs) have been installed for remote operations, and bare parts of substations have been insulated, he said.

# Assam CM lays foundation stone for community kitchen where meals for 25,000 children will be cooked

**GUWAHATI:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday laid the foundation stone of a community kitchen in Sonitpur district, where mid-day meals of 25,000 children will be cooked. The new kitchen in Durrung Tea Estate will serve students of schools across the Tezpur, Rongapara and Barachalla assembly constituencies. Sarma said the government will spend Rs 25 crore for the project, and ISKCON will also build a temple at the site. He said the funding for mid-day meals will be shared, with 60 per cent borne by the state government and 40 per cent by the Akshaya Patra Foundation. Sarma said the implementation of the mid-day meal Scheme has greatly benefited students from poor families, and along with this, the state government has introduced free uniforms and free admission schemes, which together have created a healthy educational environment. The community kitchen, to be built over 1,718 sq metre, will have staff quarters, a training centre, a multipurpose hall and utility and security blocks.

The CM recalled his visit to the ISKCON temple in Bengaluru in 2009, when he was the Education Minister, and said he was deeply impressed by the temple’s kitchen and food supply system. Sarma said inspired by this, he initiated the first centralised kitchen in Jalukbari constituency that has been serving mid-day meals to 45,000 students and also to hospital attendants and patients for the last 12 years. He said that a centralised kitchen has already been set up in Jorhat, catering to 20,000 students, while another is nearing completion in Majuli. Construction of such kitchens has also begun in Nalbari, Dibrugarh and Lakhimpur recently, he said. Sarma said the government is considering providing breakfast for students in tea garden areas, as many parents leave early in the morning for work. He announced that a new scheme will be launched in November, under which Rs 300 per month will be provided to every student appearing for the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) examination, until they pass. This will support 5 lakh students of the state, he said.

# Reopening of NH-2 does not arise as it has never been closed: Kuki Zo Council

**IMPHAL:** The Kuki Zo Council (KZC) on Thursday asserted that the issue of ‘reopening’ National Highway-2 (Imphal-Dimapur) does not arise, as the road was never closed or blocked, and cautioned that its decision must not be misinterpreted as an endorsement of unrestricted or free movement across the Meitei and Kuki areas. In a press statement, KZC said, “We categorically reiterate that the Imphal-Dimapur NH-2 has never been closed or blocked. The NH-2 has consistently remained open for commuters and for the transportation of essential goods. Therefore, the question of ‘reopening’ does not arise, contrary to certain media reports,” it said. It added, “Our appeal was specifically confined to the stretch of NH-02 passing through Kangpokpi district. It must not be misinterpreted as an endorsement of unrestricted or free movement across the buffer zones. The sanctity of the buffer zones be-



tween the Meitei and Kuki-Zo areas will continue to be strictly respected and maintained.” The council said its appeal was simply to urge the people of Kangpokpi to extend cooperation to the central security forces deployed to ensure safety along the highway. “It is the responsibility of the Government of India to deploy and manage central forces to secure commuters and the transport of goods. It is neither the duty of the local public in Kangpokpi nor of KZC to guarantee foolproof security for national highway users. The

MHA has assured that adequate central forces will be deployed to provide necessary security along NH-02 (Imphal-Dimapur)” it added. Two prominent Kuki-Zo groups on Thursday signed a suspension of operations (SoO) agreement with the government on re-negotiated terms and conditions under which they agreed on maintaining territorial integrity of Manipur, re-locating designated camps away from vulnerable areas and working for a solution to bring lasting peace and stability in the state. The signing of the Suspen-

sion of Operations (SoO) agreement with the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People’s Front (UPF) is also set to have a positive impact on peace efforts in Manipur, officials said. Separately, civil society group Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) has decided to open the National Highway-02, which passes through Manipur for free movement of commuters and essential goods. The move comes ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s likely visit to Manipur next week, first since ethnic violence broke out between the Meiteis and Kukis in May 2023. Welcoming MHA decision to extend the SoO pact with KNO and UPF and expressing hope that the Centre will follow up by resuming political dialogue for a separate administration, the Council said, “We therefore request the general public not to be misled by inaccurate interpretations, and to refrain from spreading misinformation on this sensitive matter.” Manipur has been witnessing ethnic violence since

