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**HOLIDAY NOTICE**

This is to inform all readers, advertisers that our newspaper office will remain closed for two days 14th and 15th April on account of Chaitra Sankranti and Poila Baisakh. Regular publication will resume on 16th April. We extend our warm greetings to all on these auspicious occasions.

**FAAMCH Study Maps Dengue Trends in Assam, Flags Monsoon Surge and Urban Risk**

**GUWAHATI**  
A new hospital-based study from Assam has underscored the persistent threat of dengue, pointing to sharp seasonal spikes during the monsoon months and a disproportionately higher burden among urban populations, particularly working-age men.

The research, conducted at Fakhrudin Ali Ahmed Medical College and Hospital (FAAMCH) and published in the peer-reviewed journal Cureus on February 1, 2026, analysed 1,119 clinically suspected dengue cases recorded between 2022 and 2025.

Led by microbiologist Hiramoni Sarmah of the Virus Research Diagnostic Laboratory, the study involved a multidisciplinary team of researchers from microbiology and veterinary microbiology departments, including Sanjay Bhattacharya, Derhasar Brahma, Sristi Majumdar, Jahna-bi Gogoi, and Elmy S. Rasul.

The analysis revealed clear seasonal patterns, with dengue infections peaking during the monsoon and post-monsoon period between September and December. Researchers attributed this surge to environmental conditions such as heavy rainfall, waterlogging, and high humidity, which create ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Among the years studied, 2023 recorded the highest number of confirmed cases at 63, with a positivity rate of 14.6 per cent. This was followed by a decline in 2025, which saw 17 confirmed cases and a positivity rate of 7.3 per cent, indicating year-to-year variability in transmission dynamics.

**WHO SAID WHAT**

**Freedom of speech is the bedrock of democracy**  
~ Elon Musk, American Entrepreneur

Khera is facing charges in a case registered by the Guwahati Crime Branch Police Station under multiple

**Earthquake and Cyclonic Storm Batter Silchar, Leave Trail of Damage in Cachar**



**SILCHAR**  
Panic gripped parts of southern Assam after a 4.3-magnitude earthquake struck Cachar district on Sunday morning, followed within hours by a powerful cyclonic storm that caused widespread damage across Silchar and adjoining areas.

According to officials, the earthquake occurred at around 9:21 am, prompting residents to rush out of their homes in fear. While no major structural damage was reported, the tremor heightened anxiety among people already grappling with recent spells of extreme weather. The situation worsened later in the day as strong winds and heavy rain lashed the region, uprooting trees and snapping electricity lines. Several localities were plunged into darkness as power infrastructure took a hit.

Among the worst-affected areas were Malugam, Tarapur, and the DC Office enclave, where large trees were uprooted, blocking key roads and damaging nearby

property. The fallen trees and debris severely disrupted vehicular movement, hampering emergency response efforts.

Residents reported prolonged power outages and disruption to daily life, with restoration work underway on a war footing. Eyewitnesses described chaotic scenes, with uprooted trees strewn across roads and vehicles narrowly avoiding damage.

"We had barely begun recovering from the earthquake when the cyclonic winds and heavy rain triggered fresh panic," a resident of Tarapur said.

Officials from the Cachar District Disaster Management Authority said the situation is being closely monitored and urged residents to remain cautious. Power department teams have been deployed to restore electricity supply, though authorities indicated that full normalcy may take time given the scale of the damage.

**Assam Challenges Telangana HC Relief to Pawan Khera, Moves Supreme Court**



**GUWAHATI**  
The Assam government has approached the Supreme Court of India challenging the interim relief granted to Congress leader Pawan Khera by the Telangana High Court in a defamation case linked to remarks against Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. According to officials, the state filed its plea on April 12 through advocate Shuvodeep Roy, seeking to set aside the high court's April 10 order granting Khera one week of transit anticipatory bail. The matter is likely to be listed for hearing later this week.

Khera is facing charges in a case registered by the Guwahati Crime Branch Police Station under multiple

provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including sections related to defamation and harm to reputation. The case stems from alleged remarks made by the Congress leader against Sarma.

In its order, the Telangana High Court granted limited protection to Khera, directing that in the event of arrest, he be released on bail upon furnishing a personal bond. The court also instructed him to cooperate with the investigation and make himself available for questioning as required.

The high court noted that the petitioner had established a reasonable apprehension of arrest based on supported allegations, thereby justifying interim protection. However, it imposed conditions, including that Khera must not leave the country without prior permission from a competent court.

The court further observed that Khera retains the option to seek appropriate legal remedies before courts in Assam, where the case is under jurisdiction. It also cautioned that public statements by a person of his stature could potentially influence the course of the investigation.

Khera had moved the Telangana High Court citing his residence in Hyderabad and seeking transit anticipatory bail to avoid immediate arrest in connection with the Assam case. With the Assam government now contesting the relief before the apex court, the legal battle is set to shift to the Supreme Court, where the validity and scope of the interim protection will come under scrutiny.

**Midnight Firing at ULFA-I Chief Paresch Baruah's Brother's House Triggers Security Alert in Assam**



**GUWAHATI**  
Panic gripped a village in Upper Assam after unidentified gunmen opened fire late Sunday night at the residence of a relative of Paresch Baruah, the chief of the banned insurgent outfit ULFA (Independent).

Sources said the incident occurred around midnight in Tinsukia district, where the attackers allegedly targeted the home of Baruah's younger brother, Mission Baruah. At least two assailants are believed to have fired multiple rounds before fleeing the scene.

No injuries or fatalities were reported in the incident. However, the firing has heightened security concerns in the region, which has previously witnessed insurgency-related activities.

Police teams rushed to the spot soon after the incident and have since launched a manhunt to identify and apprehend those responsible. Security has also been stepped up in and around the area as a precautionary measure.

Officials said investigations are underway to ascertain the motive behind the attack, including whether it bears any link to ongoing insurgent dynamics or local disputes.

**Mehbooba Mufti Condemns Manipur Child Killings, Questions 'Silence' from Authorities**



**GUWAHATI**  
Mehbooba Mufti, president of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), has strongly condemned the killing of two children in Manipur, terming the incident "horrific" and raising concerns over what she described as a troubling silence from those in positions of authority.

The incident occurred in Bishnupur district, where suspected militants allegedly hurled an explosive device at a residential house earlier this week. The attack claimed the lives of a five-year-old boy and a six-month-old girl, triggering outrage and protests in several parts of the state.

