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● Keir Starmer becomes UK prime minister after meeting King Charles

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Vol .No. XXV

Issue No. 176

RNI-ASSEN/2000/12862

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PRICE ₹ 8

## State flood situation remains critical

CM visits flood affected areas of Dibrugarh district • Nearly 22 lakh people in 29 dists affected

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 5: The flood situation in Assam remained critical on Friday with nearly 22 lakh people affected and all major rivers flowing above the danger mark.

The toll in this year's flood, landslide and storm has increased to 62, while three persons are missing.

Among the worst-hit districts are Dhubri where 6,48,806 people are affected, Darrang with 1,90,261 people hit and Cachar with 1,45,926 people affected.

A total of 39,338 affected people have taken shelter in 698 relief camps, while 7,24,322 people have been provided with relief materials.

An alert was issued in Kamrup (Metro) district where the Brahmaputra, Digaru and Kollong rivers were flowing above the danger marks with vast tracts of land inundated in the second wave of flood.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma visited the affected areas of Dibrugarh district on Friday to assess the situation, an official statement said.

As per the statement, the chief minister waded through the submerged HS Road and Mahalaya Road in Dibrugarh town and interacted with the flood hit people and assured them of taking remedial measures



once the flood water recedes.

Sarma also inspected the flood induced breach of the ring bund at Khawang and took stock of the ground situation and spoke to the affected people and assured them of adequate steps.

Besides this, he also asked the concerned authorities to build the ring bund and fortify the main embankment.

"The chief minister directed Panchayat and Rural Development minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass and MLA Chakradhar Gogoi to supervise the restoration work to give relief to the affected people," the official statement stated.

Sarma then visited the relief camp set up at Pithubor Girls' Higher Secondary School where 173 inmates are taking shelter. He

talked to them and enquired about the daily relief material provided to them.

The chief minister asked the district commissioner to provide medical facilities, safe drinking water and clothes to the camp inmates.

Later, he visited the relief camp set up at Khawang Higher Secondary School where 380 flood affected people have taken shelter. He spent time with them and assured them that besides providing necessary materials, expeditious measures would be taken to repair or build the houses damaged by flood.

Panchayat and Rural Development minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass, Water Resources minister Pijush Hazarika, MLAs Teros Goala and Taranga Gogoi were also present during the visit of the chief minister.

"The chief minister asked DC Dibrugarh to take necessary measures for emergency relief of the flood affected people. He assured the people that the damaged houses would be either rebuilt or repaired. Moreover, steps on war footing would be initiated from tomorrow to plug the breach point with geo bags," the statement quoted Sarma as saying. He also visited a relief camp set up at Tengakhat College where 299 inmates are taking shelter. He took stock of the facilities made available (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Massive waterlogging in Guwahati, child goes missing

GUWAHATI, July 5: Massive waterlogging has been reported from various parts of Assam's largest city Guwahati on Friday, following incessant rain and the Brahmaputra river, which flows along the city, rising above the danger level.

A child has been missing from the Jyoti Nagar area of the city since Thursday evening after he reportedly fell into an open drain.

Pumps to clear the water from the city have been deployed, while the district administration has also opened an emergency toll-free number for the citizens to reach out in case of any emergency.

Locals said the child was travelling on a scooter with his father when he slipped and fell into the stormwater drain.

The father and other relatives of the missing child immediately launched a rescue operation, with SDRF and administration personnel also joining the efforts upon receiving intimation.

"Search for the child is on. An excavator has also been pressed into action, but there has been no success so far," an official said.

"The incessant rain has caused the Brahmaputra to rise above danger levels. This has forced the closure of the Bharalu Sluice Gate, adversely impacting the outflow of water from several major storm drains in Guwahati city via Bharalu River into Brahmaputra River," Urban Affairs minister Ashok Singhal posted on X.

He said the water level of the Brahmaputra in the city at 10 am on Friday was at 49.85m, maintaining a falling trend.

The danger level is 49.68m at the measuring point.

The water level at the Bharalu Sluice Gate was 49.85 m with a steady trend upstream.

"Due to this, instances of waterlogging have been reported from various parts of the city. To mitigate this issue, we have deployed 6 pumps at the Bharalumukh Sluice Gate which are all working at full capacity to drain the accumulated water," Singhal added.

The Kamrup Metropolitan administration has issued helpline numbers for the people to reach out in an emergency. "In the greater interest of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### HT BRIEFS

#### Helpline numbers

GUWAHATI: The Kamrup Metropolitan District Administration on Friday released the contact information for the District Emergency Operations Centre of the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) Kamrup Metro to provide aid to victims affected by the floods. The contact numbers are: For emergencies, residents are advised to contact the following helpline numbers: 0361-1077; Mobile: 9365429314. Taking to micro-blogging site X the Kamrup Metro District Administration announced, "In the greater interest of safety and security of the public in general Citizens of Guwahati experiencing issues due to urban flooding can contact the District Emergency Operations Centre of DDMA Kamrup M for any assistance.

#### Mahmora river bank

GUWAHATI: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday revealed a plan for a ₹ 90 crore project aimed at safeguarding the Mahmora riverbank. Taking to micro-blogging site X the Chief Minister Office stated, "HCM Dr @himantabiswa announces ₹ 90 crore project for Mahmora riverbank protection." As per reports, Sarma evaluated the Mahmora riverbank and observed that although the situation is presently manageable, any further escalation could result in extensive chaos and panic in the Majuli area. After engaging in discussions with the local community, a project worth ₹ 90 crore has been launched to safeguard the Mahmora riverbank in order to proactively tackle possible problems. During a Facebook live session, the chief minister shared the latest information about his trip to Majuli, Dibrugarh, Mahmora, and Dhakuakhana, where he assessed the welfare of flood victims and the state of the riverbanks.

#### Abandoned Baby

GUWAHATI: In a heartwarming turn of events, a healthy newborn baby was rescued by City Police personnel from Noonmati Police Station after being found abandoned at Kalitakuchi last night. The baby, now under the care of the police, was taken to the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) for a thorough health check-up and necessary medical attention.

## Centre, NTA oppose pleas for cancellation of NEET-UG

NEW DELHI, July 5: Amid the growing clamour for cancellation of the controversy-ridden NEET-UG, 2024 exam over alleged malpractices, the Centre and the National Testing Agency told the Supreme Court on Friday that scrapping it would be "counterproductive" and "seriously jeopardise" lakhs of honest candidates in the absence of proof of large-scale breach of confidentiality.

The National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses, and the Union Education Ministry

have been at the centre of media debates and protests by students and political parties over alleged large-scale malpractices ranging from question paper leak to impersonation in the test held on May 5.

The Union Education Ministry and the NTA filed separate affidavits opposing the pleas which have sought scrapping of the exam plagued by controversy, a re-test and court-monitored probe into entire gamut of issues involved.

In their responses, they said the CBI, the country's premier investigating agency, has taken over the cases registered in different states.

"It is also submitted that at the same time, in the absence of any

proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in a pan-India examination, it would not be rational to scrap the entire examination and the results already declared," the Centre said in its preliminary affidavit filed by a director in the Ministry of Education.

"Scrapping the exam in entirety would seriously jeopardise the lakhs of honest candidates who attempted the question paper in 2024," the ministry said. The Centre said in any examination, there were competing rights, and interests of a large number of students who take it without adopting any unfair means must also not be jeopardised. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Woman gives birth on medical team's boat in flood-hit Assam

MORIGAON, July 5: A woman has given birth to a girl while being ferried to the nearest health centre on a boat amid raging floods in Assam, an official said on Friday.

Jahanara Begum was in full term of her pregnancy when she was being taken to Jhargaoa PHC in Morigaon district on a boat by a medical team led by assistant block project manager of Sandakaita rural PHC on Wednesday, when she went into labour and gave birth to a girl amid raging floods. Her husband was also accompanying her.

Paban Kumar Pator, doctor in-charge of Jhargaoa PHC, and his team, had received Begum and her

newborn daughter after being brought to the shore and took them to the medical establishment.

"The woman was being ferried to the nearest PHC by a health team which was visiting affected areas and marooned people in need of medical help. Both the mother and the child are in good health," Pator told PTI from his motor boat while visiting deluge-hit areas on Friday.

"During floods, medical teams are routinely sent to various affected areas. We have now intensified our reach, concentrating on pregnant women, children and senior citizens," the doctor said. "We are trying (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Assam's 'Shiksha Setu' portal wins National eGovernance Award

GUWAHATI, July 5: Assam government's 'Shiksha Setu' portal, a comprehensive digital platform with information on schools, staffers and students, has been selected for the National eGovernance Award 2024, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Friday.

"Proud to announce that Shiksha Setu has been honoured with the prestigious National eGovernance Award 2024. This monumental recognition highlights our dedication to revolutionising education through cutting-edge technology," Sarma posted on X.

State Education minister Ranaj Pegu said the award will be conferred during the 27th National Conference on eGovernance on August 8-9 in Mumbai.

The National Awards for eGovernance are given by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances of the Centre.

The Shiksha Setu app has been designed to serve as a single source of information for day-to-day administrative operations, and enable the department to make timely and data-driven decisions for the optimisation of resources and improve overall performance.

However, the application has been a bone of contention between the teaching community and the department, with the CM announcing earlier this week that a three-member committee has been set up to examine the app and the problems being faced by the teachers in registering their attendance in it.

The teaching community has alleged that the app has many glitches and it is an uphill task to record their attendance in it while the education minister asserted that there is no discrepancy in it. (PTI)

## Labour Party wins UK general election

LONDON, July 5: Keir Starmer on Friday promised a phase of "national renewal" as Britain's Prime Minister-elect after he led the Labour Party to a landslide victory in a landmark UK general election with a gain of over 200 seats, as outgoing leader Rishi Sunak conceded defeat with his Conservative Party suffering its worst election defeat in history.

Starmer, 61, now stands poised to take charge at 10 Downing Street after his audience with King Charles III at Buckingham Palace, following Sunak's meeting with the British monarch. As Labour crossed the halfway mark of 650 constituencies in the early hours of Friday to clinch the minimum 326 required for a majority in Parliament, Starmer stepped up to make his victory speech in London: "Change begins now. And it feels good, I have to be honest.

"A mandate like this comes with a great responsibility. Our task is nothing less than renewing the ideas that hold this country together. National renewal. Whoever you are, wherever you start in life, if you work hard, if you play by the rules, this country should give you a fair chance to get on. It should always respect your contribution and we have to restore that."

Meanwhile, the country's first

British Indian prime minister comfortably held on to his own Richmond and Northallerton seat in northern England with 23,059 votes but failed to turn things around for his party at a national level after 14 years in government. His Conservative Party suffered its worst election defeat in history losing 250 MPs in Thursday's general election.

A sombre-looking Sunak was joined by his wife Akshata Murty as his future as a member of Parliament was decided and chose to use his acceptance speech to also admit his party's defeat in winning another term in government.

"The Labour Party has won this general election and I have called Sir Keir Starmer to congratulate him on his victory," said Sunak, acknowledging the "sobering verdict" handed to his party and taking "responsibility for the loss".

He pledged to "continue to serve" his constituents for the "weeks, months and years ahead" and stressed that the transfer of power at Westminster will take place in a "peaceful and orderly manner with goodwill on all sides".

In his farewell speech, the 44-year-old was filled with emotion as he apologised to the voters who had (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Karbi Anglong plans eviction drive on encroached grazing reserves



HT Bureau  
DIPHU, July 5: A High Power Committee meeting on Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) lands under the jurisdiction of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Coun-

cil (KAAC), chaired by chief executive member (CEM) Tuliram Ronghang, was held at Kajir Ronghang Guest House, Taralango here on Friday.

After the meeting, Ronghang informed the media, stating, "A High

Power Committee consisting of stakeholders, political parties, social and student organizations, and intellectuals held its second round of meetings today. During the meeting, a resolution was passed stipulating that an eviction drive will be conducted within 15 days based on the report from the PGR/VGR Special Cell, led by officer on special duty (OSD) Rajeshan Terang, in accordance with the Supreme Court directives."

CEM Ronghang also highlighted that in Phuloni Circle, there are 1026 bighas of land, of which 308 bighas are already encroached upon, while the remaining 716 bighas will be utilised by the Forest Department for plantation purposes.

He further disclosed that a delegation will meet the Assam chief minister (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Delete Section 106.1 to exempt doctors from criminal prosecution'

## Protective provision under BNS be invoked for alleged medical negligence: IMA urges PM

NEW DELHI, July 5: The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighting that an investigating officer should invoke the protective provision under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita in cases of alleged criminal medical negligence.

The IMA pointed out that there is no criminal intent (mens rea) on the part of a doctor while treating a patient and there is no negligence to attract criminal prosecution.

"Union Home Minister Amit Shah ji acknowledged on the floor of the Parliament that death during treatment is not murder. The new BNS legislation brought up by your Government reflects on this



aspect in section 26. IMA kindly request the Government that the investigating officer invoke this provision in cases of alleged medical

negligence. In the rarest of rare cases which might be considered as recklessness the investigating officer may prefer the case to an

expert committee for opinion," the IMA said in the letter sent recently.

When contacted, IMA president Dr R V Asokan said that Section 26 in the BNS clearly states that doctors fall outside the purview of criminal law and demanded that the provision under Section 106.1 should be deleted so that doctors are exempted from criminal prosecution.

"At present, police charge doctors under Section 106.1 in cases of alleged criminal medical negligence and do not follow the provision of Section 26. A crime necessarily has to have a criminal intent (mens rea). In the absence of mens rea (criminal intent) doctors can be held responsible only in civil law (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Defence production hits record high of nearly ₹ 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24: MoD

NEW DELHI, July 5: India's annual defence production has hit a record high of approximately ₹ 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24, with the Make in India programme crossing new milestones, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Friday.

The value of defence production in FY 2022-23 was ₹ 1,08,684 crore.

Welcoming the "encouraging development", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Compliments to all those who have contributed to this feat. We are fully committed to nurturing a supportive environment to further enhance our capabilities and establish India as a leading global defence manufacturing hub".

"This will enhance our security apparatus and make us Aatmanirbhar!" he said on X.

Singh said the government is committed to creating a more conducive regime for developing India as a leading global defence manufacturing hub.

"The Ministry of Defence has achieved the highest-ever growth in indigenous defence production in value terms during financial year (FY) 2023-24, on the back of successful implementation of the policies and initiatives of the government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, focussing on achieving 'Aatmanirbharta'," the defence ministry said in a statement. The annual defence production (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



## Gold reserves were down USD 427 million to USD 56.528 billion during the week

# India's forex reserves decline

## USD 1.71 bn to USD 651.99 bn

**MUMBAI, July 5:** India's forex reserves dropped USD 1.713 billion to USD 651.997 billion for the week ended June 28, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall kitty had dropped USD 2.922 billion to USD 652.895 billion. The reserves had touched an all-time high of USD 655.817 billion as on June 7 this year.

For the week ended June 28, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased USD 1.252 billion to USD 572.881 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound, and yen held in the foreign



exchange reserves.

Gold reserves were down USD 427 million to USD 56.528 billion during the week, the RBI said.

The special drawing rights (SDRs) declined USD 35 million

to USD 18.014 billion, the central bank said.

India's reserve position with the IMF was up USD 1 million to USD 4.573 billion in the reporting week, the data added. (PTI)

## Rupee rises 1 paisa to close at 83.49 against US dollar

**MUMBAI, July 5:** The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day almost flat at 83.49 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, as muted domestic equities and rise in crude oil prices capped gains for the local unit. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.48 and hit the intraday high of 83.45 and a low of 83.50 against the American currency during the session.

It finally settled at 83.49 (provisional) against the dollar, 1 paisa higher than its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee pared its initial losses and settled for the day on an almost flat note at 83.50 against the US dollar.

Forex traders said rising crude oil prices at around USD 87 per barrel weighed on investor sentiments and restricted the upside. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.19 per cent to USD 87.26 per barrel.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 104.96, lower by 0.16 per cent.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on the weak tone in the US dollar and FI inflows. However, a correction in the domestic markets and elevated crude oil prices may cap sharp upside.

"Traders may remain cautious ahead of the US non-farm payrolls report. It is expected to increase at a slower pace. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 83.20 to ₹ 83.80," said Anuj Choudhary – Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

Forex traders said the dollar index fell towards 105 levels and US 10-year bond yields dropped towards 4.35 per cent, as a series of economic data showed a cooling US economy. "The US dollar declined extending previous day's fall on rising expectations of a rate cut by the Fed," Choudhary said.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended the day 53.07 points, or 0.07 per cent, lower at 79,996.60 points. The broader NSE Nifty settled 21.70 points, or 0.09 per cent, up at 24,323.85 points. (PTI)

## Honda India Foundation signs MOU with Marriot Group of Hotels

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, July 5:** Taking a giant stride in its commitment to community support by empowering the youth of the society, Honda India Foundation (HIF) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Marriot Group of Hotels.

This collaboration is a part of Project Buniyaad, a noble initiative aimed at providing 100% job placement to around 1000 youths from the North-eastern states and the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir in the hospitality sector.

The MOU signing ceremony was graced by prominent dignitaries including Sanjay Gupta (Chairman, Marriot India Business Council), Arun Kumar (Market Vice president for North, Nepal & Bhutan, Marriot), Ms Shveta Sahal (Director, Government Affairs and CSR, Marriot), Ms Gurleen Bhalla (Area Director North -HR, Marriot), Ms Purna Daga (Director, Marketing Communications, Marriot), Vinay Dhinagra (Trustee, Honda India Foundation), and Satyaprakash Patil (Operating officer, Honda India Foundation) along with other associates of Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI).

## Gold climbs ₹ 200; silver jumps ₹ 350

**NEW DELHI, July 5:** Gold prices rose ₹ 200 to ₹ 73,310 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday in line with global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

The yellow metal settled at ₹ 73,110 per 10 grams in the previous session.

Silver also climbed ₹ 350 to ₹ 93,400 per kg against ₹ 93,050 per kg in the previous trade.

"In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are quoted at ₹ 73,310 per 10 grams, up by ₹ 200 from the previous close," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said.

In the overseas markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,363 per ounce, up USD 7 from the previous session. (PTI)

## Airtel India denies data breach

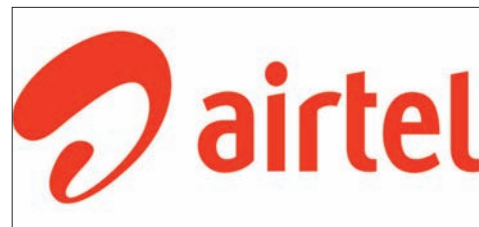
**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, July 5:** Airtel India has strongly denied claims of a data breach, which alleged that the data of 375 million Airtel India users was put up for sale on the dark web. According to Dark Web Informer on X (formerly Twitter), an unauthentic data hacker named xenZen is al-

gender, nationality, connection type, SIM activation data, Aadhaar, photo ID proof details, and address proof details. This data, belonging to Airtel India customers, is being sold for USD 50,000 in XMR.

Dark Web Informer posted screenshots from a community called BreachForums, where an account has posted about the sale of the latest Airtel India customer database. Incidentally, the seller also claimed to be behind the recent Indian Ministry of External Affairs data leak.

"There has been report alleging that Airtel customer data has been compromised. This is nothing short of

a desperate attempt to tarnish Airtel's reputation by vested interests. We have done a thorough investigation and can confirm that there has been no breach whatsoever from Airtel systems," Airtel India said.



legedly selling data belonging to Airtel India customers.

The alleged data breach includes 375 million customer details updated until June 2024. The breach, claimed to have occurred in June 2024, includes data fields such as mobile number, name, date of birth, father's name, local address, permanent address, alternate number, email ID,

## Dyson introduces Airstrait Straightener

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, July 5:** Fuelled by the desire to improve everyday technology, Dyson on Friday unveiled the Dyson Airstrait Straightener.