May 3, 2023, after a tribal solidarity march was taken out in the hill districts, in protest against the majority Meitei community’s demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Since then, about 260 people, including members of both the Kuki and Meitei communities as well as security personnel, have been killed in the violence. However, there has been relative peace in Manipur in last few months. Meanwhile, Kuki community-based Village Volunteers Coordinating Committee (VVCC) has expressed shock and disappointment over the decision to open NH-2 for the free movement of commuters and essential commodities, but reiterated that there shall be no free movement of Meiteis in Kuki areas. In a statement, KVCC said, “We strongly condemn this unilateral decision of KZC. It was taken without any consultation with the general public or the primary stakeholders directly affected by the ongoing conflict. As such, we de-

clare this decision null and void.” “We reaffirm our principled stance: there shall be no free movement for the Meitei community within Kuki-Zo territories until a separate administrative arrangement for the Kuki-Zo people is de jure,” it added. The VVCC also announced a complete boycott of KZC and cautioned that the council should bear full responsibility for any consequences. The committee also wished that the Suspension of Operations (SoO) groups are not mandated representatives of the Kuki-Zo people. “We do not oppose their decision to sign or extend the SoO pact with the government of India. Whether they choose to uphold the territorial integrity of Manipur is a matter for the SoO groups themselves. However, such decisions have no bearing on the collective will or political aspirations of the Kuki-Zo population” it said, urging community members to remain united and vigilant in protecting interests of the community.

# TMC’s Kunal Ghosh, Mithun Chakraborty of BJP file defamation suits against each other

**KOLKATA:** Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh Thursday said he has learnt that actor-turned BJP leader Mithun Chakraborty has filed a civil defamation suit against him before the Calcutta High Court. Ghosh said he has also filed a criminal defamation against Chakraborty before the Bankshall Court here alleging defamatory remarks made against him by the actor. Stating that he is yet to receive a notice from Chakraborty’s lawyer, the TMC leader said that he is eagerly awaiting to fight the suit in court when it comes up for hearing. Ghosh said that he has learnt from sources that a civil defamation suit has been filed against him by Chakraborty before the high court for alleged comments made by the TMC leader. Chakraborty had earlier sent a legal notice to Ghosh, to which the TMC leader’s lawyer Ayan Chakraborty said that he had already sent a reply.

# GST reforms to strengthen India’s clean energy transition: Environment minister

**NEW DELHI:** Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav on Thursday described the government’s overhaul of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) as a “historic Diwali gift” that will strengthen India’s clean-energy transition. In a post on X, Yadav said, “The GST rationalisation ensures that renewable energy remains the backbone of India’s climate strategy.” In another post, he termed the move “GST Reforms for a Green India” and said it would help advance clean and green power adoption, improve waste management, lower emissions and protect ecosystems, while maintaining fiscal balance. A steady adoption of solar, wind and waste-to-energy projects is critical for meeting India’s Net Zero 2070 pledge and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, he added. The reforms, announced on Wednesday, include tax cuts on solar panels, wind turbines and related devices to reduce project costs



and support domestic manufacturing, lower GST rates on effluent treatment services to boost centralised waste management and a steep reduction on biodegradable bags to help curb single-use plastics. The GST on passenger buses and commercial goods vehicles has also been reduced from 28 per cent to 18 per cent, in a move expected to cut costs, encourage fleet modernisation and promote public transport.

# Bengal cabinet approves policy to convert non-residential plots for real estate, housing purposes

**KOLKATA:** The West Bengal cabinet on Thursday approved a key policy allowing the conversion of non-residential plots for real estate and housing purposes, in what is being seen as a major push to unlock under-utilised land across the state, a highly-placed source said. The cabinet, which was chaired by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at the state Assembly, approved the new policy, which would apply to non-residential plots owned by agencies under the Urban Development and Municipal Affairs Department. “Many of these plots were allotted decades ago, often

for 99 years or more, to industrial units for employee housing, but a significant portion of the land has since fallen out of active use. Today’s approval paves the way for a formal framework that will allow their conversion, subject to a government-determined fee. The detailed guidelines, including the fee structure and modalities of implementation, will be formulated by the state in the coming weeks,” the official said. The cabinet also cleared a range of other proposals aimed at strengthening administration, healthcare, education, and heritage development. In a bid to bolster administrative infrastructure, the

government approved the creation of 18 new posts across departments. “These include positions in the finance, fisheries, and women and child development departments, as well as two temporary senior-level officer on special duty (OSD) posts in the governor’s office at the Raj Bhavan,” he said. The cabinet also gave nod to large-scale recruitment of nursing staff across 11 state-run medical colleges, he said. It also okayed the state’s proposal to introduce primary instruction in Rajbanshi and Kamtapuri languages in select districts, including Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri.