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PRICE ₹ 8

95 forest camps in KNP under water, movement of commercial vehicles restricted ● Modi, Shah take stock of situation

## State flood scene grim; mother-son dead

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, July 1:** Assam's flood situation on Monday turned critical following heavy rainfall in the state as well as in neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh.

The Brahmaputra and all its tributaries are flowing above the danger level. Informing this here on Monday, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned of heavy rainfall for the next two to three days.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday took stock of the prevailing flood situation and assured all possible help to the state to tackle the flood situation, he said.

Sarma, while talking to the press here, admitted that the second wave of flood has affected the state and that flood situation in Assam has turned critical given the water level of river Brahmaputra at all points has crossed danger level.

"Modi has called me up in the morning and assured me of all possible help to tackle the flood situation. He said that the Army and NDRF are



ready to work hand in hand with the state government," Sarma said. Sarma said that the PM has advised him that the MLAs and ministers should

swing into action to help the people in distress. He further informed that Home minister Amit Shah also reviewed the flood situation in Assam.

He said that the coming 3 days will be crucial for the state given heavy rainfall in many parts of the state and Arunachal Pradesh.

The IMD has predicted heavy rainfall in Nalbari, Karbi Anglong, Dima Hasao, Tinsukia, Dhubri, Goalpara, Bongaigaon, Golaghat and Biswanath.

"Water levels of the tributaries of Brahmaputra are about to breach embankments when the respective levels cross danger levels. If water level crosses danger level then situation is considered grim," he said.

Sarma said that till date 41 revenue circles in 14 districts are reeling under flood waters and that 698 villages are inundated by flood waters. He said that as many as 2,70,628 families have been affected by flood till date.

A woman and her child lost their lives due to the flood on Sunday, he said. Analysing the situation Sarma said that National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Gaurav Gogoi urges Gadkari to fix deplorable Teok-Sivasagar highway

HT Correspondent

**JORHAT, July 1:** Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi has urged Union minister Nitin Gadkari to intervene and take immediate action to complete the Teok-Sivasagar highway in Jorhat, which is in a deplorable condition.

Gogoi, while traveling through a stretch of the highway between Jorhat and Sivasagar district on Sunday, uploaded visuals showing the pitiable condition exacerbated by incessant monsoonal rains, and sought Gadkari's attention.

In the video, Gogoi emphasised that the Teok-Sivasagar highway is crucial for connectivity in the Jorhat region.

"Work on several portions of the road has been ongoing for several years. The condition of the road is deplorable, leading to frequent accidents and long traffic jams. Despite multiple contractors and tenders, the issues persist, causing severe inconvenience to the public," Gogoi stated in a video posted on the micro-blogging site X. Gogoi noted that Gadkari had

visited Jorhat recently and expressed optimism that the Minister would take necessary steps to expedite completion and alleviate public suffering.

The Lok Sabha MP, who had been in Jorhat since Saturday, visited Jhanjimmukh in the Teok assembly constituency on Sunday to assess villages affected by severe waterlogging. Highlighting Gadkari's previous visits to Jorhat and his reputation for swift project implementation nationwide, Gogoi appealed to prioritize this critical highway project.

Several accidents, including fatalities, have occurred recently due to safety lapses such as inadequate barricading, warning signs, and street lighting for commuters.

Notably, two private companies contracted for the project in the past five years were terminated by NHIDCL due to reported anomalies in implementation.

It's worth mentioning that student bodies like AJYCP and AASU, along with various organisations, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Robbery accused injured in police firing in Assam

**KOKRAJHAR, July 1:** A man accused of robbery was injured in police firing while allegedly trying to escape from custody in Assam's Kokrajhar district on Sunday night, an official said.

The incident took place near a tea garden at Salakati in the district when police had taken the arrested accused for a search operation in the area. The accused was arrested for robbing a man of ₹ 34 lakh in front of Axis Bank in Kokrajhar town on June 21, police said.

During the search operation, the accused allegedly attempted to flee, prompting police to fire at his leg to prevent his escape, the official said on Monday. The accused has been admitted to the R N B Civil Hospital for treatment.

Police had arrested four suspects on Sunday in connection with the robbery case from various parts of Lower Assam and recovered ₹ 21.5 lakh from their possession. The injured was identified as Amir Husain from Manikpur, while the other accused (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Nearly 1.2 lakh students take free college admission

**GUWAHATI, July 1:** Education minister Ranoo Pegu on Monday said over 71 per cent of more than 1.66 lakh students taking admission in different colleges across the state have availed the fee waiver scheme for poor families.

Previously, students with a parental annual income of up to ₹ 2 lakh were eligible for free admission, but the limit has been raised to ₹ 4 lakh from this year, Pegu said in a post on X.

The colleges now allow ration cards as proof of family earnings instead of income certificates earlier, he added.

"This year, 1,18,199 (71 per cent) students out of 1,66,123 students have availed free admission till yesterday evening," Pegu said.

The admission fees are set by colleges and universities with the State Fee Regulation Committee determining the upper limit, he added. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### HT BRIEFS

#### ITBP evacuates

**GUWAHATI:** The 20th Battalion of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) on Saturday successfully carried out a daring rescue operation in Arunachal Pradesh. Leveraging their expertise in mountaineering, they managed to evacuate a critical medical emergency involving a heart patient, as well as stranded civilians following a major landslide near Tatu (Aalo). ITBP on its official micro-blogging site handle X informed, "20 Bn #ITBP conducted a heroic rescue mission in Arunachal Pradesh. Using their mountaineering skills, they evacuated a medical emergency (heart) patient and stranded civilians after a massive landslide near Tatu (Aalo)." As per reports, a large landslide took place on the Pasighat - Mariyang-Yingkiong national highway near Geying. Although a goods truck was swept away, there have been no casualties reported.

#### Review meeting

**GUWAHATI:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma presided over the 21st Board Meeting of the Assam Cancer Care Foundation in Guwahati on Sunday, emphasizing significant progress in the state's efforts to combat cancer. Following the meeting, CM Sarma shared key achievements on micro-blogging site X stating, "I chaired the 21st board meeting of the @CareAssam Foundation and the strides we have been making in cancer care are impressive." The Foundation has provided screenings for 191,747 individuals and managed 168,047 outpatient department (OPD) cases. Additionally, 64,634 inpatient department (IPD) patients have been treated, and a targeted breast cancer screening initiative has benefited 4,009 women.

## Assam registers first case under new criminal laws: Himanta

**GUWAHATI, July 1:** Assam has registered the first case under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita in Nagaon district, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday.

It was registered at 12:32 pm in Nagaon Sadar Police Station, he said at a press conference here.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam came into effect across the country from Monday, replacing the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively.

The replacement of the colonial laws is of particular importance for Assam, as "we are fighting against child marriage, and had to take the help of Protection of Children from

Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) Act to overcome the interpretation of the Islamic laws," for the last one-and-a-half years, he said.

"Under the new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, even consensual intercourse below the age of 18 is equivalent to rape and is punishable accordingly," Sarma said.

The minimum age for intercourse with consent for married women has been raised from 15 years to 18 years, the CM said. This new clause will help in dealing with child marriage cases, and will prove to be a deterrent for those involved with the social menace, Sarma said.

"The colonial laws got replaced and 115 master trainers of the Assam Police have been working for the last few months to make a smooth (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## BJP slams Rahul Gandhi for his 'not Hindus' remarks

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** The BJP on Monday protested inside and outside the Parliament after leader of opposition Rahul Gandhi said in the Lok Sabha that members of the ruling party are not Hindus as they promote division and violence.

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi said it is a serious matter that Gandhi is calling the entire Hindu society violent, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and other ministers demanded an apology from the Congress leader. "BJP and RSS do not represent all the Hindus... We are also Hindus," Gandhi was heard saying in his response in the Lower House, amid treasury benches protest.

In a post on X, Shah said Gandhi insulted "crores of Hindus" by saying that Hindus commit violence, lie and spread hatred. "He should apologise for this," he demanded.

Union health minister and BJP president JP Nadra also lambasted Gandhi, accusing him of combining lies and hatred in his speech. It was a worst show by Gandhi on his first day, he said.

"Third Time Fail LoP has a knack for agitated, flawed logic. His speech today has shown that neither



has he understood the mandate of 2024 (his third successive loss) nor does he have any humility," he said in a post on X.

Slamming Gandhi for his remarks, Union minister G Kishan Reddy said democracy will remain intact and there will also be peace "so long as Hindus are in majority" in the country. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Pijush Hazarika assesses flood situation in Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, July 1:** Assam Minister Pijush Hazarika visited Diphu town in Karbi Anglong and took stock of the flood situation in the district on Monday.

During his visit, Hazarika reviewed the current situation and discussed potential measures to mitigate future flood risks, such as strengthening embankments, dredging rivers, and improving drainage systems.

The minister announced plans to construct a 15 km embankment to protect riverbanks in West Karbi Anglong from flooding, though specific river names were not mentioned.

"In West Karbi Anglong, a 15 km river embankment will be built to prevent erosion from various rivers. The construction of this embankment will ensure safety from flooding in West Karbi Anglong. Additionally, 5 km of embankment work has already been completed in Parokhuwa and Nonmati," he stated. Hazarika also mentioned that geo bags, sand



bags, and porcupines have been delivered and will be distributed to reinforce riverbanks against erosion. He assured that more materials would be sent if necessary. The minister reported that ₹ 70 crore has been allocated to Karbi Anglong over the past three years specifically for flood relief. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## CM Biren denies report on resignation, asks media not to spread rumours

**IMPHAL, July 1:** Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Monday described a report on his resignation as unfounded and asked the media not to spread rumours.

Singh also claimed that it is an attempt by political rivals who want to take advantage of the prevailing situation in the state which has been in the grip of violence since May last year. His statement came three days after a media outlet reported that Singh is likely to resign soon.

"Manipur is passing through a troubled time. In such a crucial time, the leaders of Manipur can't afford to be weak. We are fully confident of our abilities," the chief minister said.

Addressing the Manipur issue is more important, Singh told reporters after attending a programme in Imphal on the implementation of three new criminal laws across the country. "The rumours (on resignation) are possibly spread by those who want to be CM and ministers, as well as the opposition," he said.

The chief minister said that his government communicates regularly with the PMO and the Union Home Ministry on the Manipur situation.

"If we leave, who will lead the people? More chaos will be created. We have to guide the people," said Singh



who heads a BJP government in the northeastern state.

Singh also called on media outlets not to publish unfounded reports. "Panic situation might be created if speculative reports are published without verification. Publications of such unfounded reports may give pleasure to some people. However, chances are 90 per cent of the people in the state would start panicking," he said. He asked media outlets (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### COURTESY VISIT



The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal paid a courtesy visit to Rashtrapati Bhavan to call on President of India, Droupadi Murmu in New Delhi on Monday. HT Photo

### Shivangi the national president of the Indian American Forum for Political Education

## Eminent Indian-American physician elected official delegate to Republican Convention

**WASHINGTON, July 1:** Eminent Indian-American physician Dr Sampat Shivangi has been elected as an official delegate to the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee this month that would formally nominate former US president Donald Trump as the party's presidential candidate.

Trump, 78, is the presumptive Republican Party candidate for the presidential election.

An influential Indian-American community leader, Dr Shivangi, has been elected as a National Delegate at the convention for the sixth time.

"It is a great pleasure and honour to share the news that I have been nominated and elected as (an) official delegate at the upcoming Republican National Convention to be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, from July 13 to July 19, 2024," Dr Shivangi said.



The four-day Republican National Convention (RNC) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, would formally nominate Trump as the party's candidate for the November 5 presidential election.

The nomination process would be completed by Republican delegates from across the country.

Dr Shivangi, a lifelong member of the Republican Party and a founding member of the Republi-

can Indian Council and the Republican Indian National Council, has been nominated as RNC delegate six consecutive times.

"This will be my sixth time serving as a National Delegate at the Republican National Convention to nominate the Republican Party nominee to contest the national presidential election," he said. "My nomination began as early as when President George W Bush was nominated in New York, then-Senator George McCain, Governor Mitt Romney, (and) President Donald Trump in 2016 and 2020. Now again to re-elect President Donald Trump in 2024 in Milwaukee," he said.