Reacting to the killings on April 12, Mufti described the use of what she called a "military-grade weapon" against civilians—particularly children—as "deeply condemnable." In a statement posted on the social media platform X, she expressed anguish over the loss of innocent lives and questioned the response from authorities.

Without naming any specific individual or political party, Mufti criticised what she termed a "pin drop silence" surrounding the incident. She suggested that the lack of visible action or response was deeply concerning, especially in a situation involving civilian casualties.

The PDP leader further alleged that political priorities often overshadow fundamental issues such as human rights and justice. She remarked that, in times of crisis, civilians are frequently left vulnerable, with their safety failing to receive the attention it deserves.

The killings have further heightened tensions in Manipur, where sporadic violence has continued in recent months. Protests have been reported from multiple locations, with demonstrators demanding accountability and stronger measures to ensure the protection of civilians.

Authorities have yet to issue a detailed statement on the incident, even as calls grow louder for a thorough investigation and immediate steps to prevent further attacks.

**Study Flags Venomous Aquatic Insects in Nagaland, Experts Warn of Possible Risk in Assam**

**GUWAHATI**  
A recent scientific study conducted in Nagaland's Dimapur has raised concerns over the presence of venomous aquatic insects in local water bodies, with experts cautioning that similar species could also be present in neighbouring Assam, posing a largely unrecognised public health risk.

The research, led by biologist Karthik Sunagar and his team, was published on March 26 and focused on three species of water-dwelling insects found in a pond in Dimapur. The study revealed that the venom produced by these insects contains protein components resembling those found in viper snake venom, a finding that has drawn attention from both medical and ecological experts.

According to the researchers, these insects deploy extremely fine, needle-like mouthparts thinner than a standard syringe to inject venom into their prey, immobilising them almost instantly. Their ability to both swim and fly allows them to thrive in stagnant water bodies, where they often remain concealed beneath mud,



encounters are possible, particularly among people who fish, bathe, or wade through ponds and marshy areas. Such encounters could lead to painful stings or bites.

"The bite can be extremely painful and may result in severe swelling. In rare cases, more serious complications cannot be ruled out," said Surajit Giri, a snakebite awareness activist working with rural healthcare networks in Assam. Giri noted that preliminary observations suggest the venom may interfere with blood clotting mechanisms, drawing parallels with haemotoxic effects seen in viper envenomation. This raises concerns about the possibility of prolonged bleeding or internal haemorrhage in severe cases.

He cited a suspected incident from Assam in which an elderly man reportedly died shortly after experiencing sudden, intense pain followed by symptoms resembling a stroke. Though unconfirmed, the case is being viewed by some experts as a potential instance of venom-induced internal bleeding, possibly triggered by an aquatic insect bite.

Medical professionals have cautioned that such cases may be under-reported or misdiagnosed, often being attributed to snakebites due to the absence of clear bite marks. This diagnostic ambiguity, they say, underscores the need for greater clinical awareness and systematic documentation.

Public health experts are now calling for increased surveillance and research into unexplained injuries or deaths linked to water exposure, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas where stagnant water bodies are common.

Authorities and healthcare workers have also urged communities to remain vigilant and report unusual insect sightings or unexplained health incidents associated with ponds and wetlands.

"Community participation will be key to identifying and understanding this emerging risk," Giri said, stressing the importance of coordinated efforts between researchers, healthcare providers, and local populations to address what could become a significant yet overlooked environmental health concern.



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## A NEW CHAPTER IN INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

The visit of Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman to New Delhi this week is more than a routine diplomatic engagement—it signals the possible beginning of a much-needed recalibration between two neighbours whose destinies remain deeply intertwined. For countries bound by geography, history, language, and shared struggles, the recent strain in ties has been both unnatural and counterproductive. The current moment, therefore, offers an opportunity not merely to restore normalcy, but to reimagine the relationship on firmer, more resilient foundations.

India and Bangladesh are not just neighbours; they are partners forged in the crucible of history. The events of the Bangladesh Liberation War remain central to this bond. India's decisive support during that defining period helped shape the birth of Bangladesh, creating a reservoir of goodwill that has endured for decades. In the years that followed, cooperation expanded across multiple sectors—trade, connectivity, energy, and river water management—often serving as a model for regional collaboration in South Asia.

At its best, the India-Bangladesh partnership has demonstrated what pragmatic diplomacy, underpinned by cultural affinity, can achieve. Cross-border infrastructure projects, power-sharing agreements, and transit arrangements have not only strengthened bilateral ties but also enhanced regional integration. Yet, as recent developments have shown, even the strongest relationships can falter when political currents shift and trust begins to erode.

The past eighteen months have been particularly challenging. Under the interim administration led by Muhammad Yunus, the bilateral relationship appeared to drift into uncertain waters. Reports of violence against minority communities in Bangladesh generated unease in India, not merely as a matter of foreign policy, but as an issue with deep social and emotional resonance. Simultaneously, the rise of strident anti-India rhetoric in sections of Bangladesh's public discourse contributed to an atmosphere of suspicion.

Symbolism, often underestimated in diplomacy, also played its part. The absence of Bangladesh from India's cricketing engagements, and the lack of Bangladeshi representation in the Indian Premier League auctions, reflected more than scheduling anomalies. Cricket, in the subcontinent, is not just sport—it is a shared cultural space that often mirrors the state of political relations. The cooling of such exchanges underscored the broader chill that had set in between the two nations.

It is against this backdrop that the current outreach acquires significance. The emergence of a new government in Dhaka, led by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, appears to have brought with it a recognition of geopolitical realities. For Bangladesh, maintaining a stable and constructive relationship with India is not merely desirable—it is essential. Likewise, for India, a peaceful and cooperative Bangladesh is integral to its own regional strategy, particularly in the sensitive eastern and northeastern corridors.

What stands out about Foreign Minister Rahman's visit is the tone it has set. Rather than foregrounding grievances or revisiting past disputes, the emphasis has been on rebuilding trust and identifying areas of mutual benefit. This shift in approach is critical. Diplomatic relationships often hinge as much on intent and perception as they do on policy. A willingness to engage constructively creates space for resolving even the most entrenched issues.

India's response, too, has been measured and forward-looking. New Delhi has demonstrated a blend of patience and pragmatism, choosing engagement over estrangement. A notable example is India's timely supply of diesel to Bangladesh amid disruptions linked to the ongoing West Asia crisis.

Such actions carry weight precisely because they transcend political differences, reinforcing the idea that regional stability is a shared responsibility.