Engineered for multiple hair types, stylers can achieve a natural straight style, with body and movement, whilst maintaining the strength and healthy look and feel of their hair. The hair tress is contained by two arms, from which a precisely angled high-pressure blade of air is forced downwards and into the hair, both simultaneously drying and straight styling, with one machine.

"Having a strong understanding of how to manipulate and realise the potential of powerful airflow is fundamental to the performance of the Dyson Airstrait™ straightener.

This expertise, which we've gained over the last 25 years, is what has enabled us to deliver our first wet to dry straightener, with no hot plates, and no heat damage. Delivering the ease-of-use that people love about straighteners but with high-velocity air blades, saves time, maintains hair strength and achieves an everyday natural straight style." James Dyson, founder and chief engineer.



## NAME CORRECTION

I, SHEIKH MD. ASHROF, S/O- NUR MOHAMMOD, a resident of Ward No. 8, Islampur, Mangaldai P. & P.S - Mangaldai, Dist- Darang (Assam), do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that I am a permanent resident of the above-mentioned address and a citizen of India by birth.

My actual and correct name is SHEIKH MD. ASHROF, and all my documents correctly mention my name as SHEIKH MD. ASHROF.

However, in some documents of my son, namely SAHID ASHROF, my name has been incorrectly recorded as SEKH MOHAMAD ASHROF and SEKH MAHAMMAD ASHROF instead of SHEIKH MD. ASHROF.

I affirm that SHEIKH MD. ASHROF, SEKH MAHAMMAD ASHROF, and SEKH MOHAMAD ASHROF refer to the same individual.

## Nifty scales new lifetime high

### Sensex retreats from record to slip below 80k



**MUMBAI, July 5:** The broader NSE benchmark Nifty advanced further to settle at an all-time high for the third straight session on Friday, while the BSE gauge Sensex retreated from the record to slip below the 80k mark, as investors were indecisive at the current levels.

In a volatile session, the broader NSE Nifty continued its record-breaking run and inched up 21.70 points or 0.09 per cent to close at its lifetime high of 24,323.85, helped by fag-end buying on select counters.

As many as 34 Nifty shares advanced, and 16 declined.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 53.07 points or 0.07 per

cent to settle at 79,996.60, indicating market indecisiveness.

A total of 2,242 stocks advanced, while 1,686 declined and 88 remained unchanged on the BSE.

On a weekly basis, the BSE Sensex jumped 963.87 points or 1.21 per cent, and Nifty gained 313.25 points.

"Nifty traded in negative territory throughout the day. However, recovery in the last half hour of the session helped indices to close with minor gains..." Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd. said.

Among the 30-share Sensex pack, State Bank of India, Reliance Industries, Hindustan Unilever, NTPC, Larsen & Toubro, Nestle

India, Power Grid, ITC, JSW Steel and Sun Pharmaceuticals were the major gainers.

On the other hand, HDFC Bank, Titan, Mahindra & Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, UltraTech Cement, Tata Motors, HCL Technologies and Asian Paints were among the laggards.

"The domestic market traded with a mixed bias, with the heavy-weight banking sector acting as a laggard. Adding to the worry are the top lending banks, which recorded a sequential decline in deposit growth in the June quarter.

"Midcap and Small Cap outperformed, and the respective BSE indices hit an all-time high," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Asian markets were closed on a mixed note on Thursday.

European markets were trading in the green in mid-session deals. The US markets were closed on Thursday for Independence Day.

In the broader market, the BSE Smallcap gauge rose 0.70 per cent, and the midcap index climbed 0.75 per cent. Among the sectoral indices, oil & gas surged 1.77 per cent, energy jumped 1.70 per cent, capital goods (1.55 per cent), industrials (1.48 per cent) and power (1.24 per cent). (PTI)

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## State flood situation remains

in the relief camp and asked the DC to ensure availability of daily relief material in the camp and to give special attention to the needs of the babies and aged people.

The Brahmaputra is also flowing above the danger marks at Nimatighat, Tezpur, Guwahati, Goalpara and Dhubri. Its tributaries Subansiri at Badatighat, Burhi Dihing at Chenimari, Dikhou at Sivasagar, Disang at Nanglamuraghat, Dhansiri at Numaligarh, and Kopili at Kamrup and Dharamtul are flowing above the danger levels.

The Barak river was flowing above the danger mark at AP Ghat, BP Ghat, Chota Bakra and Fuletrak, while its tributary Dhaleswari was above the red mark in Garmura, Katakhal in Matizuri and Kushiya in Karimganj town. State ministers are also camping in various flood-affected districts. (With inputs from PTI)

## Massive waterlogging in Guwahati,

safety and security of the public in general Citizens of Guwahati experiencing issues due to urban flooding can contact the District Emergency Operations Centre (DEOC) of the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Kamrup (Metro) for any kind of assistance," it said in a statement.

Citizens have been asked to contact the toll-free number 0361-1077 and mobile phone number 9365429314. Nearly 22 lakh people are reeling under floodwater in 29 districts across the state.

The toll in this year's flood, landslide and storm is at 62.

According to an official bulletin, the number of affected people in Kamrup Metropolitan district, under which Guwahati falls, is 38,487, as of Thursday. (PTI)

## Centre, NTA oppose pleas for

The NTA, in its separate affidavit, reiterated the Centre's stand and said: "The cancellation of the entire examination on the basis of the aforesaid factor, would be hugely counterproductive and significantly harmful to the larger public interest, especially to the career prospects of the qualified candidates."

The agency said the entirety of NEET-UG 2024 exam was carried out fairly and with due confidentiality without any illegal practices, and the claim of "mass malpractice" during the exam is "completely unfounded, misleading, and lacks any basis".

"It is submitted that if the entire examination process is cancelled without their being any tangible factors warranting such actions it would be highly detrimental to the larger public interest involving the academic career of lakhs of students who have attempted the examination fairly without any wrongdoing or even an allegation of wrongdoing," the NTA said.

The ministry and the NTA said there was no proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in the examination which was taken by over 23 lakh candidates at 4,750 centres in 571 cities.

The ministry said the Centre was committed to protecting the interests of lakhs of students who have attempted the question papers fairly and after years of hardwork, without trying to obtain any illegal advantage. "Therefore, while genuine concerns based on proven facts must be addressed, other prayers merely based on conjectures and surmises, without any basis in fact, must be rejected so as not to cause unnecessary suffering and distress to honest examinees and their families," the ministry said.

The government said it has constituted a high-level committee of experts to suggest effective measures for conducting transparent, smooth and fair examinations by the NTA.

The affidavit said the panel shall make recommendations on reforms in the mechanism of the examination process, improvement in data security protocols and structure, and functioning of the National Testing Agency. "It is respectfully submitted that the government is committed to ensure the sanctity of examinations and protect the interest of students. To ensure transparency, fairness, and credibility in public examination, Parliament has enacted Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 on February 12, 2024," it said.

The affidavit said the Act was brought into effect on June 21, 2024 and provides for stringent punishment for offences related to use of unfair means in public examinations.

The top court is scheduled to hear on July 8 a batch of pleas, including those alleging irregularities in the examination held on May 5 and seeking a direction that it be held afresh. (PTI)

## Woman gives birth on medical team's

to maximise our reach even among healthy people to ensure there is no outbreak of disease at a later stage," Pator said.

As of Thursday, 170 medical teams have been deployed across the state, including eight in Morigaon, as per a bulletin issued by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA).

There are 285 pregnant or lactating women in relief camps across the state, out of the total 39,338 inmates. More than 58,000 people have been affected by floods in Morigaon district so far.

Nearly 22 lakh people are reeling under floodwaters in 29 districts of the state. The toll in this year's flood, landslide and storm stands at 62, while three persons are missing. (PTI)

## Labour Party wins UK general election

delivered the party led by him a hammering at the ballot box. But he stressed that he had given the job everything and also apologised to his Tory colleagues who lost their seats overnight.

Sunak said he will step down as the leader of the Conservative Party, taking "responsibility" for its debacle in the general election.

With some of the most prominent ministers and MPs including Sunak's predecessor Liz Truss – whose disastrous mini-budget and short-lived premiership last year is being blamed for much of the Tory debacle. Other key Tory heavyweights to lose their seats on a dismal election night for the Conservatives included Grant Shapps, Penny Mordaunt and Jacob Rees Mogg losing the election, the results being dubbed a "bloodbath" for the Conservatives.

However, among the new Tory MPs included British Indian candidate Shivani Raja who beat Labour's candidate, former deputy mayor of London Rajesh Agrawal, in the closely watched Leicester East constituency. Other British Indian Tories who managed to hold on to their seats included former ministers Priti Patel, Suella Braverman and Claire Coutinho.

On the Labour side, several Indian-origin MPs were re-elected including Preet Kaur Gill and Tan Dhesi and some newcomers made their mark such as Jas Athwal and Kanishka Narayan, who became the first British Indian to represent Wales in Parliament.

Earlier, Keir Starmer won his own seat of Holborn and St. Pancras in London with 18,884 votes and was mobbed by his supporters who could see he was on course to being named Prime Minister.

"The change begins right here. Because this is your democracy, your community and your future. You have voted. It is now time for us to deliver," said Starmer, in his acceptance speech.

Another major trend that will dominate the discourse in the coming weeks and months will be in Nigel Farage finally being elected as an MP at his eighth attempt and leading his anti-immigration Reform UK to bagging four first-time seats in the Commons. The Reform leader overturned a 25,000 Conservative majority to take Clacton in Essex by more than 8,000 votes, reflective of a wider trend of the party eating into the Tory votes.

Farage, a divisive figure in British politics, dubbed his win as "the first step of something that is going to stun all of you", describing it as the "beginning of the end" of the Conservative Party. (PTI)

## Karbi Anglong plans eviction drive

regarding law and order issues, emphasising that Law and Order is not under the jurisdiction of KAAC but rests with the chief minister.

The next High Power Committee meeting is scheduled for August 1.

The meeting was attended by member of Parliament Amarsing Tisso, former CEM of KAAC Jotson Bey, former MP Dr Jayanta Rongpi, former MLA Holiram Terang, executive members of KAAC, and members of the Autonomous Council, among others.

## Defence production hits record high

has hit a record high of approximately ₹ 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24, it said.

"As per the data received from all Defence Public Sector undertakings (DPSUs), other PSUs manufacturing defence items and private companies, the value of defence production in the country has gone up to a record-high figure, i.e., ₹ 1,26,887 crore, reflecting a growth of 16.7 per cent over the defence production of the previous financial year," the statement said.

Singh congratulated the Indian industry, including defence public sector undertakings and other public sector undertakings manufacturing defence items, and the private industry for the feat.

"The Make in India programme is crossing new milestones, year after year, under the leadership of PM Shri @narendramodi," he said.

"India has registered the highest ever growth in the value of defence production in 2023-24. The value of production has reached to ₹ 1,26,887 crore in 2023-24 which is 16.8 per cent higher than the value of production of previous financial year," he wrote on X.

The defence ministry said that of "the total value of production (VoP) in 2023-24, about 79.2 per cent has been contributed by DPSUs/other PSUs and 20.8 per cent by the private sector".

The data shows that in terms of absolute value, both DPSUs/PSUs and private sector have recorded a steady growth in defence production, the statement said.

The feat has been achieved due to the policy reforms and initiatives and ease of doing business brought in by the government in the last 10 years with focus on attaining self-reliance, the ministry said.

"The indigenisation efforts have been pursued aggressively on a sustained basis, that resulted in the highest ever VoP. Moreover, the spiralling defence exports have contributed tremendously to the overall growth in the indigenous defence production," the statement said.

Defence exports touched a record-high of ₹ 21,083 crore in FY 2023-24, reflecting a growth of 32.5 per cent over the last fiscal when the figure was ₹ 15,920 crore, it added.

In the last five years (since 2019-20), the value of defence production has been increasing steadily, and grown by over 60 per cent, the statement said and also shared year-wise data in this period. (PTI)

## Protective provision under BNS be

(Law of Torts). Accordingly IMA is committed to work towards exempting the doctors from criminal prosecution," Dr Asokan said.

The IMA in its letter also highlighted that doctors of the country however are passing through difficult times in practicing the profession and that there is an ambience of fear and mistrust in hospitals.

The violence on doctors and hospitals has reached epidemic proportions and is a "national shame".

"Your government had initiated a bill on violence on doctors and hospitals. It was even put up for public comments. However, the Bill is yet to be introduced in the Parliament. Your Government also protected the doctors during the mindless violence during Covid by amending the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897.

"A central law in statute on attacks on doctors and hospitals will be a deterrent and would strengthen the lame duck state legislations in 23 states. Hardly any conviction has happened in spite of numerous violent incidents," the IMA's letter stated. (PTI)



## Minister distributes ex-gratia, highlights community resilience amidst severe flooding

# Guardian minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass assesses relief efforts in Margherita

**HT Correspondent**  
**MARGHERITA, July 5:** Guardian minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass, accompanied by the additional district commissioner (Relief and Disaster Management) Tinsukia, Margherita sub-divisional officer (Civil), and Margherita circle officer, visited various flood relief camps under the Margherita Revenue Circle on Friday. The objective of the visit was to assess the ongoing flood situation in the sub-division and ensure the efficient distribution of relief materials.

During his visit, Guardian minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass distributed an ex-gratia payment of 4 lakhs to the family members of the late Bicky Kishan, who tragically passed away in a shelter camp in Margherita on July 2.

In the past few days, the Burhidingh and Tirap rivers surged to 3.06 meters and 2.29



meters above their danger marks due to excessive rains, posing a grave threat to residents and pushing them perilously close to disaster.

According to local reports, Margherita has not experienced

such severe floods since 1995/96, posing a sudden shock to the locals.

Out of the 47 relief camps that were established across Margherita, 20 camps are actively providing shelter to adults and minors from the flood-affected areas.

These camps are equipped with essential supplies such as medical aid, clean water, and nutrition, ensuring the well-being of those affected by the floods.

Amidst the devastation, the community has demonstrated remarkable resilience and unity.

The steadfast efforts of the administration, emergency responders, and the collective support of residents stand as a beacon of hope for the region, promising a path towards recovery and rebuilding.

The visit of Guardian minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass and his team underscores the government's commitment to addressing the challenges posed by natural disasters and providing timely assistance to affected communities. As relief efforts intensify, Margherita remains steadfast in its resolve to overcome adversity and emerge stronger than before.

## 91st birthday of Laksmikanta Mahanta observed



**HT Correspondent**  
**SIVASAGAR, July 5:** The 91st birthday of noted entrepreneur, Satradhikar of Sri Sri Ujjanial Satra, and proprietor of Industrial Art, Laksmikanta Mahanta, was celebrated at his Seujpur residence by a host of organisations on Friday.

Wishing him a healthy and happy life, the meeting held on the occasion was addressed by several notable figures, including Hem Barua, president of Rongpur Sahitya Sabha, Monica Saikia, president of Jila Mohila Samity, Dipali Bhat-tacharya Barua, former president, Manoj Kumar Borthakur, executive president of Assam State Journalists Union, Santosh Dutta, secretary of Sivasagar Jila Sahitya Sabha, Ranjan Mahanta, assistant engineer, PWD, Prasanta Sharma, president of Natyapeeth, and many others.

In his speech, Mahanta emphasised that a person must be serious about fulfilling his commitments to others.

## Sonitpur MP Ranjit Dutta sworn in as Tezpur Municipality Board member

**HT Correspondent**  
**TEZPUR, July 5:** Member of Parliament Ranjit Dutta, representing the Sonitpur (formerly Tezpur) Lok Sabha seat, took oath as an ex-officio member of the historic Tezpur Municipality Board on Friday. In a special program held at the Tezpur Municipality Board office, the parliamentarian was administered the oath by ADC Pranjit Kumar Dev. Prior to this, he was warmly welcomed to the Tezpur Municipality Board and felicitated by Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rabha with japi, khorai, and phulam gamosa, in the presence of chairman of TMB, Prayag Bhat-tacharya, and vice chairman Sangeeta Ghosh Bosh.

During the program, along with the executive officer of Tezpur Municipality Board, Prayag Baishya, 18 municipality board members, Sonitpur district BJP president Dipamani Saikia, and two officially nominated members of the board, Anjali Kalita and Pabitra Saikia, were present.

Later, while interacting with the media, the parliamentarian mentioned that he has been touring the constituency to assess the flood situation.

## 150 BPF members join UPPL party in Kokrajhar

**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, July 5:** The ruling United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) is gaining popularity among the citizens in the Bodoland Territorial Region. Over 150 new members from the Opposition BPF party joined the UPPL during the CWC meeting held at the Bodofa Cultural Complex, Chandamari in Kokrajhar on Friday.

The new members, who were active members of the BPF party from Ward No 4 of Kokrajhar town under the Debargaon Block Committee, were warmly welcomed and felicitated with traditional aronai, phulam gamosa, and party mufflers on the occasion.

UPPL president and CEM of BTR, Pramod Boro, cabinet minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma, Kokrajhar Lok Sabha MP Joyanta Basumatary, UPPL general secretaries Raju Kumar Narzary and Madhab Chandra Chetry, MLAs Lawrence Islary and Jiron Basumatary, and several senior party leaders were present at the event.

Meanwhile, the 23rd Central Working Committee of the party was held on Friday at the Bodofa Cultural Complex under the chairmanship of Pramod Boro, UPPL president and CEM of BTR. The party discussed the uplift and development strategies to strengthen the party.

CEM Boro, while welcoming the newly joined members, said, "It was a glad moment to welcome



over 150 new members from BPF and various SHG groups of Kokrajhar who joined our UPPL family."

He added that after UPPL's spectacular victory in the Lok Sabha elections, the 23rd Central Working Committee meeting in Kokrajhar saw in-depth deliberations. "We discussed the future plans of UPPL, along with several important organisational matters of the party, with the respected members of the CWC. All our party workers are highly motivated and ready to advance UPPL's vision, working even more devotedly at the ground level for the peace and progress of BTR. The victory in Kokrajhar Lok Sabha represents a vote of trust by the people of BTR in UPPL's vision of peace and progress. It is imperative that we do not rest on our laurels but instead redouble our efforts to work harder for the welfare and upliftment of the people of Bodoland Region," Boro added.



Ramen Deka, vice-chairman of SITA, ensures rural development as he distributes poultry essentials under SITA-funded 'Samridhi Poultry' project during inauguration of phase two at Bongshar-Gandhmow cluster, Sualkuchi Development Block, Kamrup Metro district. HT Photo.

## Nabul Konwar awarded second Deba Kumar Bora Memorial Media Fellowship

**HT Correspondent**  
**JORHAT, July 5:** The second Deba Kumar Bora Memorial Media Fellowship, instituted by the All Assam Journalists' Union (AAJU), Jorhat District Committee, has been awarded to Nabul Konwar, the correspondent of Doordarshan News channel based in Nazira.

Addressing reporters here on Thursday, AAJU Jorhat district unit president Jogesh Ojha and convener of the Deba Kumar Bora Memorial Media Fellowship Committee, Navajyoti Boruah, announced that Konwar was selected from several applicants for the fel-

lowship by a three-member panel. He will conduct a study on 'The Role of Media in Youth Empowerment through Micro-farming to Strengthen the State Economy'.

Konwar will receive ₹ 20,000 from the journalists' body to conduct the study and is required to submit his report within six months.

During the event moderated by Dulal Kalita, secretary of AAJU Jorhat District Committee, Barnali Saikia Bora, the wife of late Deba Kumar Bora and a member of the Assam State Women's Commission, mentioned that the fellowship is a small contribution to preserve

her husband's memory and support a cause beneficial to society and the environment.

She expressed hope that Konwar's study on this topic would garner attention from the government and the public, contributing to the enhancement of the agricultural sector.

It is noteworthy that late Deba Kumar Bora was a prominent leader of AASU during the Assam agitation, a former minister in the first Prafulla Kumar Mahanta-led government, former editor of Dainik Janambhumi, and press adviser to the late chief minister Tarun Gogoi.

## Flood situation in Nagaon remains severe

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, July 5:** The flood situation in Nagaon district remains critical, with over 197 villages across Kaliabor, Raha, Samaguri, Dhing, Kampur, and Nagaon reeling under floodwaters, according to the official record issued by the district disaster management authority.

Although the water level of the Brahmaputra River at Silghat has slightly receded, the Kolong river continues to flow above its danger level through Nagaon town. The floods have severely affected more than 65,000 people and impacted

61,088 domestic animals. Additionally, floodwaters have inundated over 18,363 hectares of crop land in these affected revenue circles.

Specifically, 14 villages in Nagaon revenue circle, 38 in Raha revenue circle, 51 in Kaliabor revenue circle, 22 in Samaguri revenue circle, 57 in Kampur revenue circle, and 15 in Dhing revenue circle are still submerged.

In response, the district administration has established 14 relief camps in the affected areas and is distributing essential supplies such as food, sanitary pads, biscuits, water bottles, and other necessities

to the flood victims.

On Friday morning, overflowing waters from the Kolong river submerged several areas in Nagaon town, including Nagaon Shiva Nagar, Kumartoop, and the Nagaon Law College area. The Nagaon Municipality Board has issued micro-phonetic announcements across the town, urging riverine residents to remain vigilant and ensure their safety.

Meanwhile, the water level of the Kapili river has slightly decreased on Friday afternoon in Kampur, although it continues to flow above its danger mark.

## Daylight theft in Nagaon

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, July 5:** In a daring daylight theft, a couple of women disguised as customers stole a gold bracelet from Bikaner Gems and Jewellers located at Nagaon Maruwaripatty last Thursday.

The incident came to light when the proprietor of the outlet reviewed the CCTV footage on Friday. In response to the incident, the showroom proprietor immediately filed an FIR at Nagaon Police Station. Police have registered a case and an investigation is currently underway, according to sources.

## Thowra MLA inspects Desang river bank leakage

**HT Correspondent**  
**DEMOW, July 5:** Parts of the Desang river bank at Koibartadolani in Thowra mouza of Demow constituency (formerly Thowra LAC) experienced leakage. Thowra MLA Sushanta Borgohain visited the Koibartadolani area on Thursday night to assess the situation.

Aditya Vikram Yadav, district commissioner of Sivasagar district, Pritam Das, Demow circle officer, Ranjit Borah, lot mandal of the concerned village, and Jadumoni Borah, gaon pradhan of the village, along with officials, visited the area on Friday morning and initiated efforts to arrange and distribute flood relief to the affected people. They also provided cattle feed and medicines for the livestock. Agricultural officers have been visiting the flood-affected villages. According to sources, officials from the Water Resources Department are actively working to protect the Desang river bank at Koibartadolani in Thowra mouza.

## Capacity building workshop for Mission Shakti officials in Nagaon



**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, July 5:** As part of a 100-day special awareness campaign on women-centric themes under SANKALP, the Office of the District Social Welfare Officer, Nagaon, in association with the district administration and District Legal Services Authority, Nagaon, organised a capacity-building workshop for district-level Mission Shakti implementing officials on Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at the conference hall of CEO, Nagaon Zila Parishad on Friday.

Munnee Neog, secretary to the District Legal Services Authority, Nagaon, attended the program as the key resource person. Over 52 female and other employees, including CDOs, supervisors, representatives from DCPU, Shakti Sadan, Sakhi Niwas, OSC, child helpline, and MSW interns from Kaziranga University, participated in the program.

The program was initiated with a welcome address and a brief note on the objectives of the program by Queen Bora, district programme coordinator cum district mission coordinator, SANKALP. In her brief note, Bora highlighted different women-centric schemes under Mission Shakti, including OSC, WHL, PMMVY, Shakti Sadan, Sakhi Niwas, etc.

Neog, the key resource person, highlighted the prospects and objectives of the new versions of laws and additions to Indian laws in BNS, covering topics from sexual intercourse by deceitful means, engaging a child to commit an offense, mob lynching, terrorist acts, to the deleted provisions of Indian Penal Codes like thug, sedition, and adultery. During the program, an interactive session was organised, allowing participants to interact on various issues with the key resource person.

The program concluded with a vote of thanks by Queen Bora, a press note asserted.

## CEM Pramod Boro initiates construction of welcome gate



**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, July 5:** A new look will be ushered in at Karigaon along the 31C National Highway on Jhwlao Dwimalu (JD) Road, Kokrajhar, with attractive designs and beautiful scenes in days to come, marking the entry point for Kokrajhar.

The chief executive member (CEM) of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Pramod Boro, laid the foundation stone for the construction of a welcome gate with an attractive design, amidst the presence of deputy CEM of BTR, Gabinda Chandra Basumatary, MLA Lawrence Islary, and senior government officials.

The welcome gate will be constructed at a cost of Rs 1.81 crores, funded by the government of BTR, with the aim of providing a grand

welcome to Kokrajhar, the city of peace and the heart town of Bodoland Territorial Region.

CEM Boro stated that the BTR government aims to construct a welcome gate at Karigaon along the National Highway on JD Road towards the entry road to Kokrajhar town. He emphasised that the welcome gate will enhance the aesthetic appeal of the area.

He also mentioned that proposals have been made to upgrade the 20 km Karigaon-Kokrajhar road to a four-lane highway.

Boro highlighted that the welcome gate will contribute to the attractive look of the road connectivity leading to Kokrajhar town. He reiterated the BTR government's commitment to working for the all-round development of its citizens.

## OBITUARY



**N**iralata Gohain, a prominent resident of Modarkhat, Phulampur village and former mother of Dikom Vidyapeeth Primary School passed away on Wednesday at the age of 81 at her residence. Late Gohain, is the wife of Khudreshwar Gohain, a retired teacher from Modarkhat area mother of Ranjit Gohain, president of the central committee of All Assam Matak Yuva Chatra Sammilan. Gohain is survived by 5 daughters and 3 sons. Her demise has cast a pall of gloom in Modarkhat area.

## Former wildlife warden files FIR against deer killers



**HT Correspondent**  
**TEZPUR, July 5:** At a time when the administration, government, and a dedicated section of wildlife and nature lovers have been engrossed in rescuing wildlife tragically affected by floodwaters, some individuals with malicious intent are seen callously killing

these animals. They are then uploading photos or videos of these acts on social media. A video footage depicting such an incident of sadistic pleasure, circulated on Facebook by Rafiqul Ali on his page, has gone viral. The accused, along with his friends, is seen brutally killing a deer in the midst of

floodwaters from a boat.

Upon noticing the viral video, former honorary wildlife warden of Sonitpur district, Saurav Barkataki, lodged a complaint at Tezpur Sadar Police Station on Friday. He urged the police to take swift action against the culprits and administer exemplary punishment as soon as possible. Barkataki also appealed to the public to inform the police or the 'Team Save Wildlife' if they have any information about the accused. Furthermore, he announced that anyone providing information about such inhumane acts to the police or his team would be rewarded.

It is worth mentioning that Saurav Barkataki, along with dedicated members of 'Team Save Wildlife', has been tirelessly working round the clock during the flood situation to rescue wildlife in distress.

## BTC chief inspires GEM participants towards brighter futures



**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, July 5:** Pramod Boro, chief of BTC, appealed to young girls participating in the Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM) by NTPC Salakati to embrace their dreams, work

diligently, and have faith in themselves. He interacted with 40 young girls who were visiting Kokrajhar as part of an educational tour under the program at the BTC Secretariat on Friday, emphasising the importance of using knowl-

edge effectively for a brighter future.

In his motivational address, chief Boro encouraged the girls to pursue their aspirations with determination and resilience. He underscored the crucial role of education in personal and societal development, stating, "Harnessing the power of knowledge can create a more equitable future for ourselves and future generations." He urged them to leverage their education to bring positive changes to their communities and serve as role models.

Commending NTPC Salakati's initiative, chief Boro noted that the GEM exemplifies how corporate social responsibility can empower young girls to realise their full potential. He praised NTPC for its comprehensive approach encompassing education, health awareness, self-defense training, and creative arts for the participants.

The Girl Empowerment Mission by NTPC Salakati aims to empower girl students through education, health awareness, self-defense training, and creative arts, marking a significant initiative towards fostering empowerment among young girls.



## Haryana polls: BJP-Cong face-Off likely

As the Haryana Vidhan Sabha elections approach, scheduled for September-October 2024, the political battleground has crystallized into a direct confrontation between the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the opposition Indian National Congress (INC). The Congress has decisively ruled out any alliance with the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), despite both being part of the broader INDIA bloc at the national level. Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh stated yesterday, "There does not appear to be much scope for an alliance between the Congress and the AAP for the assembly polls in Haryana and Delhi, but the INDIA bloc will fight elections together in Maharashtra and Jharkhand." This follows AAP's earlier announcement of its intention to go solo in the upcoming state elections. In the recent Lok Sabha elections, the BJP saw a significant setback, losing half of its seats in Haryana to the Congress. The BJP had previously dominated all ten seats in 2019 but secured only five in 2024. This electoral shift has bolstered the Congress's confidence in its ability to challenge the BJP without forming a coalition.

The latest election data reflects a closely contested political landscape. The BJP holds the largest vote share at 46.11%, with Congress trailing closely at 43.67%. AAP's influence remains marginal, securing only 3.94% of the votes, while regional parties like the Jannayak Janata Party (JJP) and the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) garnered even less, with vote shares of 0.87% and 1.74%, respectively. This suggests that the upcoming Vidhan Sabha elections will primarily be a direct contest between the BJP and the Congress, with regional parties playing a minimal role. The BJP's recent losses indicate lingering discontent among Haryana's electorate, particularly farmers and Punjabi communities, who remain dissatisfied with the party's policies and leadership changes. Despite replacing former Chief Minister M.L. Khattar with Nayab Singh Saini, the BJP's fortunes have not significantly improved, as evidenced by their Lok Sabha performance. Currently, the BJP holds 42 seats in the 90-member Haryana Vidhan Sabha, falling short of a majority. With the support of one Haryana Lokhit Party (HLP) MLA and an independent, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has a precarious hold on power, just reaching the majority mark with 44 seats. Three seats are presently vacant.

The JJP now leads the official opposition in the Vidhan Sabha alongside Congress, which has 28 MLAs. The Congress-led opposition also includes four independents, while the INLD, with one MLA, remains unaffiliated with either the NDA or the opposition bloc. In the 2019 Vidhan Sabha elections, the BJP managed to form the government despite a poor performance, winning only 40 seats compared to the Congress's 31. The JJP secured ten seats, and independents won seven. The BJP managed a recovery in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, increasing its vote share to 46.11%. Conversely, the Congress's vote share has seen a resurgence, rising from 28.08% in 2019 to 43.67% in 2024, reflecting growing support. Regional parties like the INLD and JJP have seen a significant decline in their political influence. Given this backdrop, the Congress's decision to avoid an alliance with AAP in Haryana underscores its confidence in a solo victory. The upcoming elections will be a critical test for both the BJP and the Congress.

# Attack on Hindutva - pinching the congeniality of India



India is facing a big political tussle as the confrontation has made the parliament a den of rage and uproar. Rahul Gandhi, being elected as the Leader of the Opposition seems to have given his alliance partners a nudge of confidence. Definitely, their euphoria has a reason. This is mainly due to the opposition's elevated strength and that defines the power and quantum of chaos that the INDIA alliance is vehemently unleashing in the parliament. This unity by the defeated camp seems to tell certain facts.

That its failure was real but it could successfully cut the Modi camp into size and also managed to increase its tally into a credible, viable and powerful group. The members in the group seem to have defined their purpose.

The level of disruption and pandemonium by the opposition was enough to send clear signals. A decade that it lost, the period it was crushed under the powerful Modi regime, has become a bitter memory.

Whatever might have been the tactics it played to make this resurgence, the common cause that the members found among themselves to unite was their archenemy, Narendra Modi, whom they systematically portrayed a dictator.

Frankly, the country's electorate do not subscribe to this view. But the Congress and its warmongering friends in the INDI camp have many reasons for this exultation. As they frequently projected since the election results, a mighty Modi with his clipped wings is no more a threat.

The opposition began to feel that they are entitled to shout out its throat and disrupt the parliamentary proceedings and that is Indian democracy's perilous dilemma. As voters have two choices. If this despicable nonsense by the policy makers in the parliament gives you a snigger of satisfaction, enjoy it.

Or withdraw yourself into solitude and shed at least a single tear for your having voted them to the temple of democracy. Should they be allowed to meet you in your respective constituencies after what they have put us through in the parliament? India, the largest democracy, is seriously disconnected with the ground realities. Both houses have become battlefields and revenge is the slogan.

Those who lost for three consecutive terms began to display their desperation and the result is they are raucously wild. And those who made resounding victories twice have also reasons to be desperate. Of course, the apparent hysteria on both sides is enough to conceal the reality.

Their relentless sarcasm on each other is a reminder to every citizen. As the world's largest democracy, we have not grown enough in terms of our constitutional responsibility. Except for his blazing presence as the Leader of the Opposition (LOP), Rahul Gandhi's speech in the parliament was an underperformer's usual plaintive number. His gimmick was too harsh and embarrassing.

Certainly, his presentation was a reflection of his acute intellectual crisis. He should have had the sense of what he had been up to in the parliament as he flashed pictures of divine figures. His statements not only highlighted his unchanged behavior, it also underscored his insensitivity.

Arrogantly calling a particular religion in the parliament violent was a deliberate attempt to satisfy his party's vote bank, especially the minorities.

The Prime Minister's reply had been direct and he incrementally hit the opposition with resounding resilience.

To what Rahul Gandhi meant by displaying the images of Gods in the parliament, the Prime Minister retorted by saying that images of Gods are not for Pradarshan for petty political gains but they are for Darshan. A devotee takes the darshan of the God and for a non-believer it is for Pradarshan (Display).

I thought the opposition, having increased its tally considerably, would present its acts more responsibly. But its performance in the Rajya Sabha was a deplorable repetition of what it did in the Lok Sabha.

Borrowing the words of Keir Starmer, Leader of the Labour Party in England, I would say that they have kicked the hope out of people thoroughly. They seemed to have retained their narcissist mindset loaded with contempt and took no notice of democratic val-

ues. The Prime Minister, throughout his speech, had exposed the volatility in their behavior and their double standard and impertinence for constitutional morality. This behavior of the opposition cannot be an admirable gesture.

Distressingly, Sanatan Dharma, which represents almost 80 per cent of India's population, is frequently under attack. It has become an international phenomenon as most of the western views on India are designed and defined to accuse its Hindu ethnicity. And more distressing are the efforts to humiliate it in its birthplace. Rahul Gandhi's understanding of Sanatan Dharma goes against what in real terms it stands for. Imagine India without Sanatan Dharma.

We need to understand how deeper did its roots of congeniality penetrate and how impactful was its effect that survived for millennia despite external aggression toppling its symbols of civilizational greatness. Therefore, to imagine India without Sanatan Dharma at its center is terribly depressing.

Throughout its political journey, the Congress party consistently failed to understand its depth and veracity. It has institutionalized its anti Hindu stand.

Sanatan Dharma or Hindutva is unadulterated nationalism.

Its principal view of nationalism stems from the idea of motherhood. Nation, according to Hindutva, is a manifestation of the divine in the form of mother. Consecration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya was a reminder and a moment of obeisance to what Lord Ram stood for with regard to this idea of motherhood. He is the first proponent of nationalism and the consecration of the temple was the reaffirmation of his iconic stand.

In the Ramayana, a jubilant Lakshmana comes to Lord Ram after the latter slayed the demon King Ravan. Lakshmana was mentally swept away by the beauty of Lanka which stood submerged in gold. He suggested Ram take hold of the reins of the island, where he thought life would be more satiating than in Ayodhya.

Ram, with his heavenly composure, had made a statement to Lakshmana. He said to him with brotherly love and compassion sparkling in his eyes, that mother and motherland are greater than heaven. There began, to be precise, an understanding that went for generations, and even today keeps elevating people to make great sacrifices for their country.

Hindutva in principle is this notion, in its highest realm of application. And Rahul Gandhi for obvious reasons, has not been culturally equipped enough to understand this doctrine, which made brave men live and die for this noble cause. So India, according to Hindutva, is not a tattered landscape which is closely stitched into a union for administrative reasons. But it is a cultural interconnectedness that survived through our rich traditions and practices. Rahul Gandhi seriously failed to know this dimension of India. *(The author is a freelance journalist who can be reached at mrlalu30@gmail.com)*

## Rahul Gandhi's path as leader of the Opposition

By: Dipak Kurmi

Rahul Gandhi's acceptance of the Congress Working Committee's (CWC) offer to become the new Leader of the Opposition in Parliament serves two key purposes. First, it grants him an official position under the law, setting him up as a direct competitor to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the 2029 elections. This move will compel Modi to take Gandhi more seriously than in previous years. Second, despite being a vocal critic of the Prime Minister both inside and outside of Parliament, Gandhi's criticisms have often been overshadowed by the BJP's overwhelming presence over the past decade. This dynamic is expected to shift as the BJP's representation in the Lok Sabha has decreased to 240 MPs, down from 303, while the Congress has nearly doubled its strength from 52 to 102 MPs, including three independents.

With a strengthened presence, the Congress party will be better equipped to counter the BJP's strategies. This could lead to a tit-for-tat situation in Parliament: if the BJP's "shouting brigade" tries to drown out Rahul Gandhi, Congress MPs might retaliate by disrupting the Prime Minister's speeches. The overall parliamentary balance has shifted notably. The combined strength of the NDA (BJP and its allies) has decreased to 294 seats, down from 336 in the previous term. On the other hand, the Congress-led UPA has seen a substantial increase, growing from 90 to 234 seats, including several new members. This shift poses a considerable challenge for the ruling party.

**Obstacles in his role as leader of the Opposition**

Rahul Gandhi, as the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in Parliament, will encounter many challenges that demand his full-time attention and commitment. This position is not suited for an ad hoc approach; it requires ongoing effort and careful strategic planning. Essential duties and strategies include: Regularly engaging with allied party leaders is crucial for Gandhi as he navigates strategies to confront the weakened BJP-led alliance in Parliament. Establishing and nurturing strong relationships with various political factions will be pivotal.

Gandhi's approach must strike a balance between assertiveness and maturity, especially when addressing significant public concerns in Parliament. Effectively tackling these issues will be critical to his effectiveness. A major hurdle will be uniting a divided opposition, where diverse political ideologies and regional interests complicate consensus-building, posing a formidable challenge. Even with the BJP's diminished majority, challenging its prevailing narrative remains a significant obstacle. The ruling party's influence over media and public opinion requires a strategic and convincing opposition counter-narrative.

Gandhi's leadership style and communication abilities will face continual evaluation. Establishing credibility and displaying strong leadership in parliamentary discussions and public platforms are vital to earning public trust and endorsement.

**Duties incumbent upon the leader of the Opposition (LoP)**

Gandhi will spearhead the opposition's role in ensuring government accountability, which includes voicing opposition perspectives on diverse issues, actively engaging in debates, and ensuring

robust representation.

His task will involve rallying opposition parties, fostering consensus, and coordinating their collective efforts—a challenging endeavor due to the varying ideologies and interests among these parties.

Effective communication is paramount for Gandhi, both within Parliament and beyond. His speeches, statements, and interactions with the media will shape public perception and drive political discourse.

Strategic decision-making, including knowing when to collaborate with the ruling party and when to stand in opposition, demands keen political judgment. Finding the right balance between these decisions will be critical. Gandhi's mastery of parliamentary rules, procedures, and tactics is essential. This knowledge will empower him to effectively challenge the government's actions and decisions. The effectiveness of Gandhi as LoP hinges on his ability to raise crucial issues, present alternatives, and propose constructive solutions, meeting the public's expectations.

Rahul Gandhi could potentially assume a significant role as the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which primarily reviews reports from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). The PAC, where government nominees hold a majority, typically decides matters through voting.

Additionally, as Leader of the Opposition (LoP), Gandhi would participate in various panels alongside the Prime Minister and Chief Justice of India (or their appointees). These panels are responsible for appointing key officials to crucial investigative and transparency agencies such as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Lokpal, Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), Chief Election Commissioner/Election Commissioners, and Chief Information Commissioner (CIC).

Comparisons drawn between Indira Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi highlight intriguing parallels. Just as Indira Gandhi's political resurgence in 1980 followed a period of setbacks and ridicule, Rahul Gandhi's recent elevation as a respected Leader of the Opposition in 2024 marks a similar revival. Indira Gandhi's journey from being dismissively labeled "Goongi Gudiya" to reclaiming power resonates with Rahul Gandhi's transformation from BJP's "Pappu" to his current stature. These historical echoes underscore how political fortunes can shift, often transforming adversity into opportunity.

At this critical juncture, analysts observe that the public's perception shifted as they saw a member of the Gandhi family walking through extreme weather conditions to connect with their issues. This display may have transformed their view of him, portraying him as a sympathetic figure, and potentially played a role in the BJP's electoral setbacks in 2024.

The NDA government's emphasis on Hindutva, anti-Muslim rhetoric, and lofty pledges fell short of addressing the public's real issues. Prime Minister Modi's branding of Rahul Gandhi as "Shehzada" contributed to transforming his image from "Pappu" into a credible national leader. Rahul Gandhi's tenure as Leader of the Opposition promises to reshape India's political dynamics. To effectively advocate for the opposition in Parliament, he must rise to these challenges with decisive leadership and a dedication to tackling the concerns of the Indian populace. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmi@gmail.com)*

## Akhilesh Yadav has emerged as the most successful leader of INDIA Bloc in Lok Sabha polls

By: Arun Srivastava

General election results in India have always been extraordinary and have thrown new set of political leaders. This year's polls while were a moral victory for the INDIA bloc and marked the setback to communal politics, it also threw two young leaders, Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav, in public arena who exhibited rare wisdom of taking on the rightist and communal forces head on and defeating them convincingly in the battle field. Their gains are of paramount importance for the reason that they could accomplish their mission at a time when most of the master-politicians, leaders of the people, had preferred to play safe and refrain from confronting Narendra Modi, who is acting as the mascot of the communal forces in the country.

The victory of the INDIA alliance in Uttar Pradesh has been a landmark triumph as these leaders have come to personify the aspirations and ambitions of the backward classes, Dalits, and minorities in the State. It is indeed a tough task to compare and contrast them. While Rahul is perceived as the new ideologue of the secular, democratic and centrist forces, Akhilesh is being attributed as the architect of the new front of the poor, backwards, proletariats and Dalits.

This is clearly embedded in his observation "victory is a testament to the power of the PDA (Pichda, Dalit, and Alpasankhyak) strategy. He wrote on X "it is a landmark victory of the trust reposed by the Dalit-Bahujan community which, along with the backward classes, minorities, tribals and all the neglected, oppressed and exploited sections, along with pro-democratic forces who fought shoulder-to-shoulder to save the Constitution which gives them the right to equality, respect, dignified life and reservation".

Surprisingly, Akhilesh was written off as a major challenger to authoritarianism and communalism, by most of the political analysts. He had to face bitter criticism for his over reliance on his Yadav supporters. In fact in 2022 assembly election of the state, he had ignored the suggestions of his supporters and friends to rope in the Dalits and proletariats. Akhilesh had to face ridicule from senior leaders, even from BSP chief Mayawati of despising Dalits. Some of the Dalit leaders who were with Samajwadi Party nevertheless deserted it during the 2022 assembly elections.

Prominent dalit face OP Rajbhar



shifted his loyalty to BJP accusing Akhilesh of not respecting dalit sentiment. Just ahead of it, while talks for seat sharing between anti-BJP parties were going on, the emerging young dalit face Chandrashekhar Azad aka Ravan, walked out as Akhilesh was unwilling to concede his demand. The alliance between Azad and Akhilesh did not clique. Akhilesh and Chandrashekhar had to call off the alliance. Though SP cadres and leaders ridiculed him for walking out of the alliance, he triumphed in his lone crusade against BJP and won by more than 3 lakh votes.

Muslims of UP were also maintaining distance from Akhilesh for his not giving due respect to senior SP leader Azam Khan. The situation for Akhilesh took a turn for better only after Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra entered UP. Akhilesh could comprehend the need for changing his electoral strategy. His accompanying Rahul in Nyay Yatra simply reinforced the truth.

It is worth recalling that even while opposition leaders were having meetings and confabulations for evolving INDIA bloc, Akhilesh would project his Pichde, Dalit and Alpasankhyak platform as the only visible alternative.

But after Rahul's strategic entry into UP politics and his ideological approach having valid takers, Akhilesh gave priority to electoral concept of INDIA. He combined "Pichde (backward), Dalit, Alpasankhyak (minorities)" idea with a focus on farmer issues, joblessness, paper leaks and rising prices and caught the imagination of the people. It turned out to be best poll strategy at that moment.

Dalits constitute 21 per cent of the state's population and have hundreds of sub castes; of them, the Jatavs form the largest group with 11-15 per cent. The Jatavs, a more politically conscious group, have been loyal to BSP and its leader "Dalit ki Beti", as

Mayawati identified herself. They had shifted their allegiance to BJP as they were feeling hurt at Mayawati diluting BR Ambedkar's mission the emancipation of the oppressed classes.

The change of electoral strategy and issue of representation of the Dalits and other 90 per cent of the poor in governance which was systematically raised by Rahul fundamentally altered the political scenario and priorities for Akhilesh on the eve of the Lok Sabha polls. In the wake of this realization, Akhilesh worked out fresh social realignment and roped in Dalits and other backwards. The Yadavs who had antagonistic relations with Dalits and other backward castes were relegated in the priority list.

While Akhilesh gave five seats to Yadavs that too belonging to his own family, he fielded 27 candidates from non-Yadav OBC castes. Nine of them were given to Kurnis, four to Nishads and 6 to Maurya-Kushwaha-Shakya caste conglomerate. Besides 17 Dalit candidates in reserved constituencies, Akhilesh made a symbolic gesture by fielding two more Dalit candidates from general constituencies.

The seat-wise results show that this strategy clicked. Awadhesh Prasad in Faizabad, fielded as the SP's Dalit face, managed to attract most of the 24% Dalit votes in the constituency and defeated the BJP in the land of Ayodhya. Akhilesh also fielded 11 upper-caste candidates (four Brahmins, two Thakurs, two Vaishyas, and three from other upper castes).

The SP-led INDIA bloc in U.P. put up an impressive performance by winning 43 out of the State's 80 Lok Sabha seats with the SP alone securing 37 seats and the Congress emerging victorious on six. The outcome was a major dent to the image of Narendra Modi who had sought votes by offering guarantees on his image and name. BJP could manage

to win 36 seats and its allies Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) got two seats and Apna Dal (Soneylal) one.

The issues raised by Rahul also helped Samajwadi Party in shattering the hypothesis that Dalits and Yadavs can never unite in UP. As per caste assessments based on exit polls, 65 per cent of Scheduled Caste votes polled went to the SP; an increase of 21 per cent as compared to 2019 polls. Of these, 32 per cent were Jatav votes. Resounding victory of INDIA in Uttar Pradesh will undoubtedly have a major impact on the other Hindi speaking states as also on the state assembly polls in 2027.

Akhilesh Yadav has already shown signs of his shifting his focus to national politics by retaining his Kanauj Lok Sabha seat from where he emerged victorious in the Lok Sabha elections. It was earlier said that he would prefer to keep the assembly seat and resign the Lok Sabha seat. His decision to move to national politics has two major implications: he would look for a nationwide space to operate and second with the possibility of Modi government bowing out of power in near future, the INDIA bloc would come to power. In that backdrop, he may emerge as a prominent national leader, which will help him to keep the political operations in UP under his watch.

The caste combination and structure in Bihar will not be amenable to Akhilesh. While Yadavs and Muslims are solidly behind RJD of Lalu Yadav, the dalits, OBCs, EBCs and mahadalits are with JD(U) and CPI(ML). At least this election has rendered a significant service to Akhilesh. Political circle is abuzz with the murmuring that if there is one leader who learnt the right lessons from this election and his company with Rahul, it is Akhilesh. Instead of focusing on petty issues, Akhilesh has learnt the art of combining state level issues with the national issues. This will help him broaden his support base.

Rahul and Akhilesh have succeeded in projecting Constitution as the identity symbol of Dalits and poor of the country. Their messages for job creation and implementation of reservation - proportionate to the population ("Jitni aabadi, utna haq") - has caught the imagination of the poor, Dalits and common people. The combination of Akhilesh and Rahul can be considered as a bombshell in national politics of the country having potential to eliminate the third time Prime Minister Narendra Modi even before he completes his tenure in 2029. *(IPA Service)*



# Public Services as a career choice

By: Ranjan K Baruah

We know the importance of public services as they are the foundation of development in any democracy. Public servants are engaged in providing health care, teaching in schools and colleges or universities, building and maintaining vital infrastructure, ensuring safety, and serving and protecting the citizens.

In most democratic countries, public trust in government increased by a few percentage points from 2020 to 2022, maintaining around 42-43%. However, it is still nearly 10% lower than in 1995. International aid positively impacts 52 out of 74 Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs) indicators, significantly contributing to progress on SDG indicators 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, and 17. The cost of servicing public debt as a percentage of revenue is higher now than ever before.

The United Nations Public Service Day intends to celebrate the value and virtue of public service to the community; highlight the contribution of public service in the development process; recognize the work of public servants, and encourage young people to pursue careers in the public sector. On 20 December 2002, the General Assembly designated 23 June as Public Service Day by adopting resolution 57/277.

To bolster recognition of the Day and the value of public



service, the United Nations established the UN Public Service Awards (UNPSA) programme in 2003, which was reviewed in 2016 to align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The award is the most prestigious international recognition of excellence in public

service. It rewards the creative achievements and contributions of public service institutions that lead to a more effective and responsive public administration in countries worldwide.

There is no doubt that effective, accountable and inclusive institutions are essential to

achieving the SDGs. This is recognized by SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. One of the best ways in a country like India is to join the civil services and contribute as public servants for positive social transformation. Many students aspire to become civil servants but it needs a lot of preparation and planning to be successful as a civil servant in India.

Any graduate may appear in the Civil Services Aptitude Test conducted by the Union Public Service commission. The pattern of exams includes prelims, mains and interview. The details about the exam are available on the website of UPSC. Similarly in case of state selection, the se-

lection is done by the state boards but the syllabus and pattern is more or less same as the UPSC's pattern.

Aspirants need to be serious and invest in time to crack the civil services examination which is conducted every year. Aspirants may prepare at an early age and after graduation they may focus more on the examination. Sometimes taking coaching from reputed institutions also helps in clearing doubts but at the initial stage one needs to start preparing with basic text books. Efficient public servants or bureaucrats are important for the growth of any nation or society.

There are many courses which would help aspirants to effec-

tively work as public servants and one of the courses is public administration. There are many other courses or subjects which can be opted by the aspirants who would like to contribute in the field of public services. One must be skilled to be successful in the field of public services. The job opportunities in the government sector are always rewarding which attracts many young people to become civil servants or get engaged in the field of public services. *(The author is the Advisor; Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship Department of Bodoland Territorial Council, Kokrajhar and can be reached at bkranjana@gmail.com for any career related queries)*

## Indian Coast Guard Recruitment – 320 Navik (GD) & Yantrik Posts, Online Apply

**Last Date: 10/07/2024.**

Indian Coast Guard has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 320 Navik (General Duty) and Yantrik posts in the Indian Coast Guard, an Armed Force of the Union posts. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

### 1. Navik (General Duty)

**No of posts:** 260 posts

**Educational Qualification:** Class 12th passed with Maths and Physics from an education board recognized by Council of Boards for School Education (COBSE).

### 2. Yantrik

**No of posts:** 60 posts

### Educational Qualification:

Class 10th passed from an education board recognized by Council of Boards for School Education (COBSE) and Diploma in Electrical/ Mechanical / Electronics/ Telecommunication (Radio/Power) Engineering of duration 03 or 04 years approved by All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE). OR

Class 10th & Class 12th passed from an education board recognized by Council of Boards for School Education (COBSE) "AND" Diploma in Electrical/ Mechanical / Electronics/ Telecommunication (Radio/Power) Engineering of duration 02 or 03 years approved by All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE).

### Other Criteria of Indian Coast Guard Recruitment

**Age Limit:** Age of the candidates should be minimum 18 Years and maximum 22 years. Candidates should be born between 01 Mar 2003 to 28 Feb 2007 (both dates inclusive) applying for post of Navik (GD) and Yantrik.

**Age Relaxation:** Upper age relaxation of 5 years for SC/ST and 3 years for OBC (non creamy) candidates is applicable only if, posts are reserved for them.

### Examination Fee:

# UR/OBC: ₹ 300

# SC/ST: Nil

# Mode of Payment: Net banking or by using Visa/ Master/ Maestro/ Rupay Credit/ Debit Card/ UPI.

### Important Dates of Indian Coast Guard Vacancy 2024

# Starting date of online application submission: 13th June 2024

# Last date of online application submission: 10th July 2024

## GMDWSB Recruitment 2024 – Procurement & Contract Manager Post

**Last Date: 12/07/2024.**

Guwahati Metropolitan Drinking Water & Sewerage Board (GMDWSB) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 1 Procurement & Contract Manager Post purely on contractual basis for Guwahati Sewerage Project. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

**Name of post:** Procurement & Contract Manager

**No of posts:** 1

**Age Limit:** The maximum age limit is 40 years.

**Educational Qualification:** Full-time B.E/B.Tech in Civil/Mechanical Engineering from a recognized University or AICTE affiliated Institution with a professional diploma/degree/certification in Public Procurement.

**Experience:** Minimum 10 Years of work experience, of which 6 years are compulsory experience in Multilateral Development Bank-funded projects procurement. Should have experience working in at least one JICA-funded project, knowledge of the Assam Public Procurement Act & Rules is compulsory. Hands-on experience in e-procurement portal & GeM.

**Remuneration:** The monthly fixed remuneration will range between ₹ 120000 To 150000 per month depending on qualification and experience.

### How to Apply for GMDWSB Recruitment ?

Candidates meeting the necessary qualifications and experience are invited for a walk-in interview with a CV, self-attested & original documents of Educational Qualification, Work Experience, Proof of birth certificate, and colored passport-size photograph as per details mentioned below.

### Walk-in Schedule:

**Venue:** Office of the Managing Director, Guwahati Metropolitan Drinking Water & Sewerage Board, 1st floor, Tripti Tower, Ganeshguri GS Road, Guwahati-781006.

**Date:** 12th July 2024

**Time:** From 11 AM To 01 PM.

**Note:** No candidates will be allowed to walk in after 01 PM.

## Punjab National Bank Recruitment – 2700 Apprentice Posts, Online Apply

**Last Date: 14/07/2024.**

Punjab National Bank has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 2700 Apprentice posts under The Apprentices Act 1961 (as amended from time to time) in Punjab National Bank. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

**Name of post:** Apprentice

**No of posts:** 2700 posts

**No of posts in Assam:** 27 posts

**Stipend:** The engaged apprentices are eligible for following stipend per month for the contract period of one year.

# Rural/ Semi-Urban: ₹ 10,000

# Urban: ₹ 12,000

# Metro: ₹ 15,000

### Eligibility Criteria of Punjab National Bank Recruitment

**Age Limit:** Minimum 20 years and maximum 28 years as on 30.06.2024 i.e. candidates must have been born not earlier than 30.06.1996 and not later than 30.06.2004.

**Age Relaxation:** Category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

# Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe: 5 years

# Other Backward Classes (Non-Creamy Layer): 3 years

# Persons With Disabilities: 10 years

**Educational Qualification:** Graduate degree in any discipline from any Institute/ College/ University recognized/ approved by Govt. bodies/ AICTE/ UGC. The result of the qualification must have been declared on or before 30.06.2024 and candidate must produce Mark Sheets and Provisional/ Degree Certificate issued from the University/ College/ Institute as and when required by the Bank.

**Local Language Proficiency:** The candidates applying for training seats of a particular State/ UT, should be proficient (reading, writing, speaking and understanding) in local language of that State/UT.

**Physical/ Medical Fitness:** Engagement of Apprentices will be subject to his/her being declared medically fit as per the requirement of the Bank.

**Application Fee:** Candidates have to pay an application fee as mentioned below:

Category	Fee
PwBD	₹ 472
Female/ SC/ ST	₹ 708
GEN/OBC	₹ 944

### Important Dates of Punjab National Bank Recruitment 2024

# Starting date of submission of online application: 30th June 2024

# Last date of submission of online application: 14th July 2024

## ICMR RMRC Dibrugarh Recruitment – 8 Scientist & Technical Posts

**Last Date: 18/07/2024.**

ICMR RMRC Dibrugarh has released an advertisement for the recruitment 8 Project Research Scientist and Project Technical Support posts. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

### 1. Project Research Scientist-I (Medical)

**No of posts:** 01 (UR)

**Essential Qualification:** MBBS from a recognized University.

**Desirable Qualification:** Experience of working in community-based projects.

**Emolument:** ₹ 67000 + 9% HRA.

**Age Limit:** Not exceeding 35 years.

**Last date:** 18/07/2024

**Date of interview:** 01/08/2024

### 2. Project Research Scientist-I (Non-Medical)

**No of posts:** 01 (UR)

**Essential Qualification:** 1st Class Post Graduate Degree in Microbiology/Computer Sciences/IT, including the integrated PG Degrees.

**Desirable Qualification:** Experience of working in community-based health projects.

**Emolument:** ₹ 56000 + 9% HRA.

**Age Limit:** Not exceeding 35 years.

**Date of interview:** 01/08/2024

### 3. Project Technical Support-I

**No of posts:** 04 (EWS: 01, UR: 02 & ST: 01)

**Essential Qualification:** 10 + Diploma (MLT/DMLT/ITI) with two years of experience in relevant subject/ field.

**Desirable Qualification:** Experience of working in community-based research projects.

**Emolument:** ₹ 18000 + 9% HRA.

**Age Limit:** Not exceeding 28 years.

**Date of interview:** 01/08/2024

### 4. Project Technical Support-II

**No of posts:** 02 (UR: 01 & ST: 01)

**Essential Qualification:** 12th in Science + Diploma (MLT/DMLT/Engg.) with five years of experience in relevant subject/ field.

**Desirable Qualification:** Experience of working in X-Ray imaging techniques.

**Emolument:** ₹ 20000 + 9% HRA.

**Age Limit:** Not exceeding 30 years.

**Last date:** 18/07/2024

**Date of interview:** 01/08/2024

### How to Apply for ICMR RMRC Dibrugarh Recruitment ?

#### Post Sl. No. 1 & 4

Deserving candidates may submit their applications in the prescribed form and filled up the Google form along with all required supporting documents and certificates, duly self- attested, on the <https://forms.gle/R1wQ4DouKpkqrVkr7> on or before 18-07-2024 up to 17:30 hours.

#### Post Sl. No. 2 & 3

Eligible candidates may walk-in for interview/written test and submit their applications in the prescribed format, duly filled in all respects along with all required supporting documents and certificates, duly self-attested, at the office on the day of the interview/written test, i.e. up to 10:30 hours on the said date.

## IBPS Clerk Recruitment 2024 – Online Apply For 6128 Posts

**Last Date: 21/07/2024.**

Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS) has released an employment notification to conduct online examination for the next Common Recruitment Process (CRP - XIV) to recruit 6128 Clerical Cadre posts. The exam is tentatively scheduled in August 2024 and October 2024. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

**Name of examination:** IBPS CRP CLERKS – XIV

**Name of post:** Clerk

**No of posts:** 6128 posts

### State-wise vacancy:

# Andaman and Nicobar Islands: 1

# Andhra Pradesh: 105

# Arunachal Pradesh: 10

# Assam: 75

# Bihar: 237

# Chandigarh: 39

# Chhattisgarh: 119

# Dadra and Nagar Haveli/ Daman & Diu: 5

# Delhi: 268

# Goa: 35

# Gujarat: 236

# Haryana: 190

# Himachal Pradesh: 67

# Jammu and Kashmir: 20

# Jharkhand: 70

# Karnataka: 457

# Kerala: 106

# Ladakh: 3

# Lakshadweep: 0

# Madhya Pradesh: 354

# Maharashtra: 590

# Manipur: 6

# Meghalaya: 3

# Mizoram: 3

# Nagaland: 6

# Odisha: 107

# Puducherry: 8

# Punjab: 404

# Rajasthan: 205

# Sikkim: 5

# Tamil Nadu: 665

# Telangana: 104

# Tripura: 19

# Uttar Pradesh: 1246

# Uttarakhand: 29

# West Bengal: 331

**Total no of posts:** 75 posts

### Bank-wise vacancy:

# Bank of India: 2

# Canara Bank: 4

# Central Bank of India: 64

# Punjab & Sind Bank: 5

### Eligibility Criteria of IBPS Clerk Recruitment

**Age Limit:** Candidates age should be between 20 years to 28 years as on 1st July 2024. Candidate should be born between 2nd July 1996 to 1st July 2004 (both dates inclusive).

**Age Relaxation:** Category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

# Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe: 5 years

# Other Backward Classes (Non-Creamy Layer): 3 years

# Persons With Disabilities: 10 years

**Educational Qualification:** A Degree (Graduation) in any discipline from a University recognised by the Govt. Of India or any equivalent qualification recognized as such by the Central Government. The candidate must possess valid Mark-sheet / Degree Certificate that he/ she is a graduate on the day he / she registers and indicate the percentage of marks obtained in Graduation while registering online.

**Computer Literacy:** Operating and working knowledge in computer systems is mandatory i.e. candidates should have Certificate/Diploma/Degree in computer operations/Language/ should have studied Computer / Information Technology as one of the subjects in the High School/College/Institute.

**Proficiency in the Official Language of the State/ UT:** Candidates should know how to read/ write and speak the Official Language of the State/UT for which vacancies a candidate wishes to apply.

### Application Fee:

# SC/ST/PWBD/EXSM: ₹ 175 (inclusive of GST)

# Others: ₹ 850 (inclusive of GST)

# Payment mode: Online (Debit Cards (RuPay/Visa/MasterCard/Maestro), Credit Cards, Internet Banking, IMPS, Cash Cards/ Mobile Wallets)

### Important Dates of IBPS Clerk Recruitment 2024

**Starting Date for Apply Online:** 1st July 2024

**Last Date to Apply Online:** 21st July 2024

**Date for Prelims Exam:** August, 2024

**Date for Release of Result for Online Exam:** September 2024

**Date for Mains Exam:** October 2024



# Keir Starmer becomes UK prime minister after meeting King Charles

*Starmer has vowed to lead a 'government of service' on a 'mission of national renewal'*

**LONDON, July 5:** Keir Starmer on Friday officially became Britain's new prime minister after an audience with King Charles III at Buckingham Palace, hours after his Labour Party won the general elections.

The 61-year-old Labour leader arrived at the Palace with his wife Victoria Starmer after leading his party to a landslide victory in a landmark UK general election with a gain of over 200 seats, as outgoing leader Rishi Sunak conceded defeat with his Conservative Party suffering its worst election defeat in history.

Earlier, Rishi Sunak, 44, resigned as prime minister after meeting the monarch.

Starmer has promised a phase of "national renewal" under his pre-

miership.

As Labour crossed the halfway mark of 650 constituencies in the early hours of Friday to clinch the minimum 326 required for a majority in Parliament, Starmer stepped up to make his victory speech in London: "Change begins now. And it feels good, I have to be honest.

"A mandate like this comes with a great responsibility. Our task is nothing less than renewing the ideas that hold this country together. National renewal. Whoever you are, wherever you start in life, if you work hard, if you play by the rules, this country should give you a fair chance to get on. It should always respect your contribution and we have to restore that," he said.



With Labour surpassing the 326-seat threshold needed for a parliamentary majority, Starmer emphasised the need to restore trust and unity across the country.

"Whoever you are, wherever you start in life, if you work hard, if you play by the rules, this country should give you a fair chance to get on," he asserted.

For Starmer, it's a massive triumph that will bring huge challenges, as he faces a weary electorate impatient for change against a gloomy backdrop of economic malaise, mounting distrust in institutions and a fraying social fabric.

"Nothing has gone well in the last 14 years," said London voter

James Erskine, who was optimistic for change in the hours before polls closed. "I just see this as the potential for a seismic shift, and that's what I'm hoping for."

And that's what Starmer promised, saying "change begins now."

Britain has experienced a run of turbulent years — some of it of the Conservatives' own making and some of it not — that has left many voters pessimistic about their country's future.

The U.K. divorce from the European Union followed by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine battered the economy, while lockdown-breaching parties held by then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his staff caused widespread anger. (PTI)

## Hungary's Orbán meets Putin for talks in Moscow in a rare visit from a European leader

**MOSCOW, July 5:** Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomed Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to Moscow on Friday for a rare meeting with a European leader to discuss peace proposals for Ukraine.

Orbán's visit comes only days after he made a similar unannounced trip to Ukraine, where he met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and proposed that Ukraine consider agreeing to an immediate ceasefire with Russia.

"The number of countries that can talk to both warring sides is diminishing," Orbán said. "Hungary is slowly becoming the only country in Europe that can speak to everyone."

In comments at the beginning of their meeting that were televised, Putin suggested that Orbán had come to Moscow as a representative of the European Council, despite several European officials having condemned the visit.

The Hungarian prime minister, widely seen as having the warmest relations with Vladimir Putin among all European Union leaders, has routinely blocked, delayed or watered down EU efforts to assist Ukraine and impose sanctions on Moscow for its actions in Ukraine. He has long argued for a cessation of hostilities in Ukraine but without outlining what that might mean for the country's territorial integrity or future security.

That posture has frustrated Hungary's EU and NATO allies, which have broadly considered Russia's actions as a breach of international law and a threat to the security of countries in Eastern Europe.

The visit to Moscow was Orbán's idea and was only agreed to on Wednesday, Putin's

spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov said, according to the Russian state news agency Tass.

Putin told Orbán that he wanted to hear about the position of his "European colleagues" on Ukraine and discuss Moscow's plan for peace as well as bilateral relations. Orbán noted that the meeting was the fourteenth time the leaders have held bilateral talks since 2009.

European officials and leaders have heavily criticized Orbán's visit to Moscow, something only one other European leader has done since the start of the conflict.

"This is about appeasement. It's not about peace," European Commission spokesperson Eric Mamer said.



Hungary at the beginning of the month took over the six-month rotating presidency of the EU Council, a largely formal role that

can be used to shape the bloc's policy agenda. Orbán has said he wants to use the presidency to advocate for an end to the fighting in Ukraine.

The EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, said in a statement that Orbán's visit to Moscow "takes place, exclusively, in the framework of the bilateral relations between Hungary and Russia."

"Prime Minister Orbán has not received any mandate from the EU Council to visit Moscow," Borrell said, adding that his "position excludes official contacts between the EU and President Putin. The Hungarian Prime Minister is thus not representing the EU in any form."

He noted that Putin has been indicted by the International Criminal Court and an arrest warrant released for his role in relation to the forced deportation of children from Ukraine to Russia. (AP)

## A roadside bomb planted on a bridge hits a rickshaw in Pak, killing 3 people and wounding 7

**PESHAWAR, July 5:** A roadside bomb planted on a bridge struck a rickshaw in northwest Pakistan on Friday, killing at least three people and wounding seven others, officials said.

The attack happened in Mardan district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police official Sabir Khan said. He said police transported the wounded people to a hospital.

He said a police vehicle crossing the bridge was the target, but the bomb hit a speeding rickshaw, causing civilian casualties. Khan said police were investigating to determine who was behind the attack.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and other government officials denounced the bombing.

No one claimed responsibility, but such attacks previously have been blamed on Islamic militants including the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP, a close ally of the Afghan Taliban, which seized power in neighboring Afghanistan in August 2021.

Many TTP leaders and fighters have found sanctuaries and are even living openly in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover, which also emboldened the TTP.

Pakistan has blamed some attacks on the Islamic State group and some breakaway factions of the TTP, which insists it only targets security forces. (AP)

## Israel conducts military operation in the area of the West Bank city of Jenin; 5 Palestinians killed



**JERUSALEM, July 5:** The Israeli military said on Friday it was conducting counterterrorism activity that included an airstrike in the area of the West Bank city of Jenin. Palestinian authorities said five people were killed.

The military said Israeli soldiers had "encircled a building where terrorists have barricaded themselves in" and the soldiers were exchanging fire, while an airstrike had "struck several armed terrorists" in the area.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said five people died but did not provide any information on their identities. No further details were immediately available from either side.

The clashes in Jenin, a known militant stronghold where the army frequently operates, came a day after an Israeli anti-settlement monitoring group said the government plans to build nearly 5,300 new homes in settlements in the occupied West

Bank.

The construction plans revealed by the Peace Now group are part of the hard-line government's efforts to beef up settlements as part of a strategy of cementing Israel's control over the West Bank to prevent a future Palestinian state.

The Palestinians seek the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza — areas captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war — for an independent state.

Violence has spiraled in the West Bank since the start of Israel's war in Gaza, sparked by the Oct. 7 raid into southern Israel by Hamas militants who killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took more than 200 others as hostages. The war has so far killed more than 38,000 Palestinians, Gaza's Health Ministry says. The ministry does not differentiate between combatants and civilians in its count, but

it includes thousands of women and children.

Cease-fire talks appeared to be reviving after stalling for weeks. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Thursday he was sending negotiators to resume the talks, a day after Hamas handed mediators its latest response to a U.S.-backed proposal for a deal.

The revival of negotiations appeared to mark another attempt by U.S., Qatari and Egyptian mediators to overcome the gap that has repeatedly thwarted a deal over the past months. Hamas wants an agreement that ensures Israeli troops fully leave Gaza and the war ends, while Netanyahu says the war cannot end before Hamas is eliminated.

Israeli negotiators are expected to arrive in Doha, Qatar's capital, for the talks as early as Friday, with American, Egyptian and Qatari officials present. (AP)

## Man who stabbed South Korea's opposition leader sentenced to 15 years in prison



**SEOUL, July 5:** A man who stabbed South Korea's opposition leader in the neck earlier this year was sentenced to 15 years in prison on Friday, court officials said.

The knife-wielding man attacked Lee Jae-myung, head of the liberal Democratic Party, South Korea's biggest political party, in January after approaching him asking for his autograph at an event in the southeastern city of Busan. After being detained by police, he told investigators that he wanted to kill Lee to prevent him from becoming South Korea's president.

The Busan District Court said the man was handed the prison term after being found guilty for an attempted murder and a violation of an election law.

The court said that both the man and prosecutors have one week to appeal.

The attack happened ahead of the country's crucial parliamentary elections in April, which ended with Lee's Democratic Party and other opposition parties winning a massive victory against President Yoon Suk Yeol's conservative governing party.

A court verdict called the attack "a grave challenge" to the country's election systems and an act that "significantly destroys social consensus and confidence on the basic liberal democratic principles," according to Yonhap news agency. It cited the verdict as saying the attacker had long loathed Lee because of differences of political opinions, practiced stabbing his neck in advance and followed him on five public events.

The court's public affairs office couldn't immediately confirm de-

tails of Friday's verdict. The court didn't disclose the man's identity. Police earlier said he's about 67.

The attack left Lee bleeding and slumped on the ground. He was hospitalized for eight days receiving surgery and other treatments. While leaving a Seoul hospital later in January, Lee expressed hopes for an end to "politics of hatred" in South Korea.

During police questioning, the attacker said he was unhappy with what he thought was a lack of progress in authorities' investigations of Lee over various corruption allegations. He told investigators that he tried to kill Lee to hurt his party's prospects for a victory in the parliamentary elections and to eventually eliminate chances of Lee becoming South Korea's next president, according to police.

Democratic Party officials earlier confirmed the attacker became a member last year. The ruling People Power Party said he is currently not their member but media reports said the man, only identified as his surname Kim, was previously affiliated with the party's predecessor.

Lee, a sharp-tongued former provincial governor, lost the 2022 presidential election to Yoon, a former top prosecutor, by the narrowest margin recorded in a South Korean presidential election.

Their closely fought race and post-election political bickering have intensified South Korea's already-toxic conservative-liberal divide. Surveys have showed that Lee is one of the early favorites for the 2027 presidential election. Yoon is by law barred from seeking reelection. (AP)

## Iran holds runoff presidential vote pitting hard-line former negotiator against reformist lawmaker

**DUBAI, July 5:** Iranians voted on Friday in a runoff presidential election between a hard-line former nuclear negotiator and a reformist lawmaker, with both men trying to convince a skeptical public to cast ballots after years of economic woes and mass protests roiling the Islamic Republic.

The race between hard-liner Saeed Jalili and Masoud Pezeshkian, a heart surgeon and longtime member of parliament, comes after a first round of voting saw the lowest turnout ever for an Iranian election, leaving turnout Friday a major question.

Meanwhile, wider tensions have gripped the Middle East over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. In April, Iran launched its first-ever direct attack on Israel over the war in Gaza, while militia groups that Tehran arms in the region — such as the Lebanese Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthi rebels — are engaged in the fighting and have escalated their attacks.

Iran also continues to enrich uranium at near weapons-grade levels and maintains a stockpile large enough to build several nuclear weapons, should it choose to do so. And while Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei remains the final decision-maker on matters of state, whichever man ends up winning the presidency could

bend the country's foreign policy toward either confrontation or collaboration with the West.

A heavy security presence could be seen on the streets of Tehran on Friday, as crowds appeared light at dozens of polling places. State television broadcast scenes of modest lines at polling centers around the country.

Both Jalili and Pezeshkian voted in southern Tehran, home to many poor neighborhoods, in a bid to boost turnout. Though Pezeshkian came out on top in the first round of voting on June 28, Jalili has been trying to secure the votes of people who supported hard-line parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, who came in third and later endorsed the former negotiator.

One voter, 27-year-old Yaghoob Mohammadi, said he voted for Jalili in both rounds. "He is clean, without depending on powerful people in the establishment," Mohammadi said. "He represents those who have no access to power."

Voter Samira Sharafi, the 34-year-old mother of a toddler, said she voted for reformist Pezeshkian, despite having voted for Qalibaf in the first round. She described him as "more experienced" than Jalili.

There have been calls for a boycott, including from imprisoned



Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi, though potential voters in Iran appear to have made the decision not to participate last week on their own as there's no widely accepted opposition movement operating within or outside of the country.

State television broadcast images of modest lines at select polling places around the country as polls opened on Friday.

As has been the case since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, women and those calling for radical change have been barred from the ballot while the vote itself will have no oversight from internationally recognized monitors.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi, who is in charge of overseeing the election, announced all the polls had opened at 8 a.m. local time.

Khamenei cast one of the election's first votes from his residence, television cameras and photographers capturing him dropping the ballot into the box.

"I have heard that people's enthusiasm is more than before," Khamenei said. "God willing, people vote and choose the best" candidate.

However, Khamenei on Wednesday said that those who didn't vote last week weren't against the country's Shiite theocracy.

"There are reasons behind this matter which should be examined by sociologists and those involved in politics," he said.

More than 61 million Iranians over the age of 18 are eligible to vote, with about 18 million of them between 18 to 30. Elections are scheduled to end at 6 p.m.

## Pope to preside over interfaith meeting in Indonesian mosque during longest, most challenging trip

**ROME, July 5:** Pope Francis will preside over an interfaith meeting in a mosque in the world's largest predominantly Muslim country during a four-nation Asian visit in September that will be the longest and most complicated foreign trip of his pontificate.

The Vatican on Friday released the itinerary for Francis' Sept. 2-13 trip to Indonesia, East Timor, Papua New Guinea and Singapore. The packed schedule makes clear that the 87-year-old pontiff, who has battled health problems and is increasingly reliant on a wheelchair, has no plans to slow down.

After a day of rest upon arrival in Jakarta on Sept. 3, Francis launches into a typically rigorous round of protocol visits to the four countries' heads of state and government, speeches to diplomats and meetings with



clergy and public Masses in each location. In Jakarta, he'll preside over an interfaith meeting at the capital's Istiqlal Mosque.

Sprinkled in the mix are encounters with young people, poor and disabled people, elderly people and Francis' regular meetings with his Jesuit conferees.

The trip was originally planned for 2020

but was called off because of the COVID-19 pandemic. At 11 full days, it's the longest of Francis' 11-year papacy, outpacing by a few days some of his long trips to the Americas and recalling some of the strenuous, globe-hopping trips of St. John Paul II.

It will bring the Argentine Jesuit to the world's most populous predominantly Muslim nation, Indonesia, as well as the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, where the Catholic Church wields enormous influence.

In East Timor, however, Francis may also have to reckon with the legacy of independence hero Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo. The Nobel Peace Prize winner was sanctioned by the Vatican in 2020 for having sexually abused young Timorese boys and

is currently believed to be living in Portugal.

Francis had to cancel his last planned foreign visit — a quick trip to Dubai last year to participate in the U.N. climate conference — because of a recurring case of bronchitis. He has seemed in relatively good form in recent months, including during day trips to Italian cities and visits to Roman parishes.

But in recent years, as his mobility has been limited by bad knee ligaments, he has generally stuck closer to home and kept his trips relatively short.

After he returns to Rome in mid-September, he has a four-day visit to Belgium before the end of the month, the only other foreign trip that has been confirmed for the year. (AP)



# Landslide damage house, truck falls below NH-202 in Nagaland

Mokokchung DC issues travel advisory in view of massive landslide and rockfall



HT Correspondent

**DIMAPUR, July 5:** Landslides caused by incessant rains in the past few days damaged a house in Chessore town, while a Noklak-bound truck fell below the road near K

Wungthu village in Shamator district, according to an official release on Friday.

The house belonging to Obed Yimkhiong, a resident of Keku colony, Chessore town, was dam-

aged by landslides.

A truck stuck on NH-202 near K Wungthu village fell 300 meters below the road because of loose soil. No casualty was reported in the incidents.

The roads to Chessore area remained cut off from the rest of the state due to the monsoon fury even as the Nagaland PWD is trying to clear the roads from Chessore town towards Shamator via Huker, Kephor and Shiponger villages.

Meanwhile, Mokokchung DC Thsuvisie Phoji on Friday issued a travel advisory in view of the massive landslides and rockfall that had occurred along the ongoing widening of the existing single lane to an intermediate land road between Mokokchung to Chare via Dikhu, which posed a threat to the safety of the commuters and onsite workers.

Phoji said there will be complete closers of vehicular movements along the stretch of the highway from Friday until the end of the monsoon season or further orders.

He advised the commuters from Mokokchung to Chare and vice versa to take the alternative route - Sewak Gate-Moalenden-Meyilong-Chare road.

## Arunachal Guv summons assembly for budget session



**ITANAGAR, July 5:** Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik summoned the state assembly to convene for its budget session from July 19 to 26, an official notification said.

Deputy chief minister Chowna Mein, who also holds the finance and planning portfolio, will present the annual budget for the 2023-24 fiscal.

"In exercise of powers conferred upon me by Clause (1) of Article 174 of the Constitution of India, I, Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik, Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, hereby summon the eighth Legislative Assembly of Arunachal Pradesh to meet for its second ses-

sion (budget) at 10 am from July 19 to 26," the notification issued by the governor's office read.

Meanwhile, in a bid to foster inclusive governance and ensure collective prosperity, the state's Department of Finance, Investment and Planning has called upon people to contribute their ideas and suggestions for the upcoming budget.

Mein, who announced the initiative, encouraged all stakeholders to participate actively in the process.

This initiative aims to empower residents to shape the state's future by sharing their invaluable insights, he said.

"Let us unite to propel Arunachal Pradesh forward and reinforce its leadership in the East," said Mein, highlighting the importance of collective efforts in driving the state towards sustainable development.

People can submit their suggestions online at [arunachalbudget.in](http://arunachalbudget.in) till July 11. The top three contributors will be recognised and rewarded for their impactful contributions. (PTI)

## Meghalaya gets 44 per cent excess rains in a month



**SHILLONG, July 5:** Meghalaya received 44 per cent excess rains in the last one month, causing large-scale damage to public infrastructure and upending the lives of people, officials said on Friday.

The state received 117.32 cm of rain between June 1 and July 3, which is 44 per cent more than normal, a senior disaster management official said.

"The southern districts of the state are the worst affected," he said.

"The government is monitoring the situation. The monsoon rains have damaged infrastructure, triggered landslides and flash floods, and fell trees, besides causing other damages," he added.

Chief Secretary DP Wahlang chaired a high-level meeting, reviewing the situation on the ground and the preparations to tackle them, the official said.

"The chief secretary informed the meeting that Rs 13.5 crore has been allocated to handle immediate relief operations," he said.

Most of the roads that were damaged have been restored, and measures were being taken to bring back normalcy, the official said.

Wahlang specifically requested the deputy commissioners to provide updates on road connectivity, damage to houses and the allocation of relief funds. He also expressed satisfaction and appreciation for the efforts made so far.

He emphasised the importance of remaining vigilant regarding local issues arising from the rains. He noted that the chief minister is concerned not only about landslides, but also about the impact on roads due to the rainfall. Furthermore, he urged local engineers to stay vigilant and respond promptly to mitigate any issues caused by the heavy rainfall. (PTI/NNN)

## Session on agriculture held in Shillong

**SHILLONG, July 5:** The National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) Barapani Chapter, in collaboration with the ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Umiam in Meghalaya, hosted a pivotal Brainstorming Session titled 'Positioning Northeast Agriculture Towards Amrit Kaal' on Friday.

Prominent agricultural scientists, researchers, and policymakers participated in the session to discuss strategies for aligning the region's agricultural growth with the visionary goals of Amrit Kaal. K.M Bujarbaruah, vice-president of NAAS, former deputy director general (AS), ICAR, New Delhi, and former vice-chancellor of Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, chaired the session and summarised the key insights and future directions for Northeast agriculture, underscoring the importance of collaborative efforts in achieving the goals of Amrit Kaal.

Bujarbaruah in his opening remarks emphasised that one of the basic objectives of the meeting was to see how in the best possible way to use the biodiversity of the region and convert it to bio resources in order to achieve a bio economy.

V. K Mishra, director of ICAR RC NEH and convener of NAAS Barapani Chapter, delivered the welcome address where he expressed his happiness that this session was being held at ICAR, Umiam when the Institute was celebrating its 50th year of existence from Amrit Bhawan at Laban Shillong to Amrit Kaal.

A series of keynote lectures followed, featuring insights from distinguished experts in various fields of agriculture.

S.K. Barik, professor at NEHU Shillong and former director of CSIR NBRI, Lucknow, gave a presentation on 'Transforming Food Systems to Support Biodiversity', highlighting the importance of sustainable practices in preserving biodiversity.

A. Pattanayak, former director

of ICAR IIAB, Ranchi, and ICAR VPKAS, Almor spoke on 'Strategic Roadmap for Crop Sector Growth in Northeast India: Aligning with Amrit Kaal Goals', outlining strategies to boost crop productivity.

He also emphasised that with the prevailing situations more scientific work could be done on flood tolerant rice varieties and it was high time to look into areas of animal dominance like the extensive growth of monkeys at places in Assam, which was hampering the growth of crop productivity.

G. Kadirvel, director of ICAR ATARI Zone VI, Guwahati, delivered an engaging lecture on 'Agricultural Startups to Transform NE Agriculture to Meet Amrit Kaal Requirements', focusing on the role of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Anup Das, director of ICAR RCER, Patna, spoke on 'Exploring Organic & Natural Farming as Drivers of Green Economy', emphasising the potential of organic farming in driving sustainable economic growth. The session also featured N.H. Mohan, national fellow and principal scientist at ICAR NRC on Pig, Guwahati, who discussed 'Animal Agriculture of NE in Amrit Kaal', focusing on improving livestock productivity and health.

The final keynote lecture by S.K. Majhi, head of ICAR CIFRI Regional Centre, Guwahati, on 'Taking NE Fisheries towards Amrit Kaal', explored opportunities and challenges in advancing the fisheries sector in Northeast India.

In his closing remarks chairman K.M Bujarbaruah mentioned that the Northeast had missed the green revolution 'Bus'. However, it was the time to lead the 'Ever Green Revolution Bus'.

He mentioned that one should work in areas of seed self-sufficiency, water saving device technology, conservation agriculture and harvesting green energy. (NNN)

## Symposium on POSCO held in Nagaland

**KOHIMA, July 5:** Nagaland chief secretary J. Alam on Friday said that the guidelines to support persons under Section 39 Of POSCO Act, 2012 should be adopted by the state and implemented at the earliest.

The chief secretary said this during a symposium on 'Model guidelines with respect to support persons under Section 39 of POSCO Act 2012' held at Hotel Japfu in Kohima on Friday.

Alam then requested all the stakeholders to sensitise everyone on child rights so that every child is protected and further advised that students in schools should also be sensitised about child rights.

Chairman, NSPCR, Alun Hangsing, in his keynote address, mentioned that this commission was instituted in the year 2013 and since its inception, it has been try-



ing its best to create awareness from the grass root level. He emphasised on the importance of child rights and said that there are four pillars involved i.e., right to

survival, right to protection, right to development and right to participation.

He said, "We are all stakeholders and the government is taking

## 16 Rohingyas arrested in Tripura for illegally entering India

**AGARTALA, July 5:** At least 16 Rohingyas, including seven women, were arrested in Tripura for allegedly entering India from Bangladesh without valid documents, police said. Acting on a tip-off, police apprehended 11 suspected Rohingyas at Dharmanagar Inter State Bus Terminal (ISBT) in North Tripura district on Thursday evening. Dharmanagar police station OC Himadri Sarkar said.

"During interrogation, it was found that the 11 people had crossed the international border from a Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh and were awaiting transportation to Guwahati by bus. We arrested them and presented them before a local court," Sarkar told PTI over the phone. Seven juveniles were also detained for illegally entering Indian territory, he added.

In a separate incident in North Tripura's Churaibari area earlier during the day, police intercepted a Guwahati-bound bus and requested passengers to verify their identities. Five Rohingyas among them failed to produce nationality proof, a senior officer said. (PTI)

## BSF, BGB to find solutions to bilateral issues

**SHILLONG, July 5:** The Border Security Force (BSF) and the Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) have resolved to jointly evolve viable solutions to various bilateral issues to create an environment of peace and tranquility along the international boundary.

The decision was taken at the four-day Inspectors General BSF - Region Commanders BGB level Border Co-ordination Conference, which concluded in Shillong on Thursday.

The BSF delegation was headed by IG Tripura Frontier Patel Piyush Purushottam Das. Md Shazedur Rahman, Additional Director General, Region Commander, Chattogram was the head of the 13-member Bangladesh delegation during the conference. Both the border guarding forces also signed the joint record of discussion (JRD) after the meeting. Addressing media persons in Shillong on Thursday, Patel Piyush Purushottam Das said the BSF-BGB have engaged in productive discussions and have taken significant steps towards enhancing mutual cooperation. Also, various issues of bilateral interest, which will pave the way towards enhancing the understanding and cooperation between both the border guarding forces were discussed at length. Further, a special emphasis was given

to focus issues, particularly insurgent activities, various trans-border crimes including smuggling of contraband items like psychotropic drugs and narcotic substances, border violation, pending infrastructural/developmental works, besides common Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP).

"During the deliberations, sincere commitment of both the border guarding forces in strengthening the existing robust cordial relations was re-emphasized to jointly evolve at viable solutions to various bilateral issues being confronted by both the forces for creating an environment of peace and tranquility along the international boundary by amicably resolving them and further strengthening the bond of friendship, mutual trust and co-operation," Das said.

Embarking on the path of confidence building measures, the BSF delegation head said that the two border guarding forces of India and Bangladesh have been forging ahead in their ever-growing friendly relationship by participating in Inspectors General, BSF - Region Commanders, BGB level Border Co-ordination Conference at regular intervals, as per the tradition. The last such Border Co-ordination conference was held at Chattogram,

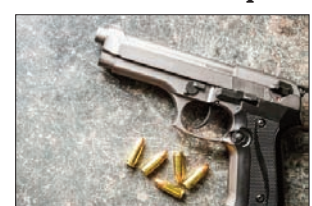
Bangladesh in September last year.

He said that over the past few years, BSF & BGB have not only cemented their bond of friendship jointly, but have also acquired new dimensions in mutual trust and cooperation for resolving the bilateral border issues through meaningful dialogues at various command levels.

"The primary objective of this conference is to strengthen the existing mechanisms for border management, discuss issues of mutual concern and address them at various levels, explore new avenues for collaboration," he said while adding, "Recognizing the importance of fostering goodwill and mutual understanding, we have discussed initiatives to promote cultural and sports exchanges between the BSF and BGB."

He said that these activities will not only build camaraderie, but also enhance mutual respect and trust between our forces. Stating that the border guarding forces of the two countries have made considerable progress on several fronts, Das said, "I am confident that the agreements and understandings reached during this conference will lead to more robust and effective border management practices." (NNN)

## Shots fired at under-construction religious installation in Imphal



**IMPHAL, July 5:** Shots were fired targeting an under-construction religious installation in Imphal in the early hours of Friday, police said.

The incident happened around 12.30 am at the Palace Compound, they said.

Police said security has been tightened in the area following the incident of firing.

Those behind the incident are yet to be identified, they said.

A team of central forces was guarding the site where the incident of firing happened, officials said. (PTI)

## Sampoornata Abhiyan launched in Nagaland's districts

Sampoornata Abhiyan to accelerate development in underdeveloped districts



HT Correspondent

**DIMAPUR, July 5:** NITI Aayog's Sampoornata Abhiyan has been launched in two aspirational districts of Kiphire and Zunheboto in Nagaland.

In Zunheboto, NITI Aayog adviser Yugal Joshi on Thursday launched the Abhiyan in the presence of Zunheboto DC Rahul Mali, Sumi Hoho president Nikheto Zhimo, district officials, community members and students.

Launching the programme, Joshi spoke about the significance of the Sampoornata Abhiyan and its alignment with national development goals. He exhorted everyone to participate in the programme to make it successful.

DC Mali administered the Sampoornata Abhiyan pledge to the gathering.

Issues and challenges in saturating the Abhiyan indicators were discussed in detail during the launch of the programme.

The district has prepared a three-month saturation plan for its Akuhaito block. The DC will review the plan monthly.

In aspirational district of Kiphire, MLA and Kiphire District Planning and Development Board chairman, C Kipili Sangtam launched the Abhiyan at the Hopongkyu Memorial hall.

In his address, Sangtam said the NITI Aayog's Sampoornata Abhiyan marks the commencement of a three-month campaign aimed at accelerating development in underdeveloped districts and blocks by achieving saturation in selected indicators of the aspirational programme.

Lauding the NITI Aayog team for their commendable work, especially in the border areas, Sangtam said Kiphire is one of the remotest districts in the country. He stressed the importance of sincere and efficient work by the departments concerned, saying that progress depends on collective efforts rather than relying solely on the government. Sangtam also stressed the need for transparency in utilising resources for development, particularly in an aspirational district, a PIB release said.

A short film on Sampoornata Abhiyan was screened at the venue. The event concluded with the inauguration of saturation camps and an exhibition stall.

## IIM, Shillong, AIT signs MoU to enhance academic & cultural exchanges



**SHILLONG, July 5:** The Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Shillong on Friday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand with an aim to foster collaboration between the two institutions, enhancing academic and cultural exchanges through mutual support, specifically focusing on

teaching and research endeavors. The signing ceremony was attended by D.P. Goyal, director of IIM Shillong, and Nitin K. Tripathi, acting vice president for Academic Affairs at AIT.

Other dignitaries from IIM Shillong included Naliniprabha Tripathy, dean of External Relations and Teidorlang

Lyngdoh, chair of External Relations.

AIT was represented by Roger Levermore, vice-president for Development and Dean of the School of Management (SOM), Sumana Shrestha, director of International Affairs at the Office of International and Public Affairs (OIPA), Sanjeet Amatya, director of Public Affairs

at OIPA and Zia Islam, executive assistant to the Dean and Coordinator at the Dean's Office, SOM.

In line with the institute's vision, such partnerships are expected to help students and researchers foster a global outlook. The underlying objective of the MoU is to facilitate collaboration between IIM Shillong and AIT Thailand through programmes such as International Dual/Joint Masters and Doctoral Programs, faculty/student exchanges, joint research projects, internship opportunities for students, and sharing resources such as library databases, journals, and online resources to enhance the academic and research capabilities of staff and students from both institutions.

Expressing his enthusiasm about the collaboration, D.P. Goyal said, "This partnership offers numerous opportunities for our students and faculty. We look forward to witnessing its positive impact." (NNN)



## Out on parole, Amritpal Singh, Engineer Rashid take oath as LS members

**NEW DELHI, July 5:** Jailed radical Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh and Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdul Rashid, who were granted parole to take oath as members of the Lok Sabha, were sworn in as MPs on Friday, amid heavy deployment of security personnel in and around the Parliament complex.

While Rashid, popularly known as Engineer Rashid, is in Delhi's Tihar jail in a terror funding case registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, Singh is lodged in a prison in Assam's Dibrugarh district for offences under the National Security Act.

They were brought to the Parliament complex by security personnel this morning.

The MPs-elect took oath in the chamber of the Lok Sabha speaker after completing formalities, a source said. Singh, 31, and Rashid, 56, won the recent Lok Sabha elections from Khador Sahib in Punjab and Baramulla in Jammu and Kashmir, respectively, as Independents while being incarcerated. They could not take oath as members of the 18th Lok Sabha on June 24 and 25 along with the other winning candidates.

For taking oath, Rashid was



granted a two-hour custody parole, excluding the travel time from Tihar to Parliament, and Singh a four-day custody parole, beginning July 5, in view of the travel from Assam to Delhi and back.

Their parole orders stated that during their period of temporary release, they can neither speak to or address the media on any issue or make any statements. Their family members also cannot make a statement in any form of media.

While Singh, a Khalistani sympathiser who heads the 'Waris Punjab De' outfit, has been allowed to meet his family in Delhi, Rashid's family had permission only to attend his oath taking.

The parole for Rashid, who has been in jail since 2019 after his arrest in 2017, was granted by a court in Delhi and that of Singh by the district magistrate of Amritsar from where he was arrested in April 2023 for barging into a po-

lice station in February and clashing with police personnel in a bid to free one of his aides from custody. Both Singh and Rashid are to be accompanied by security personnel at all times during their parole periods, the orders stated.

The Delhi Police and Punjab Police were directed to coordinate with the secretary general of the Lok Sabha for procedures inside the Parliament complex.

The name of Rashid, a former MLA, cropped up during the investigation of Kashmiri businessman Zahoor Watali, who the NIA had arrested for allegedly funding terrorist groups and separatists in the Kashmir valley.

The NIA had filed a charge sheet against several individuals, including Kashmiri separatist leader Yasin Malik, Lashkar-e-Taiba founder Hafiz Saeed and Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin in the case. Malik was awarded life imprisonment by a trial court in 2022 after he pleaded guilty to the charges. Singh styled himself after slain Khalistani militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and is in jail along with nine of his associates under the National Security Act. (PTI)

## Amid MUDA 'scam', K'taka govt transfers Mysuru Deputy Commissioner

**BENGALURU, July 5:** Amid a controversy over alleged land scam in Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), the Karnataka government on Friday transferred Mysuru Deputy Commissioner K V Rajendra.

Senior BJP leader R Ashoka had earlier alleged that Rajendra had written several letters to MUDA stating that the allotment of alternative sites to land losers, in lieu of land acquired from them to form residential layouts under a "50:50 ratio" scheme, was improper.

Rajendra was among the 21 IAS officers who were transferred by the Government in a bureaucratic reshuffle. He has been posted as the Director of Tourism in Bengaluru.

Rajendra was replaced by G Lakshminanth Reddy, who is presently the Managing Director of Karnataka Urban Infrastructure Development and Finance Corporation (KUIDFC), Bengaluru.

Ashoka, the Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, had alleged that Rajendra had also sought details about the process adopted to allot alternative sites but MUDA did not bother to respond.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday rejected BJP's demand for



a BI probe into the alleged irregularities in allotment of sites to land losers, including his wife Parvathi, by MUDA, as he stoutly denied any wrongdoing. Mysuru is the home district of the Chief Minister.

The BJP has alleged that alternative sites were also allotted to Parvathi in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by the MUDA, and sought his resignation.

The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under the scheme in lieu of over three acres of her land, where MUDA developed a residential layout.

The controversial scheme envisages allotting 50 per cent of developed land to the land loser in lieu of undeveloped land acquired for forming layouts.

The BJP has alleged that irregularities to the tune of Rs 4,000 crore had taken place in distribution of sites to land losers by MUDA. "Apparently 4,500-5,000 sites were allotted by flouting norms," a BJP leader claimed.

"Have they (BJP) given any case (to CBI) during their tenure? I have given seven cases (including his earlier tenure as CM). This is not a case that is to be given to CBI...we too had demanded, did they give (any case to CBI for probe)," Siddaramaiah had said in response to a question on BJP demanding for a CBI probe.

The Chief Minister had said the plots were given to his wife by MUDA in 2021 when BJP was in power.

"They (BJP) are the ones who gave the site, now if they themselves call it illegal, how should one take it? We did not ask for sites to be given in Vijayanagar 3rd or 4th stage (in Mysuru)," Siddaramaiah said.

The Chief Minister said earlier this week that housing sites allotted by MUDA under the scheme have been put on hold pending an investigation into the alleged irregularities.

He had also said he wouldn't resign. "What role do I have in this case?" he had asked. (PTI)

## Naidu meets FM Sitharaman, seeks financial aid for debt-ridden AP



**NEW DELHI, July 5:** Ahead of the Union Budget presentation, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, pressing for enhanced financial support to the debt-burdened state.

Sources said Naidu, during the meeting in North Block, highlighted various ongoing projects in Andhra Pradesh that

require urgent central assistance.

"The CM presented a detailed memorandum outlining the state's financial requirements and the rationale behind the demand for increased allocation," the sources added. TDP ministers in the Centre were present during the meeting.

Naidu also met Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Health Minister J P Nadda.

According to the state government data, the public debt of Andhra Pradesh has increased from 31.02 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in 2019-20 to 33.32 per cent in 2023-24 fiscal, indicating deterioration in the fiscal health of the state in the last five years.

Key among Naidu's demands were funds for the Polavaram irrigation project, special assis-

tance for backward regions, and support for the development of the new capital, Amaravati.

The chief minister also sought resolution of pending issues stemming from the bifurcation of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. The meeting assumes significance as it comes just weeks before the presentation of the Union Budget 2024-25.

The sources indicated that Sitharaman gave a patient hearing to Naidu's concerns and gave an assurance that she will look into Andhra Pradesh's demands within the broader fiscal constraints. Naidu has been vocal about the state's financial distress and sought increased central support to tide over the fiscal challenges, when he met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several Union Ministers on Thursday. (PTI)

## Defence production hits record high of nearly ₹ 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24: MoD

**NEW DELHI, July 5:** India's annual defence production has hit a record high of approximately ₹ 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24, with the Make in India programme crossing new milestones, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Friday.