He is the national president of the Indian American Forum for Political Education, one of the oldest Indian American Associations. Over the past three decades, he has lobbied for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



## Villagers rescue elephant calf trapped in well



**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, July 1:** An elephant calf fell into a kutchra well in the early hours in Honggram, West Karbi Anglong, and was successfully rescued by villagers. Due to continuous rain and difficulty in finding food, wild elephants are increasingly encroaching into human settlements. Around 3:00 am, a herd of approximately 10 wild elephants entered Mongal Rongphar village, Honggram, intending to cross the Karbi Langpi River. During this movement, a calf from the herd fell into a kutchra well located in the backyard of a house. The well, dug by villagers for water consumption and washing purposes, became a trap for the young elephant.

Jirsong Timung, from Kangteeng Teron village, Honggram, who was present during the incident and involved in the rescue operation, explained that villagers heard the distress cries of the elephant calf. Upon investigation, they discovered the calf trapped inside the well.

Timung stated that the villagers promptly mobilised to rescue the calf. Using spades and hand hoes (kudal), they carefully excavated the earth around the well to create an exit path for the elephant calf. By gradually filling the well with earth, they facilitated the calf's safe ascent. The rescue operation concluded successfully around 8:00 am, Timung recounted.

Another villager at the scene mentioned that although Forest staff arrived later, the entire rescue effort was spearheaded by local villagers, demonstrating their quick and effective response to the situation.

## AIDSO and AIMSS lead protests, decry drug abuse & crime surge

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, July 1:** In protest against the uncontrolled prevalence of drugs, alcohol, gambling, and the government's instruction to wine shops to increase their sales, the Sonitpur District committee of All India Democratic Students' Organisation (AIDSO) and a women's organisation AIMSS registered a strong protest against the Assam government's directive on Monday. They criticised the move to boost revenue through increased alcohol sales, citing a rapid growth in anti-social activities such as drug abuse, gambling, rape, burglary, and theft in the region. Activists from both organisations, supported by people from all walks of life, conducted a protest rally from Hem Baruah Hall. Later, they demonstrated their opposition in front of the district commissioner's office, adorned with posters and banners, and voiced slogans against drug peddling, gambling, and other anti-social activities.

## Aryabhata Science Centre hosts District-Level Science Meet-2024

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 1:** The District Organising Committee, Aryabhata Science Centre, in association with the district administration of Cachar, organised a District-Level Science Meet-2024 at Government Girls Higher Secondary & Multipurpose School on Sunday with a day-long program. The competition aims to develop a scientific temperament among students, make science education exciting through experimentation and hands-on activities, and promote basic science as a career option. Students from various schools under Cachar education block participated, displaying their handmade science projects on different subjects. Inaugurating the event, district development commissioner of Cachar, Norsing Bey, who was the special guest, appreciated the Aryabhata Science Centre for organising the competition to foster creative talent and generate a scientific temper among children. DDC Bey also commended the students for their participation and urged them to be sincere in their studies, emphasising that it is the prime duty of students. The chief guest, Professor Fazal Ahmed Talukdar from NIT Silchar, thanked the Aryabhata Science Centre for promoting science and technology among school children in villages. He advised parents and teachers to guide students, helping common people live and work in better conditions. The inaugural session was followed by the opening of the exhibition stalls by DDC Norsing Bey and Professor Fazal Ahmed Talukdar. DDC Bey also interacted with the district coordinators of Aryabhata Science Centre, Cachar, discussing ways to strengthen the centre's activities.

## Summer workshop kicks off at Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya

**HT Correspondent**

**MORIGAO, July 1:** A 15-day long summer workshop commenced on Monday under the aegis of the Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya, Morigaon, at the Srimanta Sankardev Sangha's Zila Namghar and Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya's office premises. The workshop aims to promote the wonderful creations of saint Srimanta Sankardeva among the younger generation, including Sankari dance, musical instruments, and theatre. It was organised by the Cultural Affairs Department, government of Assam, in collaboration with the Jagiroa Cultural Center, Morigaon. The workshop will be conducted by six prominent music practitioners with various degrees in Sankari music. It was officially inaugurated by the additional district commissioner of Morigaon, Dr Sangita Barthakur, ACS. The inaugural ceremony was moderated by the president of Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya, Gyan Muhan Deka. The event was attended by Anshuman Dutta, cultural officer at Jagiroa Cultural Centre, Birinchi Kumar Sharma, president of the Morigaon District Journalists Association.

# Dibrugarh grapples with severe waterlogging

Union minister Sarba and CM Sarma discuss emergency measures

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, July 1:** Dibrugarh town continues to grapple with severe waterlogging following relentless heavy rainfall. The situation worsened on Monday, with new areas succumbing to flooding. All 22 wards of the town have been inundated since June 27.

State Disaster Management minister Jogen Mohan assessed the situation in Dibrugarh on Monday and instructed officials to take urgent measures to address the crisis. Dibrugarh district commissioner Bikram Kairi and superintendent of police Rakesh Reddy also inspected waterlogged areas at Thana Chariali.

State Disaster Management minister Jogen Mohan visited the urban flood-affected areas of Dibrugarh town this afternoon. Accompanied by district commissioner Bikram Kairi and superintendent of police Rakesh Reddy, the minister surveyed the flood-affected Mancotta Road and Thana Chariali areas of the town.

"We are actively addressing the issue. If necessary, we will install additional pumps to drain out the rainwater from the town. We need to plan the drainage system scientifically for a permanent solution," said the minister. Mancotta Road, a crucial thoroughfare, has been



submerged for five days, particularly from Chowkidinghee traffic point to Phoolbagan. Other important roads such as AT Road, RKB Road, HS Road, KC Gogoi Road, Jail Road, VKV Road, Jhalukpara Road, KP Road, PN Road, and Convo Road are also severely waterlogged. Residents in areas like Khalihamari, West Milannagar, Jiban Phukan Nagar, Lachit Nagar, Chowkidinghee Khanigaon, Ganapara, Padum Nagar, Santipara,

Lakhi Nagar, Jiban Phukan Nagar, Guardpara, and Graham Bazar are facing significant hardships due to flooding. The Dibrugarh Police Reserve, old SP office, All India Radio office, Inspector of Schools Office, Joint Director of Health office, schools, and colleges have been affected by waterlogging. All schools in Dibrugarh district were ordered closed from Monday by the Inspector of Schools.

Dibrugarh mayor Saikat Patra

noted that floodwaters from the Brahmaputra River have entered Dibrugarh town from the Majjan area, exacerbating the situation. He acknowledged that without a cessation in rain and improved weather conditions, relief from waterlogging may not be immediate, as drains are overwhelmed.

"It's a serious issue. The Dibrugarh district administration should understand the gravity of the situation before it's too late. The Di-

brugarh Town Protection (DTP) drain should be cleaned using scientific methods, and illegal encroachments should be swiftly cleared to prevent further waterlogging issues," said Ranjan Sharma, a resident of Dibrugarh.

Meanwhile, a physical trainer (PT) teacher at Sampurna Kendriya Vidyalaya died due to electrocution after coming into contact with a live wire from a generator in Dibrugarh on Sunday morning. The deceased, identified as Pawan Gare, 29, a resident of Majuli, was also a boys' hostel warden. He had gone to start the power generator following a power cut due to waterlogging in the hostel area. Despite being rushed to the hospital, he was declared brought dead by doctors. Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal held a telephonic discussion with chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma regarding the grim flood situation in Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, and other parts of the state. Sonowal requested Sarma to provide all necessary assistance to flood victims and support emergency efforts to mitigate losses due to floods.

Chief minister Sarma assured Sonowal of immediate relief for affected regions and pledged assistance and support to those affected by the floods.

## Diphu and Sivasagar host awareness sessions on updated laws



**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, July 1:** The Diphu Police Station organised an awareness programme on the new criminal laws of the country, aimed at replacing colonial-era laws, at the Circuit House on Monday.

Stakeholders such as the Karbi Students Association (KSA), members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), school children, senior citizens, and doctors participated in the awareness programme. Speakers included District & Sessions Judge of Diphu Judicial Court, Roshan Lal; Additional Sessions Judge, Gi-

tali Rabha; and public prosecutor, Dilip Kumar Dekka. They explained the implications of the new criminal laws, which bring significant changes to India's criminal justice system, replacing the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, and Indian Evidence Act with Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyan (BSA).

Following the awareness programme, Sanjib Kumar Saikia, APS, SP of Karbi Anglong, briefed the media. He highlighted that

the awareness programme aimed to inform the public about the enforcement of the new criminal laws from July 1. These laws introduce various changes, new sections, and procedures designed to meet the needs of the country's citizens. Saikia emphasised that the new laws are citizen-centric and will benefit all sections of society, including children and women. The SP also mentioned new facilities under the law, such as the provision of zero FIR, online registration of police complaints, and issuance of summonses through electronic modes such as SMS.

**Our Sivasagar correspondent adds:** On Monday, an awareness meeting was held at Sivasagar PS regarding three new criminal laws that have come into effect nationwide. SP Sivasagar, Subhrajyoti Bora, emphasised that these laws aim to enhance accountability and improve public accessibility within the police administration.

The new laws allow police officers to record information received via electronic modes such as e-mails and WhatsApp. However, the complainant must physically visit the PS to sign the FIR. It is now mandatory to video record the seizure procedure, and medical officers must submit medical reports within 7 days for POCSO cases to prevent easy bail for the accused. In gang rape

cases involving minors, the death sentence may be applicable. Bora highlighted that investigating officers are now required to update complainants about case progress within 90 days. Additionally, any PS must register a case from a person, even if the incident occurred elsewhere. The new laws are gender-neutral and are expected to significantly reduce litigation time and alleviate the burden on Indian courts. Dr Saumerjyoti Mahanta, principal of Sivasagar Commerce College, remarked that these laws are a step towards overcoming colonial legacies, ensuring people's rights to live peacefully in their own country while safeguarding the rights of the accused. Senior journalist Manoj Kumar Borthakur praised the government's efforts to reduce the financial and temporal burdens associated with over 5 crore pending cases in Indian courts.

Police officer Sikharani Senapaty discussed changes in provisions concerning women-centric cases, particularly sexual harassment and POCSO offenses. Social worker Madhurjya Borgohain chaired the meeting, attended by OC Sivasagar PS Kujajit Sharma, principal of Government HS School, Manju Chetia, and over a hundred citizens, students, and organisational representatives.

## Cabinet ministers engage business leaders in Tezpur on GST concerns

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, July 1:** The cabinet committee comprising state government's minister for Housing & Urban Affairs and Irrigation, Ashok Singhal, and state Finance minister Ajanta Neog interacted with trade and business organisations from several districts of Central Assam on Goods and Services Tax (GST) at the Tezpur Convention Centre near here on Monday. This was the third meeting of the regional consultative meeting scheduled to be held at different places across the state.

Representatives of various trade organisations attending the meeting briefed the two ministers on the difficulties they faced following notices issued to them under GST and made several suggestions, including simplification of the tax payment system. In his speech, minister Singhal said that protecting the interests of taxpayers has always been a priority for the present government. He mentioned that the state government has consis-



tently supported businessmen and is committed to effectively addressing the challenges they face, particularly in tax payment. "GST was introduced under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to benefit the business community in the state," he added, mentioning that Assam is the first state in the country to conduct cabinet-level discussions with businessmen at the grassroots level, under the special initiative of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sharma.

Singhal also appreciated the contribution of the business community from the participating districts towards the nation-building process. He stated that the ministers would hold further discussions in Tinsukia, Sivasagar, Jorhat, and Silchar to address traders' concerns regarding GST notices and would submit their reports within a month.

The meeting was attended by MLA Prithviraj Rava, Pramod Barthakur, Ganesh Limbu, Krishna Kamal Tanty, state chief tax commissioner Pallav Gopal Jha, and other top officials of the department, as well as representatives of trade and business organisations from Tezpur, Dhekiajuli, Bishwanath Chariali, Nagaon, Hojai, and Morigaon.

Following this, the two ministers also held a separate meeting with deputy tax commissioners from the mentioned districts of Central Assam and suggested working with sympathetic consideration, offering relaxation to them.

## Thowra MLA narrowly escapes boat capsizing

**HT Correspondent**

**DEMOW, July 1:** Thowra MLA Sushanta Borgohain narrowly escaped a boat capsizing in Nitaipukhuri Rajabari Barpathar village under Demow constituency (formerly Thowra LAC) on Monday. He and his companions fell into the water as the boat sank but fortunately emerged unharmed. The incident occurred during their journey to assess flood damage in the area.