Equally significant is the outreach aimed at ordinary citizens. External Affairs Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar has indicated a willingness to ease visa restrictions, particularly for medical patients and business travellers from Bangladesh.

This is a crucial step. People-to-people contact forms the backbone of any enduring relationship, and facilitating mobility can help rebuild trust at the grassroots level.

Yet, the road ahead is not without its complexities. Among the more sensitive issues is the question surrounding former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The matter of her potential extradition has the potential to become a flashpoint if not handled with care. Encouragingly, both sides appear to recognise the risks of allowing a single contentious issue to derail the broader relationship. Diplomacy, at its core, involves the ability to compartmentalise—to address disputes without letting them overshadow areas of cooperation.

The stakes are high. The India-Bangladesh relationship is a cornerstone of stability in South Asia. When ties are cordial, the benefits are tangible: enhanced trade flows, improved connectivity, energy security, and greater regional integration. Conversely, when relations deteriorate, the costs are borne not just by governments, but by millions of ordinary citizens whose livelihoods depend on cross-border interaction.

For India's northeastern states, in particular, Bangladesh represents a vital gateway to the rest of the subcontinent and beyond. Connectivity projects linking these regions to Bangladesh have the potential to transform economic prospects, reducing isolation and fostering development. For Bangladesh, access to India's vast market and infrastructure networks offers opportunities for growth and diversification. The logic of cooperation, therefore, is compelling on both sides.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

The hardest thing about exercise is to start doing it. Once you are doing exercise regularly, the hardest thing is to stop it.

- Stephen C. Paul

# INDIA'S ETHANOL PUSH FIRMS GAIN, FOOD & WATER LOSE



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Every crisis in India is fast becoming a pretext for profit masquerading as reform. The Strait of Hormuz oil crisis has now been repurposed to justify 20 per cent ethanol blending (E20)—pitched as green and strategic, but structurally unsound. It threatens food, water, and land security while enriching an industry.

Consumers pay twice: 8–10% lower mileage and costly retrofits—Rs 20,000–Rs70,000 for each of over 40 crore running vehicles—turning a supposed solution into a nationwide economic crisis.

The touted energy benefit is possibly a myth and drain on agricultural resources gigantic. To meet the target, the country will require about 1.016 crore litres of ethanol annually. Achieving this would require a shift from sugar and sugarcane—leading to a growing dependence on maize, broken rice and rice procured from Food Corporation of India. Estimates suggest that India will need to produce 11–12 million tonnes of grains, comprising maize and rice, 275 million tonnes of sugarcane, covering a land area equal to 7.1 million hectares of land.

Experts caution that while high yielding varieties can help meet the demand, it would also increase reliance on water, pesticides and fertilizers.

According to Mumbai-based IndiaSpend's report, the E20 target may not significantly reduce emissions, may harm food security, and will provide only marginal energy security.

Further, the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) argues that using food-based feedstocks for ethanol production may not be the best use of land in a country where hunger remains a pressing issue. In effect, fuel drives would bite into food-producing lands or forests, burdening the nation's scarce resources.

Equally alarming is the water footprint. Sugarcane in India alone uses ~50 per cent of irrigation water. Producing one litre of sugarcane-ethanol guzzles about 2,860 litres of water.

That is nearly three cubic meters of water for a glass of fuel. In a water-stressed country, this is catastrophic. NITI Aayog warns that ethanol expansion could raise India's annual irrigation demand by 50 billion cubic metres by 2070 – enough to quench Delhi's thirst for 17 years. Most districts in India already face water scarcity. Redirecting scarce groundwater into fuel tanks undermines farms and drinking supplies alike.

Ethanol expansion in India will divert ~7–8 million hectare of cropland, sharply raise water use, and intensify food-fuel competition, risking higher food prices. Forcing crop-based fuels can increase overall greenhouse emissions – as seen in the US. More land clearing and fertilizer use raised carbon intensity of ethanol.

Lifecycle Emissions: Food Security Under Threat

India is already wrestling with food inflation and crop shortages. Retail food prices have been above the RBI's comfort zone for years. In 2023 poor rains and heat knocked down

yields of staples (wheat, rice, sugarcane). The government banned wheat and sugar exports and imposed minimum prices on rice to keep markets stable. Against this backdrop, turning food crops into fuel is perilous.

NITI Aayog estimates ethanol demand will divert 6.1 mt maize and 5.5 mt rice (~7.1 million hectare), tightening food supply and raising prices—echoing US Renewable Fuel Standard impacts.

Expanded sugarcane further displaces crops and strains water, undermining land, water and food security. In short, ethanol endangers three pillars of security: it eats into cropland, it drains aquifers, and it chips away food availability.

Who Profits & Who Pays?

While communities face scarcity, ethanol producers and associated industries reap profits, stated to be Rs 20-25 a litre. In other words, ethanol pricing needs drastic cut.

Companies building new unnecessary distilleries and sugar mills enjoy record demand and generous pricing for ethanol. In a recent tender for the Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2025-26 (starting November), Indian oil marketing companies (OMCs) asked for 10.5 billion litres of ethanol, but the domestic industry offered 17.76 billion litres, far exceeding the government's requirement.

This massive oversubscription of over 70 per cent highlights a significant structural surplus in India's ethanol capacity, driven by over Rs 40,000 crore in investments in recent years for E20 blending.

Industry sustains distilleries through mandates, quotas and assured prices, branding E20 as "energy independence," while effectively socialising environmental costs and privatising profits—leaving the public to bear higher food prices and water stress.

Backed by floor-ratio-production (FRP) hikes, mandates, subsidies and post-2022 export curbs, distilleries expand as citizens bear the burden on food,

water and land. When export restrictions hit sugar in 2022, the sector pivoted to fuel. In states like Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, hundreds of proposals for new ethanol distilleries have sprung up, bolstered by tax breaks and subsidies.

The higher sugarcane FRP and ethanol purchase mandates distillery margins. Ethanol stands out as a classic crisis-with-opportunity: global carbon pressure and oil shocks give industry cover to expand, even as ordinary Indians pay with their food, water and land.

A False Energy Transition Biofuel blending offers only limited decarbonisation, as crop-based fuels still emit significant carbon and can worsen emissions through land-use change. It does little to reduce India's 80–90% oil import dependence, given ethanol's lower energy density.