The value of defence production in FY 2022-23 was ₹ 1,08,684 crore.

Welcoming the "encouraging development", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Congratulations to all those who have contributed to this feat. We are fully committed to nurturing a supportive environment to further enhance our capabilities and establish India as a leading global defence manufacturing hub".

"This will enhance our security apparatus and make us Aatmanirbhar!" he said on X.

Singh said the government is committed to creating a more conducive regime for developing India as a leading global defence manufacturing hub.

"The Ministry of Defence has achieved the highest-ever growth in indigenous defence production in value terms during financial year (FY) 2023-24, on the back of successful implementation of the policies and initiatives of the government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, focussing on achieving 'Aatmanirbharta'," the defence ministry said in a statement.

The annual defence production has hit a record high of approximately ₹ 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24, it said. "As per the data received from all Defence Public Sector undertakings (DPSUs), other PSUs manufacturing defence items and private companies, the value of defence production in the country has gone up to a

record-high figure, i.e., Rs 1,26,887 crore, reflecting a growth of 16.7 per cent over the defence production of the previous financial year," the statement said.

Singh congratulated the Indian industry, including defence public sector undertakings and other public sector undertakings manufacturing defence items, and the private industry for the feat.

"The Make in India programme is crossing new milestones, year after year, under the leadership of PM Shri @narendramodi," he said.

"India has registered the highest ever growth in the value of defence production in 2023-24. The value of production has reached to ₹. 1,26,887 crore in 2023-24 which is 16.8 per cent higher than the value of production of previous financial year," he wrote on X.

The defence ministry said that of "the total value of production (VoP) in 2023-24, about 79.2 per cent has been contributed by DPSUs/other PSUs and 20.8 per cent by the private sector".

The data shows that in terms of absolute value, both DPSUs/PSUs and private sector have recorded a steady growth in defence production, the statement said. The feat has been achieved due to the policy reforms and initiatives and ease of doing business brought in by the government in the last 10 years with focus on attaining self-reliance, the ministry said.

"The indigenisation efforts have been pursued aggressively on a sustained basis, that resulted in the highest ever VoP. Moreover, the spiralling defence exports have contributed tremendously to the overall growth in the indigenous defence production," the statement said. (PTI)

## Vendetta politics: Cong slams PM Modi over 2023 decision on sale of rice to state govts

**NEW DELHI, July 5:** The Congress on Friday alleged "vendetta politics" on part of the Modi government for refusing to sell adequate rice to implement the 'Anna Bhagya Guarantee' in Karnataka last year and asked whether he would apologise to the people for "obstructing" their elected state government from implementing its schemes.

Congress general secretary, in-charge communications, Jairam Ramesh said evidence has emerged showing that Narendra Modi's "vendetta-driven" decision not only deprived the people of Karnataka of an additional 5 kg of rice through the 'Anna Bhagya Guarantee', but also increased India's food subsidy bill by tens of thousands of crores.

He alleged that the PM's "vendetta politics", aimed at obstructing the Congress and non-BJP state governments from implementing their programmes, has corroded India's federal system and cost the Indian taxpayer.

"On June 13, 2023, the Modi government stopped selling rice to state governments under the Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic), reversing the Food Corporation of India's orders to Karnataka issued the day before," Ramesh said in a statement.

"This irrational policy was undertaken with the sole intention of disrupting the Karnataka government's Anna Bhagya Scheme, which doubles the quota of rice available to each individual entitled to grain under the National Food Security Act (2013)," he said.

With the Modi government refusing to sell the state adequate rice to implement the scheme, it was only the Karnataka government's determination and pro-activeness that allowed it to continue the scheme, through a cash transfer of Rs 170 per month for each eligible beneficiary to defray expenses for purchasing 5 kg of rice, Ramesh said. (PTI)

## PM Modi congratulates Keir Starmer on 'remarkable victory' in UK general elections

**NEW DELHI, July 5:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday congratulated Labour Party leader Keir Starmer on his party's landslide win in the UK general elections and said he looked forward to their positive and constructive collaboration to further strengthen the India-UK comprehensive strategic partnership. Modi also praised outgoing British Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader Rishi Sunak for his admirable leadership of the United Kingdom and his active contribution to deepen the ties between India and the UK during his term in office.

"Best wishes to you and your family for the future," he said.

Starmer is set to become Britain's next prime minister after his Labour Party hurred

towards a landslide majority on Friday in the parliamentary elections and dealt a bruising defeat for incumbent premier Rishi Sunak's Conservative Party. Congratulating him, Modi said, "Heartiest congratulations and best wishes to Keir Starmer on the remarkable victory in the UK general elections. I look forward to our positive and constructive collaboration to further strengthen the India-UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in all areas, fostering mutual growth and prosperity." (PTI)



## Issues of regional, global interest to figure in talks between Modi, Putin

**NEW DELHI, July 5:** Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Russia for an upcoming summit, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra on Friday said issues of regional and global interest will be on the agenda of the talks between PM Modi and President Vladimir Putin. In a media briefing here, he also said the annual India-Russia Summit is taking place after three years, and "we attach great importance to it". Prime Minister Modi will pay a two-day visit to Russia from July 8 to 9 to hold the 22nd India-Russia summit that will review the entire range of multi-faceted ties between the two countries. After concluding his trip to Russia, Modi will travel to Austria, which will be the first visit by an Indian prime min-

ister to that country in 41 years, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday. It will be Modi's first trip to Russia in nearly five years. His last visit to the country was in 2019 when he attended an economic conclave in the Far East city of Vladivostok. Issues of regional and global interest will be part of the agenda in the talks between the two leaders, Kwatra said.

The India-Russia summit will provide opportunities to discuss a whole range of bilateral ties, including in defence, investment, education and culture, and people-to-people ties, he said. Kwatra added that both sides are working on a series of outcome documents in connection with the 22nd India-Russia Summit. (PTI)

## Don't want to make it political but administration made lapses: Rahul Gandhi on Hathras stampede

**HATHRAS/ALIGARH (UP), July 5:** Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday said there were lapses on the part of the administration in the Hathras stampede incident that killed over 100 people, but added that he did not want to make it a political issue. Gandhi, after meeting the victims of the stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras on Friday morning, urged Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to release "maximum compensation" for the victims without any delay. One of the family members who met Gandhi said he assured them that he will raise the issue in Parliament so that such incidents do not happen in future. Speaking to reporters in Hathras on Friday morning, Gandhi said, "It is a matter of grief that so many families have suffered, so many people lost their lives." (PTI)

**জাননী**

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## Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra noted that India has emerged as one of the leading destinations for foreign nationals to get their organs transplanted owing to world-class health facilities and highly skilled medical professionals

## Need to sensitise foreign nationals on organ transplant guidelines in India: Health ministry

**NEW DELHI, July 5:** The Union Health Ministry has written to the ministries of External Affairs and Home Affairs underlining the need to sensitise foreign nationals visiting India for organ transplants about guidelines and legal requirements that regulate the process in the country.

In the letter, Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra noted that India has emerged as one of the leading destinations for foreign nationals to get their organs transplanted owing to world-class health facilities and highly skilled medical professionals.

"It is essential for these foreign nationals visiting India for organ transplant to understand the specific guidelines and legal requirements that regulate the process of organ transplantation in India," Chandra said in the letter addressed to Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla and Union Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra on June 19.

In order to sensitise the foreign nationals who visit India on medical visa for organ transplantation along with addressal of their queries regarding rules pertaining to the same, the Ministry of Health has prepared scroll messages and creatives, and the Health secretary urged dissemination by displaying it on the websites/portals of Bureau of Immigration under Ministry of Home Affairs and at airports as well as on the websites of Ministry of External Affairs and Embassies and missions of



India abroad.

"I shall be grateful if you could kindly look into the matter personally and direct the concerned authorities for ensuring that the enclosed messages may be circulated extensively through immigration for wide reach," the letter said. The scroll messages stated that when the donor or recipient is a foreign national, the prior approval of the authorization committee

shall be required before removing or transplanting human organ or tissue or both. No Indian living donor is permitted to donate his organ(s) to a foreigner, recipient unless he is a near relative of the recipient, the message stated. A senior official of embassy of the country of origin in India is required to certify the relationship between the donor and the recipient as per form 21, the message states.

In case a country does not have an Embassy in India, the certificate of relationship, in the same format, shall be issued by the government of that country. Foreigner patients needing organ(s) from a deceased donor for transplant, can also seek registration in India through their treating hospital after which their name will be included in the waiting list registry. However, such cases would be considered for allocation of organ only when there is no Indian patient, is available to take that organ.

In April, Dr Atul Goel, Director General of Health Services (DGHS) had urged all states and UTs to ensure regular collection and sharing of data of all transplant cases including those of foreigners, with National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO) on a monthly basis.

Referring to media reports on commercial dealings in organs involving foreign citizens Dr Goel stated, "It has also been noted from the registry of NOTTO, that there has been a surge in the number of organ transplants of foreigners in the country, which calls for monitoring of such transplants by concerned state or UT government authority."

He had urged them to investigate any violations and take appropriate action, including suspension of registration for performing organ transplant, of the hospitals involved in illegal activities. (PTI)



## SC to consider pleas seeking review of verdict declining legal recognition to same-sex marriage

**NEW DELHI, July 5:** The Supreme Court is scheduled to consider on July 10 a batch of pleas seeking review of its last year's judgement which refused to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage.

According to the cause list of July 10 uploaded on the apex court website, a five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud would consider in chambers the pleas seeking review of the October 17 last year verdict.

As per the practice, the review pleas are considered in chambers by judges.

Besides the CJ, the other members of the bench will be Justices Sanjay Khanna, Hima Kohli, B V Nagarathna and P S Narasimha.

In a setback to gay rights activists, the apex court had on October 17 last year refused to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage, saying there was "no unqualified right" to marriage with the exception of those that are recognised by law. The apex court, however, had made a strong pitch for the rights of queer people so they don't face discrimination in accessing goods and services that are available to others, safe houses known as 'Garima Greh' in all districts to provide shelter to members of the community facing harassment and violence and dedicated hotline numbers which they could use in case of trouble.

Holding that transgender people in



heterosexual relationships have the freedom and entitlement to marry under the existing statutory provisions, the top court had said an entitlement to legal recognition of the right to union, akin to marriage or civil union, or conferring legal status to the relationship can be only done through "enacted law".

A five-judge constitution bench headed by CJ Chandrachud had delivered four separate verdicts on a batch of 21 petitions seeking legal sanction for same-sex marriages.

All the five judges were unanimous in refusing to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage under the Special

Marriage Act and had observed it was within Parliament's ambit to change the law for validating such union.

While the CJ had written a separate 247-page verdict, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul (since retired) had penned a 17-page judgement in which he broadly agreed with Justice Chandrachud's views.

Justice S Ravindra Bhat (since retired), who authored an 89-page judgement for himself and Justice Hima Kohli, had disagreed with certain conclusions arrived at by the CJ including on applicability of adoption rules for queer couples.

Justice PS Narasimha had said in his 13-page verdict that he was in complete agreement with the reasoning given and conclusions arrived at by Justice Bhat.

The judges were unanimous in holding that queerness is a natural phenomenon and not "urban or elite" occurrence.

In his judgement, the CJ had recorded the assurance by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the Centre will constitute a committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for the purpose of defining and elucidating the scope of entitlements of queer couples who are in union.

The LGBTQIA++ rights activists, who had won a major legal battle in 2018 in the Supreme Court which decriminalised consensual gay sex, had moved the apex court seeking validation of same-sex marriage and consequential reliefs such as rights to adoption, enrolment as parents in schools, opening of bank accounts and availing succession and insurance benefits.

Some of the petitioners had urged the apex court to use its plenary power, "prestige and moral authority" to push the society to acknowledge such a union which would ensure LGBTQIA++ lead a "dignified" life like heterosexuals.

LGBTQIA++ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, asexual and allied persons. (PTI)

## African Swine Fever outbreak reported in Kerala's Thrissur



**THRISSUR (KERALA), July 5:** An outbreak of African Swine Fever, a highly contagious and deadly swine disease that can affect both farm-raised and feral (wild) pigs, has been reported from a farm in a village in Kerala's Thrissur district, officials said on Friday.

Due to the outbreak of swine fever, which can be readily transmitted from one pig to another through direct contact with bodily fluids from an infected pig, the Thrissur district collector has ordered the culling of 310 pigs at a private farm in Thrissur district's Madakkathara panchayat, they said.

"The disease was confirmed in the pigs owned by Kuttalapuzha Babu of Veliyanthara in the 14th ward. The district collector has directed the district animal husbandry officer to cull the pigs and bury them," according to an official release here.

A team consisting of doctors, livestock inspectors and attendants will conduct the culling process, and further primary disinfection measures

will also be taken, it said.

The area within a one-kilometre radius of the affected farm has been declared a disease-affected area, and the area within a 10-km radius has been declared a disease surveillance area.

"The transportation of pork from the affected areas, the operation of such farms, and the movement of pigs, pork, and feed from the affected areas to other parts of the district, as well as the movement of these items from other areas into the affected area, have been prohibited until further orders," the release said.

Officials said the Animal Husbandry Department will investigate whether pigs were transported from the affected farm to other farms within the last two months.

The department will also conduct strict checks at checkpoints and other entry points in the district to prevent the illegal transportation of pigs and pork from Thrissur or other areas, they said.

Following the confirmation of the disease in Madakkathara panchayat, precautionary measures will be taken in other areas of the district as well, officials said.

If the swine fever virus is detected in other areas, the municipal/government secretaries, village officers and rural development officials concerned should inform the relevant veterinary officer and then take the necessary steps to control the spread of the virus, they said.

According to the officials, African Swine Fever (ASF) is different from other types of fever.

Since it is a disease that affects only pigs, the possibility of transmission to other animals or humans is low, authorities have informed. (PTI)

## Five dead after inhaling suspected toxic gas inside well

**JANJIGIR-CHAMPA, July 5:** Five people, including a man and his two sons, died due to suspected inhalation of poisonous gas inside an unused well in Chhattisgarh's Janjgir-Champa district on Friday, police said.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai expressed grief over the incident that occurred in Kikirda village under the Birra police station area in the morning.

He also announced a financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh to the kin of each deceased.

A team from the state disaster response force (SDRF) fished out the bodies from the well, they said.

Ramchandra Jaiswal (60), Ramesh Patel (50), his two sons Rajendra (20) and Jitendra (25), and Tikeshwar Chandra (25) have died in the incident. Inspector General of Police (Bilaspur Range) Sanjeev Shukla said.

As per preliminary information, Jaiswal entered the 30-foot deep well on the premises of his house to retrieve a wooden strip that had fallen in, he said.

When Jaiswal fainted, his wife shouted for help, following which three others from the Patel family in the neighbourhood entered the water body, he said.

When none of them came out, Chandra entered the well, but he also fell unconscious, prompting locals to alert the police, the official said.

Prima facie, it appears that the men died after inhaling some poisonous gas inside the well. However, the exact cause of the deaths will be known after the autopsy, an official from the district administration said. "The first man (Jaiswal) entered the well, and after inhaling some poisonous gas, he fell into the water and died. Four others entered the well to save him and lost their lives," he said.

The SDRF team has retrieved the bodies, and they have been sent for post-mortem, he said.

Under provisions of the Revenue Book Circular, compensation will be provided to their kin, and other financial assistance will also be extended, he added.

In a post in Hindi on 'X', the chief minister said, "Received information about the tragic death of five people after coming in contact with poisonous gas in a well in Kikirda village of Janjgir. I announce a financial assistance of ₹ 5 lakh to the kin of each deceased."

The state government is ready to provide all possible assistance to the affected families, he said.

According to official sources, the old ring well had not been used for around four months since Jaiswal had dug a borewell in his house.

The well was around 30 feet deep and had water up to 5 feet, they said. The owner had used wooden strips to cover the opening of the well, and following thunderstorms and rains in the area in the last few days, one of the strips had fallen in, they said.

Sources said the well was unused for a long time and was covered, resulting in the emission of toxic gas. (PTI)

## Delhi HC directs removal of social media post that claimed centipede found in Amul ice cream tub

**NEW DELHI, July 5:** The Delhi High Court has directed a Noida-resident to remove her social media posts that alleged she found a centipede in a tub of Amul ice cream bought by her.

Justice Manmeet P S Arora, while dealing with a lawsuit by Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation which markets products under Amul brand, further restrained the customer from posting and uploading any other identical or similar content on social media platforms until further orders.

In a post on social media platform 'X' on June 15, Deepa Devi had shared a picture purportedly showing a centipede inside her Amul ice cream tub that she ordered through an instant delivery app.

The plaintiff company argued in high court that the claim was false and incorrect as it was absolutely impossible for any foreign substance, let alone an insect, to be present in an ice cream tub packed at its facility.

In an order passed on July 4, the court observed that the non-cooperation of the customers who have also remained absent in the present proceedings, has given



credence to the company's case.

It noted that the customers were given an opportunity to participate in the court proceedings and make good the claim that they canvassed in their social media post but they "elected not to appear" and also refused to hand over the ice cream tub to the company for the purpose of the investigation.

"The non-appearance of defendant nos. 1 and 2 (Deepa Devi and her husband) evidences their unwillingness to participate in the forensic examination and verification of their claims of the dead insect made in the social media posts uploaded

on 15.06.2024," observed the court in an interim ex-parte order passed in the case.

"Defendant nos. 1 and 2 are directed to forthwith remove the social media posts uploaded by them on defendant no. 1's Twitter/X account titled @Deepadi11..within 3 days," ordered the court.

They are restrained from "posting and uploading any content identical or similar to the said post" on 'X' or any other social media platform including Facebook, Instagram and YouTube until further orders, it said.

They are further restrained from "publishing or causing to publish any content with regard to the plaintiff or plaintiff's product with respect to the incidents referred to in the plaint, anywhere on the internet or in print or electronic media until further orders," it added.

The court clarified that if the defendants fail to take down the social media posts within three days, the company can write to 'X' to delete the same from their platform.

Represented by senior advocate Sunil Dalal and lawyer Abhishek Singh, the

plaintiff company submitted that while the company was willing to investigate the matter and had even contacted the customers on June 15, they refused to make available the ice cream tub to the officials.

It was submitted that numerous stringent quality checks are employed at every stage -- from procurement of raw milk from the farmer till the manufacturing of the ice cream at the plaintiff's state of art ISO certified plants, till the loading of finished product in specially-designed, temperature-controlled refrigerated vans.

The court was assured that stringent quality checks absolutely ensure that no physical, bacterial or chemical contamination whatsoever is introduced to the product and also, ensures that each product conforms to the standards laid out by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India.

The plaintiff argued that a forensic examination can be conducted by any government laboratory as it would effectively determine whether the insect was indeed present in the ice cream tub before it was sealed and packed. (PTI)

## Two cops suspended on charges of molesting woman pilgrim in Kedarnath



**DEHRADUN, July 5:** Two police sub-inspectors have been suspended on charges of molesting a woman pilgrim from Madhya Pradesh in Kedarnath a year ago.

Sub-inspector Kuldeep Negi and Kedarnath Station House Officer Manjul Rawat were suspended on the basis of the recommendation of an inquiry committee, Rudrapurag Superintendent of Police (SP), Vishakha Ashok Bhadane told PTI.

The woman had come to visit Kedarnath in May, 2023 along with eight of her friends. After visiting the Himalayan temple, her friends returned by the heli service. However, she was left behind as there was no space in the helicopter.

While she was waiting for the next sortie to be ferried back the weather turned bad and the heli service had to be suspended for the day.

As there were no proper lodging arrangements at the temple, she sought Rawat's help. He asked her to stay at the police camp for the night saying a woman constable will be deployed there for her security, the SP said quoting the woman's complaint in this regard.

However, no woman constable was sent to the police camp in Kedarnath as promised.