Speaking on his X (formerly Twitter) handle on Monday, Thowra MLA Sushanta Borgohain mentioned visiting Barpathar village in Rajabari Gaon Panchayat, Demow Constituency, to survey the flood damage caused by the Brahmaputra. The district administration is actively providing relief to affected residents. Borgohain was accompanied by Hiranjit Bireswar Deori, Pradip Gogoi, and the gaon pradhan during the assessment.

According to sources, due to incessant rain, the water level of the Brahmaputra has increased, causing several villages in Demow constituency (formerly Thowra LAC) to be inundated.

## Nagaon Lions Club honours three senior physicians

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, July 1:** Along with the rest of the country, Nagaon Lions Club celebrated International Doctor's Day on Monday. On this occasion, as in previous years, Nagaon Lions Club felicitated three noted and sincere physicians of the small town with fulam gamosa, mementos, japi, and appraisal letters at their respective workplaces. Dr Dipen K Sarma was felicitated at his Foudzari-patty-based Police Hospital, Dr Sitangshu Chakraborty at Lawkhowa Road-based Shikha Homeopathic Hospital, and Dr Brijmohan Khaderia at his workplace near Haibargaon by the club members.

The felicitation program was initiated by the newly elected president of the club, Ajoy Mittal, along with secretary Pralay Shah, treasurer Madan Shah, PRO Biswajit Mahanta, Gurucharan Singh, Bakul Bora, Mahabir Agarwal, and other members of the club.

## SBI Sootea marks 69th Bank Day

**HT Correspondent**

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, July 1:** The 69th Bank Day was celebrated in SBI Sootea with great pomp and grandeur on Monday. The customers and staff were addressed by branch manager Prem Chetry, who highlighted the role played by SBI in nation-building throughout its 69-year journey.

The celebrations began with the felicitation of important customers and influential people of the society. A cake-cutting ceremony was led by Neeraj Nishim Hazarika, a young entrepreneur from the locality, in the presence of Sootea Municipal Board chairperson Dipsikha Handique and other veteran and important customers. Neeraj Nishim Hazarika praised the excellent management of the branch by branch manager Prem Chetry and the service delivery by the staff and officers. Sweets were distributed among the customers.

# TOF master trainers training prog launched at Assam Agricultural University

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, July 1:** In a significant step towards enhancing Trees Outside Forests (TOF) and empowering farmers and tree growers to adopt TOF and agroforestry practices, a five-day training of TOF master trainers is being held from July 1-5 at Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat.

The training program is organised by the Centre for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Forest, government of Assam. Upon completion of the program, these TOF master trainers will mobilise a minimum of 100 farmers from their respective villages to disseminate the knowledge they have gained, promoting the adoption and dissemination of agroforestry practices on the ground.

This initiative is part of the Trees Outside Forests in India (TOFI) program, a five-year collaboration between the United



States Agency for International Development (USAID) and India's Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MOEFCC), implemented by CIFOR-ICRAF.

The program was inaugurated by Dr BC Deka, vice chancellor of Assam Agricultural University (AAU). In his address, Dr Deka

emphasised the crucial role trees play in people's lives and the myriad benefits agroforestry offers to farmers. He commended the TOFI initiative for aiding in income generation and taking significant steps toward mitigating the global climate crisis. Dr Deka also highlighted the potential economic

benefits of carbon credits associated with agroforestry, which farmers can leverage.

Nandha Kumar, divisional forest officer (DFO) of Jorhat division in Assam, who attended the session, articulated the critical role of wood in the industry and the dynamics of wood supply and demand. He explained how recent deregulation of species in Assam would provide farmers with greater freedom regarding transit and felling constraints.

Kumar also highlighted the involvement of farmers in the Amrit Brikshya Andolan in Assam, a significant initiative led by the chief minister. Santanu Pujari, chairman of the Assam Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (AIIDC), underscored the importance of the TOFI initiative in developing the state's wood-based industries and establishing sustainable infrastructure. He encouraged farmers, as major stakeholders, to contribute to a more sustainable and profitable future for the state

through active participation in the initiative.

Dr AK Das, director (DPGS) of Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, and Rajib Bora, scientist - G from the Rain Forest Research Institute (RFRI), Jorhat, also highlighted the importance of agroforestry models and practices during the session.

Altogether, 102 participants from various farmer-producer organisations (FPOs), NGOs, Self-Help Groups, and other institutions in Jorhat district are receiving rigorous and intensive training in the program. They are being trained by experts from the Department of Environment and Forest, Department of Agriculture, Rain Forest Research Institute, CIFOR-ICRAF, and various reputed agricultural, horticultural, and forestry institutions in Assam.

Representatives from the TOFI team, including Raju Sood, Dr Arup Jyoti Kalita, Manjil Barua, and Mini Niraj Kumar, are present to conduct the program.







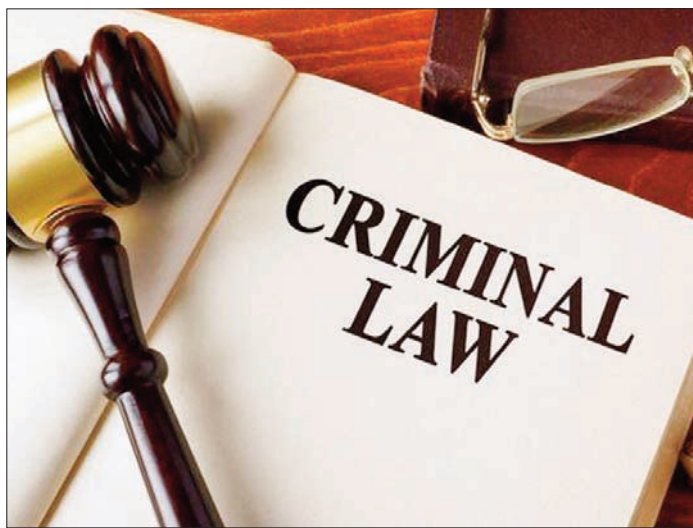
Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) replace colonial era laws

## Arunachal CM terms new criminal laws as 'watershed' moment in country's judicial history

ITANAGAR, July 1: With the new criminal laws coming into force on Monday, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu termed it a "watershed" moment in India's judicial history.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) replaced the colonial-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively.

"A watershed moment in India's judicial history as Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam come into force today, replacing the British-era IPC, Code of Criminal Procedure, and Indian Evidence Act," Khandu



posted on X. The Chief Minister described the new laws as a farsighted move towards ensuring political, economic, and social justice for all by ensuring the timely completion of investigations.

Arunchal Pradesh will use the English and Hindi versions of the three new criminal laws since the state's people speak in "innumerable" dialects, officials said.

Officials and other individuals concerned are being trained on the new laws in English and Hindi. (PTI)

## Manipur Govt urges all sectors to cooperate to resolve crisis

IMPHAL, July 1: Governor of Manipur, Anusuiya Uikey has said that all stakeholders should cooperate with each other to resolve the prevailing crisis in Manipur.

She said this while addressing the closing ceremony of the 15-day Summer Children Theatre Workshop, 2024, held at Manipur Trade and Expo Centre Relief Camp in Lamboikhognangkhong in Imphal West district on Sunday.

The workshop was organised by the National School of Drama, New Delhi and the National School of Drama (TIE Wing), Tripura, in collaboration with KHENJONGLANG and state social welfare department especially for children in relief camps of the Expo Centre and Temporary Shelter Home, Sajiwa Jail Complex in Imphal East. The Governor interacted with 120 displaced children along with their guardians and distributed certificates for their participation in dancing and painting events during the workshop.

The Governor said, "Every section of the society has been affected by the situation in the state. Women and children have been affected and there is the need to support them with utmost care. Their minds are in turmoil because of the prevailing unrest. Such a theatre work-



shop will help in diverting their minds and help them to relax."

Appreciating the role of KHENJONGLANG, the Governor said that such initiatives will help to remove stress from the young minds and foster a good mental back-up for the children.

She then asked the theatre group to continue their efforts and assured to extend all possible assistance from the Raj Bhavan.

"As children are the future pillars of the nation, facilities like good education, good healthcare etc. have to be delivered to them. All children are talented and they

should be guided and nurtured in their area of interest," the Governor added. Expressing her serious concern over the situation in the state, the Governor said that steps to resolve the crisis were being initiated by taking up the matter with the central leaders from time to time and hopefully some tangible result would be seen in the near future.

The Governor then appealed to all stakeholders to cooperate with the state to resolve the crisis and restore peace and tranquility in the best interest of the people of the state. (NNN)

## 1 missing after bridge collapses with truck in Manipur



IMPHAL, July 1: One person went missing as a Bailey bridge collapsed in Manipur's Imphal West district when a truck was

crossing it, officials said on Monday.

The incident happened at Mutum Phibou in the Wangoi police station

area on Sunday when a truck carrying firewood was crossing the bridge over the Imphal river, they said.

The truck fell into the river. Locals managed to rescue three persons who were travelling in the truck but the driver, identified as Md Borajao (45), went missing, they added.

A search was underway to find the driver, officials said.

"I have asked the officials concerned to submit an inquiry report within three days and to repair the bridge at the earliest. It seems the accident was because of a technical defect," said Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Y Khemchand after visiting the site. (PTI)

## Schools having low number of students to be merged with nearby schools

AGARTALA, July 1: Tripura chief minister Manik Saha said around 165 schools that have a low number of students would be merged with other schools located in their vicinity.

The state education department has already undertaken an extensive survey to identify the schools in which the number of students is low.

"Raising the alarm over the move to rationalise students and teachers in state-run schools will not bring fruitful results. Schools mushroomed in the state due to political reasons. We have to ensure quality education by merging schools with low number of students with schools that have a good number of students," he told the reporters on Sunday.

"It came to light that a few schools run with four students and two or three teachers. The merger plan will be beneficial for the students too. The shortage of teaching staff will also be addressed by the plan," he said.

Saha said around 165 schools having a low number of students will be merged with nearby schools, preferably located within a 1 km radius.

The chief minister said the government was also working to address traffic congestion in Agartala.

"I had a meeting with engineers on addressing traffic jams in various parts of the city. I suggested constructing more flyovers to ensure seamless movement of vehicles," he said. (PTI)

## Rains wreak havoc in Arunachal Pradesh



ITANAGAR, July 1: Incessant rains triggered landslides and floods in several districts of Arunachal Pradesh on Monday, throwing life out of gear, officials said.

All the major rivers in the state are in spate and flowing above the danger mark, they said.

The overflowing Kameng river swept away several houses at Seppa, the headquarters of the East Kameng district. However, there was no report of any casualty.

A landslide that happened in the Division IV area of the state capital damaged several buildings and buried a car. A woman who was driving the car managed a miraculous escape, police said.

The important Kurung bridge was washed away on Sunday, snapping connectivity to the Kurung Kumey district, Koloriang MLA Pani Taram said.

A flood alert was issued for Namsai district and Wakro circle of Lohit district as water levels of all the rivers have crossed the danger marks, officials said.

Thirty-four villages in Namsai and Wakro have so far been affected by the flood, they said.

People have been advised to remain alert and take all precautionary measures. They have also been advised to refrain from venturing

into the rivers or riverbanks, officials said.

In the East Siang district, the water levels of the Siang river, its tributaries and other perennial streams are in spate. Incessant rains triggered landslides along the Pasighat-Yingkiong and the Pasighat-Aalo highways, disrupting communication.

Flood waters submerged low-lying areas of Pasighat, Ruksin, Mirem and Bilat areas of East Siang, and parts of Lower Siang district, officials said.

The weather is also hindering the construction work of the Murkongselek-Pasighat railway line, they said.

The IMD issued a red alert for Changlang, Namsai, Lohit, Lower Dibang Valley, East Siang and Lower Siang districts, forecasting heavy to very heavy rains over the next two days.

Heavy rainfall, accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning, is likely in Anjaw, Papum Pare, Tirap, East Kameng, Kurung Kumey, Leparada, Longding, West Kameng and West Siang on Tuesday, it said.

All schools in Itanagar and nearby areas have been shut for five days, in view of the weather conditions, according to an order. (PTI)

## 2 arrested, heroin worth ₹ 4 crore seized in North Tripura

AGARTALA, July 1: Two persons were arrested with heroin worth ₹ 4 crore in North Tripura's Bagbassa area, police said on Monday.

Acting on a tip-off, a vehicle that was coming from Mizoram was intercepted on the Assam-Agartala highway on Sunday, they said.

"During the search, 408 gram of heroin kept in various parts of the vehicle were found. Two persons, identified as Sohel Miah and Dilwar Hussain -- both residents of Sonamura subdivision of Sepahijala district, were arrested for smuggling drugs," Superintendent of Police Bhanupada Chakraborty told PTI.

The heroin consignment, which was coming from Myanmar via Mizoram, was supposed to be delivered at Sonamura located near the Bangladesh border, he said.

"We have started an investigation into the case. Drug peddlers are using the North Tripura district as a safe corridor," he added.

Chakraborty said that with this, police seized heroin worth ₹ 31 crore from various parts of the district in June. (PTI)

## National Doctors' Day celebrated in USTM



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 1: Faculty members and students of the IA Ayurvedic Medical College at the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) came together to celebrate the 'National Doctors' Day' at the university campus in Ro Bhoi district in Meghalaya on Monday.

The doctors and associates of the upcoming PA Sangma International Medical College and Hospital (PIMCH) also marked the occasion, reflecting on the invaluable contributions of medical professionals.

At IAAMC, the celebrations were vibrant as students and doctors gathered to honor Bidhan Chandra Roy on his birth and death anniversary on Monday. The event commenced with the cutting of a cake, followed by melodious singing and insightful speeches on the significance of the day.

R.K. Sharma, principal of IAAMC, addressed the gathering, emphasising the importance of this day and the legacy of Roy. Anil Kumar Sarma, advisor of IAAMC, delivered a speech shedding light on the remarkable life and achievements of Roy, highlighting his contributions in the medical field.

Barnali Das, deputy medical superintendent of the University Hospital of Ayurveda and Naturopathy, also addressed the students, inspiring them with her words and reinforcing the significance of their chosen profession.

Simultaneously, the doctors of PIMCH commemorated the day with equal zeal, honoring Roy,

fondly remembered as the 'Miracle Man of Medicine'. The programme was graced by G.D. Sharma, vice chancellor of USTM, and Biraj Kumar Das, principal of PIMCH along with many senior doctors and staff members.

Addressing the enthusiastic gathering of doctors at PIMCH, G.D. Sharma underscored the vital role that medical professionals play in society. He spoke about the dedication and commitment required in the medical field and the profound impact that doctors have on the lives of countless individuals. Sharma expressed his gratitude to the doctors for their unwavering service and dedication, particularly during challenging times.

Biraj Kumar Das, principal of PIMCH, also took the opportunity to address the audience. He spoke about the legacy of Roy and his monumental contributions to medical education and healthcare in India. Das encouraged the young medical students to draw inspiration from Roy's life and strive for excellence in their careers. The celebrations concluded with a sense of pride and unity among the medical fraternity at USTM.

The day served as a reminder of the noble profession of medicine and the relentless efforts of doctors who work tirelessly to ensure the well-being of society. The event reinforced the commitment of IAAMC and PIMCH to produce dedicated and compassionate doctors, who would carry forward the legacy of great medical professionals like Roy.

## New criminal laws will protect rights of people: Mizoram minister

AIZWAL, July 1: Mizoram home minister K Sapdanga on Monday said the newly introduced criminal laws marked the beginning of a new process and significant chapter in the country's legal system.

Addressing a function at central Mizoram's Serchhip town to mark the introduction of three new criminal laws - Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA), which came into force across the country on Monday, Sapdanga said that these changes are crucial in the ongoing fight against crime, benefiting both Mizoram and the entire country.

He said that the old laws, some of which were over a century old and enacted by the British, are now being replaced to suit contemporary times and technologies.

"The new criminal laws will strongly protect the rights of the people. It will empower the law enforcement agencies and increase their role. It will be rigid in some cases as well as lenient at the same time. They are outstanding laws to mitigate and fight several crimes in the country," the Mizoram Home minister said.

He said that the new criminal laws will replace the colonial era - Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Indian Evidence Act.

The Mizoram government had taken a series of initiatives, including training of police personnel, churches, NGOs and advocates and carrying out public awareness to ensure the smooth implementation of three new criminal laws. (PTI)

## Maximum of two adjournments in court cases, zero-FIR under new criminal laws: Manipur CM

IMPHAL, July 1: Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh said on Monday that under the new criminal laws, there are provisions for maximum of two adjournments in court cases and filing of zero-FIR at any police station.

The Union home ministry had recently announced the enactment of three new criminal laws.

Addressing a formal function at the Palace Auditorium, Manipur State Film Development Society in Imphal on Monday, N. Biren Singh said that the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA), 2023 have replaced British-era Indian Penal Code, 1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, respectively.

The chief minister said, "Under the new laws, FIRs can be filed in one's own dialect. These laws will be of great help to the people."

Stating that the laws are abreast of the times, and would be very effective, he

said that at the same time the implementation part is also very crucial.

"If those implementing agencies including security officers, lawyers are not sincere then the laws will not serve their purpose. I appeal to all to work with sincerity and with conviction to help in delivering justice to the people," Singh said.

The chief minister also said that the central government's introduction of these laws stemmed from the observation that the existing laws were inadequate to address the technological advancements and societal shifts that had occurred over the past few decades. The new laws overhauled the Indian criminal justice system, he said, adding that they aimed to implement justice through a victim-centric approach, increasing focus on national security and introducing digital/electronic evidence reviews. He also said that there were provisions against mob justice and further, appealed to the people of the state against delivering mob justice and to bring understanding through dialogue and more peaceful ways.

He said other major changes included revisions in punishment for few crimes and addressing issues such as the jurisdiction, backlog of cases, insufficient human resources and infrastructure, inadequate investigations and prosecutions and outdated laws and procedures. The Chief Minister also highlighted certain key features of the three new laws and said that under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, in the corporate context, the penal sections of law mostly related to cases of cheating, criminal misappropriation, breach of trust, forgery and used of forged documents.

He also highlighted key feature of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 and said it defined additional types of electronic evidence, empowered courts and police officers to issue summons in cases where digital evidence was involved, clarifies jurisdictions in cheating cases involving electronic modes of deception and empowered Courts to ask for electronic filings in cases where documents were voluminous. (NNN)

## 'Stop Diarrhoea Campaign' launched in Nagaland

Campaign to be implemented through different platforms and collaboration between sectors such as health, water and sanitation, education and rural development

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 1: The Nagaland health and family welfare department launched the 'Stop Diarrhoea Campaign' in the three districts of Noklak, Wokha and Tuensang under the slogan "Stop diarrhoea through hygiene and ORS" on Monday to eliminate diarrhoea.

The department adopted a new strategy to eliminate the disease by upgrading the campaign in the state from two weeks to two months involving extensive information education communication (IEC) through different platforms and collaborating across multiple sectors such as health, water and sanitation, education and rural development.

The campaign will culminate on August 31.

Launching the campaign in Noklak, DC Arikumba said diarrhoea is a disease, which can be prevented and cured if proper hygiene and other preventive measures are taken.

He requested all the stakeholders to spread awareness on the campaign in the district.



Noklak chief medical officer, Victor NC said during the district task force meeting on 'Stop Diarrhoea Campaign' held on June 29, it was decided to set up dedicated corners,

which would have stocks of ORS and zinc

tablets to be provided to the patients for free in all health units.

In Tuensang, the campaign was launched at the conference hall of the Tuensang District Hospital.

Tuensang ADC, Thungchanbemo Tungoo, who was the guest of honour of the programme, urged the health workers, especially the ASHA and Anganwadi workers, to work with dedication to create awareness campaign on the importance of hand washing and clean drinking water among the children, especially during the monsoon season.

Tungoo said the district administration is always ready to assist the health workers anytime in this regard.

In Wokha, the campaign was launched at the chief medical officer's office.

Addressing the campaign as the special guest, Wokha ADC, K Furhesie Nyuwi emphasised the importance of sensitising health workers to strengthen diarrhoea management efforts in the district.

He also urged the line department to get actively involved in the campaign because it is a collective responsibility to save the lives of kids and attain zero deaths due to childhood diarrhoea.





## Implementation of new criminal laws evoke mixed reactions from legal experts

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** The three new criminal laws, which replaced the British-era penal statutes on Monday, have evoked mixed reactions from legal luminaries with some hailing them as "significant step" towards modernising criminal justice system while others terming them as "draconian" and "cosmetic".

The new laws -- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) -- came into effect across the country from July 1 and replaced the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act respectively.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi said an opportunity to make genuine reforms has been wasted and "cosmetic changes" have been brought about in new laws, disregarding the crucial aspect of huge pendency of cases in courts, especially in trial courts.

However, senior advocate and former Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president Adish C Aggarwala termed the new criminal laws as significant step towards modernising the criminal justice delivery system and delivery of time bound justice.

This view was echoed by senior advocates Mahesh Jethmalani, also a BJP MP, and Vikas Pahwa. Advocate and Congress MP Manish Tewari termed the new laws "pernicious in nature, draconian in their implementation". Activist lawyer Kamini Jaiswal concurred with Tewari and termed them as "disaster".

Significantly, the apex lawyers' body, the Bar Council of India (BCI), came in support of the laws and recently urged all bar associations across the country to refrain from any immediate agitation or protest against the implementation of the new criminal laws.

"One of the important changes brought in by the new laws is the introduction of specific timelines for conducting trials and delivering verdicts," former SCBA president Aggarwala said and hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for decolonising British-era criminal laws.

He said after hearing arguments, the judges will have to render judgment within 30 days from the date of completion of arguments, which may be extended to a period of 45 days for reasons to be recorded in writing.

Jethmalani said the opposition parties do not understand that these laws are for everyone, for prosecution, for victims and for criminals.

"I don't understand which provision is the problem. They are just saying anything and have not analysed the provisions," he said.

Pahwa said, "I think there are a lot of positive points if we read them as a whole. Of course there's also a flip side. The biggest positive point would be the implementation of technology. The entire criminal justice system will now be governed by technology." He said the trials will get expedited if the laws are followed in right spirit.

"This is an opportunity to create genuine reform. Unfortunately, what has happened is cosmetic changes, 90 per cent remaining the same, numbers changed, a few words changed here and there..." Singhvi said. (PTI)

## Lonavala waterfall tragedy: Body of 1 of 2 missing children found

**PUNE, July 1:** Rescue teams on Monday morning recovered the body of one of the two missing children, who along with three other family members got swept away at a waterfall near the Bhusli Dam in Pune's Lonavala area, officials said.

Search was on for the other missing child, they said.

On Sunday, a group of persons got swept away by the gushing water caused by intense rainfall in the region.

After the tragic incident, the rescue teams on Sunday recovered the bodies of a 36-year-old woman and two minor girls.

Police, Navy divers and other rescue teams on Monday resumed the search for the two missing children and recovered the body of Mariya Ansari (9) from a reservoir near the accident spot, a senior official from Pune rural police said.

Search was still on for the other missing child - Adnan Sabhat Ansari (4), he said.

A heart-wrenching video of the incident showed a group of 9-10 persons, including



those who lost their lives, stranded in the middle of a stream with flood waters gushing down and crying for help while their relatives and other bystanders asking them to hold on to each other.

As the water flow increased, first a woman carrying a small boy, and another girl were seen getting swept away. Later, the remaining persons were also swept away in the waters.

A search team on Sunday recovered the bodies of Shahista Liaqat Ansari (36), Anima Adil Ansari (13) and Umera Adil Ansari (8)

from the reservoir downstream.

According to the police, 16-17 members of a family from Sayad Nagar in Pune's Hadapsar area had hired a private bus to visit the scenic spot near Lonavala for a picnic on the rain-soaked Sunday.

Members of the Ansari family went to see the waterfall close to the Bhusli Dam but were caught unawares when the water flow rose due to intense rain in the area and were swept away, a police official said on Sunday.

A relative said the family members travelled from Mumbai for a wedding a couple of days ago. On Sunday, more than 15 members hired a bus to go to Lonavala for a picnic, he said.

As the monsoon season begins, thousands of visitors flock to the Bhusli and Pavana dam areas, often disregarding warnings from the police and local authorities to avoid unknown areas.

A police officer estimated that more than 50,000 people visited Lonavala on Sunday. (PTI)

**AMRITSAR/CHANDIGARH, July 1:** Rebel Shiromani Akali Dal leaders on Monday appeared before the jathedar of the Akal Takht and apologised for the "mistakes" committed when their party was in power in the state.