Pushing food crops into fuel production under global climate pressure risks harming food security and growth priorities. India needs independent, context-driven energy strategies that balance emissions with equity and development. It must not succumb to global climate discourse – driven by Western carbon pressure.

India's per capita emissions remain far below the developed world's, and its priority must be equitable growth and food security.

Towards Real Energy Security

India's energy crisis reflects policy gaps, not resource scarcity. Priorities should include boosting energy efficiency to curb demand, scaling solar and wind as truly indigenous alternatives, and optimising transport via rail, buses and electric three-wheelers. Biofuel efforts must focus on waste-based and advanced technologies that avoid food and water stress. Additionally, green hydrogen from renewables offers a viable pathway for industry and heavy transport without burdening farmland.

Ethanol blending should

remain marginal, not central; crop-based fuel risks national resources for limited gains. Policymakers must avoid short-term optics that create long-term economic and ecological costs.

India's strategic goal should be securing energy and agriculture simultaneously, not sacrificing one for the other. By all means, use cleaner fuels – but not at the cost of starving our farms and drying our wells. The true path to energy independence lies in myopic promotion of ethanol.

### DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

The victory of the opposition in Hungary yesterday, like the Polish election in 2023, is a victory for democracy, not just in Europe but around the world. Most of all, it's a testament to the resilience and determination of the Hungarian people – and a reminder to all of us to keep striving for fairness, equality and the rule of law.

~ Barack Obama, Former US President



# Cross-Border Crackdown: Seven ULFA-I Linkmen Held in Tinsukia, Jagun Grenade Attack Probe Intensifies

MARGHERITA

In a coordinated counter-insurgency operation along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border, security forces have apprehended seven suspected linkmen of the banned United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I), with investigators probing possible links to the recent grenade attack in Jagun that left four Assam Police commandos injured.

The joint operation, carried out by Assam Police and Arunachal Pradesh Police, unfolded over a week beginning April 7 and was based on specific intelligence inputs. The arrests were made from areas under Lekhapani Police Station in Tinsukia district, a region that has long remained sensitive due to its proximity to inter-state borders and history of insurgent movement.

According to officials, the de-



tained individuals are suspected of acting as conduits for ULFA-I, facilitating communication, movement, and logistical support for the outfit across the porous Assam-Arunachal Pradesh frontier.

The accused have been identified as Berlin Neog (Bordumsa), Mithu Gohain and Lilambar Moran (Pengeri), Bikash Deka (Kakopthar), Shiva Dey and Paritosh Deb (Miao, Arunachal Pradesh), and Manab Deb (Makum).

Security agencies believe that some of those apprehended may have played a role in enabling the recent grenade attack on an Assam Police battalion camp in Jagun. Preliminary findings suggest that critical intelligence regarding the camp may have been passed on to ULFA-I operatives in advance of the strike.

"All seven accused are currently in police custody, and interrogation

is underway. The operation is part of ongoing efforts to curb insurgent activities in Upper Assam," a police official said, adding that investigators are working to map the extent of the network.

The suspects are being interrogated at Lekhapani Police Station, where agencies are examining their alleged roles in maintaining sustained contact with insurgent handlers. Officials indicated that the group may have been involved in relaying information, arranging safe passage, and supporting coordination for militant activities.

Investigators are also exploring whether the network was linked to extortion rackets or other underground operations often associated with insurgent groups in the region. The arrests have raised additional concerns within the security establishment, particularly as some of

the detainees are reported to be academically accomplished, pointing to a troubling trend of recruitment among educated youth.

While no official statement has yet been issued detailing the full scope of the operation, sources suggest that further arrests may follow as the interrogation progresses.

The crackdown has prompted heightened vigilance along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border, with security forces intensifying surveillance and intelligence-gathering efforts amid renewed concerns over militant regrouping in Upper Assam.

The developments come against the backdrop of continued efforts by law enforcement agencies to dismantle local support structures that enable insurgent outfits like United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent to operate within civilian areas.

## FAAMCH Study Maps Dengue Trends in Assam, Flags Monsoon Surge and Urban Risk

GUWAHATI

A new hospital-based study from Assam has underscored the persistent threat of dengue, pointing to sharp seasonal spikes during the monsoon months and a disproportionately higher burden among urban populations, particularly working-age men. The research, conducted at Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College and Hospital (FAAMCH) and published in the peer-reviewed journal *Cureus* on February 1, 2026, analysed 1,119 clinically suspected dengue cases recorded between 2022 and 2025. Led by microbiologist Hiramoni Sarma of the Virus Research Diagnostic Laboratory, the study involved a multidisciplinary team of researchers from microbiology and veterinary microbiology departments, including Sanjay Bhattacharya, Derhasar Brahma, Sristi Majumdar, Jahmabi Gogoi, and Elmy S. Rasul.

Monsoon months drive case surge

The analysis revealed clear seasonal patterns, with dengue infections peaking during the monsoon and post-monsoon period between September and December. Researchers attributed this surge to environmental conditions such as heavy rainfall, waterlogging, and high humidity, which create ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

Among the years studied, 2023 recorded the highest number of confirmed cases at 63, with a positivity rate of 14.6 per cent. This was followed by a decline in 2025, which saw 17 confirmed cases and a positivity rate of 7.3 per cent, indicating year-to-year variability in transmission dynamics.

Urban population and working-age men most affected

The study found that urban residents accounted for 61.2 per cent of confirmed dengue cases, compared to 38.8 per cent from rural areas, suggesting that population density, construction activity, and water storage practices in towns and cities may be key drivers of transmission.

## We are forming government in ADC": BJP

AGARTALA

BJP candidate Bipin Debbarma on Sunday expressed confidence that his party will form the government in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAACD) elections 2026 after casting his vote in the ongoing polls.

Debbarma cast his vote at the 15-Jirania ST District Council polling centre in Tripura during the elections.

He said that voting was being conducted peacefully across the region, with enthusiastic participation from the electorate since the early hours of polling.

"Today I have cast my vote at the polling station. In a democracy, we exercise this right with celebration. Voting has been going on smoothly everywhere since early morning.

People are welcoming this election with enthusiasm, excitement, and joy," he said.

Expressing confidence in his party's prospects, he added, "People are seeing that this time

the BJP will be brought to power in the ADC. The way people are trusting the BJP, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and our state Chief Minister Manik Saha, we are forming a government in the ADC."

Debbarma is the BJP candidate from the Damcherra-Kachucherra ST constituency in Dhalai district, where polling is underway as part of the broader electoral exercise for the TTAADC.