They handed the apology letter to Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh at the Akal Takht Secretariat at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The Akal Takht is the supreme temporal seat of the Sikhs.

The leaders sought forgiveness for the "four mistakes" during the former SAD regime between 2007 and 2017, including the failure to punish those responsible for the 2015 sacrilege incidents, and pardoning Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh in the 2007 blasphemy case.

They also held SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal, who was the deputy chief minister at that time, responsible for the "mistakes".

While the rebels targeted Badal, in Chandigarh, the SAD's women wing expressed faith in his leadership, saying he is best suited to lead the party at this juncture.

In the letter to the Akal Takht, the rebel leaders said the Sikh panth and the people of Punjab drifted away from the Akali Dal over these "mistakes" while asserting that they were ready to face any punishment in accordance with the Sikh tenets.

Because of this, the SAD faced "failures" not only on the religious front but also suffered people's apathy in the political field, the rebel leaders said while acknowledging that they also remained part of the party leadership as these events unfolded.

Reacting to Badal's 2023 apology for not being able to catch the culprits involved in the sacrilege incidents, the rebel leaders had recently said the forgiveness sought by the



SAD chief was neither from the Akal Takht nor followed the rites and rituals of the Sikh tenets.

A section of senior party leaders have revolted against Badal, demanding that he step down as the party chief following its debacle in the recently held Lok Sabha elections in Punjab.

Recently, the rebel leaders had decided to launch the 'Akali Dal Bachao Lehar' and sought Sukhbir Badal's ouster as SAD president.

Among the prominent leaders who have raised a banner of revolt are former MP Prem Singh Chandumajra, former SGPC chief Bibi Jagir Kaur, ex-MLA Gurpartap Singh Wadala, former Minister Parminder Singh Dhindsa, and party leader Sucha Singh Chhotepur, all of whom presented themselves before the Akal Takht jathedar.

The letter also referred to the 2015 sacrilege incidents, saying the then Akali government could not ensure punishment to the guilty in these cases. The sacrilege incidents caused outrage in the Sikh panth, said the letter.

But the (then) Shiromani Akali Dal government and the then Home Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal and president Shiromani Akali Dal, neither got this matter probed in a timely manner nor succeeded in getting the culprits punished, it said.

As a result, the situation worsened in Punjab and tragic incidents took place at Kotkapura and Behbal Kalan, it said.

The Shiromani Akali Dal government could not hold any official accountable for these incidents, it said.

The incidents related to the theft of a copy of the Guru Granth Sahib, putting up handwritten sacrilegious posters, and torn pages of the holy book being found scat-

tered at Bargari, had taken place in Faridkot in 2015.

These incidents had led to protests in Faridkot. In the police firing at the protesters in October 2015, two persons were killed in Behbal Kalan while some persons were injured at Kotkapura in Faridkot.

The letter also mentioned the 2007 blasphemy case which was registered against Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh for allegedly imitating the 10th Sikh master, Guru Gobind Singh at Salabatpura in 2007.

"Instead of taking further action to punish the person, the SAD government withdrew this case," stated the letter.

In 2021, Badal claimed that the SAD government had never withdrawn the blasphemy case against the Dera chief, who is at present lodged in a jail in Haryana. Ram Rahim has been sentenced to 20 years imprisonment for raping two disciples.

The letter also claimed that Badal allegedly used his influence to ensure that the Dera chief was pardoned in the blasphemy case.

"But the leadership of Shiromani Akali Dal and Shiromani Committee (SGPC) had to withdraw from this decision keeping in mind the anger and resentment of the Sikh Panth," it said.

In 2015, the Akal Takht pardoned the Dera chief in the blasphemy case based on a written apology. However, bowing to pressure from the Sikh community and hardliners, it annulled its decision.

The rebel leaders also slammed the then Akali government for appointing Smedh Singh Saini as the director general of police and accused it of failing to keep its promise of forming a commission to probe "fake po-

lice encounters".

"Because of this and many other similar developments, the Sikh panth got angry and became disappointed with the leadership of the Shiromani Akali Dal. As a result of which, its position in the political and religious fields got weakened," said the letter.

"We also acknowledge that we failed to stop the wrong approach of the leadership of Akali Dal and the SGPC, even though we repeatedly raised these painful issues within the party," it added.

The leaders claimed they had urged the senior leadership of the party to appear before the Akal Takht, repent for their "mistakes" and express remorse as per the "Gurmat maryada" (religious code of ethics). But their appeal was rejected.

"Being a part of the leadership of Shiromani Akali Dal at that time, we have a burden on our minds. That is why we have come to you to apologise for the mistakes through this letter," the leaders said.

"We are ready to accept any punishment given by the Akal Takht according to the 'Gurmat' tradition for these mistakes so that we can be relieved from this burden," it added.

After the meeting with the jathedar, the leaders offered prayers by standing in front of the Akal Takht and sought forgiveness.

Speaking to reporters in Amritsar, the rebel leaders expressed their commitment to revive the SAD and serve the panth.

On Monday morning, some rebel leaders went to the Amritsar home of Khadoor Sahib MP-elect Amritpal Singh and met his party. The radical preacher Amritpal is yet to take the oath as he is lodged in jail in Assam, detained under the National Security Act. (PTI)

## Tughlakabad Metro Station to be developed as south Delhi's inter-connectivity hub: DMRC

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** Tughlakabad Metro Station is being developed as south Delhi's new metro hub to facilitate inter-connectivity between the Kashmere Gate-Raja Nahar Singh and Tughlakabad-Aerocity corridors, DMRC officials said on Monday.

While the existing station is being elevated, the new station will be an underground one and a subway will connect the two adjoining stations through the paid area, they said.

"The Tughlakabad Metro Station is being turned into an inter-change station in Phase-4 to facilitate inter-connectivity between the Kashmere Gate-Raja Nahar Singh corridor (Line-6 violet) and the Tughlakabad-Aerocity corridor," the officials said.

The new station has been designed as a four-level underground structure where there will be platform at the bottom (at an approximate depth of 23 metres) followed by the concourse and then an entire floor for parking above it with the roof level at

the top (ground level), they stated.

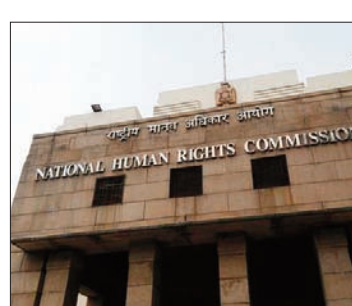
The underground parking facility will have provision for accommodating around 250 vehicles. It will have direct access via lifts, stairs and escalators to both the Violet and Silver Line stations, the officials said.

Tughlakabad will be the first ever interchange facility of Delhi Metro to have an underground parking facility. Currently, only Dhansa Bus Stand on the Grey line has such a provision, they said.

A subway will connect the new and old Tughlakabad Metro stations. This subway will be about 45 metres long and, hence, provide quick transit facilities to the passengers from one line to the other, they said.

According to the officials, the Tughlakabad station, being a terminal station of the new corridor, will also be connected to the existing Sarita Vihar depot via a tunnel. This depot is being expanded to accommodate the Silver Line trains. Currently, it only caters to the trains of Violet Line. (PTI)

## NHRC notice to Centre, TN govt over 'discrimination' by manufacturer of electronic devices in jobs



**NEW DELHI, July 1:** The NHRC on Monday said it has issued notices to the Union Labour Ministry and the Tamil Nadu government over reports that a major manufacturer of electronic devices has allegedly "systematically excluded" married women from jobs at its assembly plant in Sriperumbudur.

Issuing the notices, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has noted the fact that gender equality is not only required in the Indian Constitution but the international treaty and covenants, viz., International Covenant Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights also provide non-discrimination on the ground of gender in any form of employment.

The NHRC has taken "suo motu cognisance of media reports that Foxconn, a major manufacturer of Apple devices has systematically excluded married women from job at its iPhone assembly plant in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu", it said.

It is alleged by a former HR executive at Foxconn that "verbal directions" have been given to the Indian hiring agencies by the company in this regard. It is also stated that the company "does not hire married women because of cultural issues and societal pressure", the statement said, citing reports.

Sources recently said Apple iPhone maker Foxconn has informed the government that 25 per cent of its new hires are married women and its safety protocol, which requires all employees to avoid wearing metal irrespective of gender or religion, is not discriminatory.

In an informal note shared with the

government after reports had suggested that it was not hiring married women, Foxconn had stated that such stipulations are not part of its policy and these claims may have been made by those individuals who were not hired, the sources earlier said.

The Commission in its statement has observed that the content of the media reports, if true, raise a serious issue of discrimination against married women causing the violation of the right to equality and equal opportunity.

Therefore, the Commission has issued notices to the Secretary, Union Ministry of Labour and Employment, and the chief Secretary, government of Tamil Nadu, seeking a detailed report within one week, the statement said.

It is the obligation of the state authorities to ensure that all companies relating to labour laws and the right to health and dignity to any individual, including women, who are working in the supply chain of any production unit of the private sector, the statement said.

As per media reports carried on June 26, a number of job seekers in the company were spoken to during the period January 2023 to May 2024 and the candidate information pamphlet of the company was examined, it said.

"It was revealed that only unmarried women were eligible for assembly job while there was no mention in this regard in the advertisements made by the company. A WhatsApp chat between a married candidate and the hiring agency of the company was also quoted in the news report stating that when the candidate asked about the salary and childcare facility offered by the company, the response was 'married not allowed'. The company, reportedly, refuted the allegations of discrimination in employment based on marital status, gender, religion or any other form," the statement said. (PTI)

SEARCH WAS ON FOR THE OTHER MISSING CHILD, THEY SAID.

## SERA, Blue Origin announce India partner nation for human space flight programme

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** The Space Exploration and Research Agency and Blue Origin on Monday announced India as a partner nation in their human spaceflight programme for citizens from countries who have sent a few or no astronauts to space.

SERA, a US-based agency, will offer citizens from across the world six seats on a future mission of New Shepard, Blue Origin's reusable sub-orbital rocket.

New Shepard will fly the selected astronauts on an 11-minute journey past the Kármán line (100 km), the internationally recognised boundary of space.

Astronauts will experience several minutes of weightlessness before making a controlled descent back to the landing pad.

"We're excited to have India as part of our human spaceflight programme," said Joshua Skurla, Co-Founder, SERA.

"We want to make space accessible for everyone and are happy to



offer this unique opportunity to an Indian citizen who wants to experience the wonders of space travel," Skurla said.

Any Indian citizen can register for the programme by paying a fee of

approximately USD 2.50 to cover the costs of verification checks that ensure safe and fair voting. The final candidates will be voted on by the public for an opportunity to fly to space onboard the New Shepard

mission. The potential astronauts will be required to meet Blue Origin's physical requirements.

They can garner votes by telling their story to the public using their mission profile pages, social media, and other resources. Voting will progress through candidate elimination across three phases. People will vote only for candidates from their nation or region, except for the sixth global seat.

"By giving communities the power to choose their astronauts, we ensure this mission is driven by people, for people," said Sam Hutchison, Co-Founder, SERA.

"This approach will ignite national conversations on space and foster international collaboration in space exploration. The minimal physical requirements and training for New Shepard's flight lowers the barrier to entry by allowing more diverse and inclusive participation in space," Hutchison said. (PTI)

## 'Vandalism' at place of worship in J&K; 3 more people detained, shutdown observed

**REASI/JAMMU, July 1:** Three more people were detained by police in connection with the alleged vandalism at a place of worship in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district, where normal life was hit by a shutdown as local residents protested against the incident, officials said.

The place of worship was found vandalised by a visitor in a village in the Dharmari area on Saturday evening, sparking tension and protests. Police registered an FIR under relevant sections of law and formed a Special Investigation Team headed by a deputy superintendent of Police to identify and arrest the culprits.

While 12 people were apprehended till Sunday, three more suspects were detained on the intervening night of Sunday and Monday. The total number of those taken into custody for questioning in the case stands at 15, a police officer said. He said the SIT is working on various clues to crack the case and requesting people to

maintain law and order.

Responding to a call for bandh by a local group, a shutdown was observed in Reasi town and adjoining areas on Monday with groups of youth burning tyres on different roads. A large number of agitated people also assembled at Zanana Park in the town and took out a march towards nearby Thapa Chowk, demanding stern action against the culprits.

Officials said police and paramilitary forces were deployed in strength in the sensitive areas as a precautionary measure to maintain law and order.

Deputy Commissioner of Reasi Vishesh Paul Mahajan visited the protest site and tried to pacify the protesters, assuring that stern action would be taken against the culprits.

"Anyone trying to vitiate the peaceful atmosphere will not be spared. It is an attempt to create hurdles and sabotage developmental activities, besides communal harmony. (PTI)

**PROVISION OF PRAYER SHED ON THE PLAY GROUND**

E-Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/102 of 2024. Dated: 27-06-2024. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN.1, Brief Description of Item:** Provision of prayer shed on the play ground at Railway High School & other ancillary work at Lumding under St.DENIV/Lumding. **Tender Value:** ₹1,05,20,287.24. **Earnest Money:** ₹2,02,600.00. E-tenders will be opened at 15:30 hrs. on 22-07-2024 and closed at 15:30 hrs. on 23-07-2024. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 22-07-2024 in website <http://www.irps.gov.in>

**DRMWorks, Lumding**  
**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
 "Serving Customers with a smile"

# Prabhas-starrer 'Kalki 2898 AD' crosses ₹ 500 crore-mark at global box office

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** Director Nag Ashwin's 3D sci-fi spectacle "Kalki 2898 AD" has grossed ₹ 555 crore worldwide at the box office in its opening weekend, the makers said on Monday.

Mounted on a reported budget of ₹ 600 crore, the multilingual movie features a star-studded cast of Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, Amitabh Bachchan and Kamal Haasan.

Previously titled "Project K", "Kalki 2898 AD" is billed as a fusion of the Hindu epic Mahabharata and science fiction and is produced by Vyjayanthi Movies.

Vyjayanthi Movies shared the latest box office figures on its official X page, with the caption: "555 CRORES & counting..."

"The BIGGEST FORCES are dominating the GLOBAL BOX OFFICE, show no signs of slowing down #Kalki2898AD #EpicBlockbusterKalki @SrBachchan @ikamalhasan #Prabhas @deepikapadukone @nagashwin7 @DishPatani @Music\_Santhosh @VyjayanthiFilms @Kalki2898AD @saregamaglobal @saregamasouth."

The film had a global release on Thursday in six languages: Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Hindi and English.

In a separate post, the banner said the Hindi version of "Kalki 2898 AD" crossed ₹ 115 crore (net box office collection) in the first weekend in India.

According to Prathyangira Cinemas, which released the movie in the US, by earning USD 10.5 million "Kalki 2898 AD" has become the "highest grossing first weekend film in North America for any Indian film".

The movie also stars Disha Patani, Saswata Chatterjee and Shobhana. It is reportedly the most expensive feature film in Indian cinema history. (PTI)



## Thank you to everyone who has been concerned: Luv Sinha on father Shatrughan Sinha's health



**MUMBAI, July 1:** Actor Luv Sinha on Monday thanked well-wishers for their concern over his father Shatrughan Sinha's health, reiterating the veteran star-MP is admitted to a hospital here after he developed a "strong fever" and not because he underwent a surgery.

The 77-year-old was taken to the medical facility some time last week for an annual check-up as well. One should steer clear of "unverified news", Luv said.

"In regard to my father's health I'd like to clarify that there was no surgical procedure, and one shouldn't believe unverified news.

"We took my father to the hospital for his annual checkup, and because he had a strong fever. Thank you to everyone who has been concerned," he wrote on X.

Sinha, popular for '70s and '80s films such as "Mere Apne", "Kalicharan", "Vishwanath", "Kaala Patthar" and "Dostana", was earlier this month elected as TMC MP from West Bengal's Asansol in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

On June 23, he and his wife, actor-politician Poonam Sinha hosted their actor-daughter Sonakshi Sinha's wedding to her longtime partner and "Double XL" co-star Zaheer Iqbal.

Previously, Luv had said Sinha was admitted to a private hospital here due to a "strong fever". He also denied reports that the veteran actor underwent a minor surgery.

"My father had a strong fever and we decided to take him to the hospital so that he could recover and we could have his yearly tests done as well. I have been going there (to the hospital) every day, so (I) can tell you that there was no surgical procedure," Luv had said in a WhatsApp message to PTI. (PTI)

## Manisha Koirala meets 'Indian' co-star Kamal Haasan, calls him 'one of the brilliant minds'

**MUMBAI, July 1:** "Heeramandi" star Manisha Koirala on Sunday shared a picture with her "Indian" co-star Kamal Haasan, whom she described as one of the brilliant minds she had an opportunity to work with.

Haasan was recently in Mumbai to promote his upcoming film "Indian 2: Zero Tolerance", the sequel to the 1996 film "Indian".

Koirala, who also worked with the Tamil star in 2001's "Aalavandhan" ("Abhay") and "Mumbai Xpress" (2005), posted their photograph on her Instagram page. "One of the brilliant minds that I had an opportunity to work with..books and films n now fashion is his world. He recommended amazing books which stretches one's mind & soul..his unique & deep observations on life amazed me decades ago..

"His cinematic understanding is unparalleled.. I can have long hours of conver-

sation with him or rather listen to him talk for hours..thank you @ikamalhasan ji for all that you do and all that you are!! You never cease to amaze me each time I meet you!! #fangirl #brilliantactor #one-ofakind (sic)" she



wrote.

In a previous post, Koirala said she watched "Kalki 2898 AD", which features Haasan in the role of the main antagonist Supreme Yaskin. Directed by Nag Ashwin, the star-studded sci-fi epic has earned Rs 415 crore globally since its release on Thursday.

"Watched #kalki #lovedthefilm #movedayout," she captioned her Instagram Story.

S Shankar's "Indian 2", titled "Hindustani 2" in Hindi, is slated to be released on July 12. It will also feature Kajal Aggarwal, Rakul Preet Singh and Siddharth. (PTI)

## Freeman thanks fans for calling out unauthorized AI version of his voice

**LOS ANGELES, July 1:** Hollywood veteran and legendary narrator Morgan Freeman expressed gratitude towards his fans after they criticised the unauthorised AI version of his voice on social media.

Known for his distinctive voice, the 87-year-old has narrated films such as "The Shawshank Redemption", "War of the Worlds" and "Conan the Barbarian" as well as several documentaries, including "Cosmic Voyage" and "Slavery and the Making of America".

According to The Hollywood Reporter, Freeman's comments came after a TikTok user allegedly introduced herself as the niece of the actor and shared a few videos reportedly featuring a narration from an AI-generated version of his voice.

"Thank you to my incredible fans for your vigilance and support in calling out the unauthorized use of an A.I. voice imitating me.

"Your dedication helps authenticity and integrity remain paramount. Grateful. #AI #scam #imitation #IdentityProtection," the Oscar winner wrote in an X post on Friday.

Recently, actor Scarlett Johansson threatened legal action against OpenAI for allegedly copying and imitating her voice after she declined to license it to the company. (PTI)



## 'BARZAKH' IS DOWNRIGHT EXPERIMENTAL AND I LOVE IT: FAWAD KHAN



**NEW DELHI, July 1:** Pakistani superstar Fawad Khan says he jumped at the opportunity to feature in the upcoming drama series Barzakh as he always wanted to attempt something "out of the ordinary".

Asim Abbasi, known for Churails and Cake, has directed the show which reunites the actor with his Zindagi Gulzar Hai co-star Sanam Saheed. It is produced by Shailja Kejrival and Waqas Hassan. Khan said working on Barzakh was an amazing experience. "I grew to love the people I was working with and it felt like being at home. After having seen Cake, when I was approached for 'Barzakh', I jumped at the opportunity. Asim's work sets him apart as a very unique director whose emphasis is on character development in a way that is contemporary.

"Also, I've always wanted to attempt something out of the ordinary and Barzakh is nothing ordinary. It's downright experimental and I love it. Asim and Shailja are a power combo. They've tuned into each other's sensibilities and aesthetics. That makes the process all the more easier," the actor said in a statement.

According to the makers, Barzakh blends magical realism with supernatural fantasy in a family reunion setting, promising an unforgettable narrative. It will have its worldwide premiere on Zindagi's YouTube and ZEE5 on July 19.

The trailer of the series, which was released on Monday, gives a sneak peek into the poignant journey of a 76-year-old man who stuns his estranged children and grandchildren by announcing

his wedding to the ghost of his first true love.

"This unconventional event sparks emotional revelations and confrontations as family members gather, unsure whether to celebrate or intervene. As seen in the trailer, 'Barzakh' intricately weaves together folklore against the stunning Hunza Valley backdrop, revealing a mystical world where everyone is interconnected. Amidst the turmoil, a haunting question lingers: 'When all has withered, withered, will love endure?'" read the official synopsis.

Salman Shahid, M Fawad Khan, Eman Suleman, Khushhal Khan, Faiza Gillani, Anika Zulfikar, and Franco Giusti also round out the cast.

Khan also praised Abbasi and Kejrival for leading the team ably.

"Under Asim & Shailja there

are many other people who've made this journey memorable. Namely Zoobia, Hussain, Nabeel, Ariana, Yasser and last but not the least Waqas Hasan.

"As a producer, how Waqas brought the story to life is nothing short of extraordinary, and his dedication to the craft is deeply inspiring. I'd like to keep the theme of the show a secret. It's a family reunion under supernatural circumstances. That's all I'll say for now." Working with Saheed after all these years is "still a comfort zone", he said about his Zindagi Gulzar Hai co-star.

"I enjoyed it and I believe in her skills. It always makes my job easy. I hope you enjoy watching it as much as we enjoyed the process of making it," he added.

Saheed said being part of Barzakh was an "immensely rewarding" experience. (PTI)

# Stay in the moment, keep flexible mindset: Bindra's advice to Paris-bound Indian athletes

**CHANDIGARH, July 1:** As India's first individual Olympic gold-medallist, Abhinav Bindra knows a thing or two about handling big-stage pressure and he has a simple piece of advice for those aiming for the podium in the upcoming Paris Games -- stay in the moment and have a flexible mind.

Bindra, who won the yellow metal in men's 10m air rifle event in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, wants Indian athletes to enjoy their time at the world's greatest sporting extravaganza.

"I want to wish all the athletes the very best of luck. They've done us all proud already by giving it their all and doing consistently well over so many

competitions. And now it's their moment to shine on the world stage," Bindra said during a meet and greet programme organised by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) here on Monday.

"The Olympics is the greatest platform to sport in the world, and the whole world is waiting to welcome them. The whole country is waiting for our athletes to do their best and make us all proud.

"I would just want them to give their best to stay in the moment, to remain flexible in mindset and just back the work that they had put in. You know, true confidence comes from the effort that has been put in over

a consistent period of time, which I'm sure they have," the 41-year-old added.

Two-time Asian Games gold-medallist and Asian champion shot putter Tajinderpal Singh Toor, who is bound for Paris, said star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra's gold-medal winning feat in Tokyo has inspired other track-and-field athletes.

"Our athletes are performing well and they will win medals in the Olympics. Since Neeraj Chopra won the gold medal in the Tokyo Olympics, other athletes also want to win medals for their country," he said.

Asian Games silver medallist javelin thrower Kishore Kumar Jena, who will also be partici-



ating in the Paris Olympics along side Chopra, hopes India will clinch its best-ever medal haul in athletics in Paris.

"We take pride in representing our country. It is a matter of happiness that many have qualified for the Olympics from India, and we hope to win the highest number of medals," he said.

"The journey has not been easy, it has involved a lot of hard work, staying away from home, and practising day and night."

Jena said he is satisfied with his preparation for the Paris Games.

"Preparations are going well, and we are determined to per-

form at our best and give 100 per cent.

"Since 2021, I have been at the national camp in Patiala, receiving full support from the Indian government to enhance my game."

Sprinter Hima Das, who could not take a shot at Paris qualification due to fitness issues, lauded the AFI for its unwavering support to the athletes.

"As an athlete I will say that everyone should give their best. The Athletics Federation of India has helped athletes reach this level and now it is your turn to show them your achievements," said the athlete from Assam, who is nicknamed Dhing Express. (PTI)

# India overcome resilient South Africa to win one-off Test by 10 wickets

**CHENNAI, July 1:** India were made to wait a tad longer for the winning moment by centurion Laura Wolvaardt, but they eventually went past the line convincingly by 10 wickets on the fourth and final day of the one-off women's Test against South Africa here on Monday.