Earlier, the overall voter turnout in the ongoing general election of the TTAADC 2026 stood at around 21.5 per cent till 9 am, according to official polling data.

As per the two-hourly polling report, out of a total of 951,613 registered voters, nearly 204,679 electors exercised their franchise in the first two hours of polling from 7 am to 9 am, showing strong participation during the morning hours.

Between 7 am and 9 am, around 100,058 male voters cast their votes, while 104,621 votes were cast by women, indicating a higher female voter turnout.

## Lt Gen R.P. Kalita Flags Strategic Risks, Energy Readiness in Northeast

DIBRUGARH

Retired Lieutenant General Rana Pratap Kalita on Sunday outlined a wide spectrum of national security challenges and energy preparedness issues, with a particular focus on the Northeast's strategic vulnerabilities and infrastructure resilience.

Delivering a detailed address in Dibrugarh, Kalita highlighted the critical importance of the Siliguri Corridor—often referred to as the "Chicken's Neck"—which serves as the narrow land link connecting mainland India to the Northeast. He described the corridor as a vital artery sustaining road, rail, power, and digital connectivity, warning that any disruption could have far-reaching implications for the region.

Pointing to evolving geopolitical dynamics, Kalita flagged increased infrastructural activity by China in bordering regions,



noting that Indian security agencies have stepped up surveillance and preparedness. While he assessed the chances of a direct military conflict as low, he cautioned against the growing risk of hybrid threats, including attempts to exploit local fault lines and extremist networks. He emphasised the need for a dual-layered security strategy—strengthening core infrastructure along the corridor while simultaneously developing alternative routes and redundancy systems to ensure uninterrupted connectivity during crises.

Coordination between civil administration and security forces, he said, remains crucial for both routine stability and emergency response.

Shifting focus to global energy dynamics, Kalita drew attention to the strategic sensitivity of the Persian Gulf, a key hub for global oil exports. Referring to a recent 15-day ceasefire in the region, he termed it a positive development but cautioned that lasting stability would depend on sustained diplomatic engagement.

On the domestic front, Kalita said Assam is adequately prepared to meet peak electricity demand during the summer months, which has previously reached around 2,800 MW. He noted that the Assam Power Distribution Company Limited has secured sufficient supply through competitive procurement, supplemented by the national grid.

He added that the Assam Pow-

er Generation Corporation Limited contributes less than one-fifth of the state's power requirements, with renewable sources—particularly rooftop solar—playing an increasingly significant role in bridging demand gaps.

Referring to the Subsantari Lower Hydroelectric Project, Kalita noted that Assam has the option to procure power from NHPC Limited, though tariffs may appear relatively higher due to the project's long gestation period. He stressed that procurement decisions would hinge on cost-effectiveness and reliability within the framework of India's integrated national grid.

Summing up, Kalita underscored that safeguarding strategic chokepoints like the Siliguri Corridor, addressing emerging hybrid threats, and strengthening energy resilience are central to ensuring long-term stability in the Northeast.

## Assam Civil Society Flags 'Democratic Backsliding', Questions EC Neutrality After CM's Remarks

GUWAHATI

The Assam Civil Society has raised concerns over what it described as a deteriorating democratic climate in the state, criticising recent remarks by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and questioning the perceived neutrality of the Election Commission of India (ECI) in the aftermath of polling.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the organisation alleged a growing intolerance towards sections of the media and opposition voices, warning that developments following the conclusion of voting have triggered unease about the conduct of the electoral process in Assam.

The group accused the Chief Minister of targeting opposition candidates and media organisations through his public statements, asserting that such actions run counter to established democratic norms and traditions. It fur-



ther claimed that these developments risk undermining public confidence in institutional fairness.

The Assam Civil Society also expressed apprehension regarding the functioning of the Election Commission of India, noting that while the state administration remains under the Commission's mandate during the election period, allegations of harassment and selective action against opposition figures have raised questions about the poll body's impartiality.

Citing specific instances, the organisation referred to cases involving opposition leaders such as Lurinjyoti Gogoi and Kunki Chowdhury. It alleged that both leaders and their supporters have faced undue pressure, and pointed to what it termed as disproportionate action against Chowdhury in an election-related case, while complaints filed from her side have reportedly not received similar attention.

The statement also criticised what it described as "vindictive remarks" by

the Chief Minister against media outlets, including Asomiya Pratidin and DY365, along with certain digital platforms and members of Chowdhury's family.

Calling for restraint, the civil society body urged Himanta Biswa Sarma to avoid statements that could further inflame tensions and emphasised the importance of safeguarding democratic values during the sensitive post-poll period.

At the same time, it appealed to opposition parties and their supporters to exercise caution and refrain from reacting to provocation, underscoring the need to maintain peace and stability.

The statement comes amid heightened political tensions in Assam following the conclusion of voting for the 2026 Assembly elections, with competing narratives emerging over the conduct of both political actors and institutions overseeing the electoral process.

## AJP Candidate Kunki Chowdhury Appears Before Police in MCC Case, Terms Charges 'Baseless'



GUWAHATI

Kunki Chowdhury, an Asom Jatiya Parishad (AJP) candidate from Guwahati Central, appeared before police on Sunday in connection with an alleged Model Code of Conduct (MCC) violation during the Assam Assembly elections, even as she denied all charges and termed them "baseless."

Chowdhury presented herself at Panbazar Police Station in compliance with a notice directing her to appear before 11 am. The notice had cautioned that failure to do so could lead to arrest under provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). She was questioned for nearly two hours by investigating officers.

The case, registered on April 9th the day of polling, was based on a complaint filed by BJP worker Naba Kumar Lahkar, alleging violations of election norms and disruption of free and fair voting. The FIR names Chowdhury along with her campaign manager Sandeep Yadav and invokes provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Speaking to reporters after her appearance, Kunki Chowdhury said she had fully cooperated with the investigation and expressed confidence in due process. "An FIR was filed against me with false allegations. I came here to give my statement and have full faith that the system will investigate fairly," she said.

Her counsel, Santanu Borthakur, described the charges as baseless and "not serious," alleging that the case and summons were aimed at harassing the candidate. He also raised concerns over the timing and wording of the police notice.

The development has added to the charged political atmosphere in the Guwahati Central constituency, where Chowdhury, 27, is among the youngest candidates and is contesting against BJP leader Vijay Kumar Gupta.