India were required to chase a modest 37 after bowling out South Africa for 373 in their second innings and the hosts accomplished the task in 9.2 overs without losing a wicket. India had declared their first innings closed at 603 for six.

The opening duo of Shubha Sathesh (13 not out) and Shafali Verma (24 not out) steered their side home comfortably.

This is India's second 10-wicket triumph in Tests after a scoring a similar win over the Proteas at Paarl in 2002.

After getting bundled out 266 in their first innings, South Africa fought well through hundred-makers Wolvaardt (122, 314b, 16x4) and Sune Luus (109, 203b, 18x4) in the second innings.

However, SA could only delay the inevitable.

Resuming at the overnight 232 for two, and trailing India by 105 runs, Wolvaardt and Marizanne Kapp appeared to be in good touch.



The former brought up her maiden Test century, also becoming the first woman batter to score a Test, ODI and T20I ton in the same year.

However, Kapp was soon trapped leg-before by Deepti

Sharma for 31, while Sneha Rana ousted Delmi Tucker for a duck as the tourists slipped to 266 for four.

With still work to be done for the South Africans to take the lead, Wolvaardt tried to anchor

the innings but was dismissed for 122 when Rajeshwari Gayakwad trapped her in front to reduce the visitors 281 for five.

But the Proteas marched on and went past the 300-run mark, their highest team total in Tests

against the Indians. The previous best was the 266 that made in their opening innings here.

South Africa needed less than 50 runs to take the lead at this stage. Nadine de Klerk and Sinalo Jafta stuck together until the lunch break and SA were 302 for five then.

However, in the post-lunch session, Jafta retired hurt due to cramps, as the visitors sent Anne Dercksen to join De Klerk.

But Dercksen departed for five, falling to Pooja Vastrakar with SA trailing by 27 runs.

Meanwhile, the tourists went past 316 to register their highest score in Test cricket, going past the 315 they made against England at Shenley in 2003.

Although South Africans closed in on a lead they struggled to get the partnerships going.

The next stand was worth 14 runs between De Klerk and Tumi Sekhukhune before the latter was run out for six.

Jafta returned to bat, but she could add just nine more runs and departed for 15 and they went to tea at 336 for eight.

The hosts eventually conceded the lead in the final session. This was the third instance of India giving away the lead after enforcing a follow-on and the fifth overall. (PTI)

# Praggnanandhaa misses against Wesley So on another day of draws



**BUCHAREST (ROMANIA), July 1:** Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa yet again squandered promising position to settle for a draw against American Wesley So in the fifth round of Superbet Classic tournament as none of the five boards produced any decisive result, here.

The lead positions remained unchanged with Fabiano Caruana of United States still ahead on 3.5 points, enjoying a half point lead over world championship challenger D Gukesh and Praggnanandhaa.

French duo of Alireza Firouzja and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia and Wesley share the third spot on 2.5 points each, a half point ahead of Anish Giri of Holland and Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan.

Local hopeful Deac Bogdan-Daniel is still at the bottom with 1.5 points.

Gukesh also enjoyed some advantage that slipped away against Abdusattorov while Vachier-Lagrave played solidly to hold Caruana.

Bogdan-Daniel drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi in the 10-player double round-robin event, offering USD 350000 as prize money. Praggnanandhaa is usually spot-on when it comes to accurate calculation or tactics but somehow here he has been missing on advantageous positions and also some winning moves.

Having missed out on a technically winning endgame against Gukesh, Wesley So found himself lucky as the Indian missed a not-so-difficult manoeuvre that he would find in seconds on an-

other day.

Inspired by the presence of Garry Kasparov in the playing hall, Praggnanandhaa chose the King's Indian defense as black, faced the Fianchetto variation and did not have many troubles in maintaining the balance.

Wesley became a little ambitious towards the final stages of the middle game and this is where Praggnanandhaa could have penetrated his king side decisively. Wesley survived with the skin of his teeth.

Gukesh also had a chance against Nodirbek through a tactical stroke that would have ensured consistent pressure and a long-term advantage. The game was drawn without much ado once Gukesh missed out on the opportunity.

Caruana showed his opening expertise to hold Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in a Ruy Lopez open. The American went for a little known variation as black and it was clear that his homework ran deep. Vachier-Lagrave decided not to take his chances for too long and drew wide repetition in just 28 moves.

Monday is the only rest day in the tournament and the sixth round will be played on Tuesday.

Results round 3: D Gukesh (Ind, 3) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 2.5); Wesley So (Usa, 2.5) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 3); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 2.5) drew with Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 3.5); Anish Giri (Ned, 2) drew with Firouzja Alireza (Fra, 2.5); Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rou, 1.5) drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi (FID, 2.5). (PTI)

# Akula, Bernadette among 47 players in UTT draft for 2024 season

**MUMBAI, July 1:** India's rising player Sreeja Akula, Romania's world No 10 Bernadette Szocs, Nigeria's Aruna Quadri and German Nina Mittelham are among the top players listed for the Ultimate Table Tennis 2024 draft to be held here on July 10.

The upcoming edition of UTT is slated in Chennai from August 22-September 7.

The players draft will have 47 players including eight foreign men's and women's players and among them 43 will be drafted into the teams.

The Paris Olympics-bound Indian stars Sharath Kamal, Manika Batra, Harmeet Desai, Manav Thakkar and G Sathiyam have already been retained by their respective franchises.

Among Indians, the world No 24 Akula, who recently claimed the WTT Contender singles title, will garner attraction. For the 29-year-old Bernadette, this will be her third appearance, while the 16th ranked Quadri will be set for his fourth. Mittelham will play in her maiden season. Sharath Kamal remains with Chennai Lions while G Sathiyam will play for Dabang Delhi TTC again.

Desai will continue to represent Goa Challengers while Thakkar will turn up for U Mumba TT. Manika will play for Bengaluru Smashers.

With Puneri Paltan not retaining any of their players, they will be a part of the opening round of the draft along with new teams Jaipur Patriots and Ahmed-

abad SG Pipers.

"All eight teams will be in action from the second round as each franchise will have to make a six-member squad, consisting of one foreign male and female player and two Indian male and female players," a release from the organisers said. Among the other Indian players in the draft will be Asian Games doubles bronze medallists Ayhika Mukherjee and Sutirtha Mukherjee, Yashaswini Ghorpade, Diya Chitale, Poymantee Baisya and Taneesha Kotecha among women.

Snehit SFR, Jeet Chandra, Manush Shah and Yashansh Malik are the other men's players in the draft.

Among the foreign players in the draft are this year's World Team Table Tennis

Championships silver medallists Jules Rolland and Lilian Bardet of France, four-time Olympian and 2015 European Championships doubles gold medallist Joao Monteiro of Portugal, 2019 World Championships doubles silver medallist Alvaro Robles of Spain and South Korea's World No 70 Cho Seungmin in the men's category.

Among the women players, Thailand's Suthasini Sawettabut (WR 56), who played for title winners Goa Challengers last year, Sakura Mori (WR 27), Lily Zhang (WR 30) and Orawan Paranang (WR 36) will be part of the draft.

The competition will be divided into two groups of four teams each this year. (PTI)

# Match was always inclined towards India despite SA fightback: Sneha Rana

**CHENNAI, July 1:** Spinner Sneha Rana said India were always confident of closing out the match despite the South African fightback in the second innings of the one-off Test here on Monday.

Despite their early domination, India had to wait till the fourth and final day of the Test for the eventual 10-wicket victory. "Are you demotivating us? (chuckles) We had positive vibes throughout (the match) and it never did cross our minds that South Africa was taking the game away from us," Rana said in the post-match press meet.

"The match was always inclined towards India. We kept believing that we could take a wicket anytime, and that's exactly what happened," she added. Rana said it was all about keeping calm when the South Africans were offering resistance. "There will be phases during Tests when the opposition will build partnerships. But to keep ourselves calm and keep

our minds going, we chirped and cracked jokes among ourselves which helped to keep us awake," she said. Rana bagged 10 wickets in the match for 188 runs, the second-best Test bowling figures by an Indian in Tests after former pacer Jhulan Goswami's 10 for 78. The spinner said she was working on her skills at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru.

"We don't go really into the technical part because the time is extremely less. But we did plan what we could bowl, what we could do and how to bring the best out of ourselves. Be it our stock ball or the variation, we only worked on those aspects," she replied to a PTI query. "Obviously, the pitch (here) was favouring the batters. Conditions were difficult (for the bowlers), but you get more-or-less similar conditions everywhere nowadays.

"Thus we need to consistently work on variations and stock



balls and when and how to use them efficiently. For example, how you are going to implement them against top batters like Laura (Wolvaardt) and Marizanne Kapp. We need to carry forward these small learnings," he elaborated.

Rana termed the win over South Africa as "satisfactory."

"As far as satisfaction is concerned, we are delighted, especially when you defeat the best teams with great performance, particularly when you need it the most. So, nothing's more satisfactory than that," she said.

Having played three Tests in the last six months, Rana felt there should be more bilateral matches in women's cricket.

"Test is one of the best formats of the sport, and the more it is played, the better for women's cricket. "Thanks to BCCI again for reviving the multi-day (domestic) competitions, and I feel we should play more than a Test (per series)," she concluded. (PTI)

# Anand wins Leon Masters for the 10th time

**LEON (SPAIN), July 1:** Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand proved his mettle once again and defeated Spaniard Jaime Santos Latasa 3-1 in the finals to win the Leon Masters for a 10th time here.

The 54-year-old Anand, who lived in Spain for many years before shifting his base back to Chennai, proved yet again that this was one of his favourite hunting grounds. It was in 1996, or 28 years back, that Anand won his first title here.

The format featured four players with his compatriot Arjun Erigaisi, the world number four, as the fourth seed and Bulgarian Veselin Topalov being the other two players in the tournament.

Each round featured four games of 20 minutes each with a 10-second increment after every move. Arjun had lost to Santos Latasa in the second semifinals by a score of 1.5-2.5 which was considered a sensational victory for the latter given the vast difference in the ratings.

Earlier in the first semifinal, the legendary duel between

Topalov and Anand had ended in favour of the Indian who won the third game before drawing the remaining three. Though the score-line suggests otherwise, Anand conceded that it was not so easy.

Santos Latasa pushed hard in the first game and in the second too, he had an extra pawn in a complicated game that ended in a draw. Anand won the third game with black pieces out of an Italian opening. It was a balanced middle game wherein Anand was pleasantly surprised as the Spaniard went for a wrong trade that cost him two pieces for a rook and a couple of pawns.

The technical genius in Anand was soon at work as he kept on creating problems that became increasingly difficult to solve for his opponent. The game lasted 45 moves. Santos Latasa faced an unpleasant task of winning on demand as black in the final game. "This is something that even the best in the world would not feel comfortable with and Anand got a fine position after trading the Queens early out of a Rossolimo opening. (PTI)

# New head coach to take charge from Sri Lanka series: Jay Shah

BRIDGETOWN, July 1: The Indian cricket team will have a new head coach from the limited-overs series in Sri Lanka starting later this month, BCCI secretary Jay Shah said on Monday but did not reveal who has been finalised to succeed the outgoing Rahul Dravid.

Former opener Gautam Gambhir is expected to succeed Dravid as the India head coach. The Cricket Advisory Committee has also conducted the interviews for the high-profile job and short-listed Gambhir and former India women's coach W V Raman.

The appointment of a selector will also be made soon, said Shah, who is in the Caribbean with the India squad that won the T20 World Cup title on Saturday, beating South Africa by seven runs in the final.

"Both coach and selector appointment will be made shortly. CAC has interviewed and short-listed two names and after reaching Mumbai whatever they have decided will go by that. VVS Laxman is going to Zimbabwe but new coach will join from Sri Lanka series," Shah told select media, referring to the Zimbabwe tour beginning July 6.

The Indian team is due to tour Sri Lanka for three T20Is and as many ODIs starting July 27.



Shah showed his elation after India won an ICC title after 11 years here on Saturday. He praised the efforts of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, who played a match-winning knock in the final.

Both the stalwarts announced their retirement from T20Is after the triumph and were joined by all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja in saying goodbye to the format a day later.

"It was same captain last year and same here in Barbados. We

won all games except the final in 2023 as Australia played better. This time we worked even harder and played better to win the title.