The AJP has strongly criticised the police action. Party president Lurinjyoti Gogoi termed the summons "shocking and unfortunate," alleging misuse of administrative machinery by the ruling establishment. He also questioned the lack of action on a complaint filed by Chowdhury over an alleged deepfake video targeting her family.

The controversy follows earlier remarks by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who had warned of legal action against Chowdhury's parents over allegations related to food habits—claims the AJP candidate has dismissed.

Polling for all 126 Assembly constituencies in Assam was held on April 9, recording a turnout of 85.96 per cent. The counting of votes is scheduled for May 4.

## ED Files Chargesheet in Rs 60 Crore Border Projects Scam, Alleges Bribery Network in Assam



GUWAHATI

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has filed a prosecution complaint before a Special Court in Assam in con-

Quest!

India used to be the richest country in the world until the British invasion in the early 17th Century

nection with an alleged ₹60.30-crore bribery and money laundering case linked to infrastructure projects along the Indo-Bangladesh border.

The chargesheet, submitted by the agency's Guwahati Zonal Office under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA), names several individuals, including serving and former officials of the National Projects Construction Corporation Limited

(NPCC), as well as directors of private construction firms and associated entities.

Among those named are Rakesh Mohan Kotwal, former Zonal Manager (Northeast Region) of NPCC; Latiful Pasha, Officer-in-Charge of the Jalpaiguri Project Office; Anish Baid and Binod Singh, directors of M/s Shree Gautam Construction Company Ltd.; and Sunil Kumar, along with others linked to business entities including M/s Jaichand Lal Singh.

According to the ED, the case pertains to contracts awarded by NPCC on behalf of the Border Security Force (BSF) for the construction of nine Border Out Posts (BOPs) along the sensitive frontier.

Investigators allege that Kotwal and Pasha demanded an initial bribe of ₹33 lakh—later negotiated to ₹30 lakh—from contractor Anish Baid for clearing pending bills worth approximately ₹2.24 crore. The agency claims this was part of a larger pattern of illegal gratification sought from contractors engaged in border infrastructure works.

The probe, which stems from an FIR registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), has uncovered a suspected money trail involving hawala transactions routed through Silchar, Guwahati, and Delhi.

The ED stated that around ₹25

lakh was allegedly transferred through these channels via accounts linked to Shree Gautam Construction Company Ltd. and M/s Jaichand Lal Singh before being routed to M/s Vinit Distributors. The transaction was intercepted by the CBI on July 14, 2019, at a hotel in Delhi, where ₹25 lakh in cash was allegedly being handed over to Sunil Kumar. The amount was subsequently seized.

In a related recovery, the ED said an additional ₹15 lakh in cash was found at a Hyundai showroom in Silchar, allegedly stored at the direction of Binod Singh.

Officials further alleged that the accused had solicited bribes from multiple contractors associated with NPCC projects, suggesting a wider corruption network operating within infrastructure contracts in the region.

All accused have been charged under Section 3 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, which pertains to the offence of money laundering and carries penalties under Section 4.

The agency said further investigation is ongoing to trace the full extent of the financial network and identify additional beneficiaries in what is being viewed as a significant corruption case tied to strategic border infrastructure development.

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## “Will you place that letter in public domain...”: MK Stalin questions FM Nirmala Sitharaman



“If your current claim is true, will you place that letter in the public domain?” he asked. The remarks came in response to Sitharaman’s dismissal of MK Stalin’s allegations that the central government has asked the state to stop incentives for paddy cultivation, calling them “factually baseless” and a “deliberate distortion.”

Sitharaman said in a post on X that the Centre had merely suggested that states align their bonus policies with national priorities, such as encouraging crop diversification and achieving self-sufficiency in pulses and oilseeds. She emphasised that the declaration of a bonus over and above the Minimum Support Price (MSP) remains the prerogative of state governments.

Sitharaman accused Stalin of creating diversions to serve his “narrow, self-serving political interests” and urged him to adopt a positive approach and work in the national interest. “The farmers of Tamil Nadu deserve a government that works for their prosperity, not one that weaponises their anxieties for votes,” she said.

Backing the Finance Minister’s statement, the Ministry of Finance said that the communication sent to states was “an advisory to states and was not directive.” West Bengal assembly will be held in two phases - on April 23 and April 29. Votes will be counted on May 4.

government should consider discontinuing the bonus. I have not stated anything that is not present in that letter. Nor is there any need for me to,” he wrote.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister further highlighted that the letter clearly asked the State government to “review the existing bonus policy of the State Government and consider discontinuing the bonus on paddy.”

“While you have stated in your tweet that it is up to the State Governments to consider a bonus above MSP to paddy farmers and nobody has taken away such rights, the letter sent to us clearly asked us to review the existing bonus policy of the State Government and consider discontinuing the bonus on paddy.”

NEW DELHI

The debate between the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman continues as Stalin challenged the Finance Minister to put the letter sent to the Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary, noting remarks of the discontinuation of paddy bonus, in the public domain.

Taking it to X, Stalin said that the letter sent by the Finance Minister to the Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu specifically mentions the consideration for the discontinuation of paddy bonus.

“In the letter your Ministry sent to the Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu, it is clearly stated that since the State’s additional bonus for paddy has led to bumper production, the State

## BJP’s Agnimitra Paul to face TMC’s Tapas Banerjee in high-stakes Asansol Dakshin battle



ASANSOL

As West Bengal prepares for the upcoming Assembly elections, the Asansol Lok Sabha constituency, which includes seven Assembly segments, has emerged as a key electoral battleground, with major political parties stepping up their campaigns.

BJP leader Agnimitra Paul, the sitting MLA from Asansol Dakshin and Vice President of the party’s West Bengal unit, remains one of the most promi-

nent faces in the constituency. Known for her active political presence and organisational role, she is seeking to retain her seat in what is expected to be a closely fought contest.

Among the key contests, Asansol Dakshin is witnessing a high-profile battle. Agnimitra Paul is up against Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Tapas Banerjee, the current MLA from Raniganj, who earlier represented Asansol Dakshin from 2011 to 2021. The Asansol Lok Sabha constituency includes Pandabeswar,

Raniganj, Jamuria, Asansol Dakshin, Asansol Uttar, Kulti and Barabani. It is considered politically significant due to its location in the state’s industrial belt. Asansol, which is part of the Asansol-Durgapur industrial zone, is known for its coal, iron and steel industries, making it one of the most economically important regions in West Bengal. However, despite its industrial importance, several civic issues continue to affect residents. Poor road conditions and inadequate drinking water

supply remain major concerns. Heavy vehicular movement has also damaged roads in many areas, causing daily difficulties for commuters.