"If you look at other teams, experience counts. From Rohit to Virat, all excelled. Experience makes a lot of difference, in World Cups you can't experiment much also.

"A good player knows when to say goodbye to the game, we saw that yesterday. You look at Rohit's

strike rate, it is better than a lot of young players," he said.

How does he see the transition planning out following the retirement of Rohit, Kohli and Jadeja? "Transition has already happened with three greats retiring," Shah said.

India, who had built a reputation of losing the big finals over the past decade, finally ended their title drought after losing two ICC finals over the last 12 months and

Shah hoped the winning run will continue.

"I would want India to win all the titles. We have the biggest bench strength, only three players from this team are going to Zimbabwe. We can field three teams if the need arises.

"The way this team is progressing, our target is to win World Test Championship final and Champions Trophy. There will be a similar squad playing there. The seniors will be there," said Shah.

On Hardik Pandya's all-round performance in the World Cup and chances of him taking over captaincy from Rohit, Shah said: "Captaincy will be decided by the selectors and we will announce it after discussing with them. You asked about Hardik, there were lot of questions over his form but we and selectors showed faith in him and he proved himself."

Shah also confirmed that an A team will be travelling to Australia later in the year ahead of the five Tests Down Under. The BCCI is planning a felicitation after reaching India but the Hurricane warning has shut down the airport in Barbados indefinitely, leaving the victorious squad stranded.

"Like you we are also stuck here. After the travel plans are clear, we will think about the felicitation," said Shah. (PTI)

Seniors will be there in CT and WTC; next T20 captain to be decided by selectors: Shah

BRIDGETOWN, July 1: BCCI Secretary Jay Shah on Monday asserted that "seniors will be there" in next year's Champions Trophy and the World Test Championship final if India qualifies for it, while a decision on whether Hardik Pandya succeeds Rohit Sharma as the next T20 captain will be taken solely by the selectors.

Talking to select media here, Shah lauded the contribution of senior players in the side's T20 World Cup triumph at the end of which skipper Rohit, senior batting star Virat Kohli and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja announced their retirement from the shortest format's international assignments.

"Transition has already happened with three greats retiring," Shah said when asked about his thoughts on the team's next phase following the retirement of the seasoned trio.

"The way this team is progressing, our target is to win the World Test Championship final and Champions Trophy. There will be a similar squad playing there. The seniors will be there," he added.

This means that fitness permitting, senior players are likely to be available for the nine ODI matches that India will play before the

Champions Trophy scheduled in February-March in Pakistan.

India's ODI assignments before that include three games each against Sri Lanka (away), New Zealand (home) and England (home).

On Hardik Pandya's all-round performance in the World Cup and chances of him taking over captaincy from Rohit in the T20 format, Shah said: "Captaincy will be decided by the selectors and we will announce it after discussing with them.

"You asked about Hardik, there were lot of questions over his form but we and selectors showed faith in him and he proved himself."

Pandya served as Rohit's deputy in the format.

India broke the shackles of a tormenting 11-year run during which the side failed to win a single ICC title.

After losing two ICC finals over the last 12 months, the trophy drought finally ended here and Shah hoped the winning run will continue.

"I would want India to win all the titles. We have the biggest bench strength, only three players from this team are going to Zimbabwe. We can field three teams if the need arises," he said. (PTI)

## IOA EC members decide not to take any allowance for their Paris trip



NEW DELHI, July 1: Concerned that their image will take a hit if they accept the dearness allowance, which is higher than the athletes for the Paris Olympics, the IOA Executive Council members have decided that they will not take any such payment and rather make their own arrangements.

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) EC also asserted that it was not dependent on the government funds for travel abroad since all the members come from "sound backgrounds".

The IOA Executive Council members were to receive USD 300 per day (approx ₹ 25,000) as per the budget estimates. The members were also to receive an additional USD 1000 (around ₹ 90,000) per day for accommodation purpose during their five-day visit.

What drew criticism was that the athletes' allowance was fixed at USD 50 per day even as a sum

of ₹ 2 lakh was also sanctioned for each athlete for achieving the Olympic qualification.

Concerned that a wrong message has gone to the public, the IOA Executive Council met on Sunday morning and decided to discuss the issue before the Indian contingent's send-off ceremony at a city hotel.

"Yes, we discussed this issue. Most of the members agreed that we should not accept this allowance. A wrong message has gone to the public and it needs to be rectified," an EC member told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"Actually, all the EC members are financially well-off. They don't need to depend on the government funds for such travels. Each of us can manage it easily. And this 1000-1500 dollars amount does not make any difference to us.

"Our senior Vice President Mr Ajay Patel is chairman of the Gu-

jarat State Co-Operative Bank Ltd and other members are also financially sound. Do you think we are dependent on such amount? Honestly, we are not dependent on the government funds."

The member also claimed that the DA amount was not raised to USD 300 from USD 150 as it has been reported.

"If you get the details checked, the DA amount was USD 300 even in Tokyo, it was not raised for this edition of the Games. It was wrongly reported that the sum has been doubled for this edition," the member asserted. There are 15 members in the Executive Council, including two Athletes' Commission representatives.

IOA President PT Usha had sought approval from all the members to sanction the budget estimates but treasurer Sahdev Yadav had sought an EC meeting for discussion before final approval. (PTI)

## Six Indians in ICC Team of the Tournament

DUBAI, July 1: The International Cricket Council has picked six Indians in its 'Team of the Tournament' for the just-concluded T20 World Cup but there was no place for star batter Virat Kohli, who played a match-winning knock in the final against South Africa.

In his new role as an opener, Kohli had an underwhelming World Cup before rising to the occasion in the big final where he was adjudged man-of-the-match for his 59-ball 76.

India pipped South Africa by seven runs in a sensational comeback in the death overs to win their second T20 World Cup title after 17 years.

The ICC XI featured Indian skipper Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel and two pacers in Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh.

Rohit led from the front with 257 runs at a splendid strike-rate of 156.7 to his name. He was the second most leading run-getter after Afghanistan's Rahmanullah Gurbaz. The Player of the Tournament and India's trump card in their title win, Bumrah returned with 15 wickets.

But more than his wickets, his impact in restricting the scoring rate of teams made Bumrah India's most important player right through the tournament. His economy rate of 4.17 was the best ever by any bowler in a single edition of the men's T20 World Cup.

Following their historic semifinal finish, Afghanistan found three players in the ICC team, including left-arm quick Fazalhaq Farooqi, who topped the wicket-takers chart jointly with Arshdeep (17 wickets each). (PTI)

## Neeraj Chopra opts out of Paris Diamond League: Report



NEW DELHI, July 1: Olympic and world champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra has opted out of this Sunday's Paris Diamond League, citing the adductor niggle that has been troubling him for the past couple of months, according to a report.

Speaking to 'ESPN', Chopra said he is focussing on training and strengthening his blocking leg.

"I need to strengthen my blocking leg when I throw because that's

self too much in training, I've learnt to pause for a bit," he added. The block phase is a crucial maneuver as it is the point at which the pace generated by the run-up is transferred to the hip and then to the throwing arm before the javelin is sent flying.

Chopra, who topped the field in last month's Paavo Nurmi Games in Turku, Finland, with a throw of 85.97m, said he has become wiser over the years and no longer puts himself at risk to fulfill commitments like he used to do before his Olympic gold.

"Back then, if I had an entry in a competition, I would definitely go and compete no matter what happened. But now with more experience, I am better placed to make correct decisions," he said.

"I was happy with my performance in Turku, but I felt there was more work to do. I was slow on the runway compared to my normal speed. "I want that speed back and for that, I need proper confidence that I am fully fit and that my groin is fit. I want to feel confident when I run on the runway," he pointed out. (PTI)

## Sikandar Raza to lead young Zimbabwe team against India

HARARE, July 1: Experienced batter Sikandar Raza was on Monday named as captain of a young Zimbabwe team for the five-match T20I series against world champions India, which begins here from July 6.

The African side has also named Belgium-born Antum Naqvi in the squad but his final inclusion is subject to the confirmation of his citizenship status, Zimbabwe Cricket said in a release.

Naqvi was born to Pakistani parents in Brussels, Belgium, before moving to Australia, but he was con-

sidered for selection after he declared his desire to represent Zimbabwe in international cricket and applied for naturalisation.

Aiming to rebuild under new head coach Justin Sammons after failing to qualify for the just-concluded T20 World Cup, Zimbabwe have picked a young squad under Raza.

The 38-year-old right-hander, who has 86 matches under his belt, is the team's most experienced player, followed by 29-year-old Luke Jongwe who has featured in 63 games. (PTI)

## OCA EB agrees to yoga in Asian Games programme, General Assembly nod pending: IOA chief Usha

NEW DELHI, July 1: IOA president PT Usha on Monday said the Olympic Council of Asia's Executive Board has agreed to include yoga in the Asian Games and a confirmation from the OCA's General Assembly would pave the way for its inclusion to the event's programme.

Usha said OCA acting president Randhir Singh informed her about EB's decision. She thanked him for his "unflinching support" to yoga's inclusion as a competitive sport in the Asian Games.

"I am delighted that the OCA Executive Board spontaneously agreed to India's request to give yoga the recognition it deserves. The proposal shall now move through the Sports Committee to the General Assembly for confirmation," Usha said in an IOA release.

An IOA source said it is just the first step towards yoga's inclusion in the multi-sport event as a medal sport.

"Whether it will be medal sport or demonstration sport, that will be decided by the OCA General Assembly. It's the first step. But since Yoga is prevalent worldwide, the

IOA is hoping for it to be a medal sport in due course of time," the source told PTI.

The IOA chief said it was a natural step for the competitive sports community to embrace yoga, especially after the world had given it due recognition.

"It has a universal appeal and people around the world have embraced yoga and drawn benefits," Usha said.

She also thanked new Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya for his efforts ahead of the OCA meeting.

"When we make a collective effort, led by the Prime Minister himself, we can achieve success seamlessly. I am glad India's effort to have yoga included in the biggest celebrations of sport is finding resonance."

Mandaviya had earlier welcomed IOA president Usha's move to get yoga included in the Asian Games programme.

"It is only fair that in keeping with its wide popularity, yoga becomes a competitive sport and is in the Asian Games," Mandaviya said in a statement a few days back. (PTI)

## All three white ticked off; one red to go, tick it: Dravid to Kohli

BRIDGETOWN, July 1: Staying true to his no-nonsense taskmaster image, outgoing India head coach Rahul Dravid had an assignment for star batter Virat Kohli even on his last day at work and within hours of India winning the T20 World Cup.

"All three white ticked off, one red to go. Tick it," Dravid told Kohli in a video of the Indian dressing room celebrations shared by the ICC on its Instagram page.

By three white he meant the limited-overs global trophies -- the T20 World Cup, the ODI World Cup and the Champions Trophy -- all of which Kohli has collected as a player.

What's left now is winning the World Test Championship Final. India have lost the WTC Final twice (against New Zealand in 2021 and Australia in 2023).

The 35-year-old Kohli, who retired from T20 Internationals after the World Cup triumph here on Saturday, merely smiled at Dravid as he repeated himself to assert his point, albeit with a warm smile on his face.



"Go tick it." The 51-year-old Dravid, who was appointed India coach in 2021, ended his tenure with this event.

India defeated South Africa by seven runs in the humdinger to

claim their second overall T20 world crown, having won the title in its inaugural edition in South Africa back in 2007 under Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

In the ODI format, India won the 1983 and 2011 World Cups be-

fore snaring the 2013 Champions Trophy. The congratulatory video also featured Suryakumar Yadav, whose blinder of a catch to dismiss David Miller proved crucial in the final here.

The Mumbaikar said it would

take him at least two days to fully grasp the enormity of the achievement.

"No feelings right now, I don't know what to say," he said.

Pacer Arshdeep Singh flaunted a couple of polaroid shots of his, one taken on the morning of the final and the other with the winner's medal around his neck and the trophy in his hands in the afternoon.

"This is what belief can do," he said.

The Indian team is currently stranded here as Barbados has been shut down due to hurricane Beryl, originating in the Atlantic. The category 4 hurricane has intensified with maximum sustained winds of 210 kmph.

The Indian team was supposed to take an Emirates flight from New York via Dubai. A source told PTI that the plan now is to take the team back to India on a charter flight.

The Indian contingent, including support staff, families, and officials, consists of about 70 members. (PTI)