Politically, the constituency has been regarded as a stronghold of the TMC, although the BJP has made steady gains in recent years. The region also has a significant Hindu voter base, estimated at around 75 per cent, making it crucial for both parties.

According to the election schedule, polling in West Bengal will be held in two phases on April 23 and April 29, while the results will be declared on May 4. West Bengal has a total of 294 Assembly seats, with the majority mark set at 148.

In the 2021 Assembly elections, the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) secured a decisive victory, winning 213 seats with a vote share of 48.5 per cent.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged as the main opposition, winning 77 seats with a vote share of 38.5 per cent. Smaller players, including RSPMA and Independent candidates, won one seat each. The total declared seats stood at 292.

In comparison, the 2016 Assembly elections also saw AITC dominate, winning 211 seats with a 45.6 per cent vote share. The Indian National Congress secured 44 seats with 12.4 per cent votes, while the CPI(M) won 26 seats with a 20.1 per cent vote share. Other parties, including the BIP and RCP, won three seats each, while Independents secured one seat. The ‘Others’ category accounted for six seats with a 7.7 per cent vote share. With both the TMC and BJP intensifying their efforts, Asansol is set to play an important part in determining the outcome of the upcoming Assembly elections.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Trump says ordered naval blockade of Hormuz while acknowledging US-Iran talks ‘went well’

WASHINGTON

United States President Donald Trump on Sunday said he had ordered a naval blockade of the Strait of Hormuz in response to Iran’s “unyielding” refusal to give up its nuclear ambitions during peace talks in Islamabad.

While acknowledging that the marathon talks in Pakistan had gone “well” and “most points were agreed to,” Trump said Tehran had refused to concede on the issue of its nuclear program.

“Effective immediately, the United States Navy, the Finest in the World, will begin the process of BLOCKADING any and all Ships trying to enter, or leave, the Strait of Hormuz,” Trump said on his Truth Social platform.

He also said the US will begin destroying mines placed by Iran in the Strait.

“Any Iranian who fires at us, or at peaceful vessels, will be BLOWN TO HELL! Iran knows, better than anyone, how to END this situation which has already devastated their Country,” he added.

In two lengthy posts on Truth Social, Trump slammed Iran for promising to open the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic waterway through which a fifth of the world’s crude oil passes, and “knowingly” failing to deliver.

“They say they put mines in the water, even though all of their Navy, and most of their ‘mine droppers,’ have been completely blown up. They may have done so, but what ship owner would want to take the chance?” Trump said.

Iran had effectively blocked the Strait of Hormuz for weeks, since the United States and Israel launched a military campaign against the country.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin has offered to mediate the talks between US and Iran after Pakistan brokered talks ended in both countries failing to reach an agreement on Sunday.



Putin has informed his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian he was ready to help mediate efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East, the Kremlin said.

“Vladimir Putin emphasised his readiness to further facilitate the search for a political and diplomatic settlement to the conflict, and to mediate efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East,” the Kremlin said.

The US and Iran failed to strike a deal to end the West Asia conflict after a crucial 21-hour talks between delegations from both countries in Pakistan’s Islamabad. However, there was no immediate return to hostilities, and the region clung to hope that a fragile truce would hold.

US Vice President JD Vance left Pakistan after the talks, stating that Washington had made Tehran its “final and best offer” for a deal.

“We leave here with a very simple proposal,” he said. “We’ll see if the Iranians accept it.”

Iran’s parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who took part in peace talks, said that Washington was “unable” to win Tehran’s trust during the discussions.

“My colleagues in the Iranian delegation... put forward constructive initiatives but ultimately the other side was unable to gain the trust of the Iranian delegation in this round of negotiations,” Ghalibaf said in a post on X.

The failure of the talks will raise concerns that a return to fighting could drive world energy prices higher and further damage shipping and oil and gas facilities in the Gulf.

President Donald Trump attends the UFC 327 at Kaseya Center, Saturday, April 11, 2026, in Miami.

Nawaf Salam made his remarks on the eve of the 51st anniversary of the

start of Lebanon’s 15-year civil war.

Lebanon and Israel will hold direct talks in Washington starting Tuesday in a bid to end Israel’s conflict with Hezbollah, an Iran-backed militant group in Lebanon.

Hezbollah supporters and critics of the decision to negotiate have protested in Beirut, saying the government is too weak to end the war.

The government has set a truce as a prerequisite for talks, and plans to demand an Israeli withdrawal, the release of Lebanese prisoners, and the return of over one million displaced Lebanese.

Lebanese authorities have criticized Israel’s airstrikes and ground invasion, but have also decried Hezbollah for launching rockets on March 2nd in solidarity with Iran, sparking the latest escalation.

The Lebanese government came to power just over a year ago promising to disarm all non-state groups.

“I feel the pain of the mother who lost her son combatting on the frontlines as I feel the pain of the mother who lost her child who did not choose this war and only wanted to live,” said Salam.

Kevin Book, the managing director of research at research firm ClearView Energy Partners, said Sunday that leaner volumes generally mean tighter markets and higher prices, but “much depends on the scope and implementation of the blockade.”

“How Tehran responds matters, too. Iranian and/or Houthi reprisals against Gulf producers’ alternative routes could drive prices still higher,” Book said.

Jonathan Elkind, senior research scholar at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University said Trump’s statement on Fox News that implementing the blockade will take some time also adds uncertainty.

“Is this a climb down because of concerns about how sharply oil markets were set to rise in tomorrow’s trading? No one knows,” he said.

## At least 100 killed in Nigeria after air force ‘misfire’ on market



MAIDUGURI

A Nigerian Air Force strike targeting jihadi rebels hit a local market in northeastern Nigeria, killing over 100 civilians including children and injuring many others, a rights group and local media reported on Sunday. Officials confirmed a misfire without providing details.

Amnesty International cited survivors as saying that at least 100 people were killed in the air-strike on Saturday on a village in Yobe state, near the border with Borno state, which is the epicenter of the jihadi insurgency that has ravaged the region for over a decade.

“We have their pictures and they include children,” Isa Sanusi, Amnesty International’s Nigeria director, told The Associated Press, referring to the casualties.

“We are in touch with people that are there, we spoke with the hospital,” he said. “We spoke with the person in charge of casualties, and we spoke with the victims.”

A worker at the Geidam General hospital, in Yobe, said at least 23 people injured in the incident were receiving treatment. The worker spoke anonymously as he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Such misfires are common in Nigeria, where the military

often conducts air raids to battle armed groups who control vast forest enclaves. At least 500 civilians have died since 2017 in such misfires, according to an AP tally of reported deaths. Security analysts point to loopholes in intelligence gathering as well as insufficient coordination between ground troops, air assets and stakeholders.

The large, remote market located near the Borno-Yobe border is known to be often used by Boko Haram jihadis to buy food supplies.

Abdulmumin Bulama, a member of a civilian security group working with the Nigerian military in the north-east, said there was intelligence that Boko Haram terrorists had gathered very close to the market and were planning an attack on nearby communities.

“The intel was shared and the Air Force jet acted based on the credible information,” Bulama said.

The Yobe State Government confirmed in a statement that a Nigerian military strike was targeting a stronghold of the Boko Haram jihadi group in the area and that “some people... who went to the Jilli weekly market were affected.”

The Yobe State Emergency Management Agency also acknowledged that an incident had occurred resulting in “casualties affecting some market-

ers” and said it had dispatched response teams to the area.

Nigeria’s military issued a statement saying it conducted a successful strike on a “terrorist enclave and logistics hub” belonging to jihadis in the area, killing scores of them as they rode on motorcycles. It did not provide any detail about a possible misfire, but noted that motorcycles remain prohibited in conflict hot spots and “any such movements in restricted areas are therefore treated with the utmost seriousness.”

Amnesty International has called for an independent investigation into the incident, adding that the military is “fond of” labeling civilian casualties as bandits.

Nigeria, which is Africa’s most populous country, is battling a complex security crisis, especially in the north, where there is a decade-long insurgency and several armed groups that kidnap for ransom.

Among the most prominent Islamic militant groups are Boko Haram and its breakaway faction, which is affiliated with the Islamic State group and known as Islamic State West Africa Province. There is also the IS-linked Lakurawa group operating in communities in the northwestern part of the country that borders Niger Republic.

## Nagaland University-led Multi-Institute Study decodes cancer-fighting potential of traditional Konyak herbal medicine

Using advanced techniques such as molecular simulations, researchers identified compounds with strong anti-cancer potential, showing performance comparable to existing drugs while indicating lower toxicity



### LUMAMI, NAGALAND

Researchers from Nagaland University, Berhampur University, and Saveetha Medical College have, in a preliminary investigation, identified traditional herbal formulation used by the Konyak tribe of Nagaland for its anti-cancer potential, providing valuable scientific insight into indigenous medicinal practices.

A video byte of Dr. G. Bupesh, Assistant Professor, Dept of Forestry, Nagaland University, explaining this research can be viewed and downloaded from the following link - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h-PVQoYTRercMs2-aOkY5HpIZYVAK-Cce6/view>



Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing.

While the researchers found that there has been limited scientific effort to understand the mechanisms through which such remedies exert their therapeutic effects.

Traditional herbs are widely used. However, few studies have been attempted to understand their mechanism of action or validate their effectiveness using modern scientific tools. The present study attempts to bridge this gap by combining traditional knowledge with modern analytical and computational approaches.

The multi-institute research team investigated a five-plant polyherbal formulation and found that its bioactive compounds can effectively target VEGFR2, a key protein responsible for tumour blood vessel growth.

The findings were published in the *Microchemical Journal* (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.microc.2026.117666>), a peer-reviewed scientific journal that publishes research on analytical methods and techniques for detecting and measuring chemical substances at micro and trace levels. The paper was co-authored by Longnyu M. Kon-

gath, G. Bupesh, Parthasarathy Sudharsan, Nokenketla Jamir, Sidhartha Saikia from Department of Forestry, Nagaland University, along with collaborators from Berhampur University and Saveetha Medical College.

Applauding the multi-institute research team for uncovering the cancer-fighting potential of traditional Konyak herbal medicine, Prof. Jagadish K. Patnaik, Vice Chancellor, Nagaland University, said, "By integrating indigenous knowledge with advanced molecular simula-

tions, the study identifies promising compounds that match the efficacy of existing drugs while indicating lower toxicity. This achievement reflects the university's dedication to innovative, impactful research rooted in local wisdom and global scientific advancement."

Emphasizing the uniqueness of the study, Dr. G. Bupesh, Assistant Professor (Natural Products and Tribal Health Research), Department of Forestry, Nagaland University, said, "This is the first time a specific five-plant formulation used by the Konyak tribal healers has been scientifically analysed and validated using advanced computational methods. Using advanced techniques such as GC-MS analysis and molecular simulations, we identified compounds with strong anti-cancer potential, showing performance comparable to existing drugs while indicating lower toxicity."

The study further revealed that these compounds demonstrated stable interactions and favourable safety profiles, indicating their potential as natural anti-angiogenic agents that could inhibit tumour growth. Importantly, the research also showed that these natural compounds selectively target VEGFR2 over similar proteins, which could help reduce side effects in future therapeutic applications. The study also highlighted that most identified compounds showed low toxicity and acceptable pharmacokinetic properties, making them promising candidates for further drug development.

According to the researchers, the findings not only validate indigenous knowledge systems but also open up new pathways for cost-effective and nature-based drug discovery. While the findings are currently based on computational analysis, the researchers emphasized the need for further laboratory and clinical studies to validate these results, particularly in the context of colon cancer treatment.

By combining indigenous knowledge with advanced scientific tools, the study provides a powerful example of how traditional practices can inform future innovations in medicine, while also preserving valuable cultural heritage.

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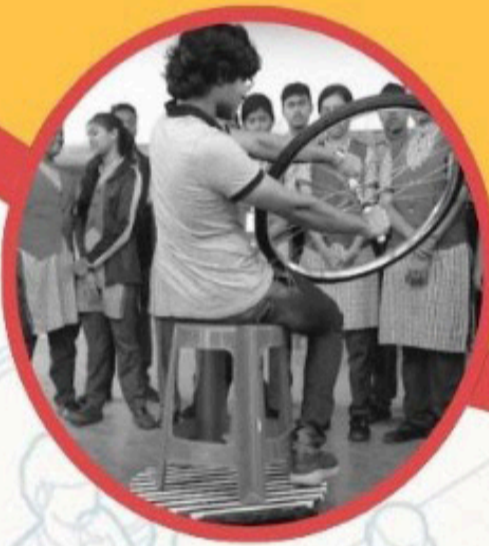
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