Instead, sub-inspector Negi came to the camp under the influence of alcohol and molested her, she alleged in her complaint. She returned to Indore the next morning and lodged a complaint with the Rudrapurag SP on WhatsApp.

The SP instituted an inquiry committee headed by Gupta's circle officer to look into the matter. However, the probe did not make much progress. The woman then lodged a complaint on CM helpline Uttarakhand in October, 2023.

After that Dehradun's SP (city) Pramod Kumar was asked to investigate the matter himself.

He submitted his report to the administration recently indicting the two cops following which an FIR was lodged against them at Sonprayag Kotwali on June 28 and both of them were suspended, the Rudrapurag SP said. (PTI)

## PIL in HC says hooch tragedy victims not freedom fighters, argues against ₹10 lakh compensation

**CHENNAI, July 5:** A Public Interest Litigation has been filed in the Madras High Court to strike down the Tamil Nadu government order providing Rs 10 lakh compensation to all the victims of the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy.

When the PIL filed by Mohamed Ghouse came up for hearing on Friday, a division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice R Mahadevan and Justice Mohammed Shafiq orally said the compensation amount was on the higher side and posted after two weeks, further hearing of the case.

The victims were not freedom fighters or social activists who have lost their lives for the cause of the general public or for the sake of the society and had committed an illegal act by consuming spurious liquor, he submitted.

According to Ghouse,

consuming illicit liquor was an illegal act. The state need not have pity on those who consumed illicit liquor and thereby committed an illegal act and consequently succumbed to such an ac

He said solatium should be given only to the victims of accidents and not to those who have committed an illegal act for their own pleasure.

The order of compensation to all the hooch tragedy victims was unreasonable and arbitrary and the consumers of illicit liquor must be denied the compensation and they must not be treated as victims, he added.

The petitioner said it was not clear and justified on what basis the state government was granting a lesser solatium to victims of fire or any other accidents and at the same time granting a huge amount to hooch tragedy victim. (PTI)

## Odisha govt forms new panel to supervise reopening of Ratna Bhandar of Puri Jagannath temple

**BHUBANESWAR, July 5:** The Odisha government has formed a fresh high-level committee to supervise the reopening of Ratna Bhandar at Puri's Jagannath temple for repair and inventory of valuables. Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan, in a press conference on Thursday night, said the panel was formed in accordance with the direction of the Orissa High Court. In March, the previous BJD government had formed a 12-member committee led by retired Supreme Court judge Arijit Pasayat to supervise the inventory of jewellery and other valuables stored in the Ratna Bhandar.

The BJP government dissolved the Justice Pasayat-led panel and formed the fresh committee. "A high-level committee is hereby reconstituted, under the chairmanship of Justice Biswanath Rath, to supervise the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee in carrying out the inventory of valuables including jewellery stored in the Ratna Bhandar," a notification issued by the Law Department said.

The 16-member new committee headed by former judge of Orissa High Court, Justice Biswanath

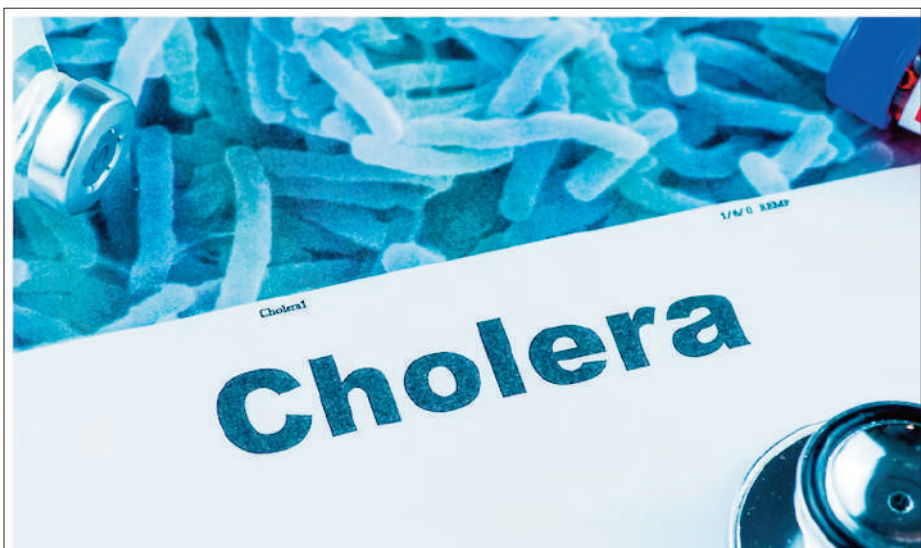
Rath, will hold its meeting in Puri on July 6 to decide the date for the opening of the Ratna Bhandar and prepare modalities for the repair of the inner chamber and inventory of valuables stored inside it, Harichandan said.

The minister said the panel will also decide which external agencies will be involved to examine the quality of the valuables stored in the treasury of the 12th-century shrine.

As per recommendation of the committee, the state government will decide its future course of action for reopening of the Ratna Bhandar, he said. The chief administrator of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) has been appointed a member convenor of the committee while Puri Collector, sand artist Sudarsan Pattanaik, representative of Gajapati Maharaj, representatives of ASI, and former Odisha DGP Prakash Mishra are other members of the panel.

While disposing of a PIL on September 29, 2023, filed by BJP leader Samir Mohanty on the safety of Ratna Bhandar, the high court directed the government to form a high-level committee. (PTI)

## Six kids dead in one week in Indore ashram: Four caused by cholera, says collector



**INDORE, July 5:** Four of the six children who died within a week in an NGO-run ashram in Indore in Madhya Pradesh succumbed to cholera, a senior official said on Friday.

Collector Ashish Singh said the management of Shri Yug-

purush Dham Bal Ashram, where the deaths took place, delayed in intimating the district administration about the infection in time.

"Based on test of water samples from the ashram, we can say cholera was the cause of

death of four out of six children. It has been proved that cholera infection spread because of contaminated water at the ashram. Water there is supplied through tankers. The cause of the other two deaths cannot be said for sure," Singh

told reporters. There was a water purifier with reverse osmosis technology at the ashram but it needs to be checked if the device was working during the cholera outbreak, Singh added.

"If the ashram management had informed the administration about the first case in time, fewer children would have fallen ill. Perhaps, we could have saved one or two lives. This mistake has definitely taken place on the part of the ashram," Singh asserted.

An official on the probe panel said a doctor at the district hospital had found two children suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea on June 27 but the administration was not informed by the ashram management. "It was only when the administration's team reached the ashram for a check on July 2 that the two children were hospitalised. These children are mentally weak and cannot speak about their ordeal

to others," the official said.

Four children died in the ashram between July 1-2 after suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea, while one child died on June 30 of brain seizure, he said.

"Our high level inquiry committee comprising senior officials and private sector doctors is working in a transparent manner. The probe has revealed the ashram hid the information of only one child. This case is also being probed by our panel," the official said.

Meanwhile, the official said the condition of 60 children admitted in the city's Government Chacha Nehru Children's Hospital after the cholera outbreak in the ashram was improving.

"Twelve children, after recovery, have been referred to a government ashram in Pardehpura area. Twenty more children are expected to be discharged from the hospital soon," the official said. (PTI)





## Alia Bhatt, Sharvari to headline first female-led YRF Spy Universe film 'Alpha'

**NEW DELHI, July 5:** Alia Bhatt and Sharvari are set to play super-agents in Yash Raj Films next Spy Universe movie "Alpha", the makers announced on Friday.

Billed as the first female-led YRF Spy Universe film, the movie will be directed by Shiv Rawail, who previously helmed the banner's Netflix series "The Railway Men".

"Alpha" will see the actors join the spyverse, which already boasts of blockbuster titles such as "Pathaan" as well as the "Tiger" and "War" franchises.

There were reports that Alia and Sharvari will front the female-led espionage movie, produced by YRF's Aditya Chopra.

In the title reveal video, Alia can be heard saying, "Greek alphabet ka sabse pehla akshar. Aur humare programme ka motto.. sabse pehle, sabse tezz, sabse veer. Dhyaan se dekho toh har sheher mein ek jungle hai. Aur jungle mein hamesha Raj karega.. ALPHA!"

"It's the time of the #ALPHA girls," Alia wrote on Instagram.

According to the 51-second clip shared by YRF on its X page, the filming on "Alpha" has begun.

The YRF Spy Universe was launched back in 2012 with Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif's "Ek Tha Tiger". Its success spawned two sequels "Tiger Zinda Hai" (2017) and "Tiger 3" (2023).

Prithvi Roshan and Tiger Shroff's "War" released in 2019, which was followed by 2023's "Pathaan", starring Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone.

Besides "Alpha", "War 2", featuring Prithvi and NTR Jr., "Pathaan 2" with Shah Rukh, and "Tiger vs Pathaan", starring Salman and Shah Rukh are in the banner's pipeline.

"Tiger 3" was the last offering in the spyverse, which released in November 2023. While Alia was last seen on the big screen in "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani", Sharvari's latest was "Munjya". (PTI)



## I CHOOSE TO WIN: HINA KHAN CUTS HER HAIR OFF AFTER CHEMOTHERAPY



**MUMBAI, July 5:** Popular television star Hina Khan, who recently shared her breast cancer diagnosis with fans, cut her hair short after the first chemotherapy session and said she is giving herself every chance to "win this battle".

The 36-year-old, best known for her role in TV show "Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai", shared the video on her Instagram where her mother is seen weeping as the actor chops off her hair.

"To all the beautiful people out there, especially women who are fighting the same battle, I know it's hard, I know for most of us, our hair is the crown we never take off. But what if you're facing a battle so tough that you have to lose your hair—your pride, your crown? If you want to win you've got to take some tough decisions. And I choose to win," the actor posted. (PTI)

## 'Kalki 2898 AD' a massive spectacle, merger of myth and reality: Amitabh Bachchan

**NEW DELHI, July 5:** Megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Friday expressed gratitude to fans for the love that has come his way for "Kalki 2898 AD" and praised the "audacious mind" of director Nag Ashwin for transforming the Hindu epic Mahabharata for modern-day viewing.

The 81-year-old actor is receiving glowing reviews for his role of the immortal warrior Ashwathama in the star-studded sci-fi spectacle.

Released worldwide on June 27, the movie has grossed over Rs 700 crore at the box office. "The essence of KALKI re-sounds within and without .. and my gracious

gratitude," Bachchan wrote on X.

In a lengthy post on his personal blog, the screen icon said he watched "Kalki 2898 AD" for the third time recently.

"The experience just keeps building .. every time you notice and admire the pains taken by the Director in purring this massive vision in fructification, and presenting it in a manner that makes the film historic .. historic not just in its

commercial prospects, but historic in its values of the audacious mind of the Director in metamorphosing the legend of the Mahabharat with its manifestation after 6000 years .. into the viewage of modern day humans that go to see the film TODAY in 2024 .." he wrote.

"Yes the film is a massive spectacle .. but it is also a learning .. a learning of the merger of myth and reality .. and a learning to the film makers on the process of putting this mammoth together for a

"brilliantly" interpreting the mythological epic Mahabharata, comprising over 1.40 lakh verses.

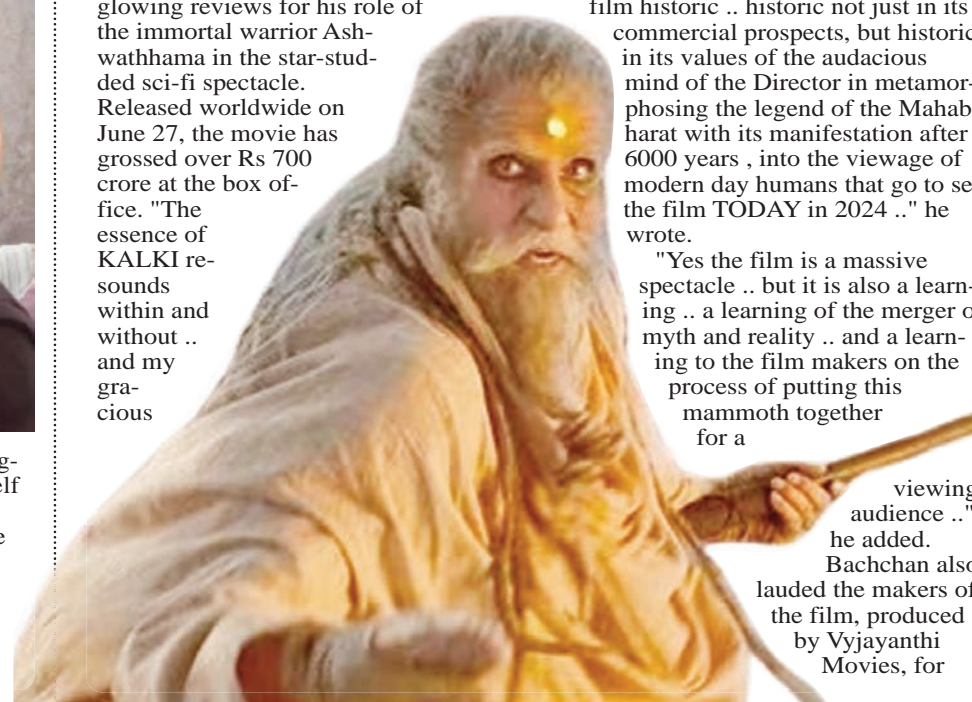
".. the largest epic ever in the history - and bringing it to modern day - well modern meaning 2898 AD - and to embellish it with the subtle nuances, which govern the past with what is to happen after the Mahabharata is over - the war between the Kauravas and the Pandav armies that lasted 18 days .."

What happened after the 18-day war in Kurukshetra and does life continue to be stagnant or is there something more, "Kalki 2898 AD" answers these questions, he added.

"WELL FIND OUT BY SEEING KALKI .. and revel in its vast and massive presentation .. and to live till the FINALITY of its story-telling in the wait of the Part 2 .." he teased the sequel of the big-budget multilingual film.

Bachchan revealed he had an on-camera conversation with Ashwin about "Kalki 2898 AD", which he said will be put out soon as a podcast or an interview on TV channels.

It also stars Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, and Kamal Haasan, with Saswata Chatterjee, Shobana, and Disha Patani. Mounted on a reported budget of Rs 600 crore, the film released in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Hindi, and English. (PTI)



## It wasn't conventional, it was a road I built on my own, says Divya Dutta on 30 years in cinema

**MUMBAI, July 5:** If you are passionate about something, you will be energetic about it," says actor Divya Dutta, who still feels like a newcomer after spending 30 years in the film industry.

The actor, known for films such as "Veer-Zaara", "Bhaag Milkha Bhaag", "Delhi-6", "Special 26", "Badlapur", and "Irada", made her debut in 1994 with "Ishq Mein Jeena Ishq Mein Marna" when she was just 17.

It feels like yesterday that she started her journey in films, she said.

"I still feel like a newcomer. I didn't even know it's been 30 years...

The experience is so fresh in my mind. When you are passionate about something then you are always energetic about it. I still feel like a child that I came here when I was 17-year-old. I feel the same. Have the same excitement.

"I'm blessed that these 30 years have been beautiful. It was not conventional. It was the road I built on my own. I am happy the road I carved is followed by many co-actors or juniors. I met so many people and had so many experiences through which I became what I wanted to be come today. I am very happy and proud," Dutta told PTI in an interview here.

As an outsider, you come with stars in your eyes, recalled the actor,

whose latest film release is "Sharmajee Ki Beti". It is directed by Tahira Kashyap Khurana and is streaming on Prime Video.

"That when I come (into the industry), I will take it by storm. I will do this and that and people will know who Divya is. The thing about the industry is they never say 'no' to anyone as it is a business. Today you might not need this person for help but tomorrow you might. Everyone is very sweet to you. But most of the time wherever I go people keep telling me that we will work in the film together but later I realised none of this happened."

Dutta, who received a lot of acclaim and accolades for playing the role of the loveable Shabbo in Yash Chopra's 2004 romance drama "Veer-Zaara", said she was sceptical about taking up the project.

"When I took on 'Veer-Zaara' which was an unconventional role at that time, I received so much love. Yash uncle and Aditya (Chopra) told me that 'if the role was not special, we wouldn't have asked you to do it'.

"I was scared I did not want to be stuck in one image that I have come to become a heroine... If I do something different like this, I would be stuck there but I realised that gave me commercial success," she said.

"Veer-Zaara" proved to be a career breakthrough for the actor who went

on a signing spree after its critical and commercial success. It was producer Aditya Chopra, who served as writer and producer on the Shah Rukh Khan and Preity Zinta-starrer, who asked her to create a legacy for herself in the industry while they were working on Yash Raj Films' "Aaja Nachle" (2007).

"I was sitting with him and he asked me 'What are you up to?' I said 'I signed 20 films' very proudly. What happens is with lots of difficulty you set yourself in the industry you just want to get busy. The feeling of being busy is very nice. So, he asked me, 'Well, you need money or something?' I said 'No. Why?' He says, 'Why are you signing so many films? You are a good actor and you should leave a legacy behind'. So that really struck a chord with me.

"I decided I will only do films that make my heart flutter... I left many big films and did small films. I love doing that because I feel the journey of a film is very important. I really like the fact that someone meets and tells me that 'If you are doing the film, it means it will be different'. I like my choices and I'm glad my audience does too," she said.

In "Sharmajee Ki Beti", Dutta plays Kiran Sharma, a happy-go-lucky Patiala woman who feels lost after relocating to Mumbai and tries to find her individuality. (PTI)





# Inspirational, emotional: New-Gen India stars hail T20 WC triumph, eye their own glory

"It was a great feeling that day. I was alone in the hotel and I was screaming all along inside the room," said Bishnoi. (PTI)

# Euro 2024: Misfiring England faces in-form Switzerland for semifinal spot

Bellingham, forward Phil Foden and full back Kieran Trippier are among five England players who would miss the semifinals if booked against Switzerland. Captain Granit

"Every team participating in the Euro wants to win, and so do we. But in the end, we are having both feet on the ground. We know who we are and where we're coming from. We know our basics. That is keeping us in the tournament until now." — Switzerland midfielder Steven Zuber. (AP)

*Keep your faith in us,  
we will not disappoint  
you: Hockey skipper  
Hamrmanpreet*

Nariman Point after 7.30 pm and went till the Wankhede Stadium. Although it usually takes five minutes to cover the distance between these two points, it took more than one-and-a-half-hour for the parade to do so due to the large gathering of fans. (PTI)

# AICF to announce delayed chess Olympiad squad in 'a week'

The qualification criteria for the players was that they should play at least nine games till June this year. (PTI)

*I want Sikandar to lead  
from the front: Zimbabwe  
coach Sammons*

Sammons said that his focus

Shubman, I think I was with the Proteas. We were playing that Test series against India. I

prospect for India. Again, it's another opportunity for our guys to test themselves against the best," he concluded. (PTI)

*Never take away a World Cup  
final from Mumbai Aaditya  
Thackeray takes swipe at BCCI*

strong message to the BCCI... Never take away a World Cup final from Mumbai," the former Maharashtra minister said in a

it took more than one-and-a-half-hour for the parade to do so due to the large gathering of fans. (PTI)



## Enter Gen-Next: New look India start their journey without Virat and Rohit against Zimbabwe



**HARARE, July 5:** A new-look Indian T20 team would embark on a journey of self-discovery without their constant talismans, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, hoping to unearth their mainstays for the future in a five-match series against Zimbabwe starting here on Saturday.

Even as the euphoria of T20 World Cup triumph sweeps through the length and breadth of India, Shubman Gill, who was a reserve in that squad, will hit a refresh button along with a bunch of IPL performers.

All the fresh faces are expected to make their international debut during the series scheduled to be played entirely in the Zimbabwean capital.

Two young men, who are lined for debut could be Punjab's Abhishek Sharma, who had a stupendous IPL for Sunrisers Hyderabad and the young Assamese lad Rryan Parag, who has given ample demonstration of his capabilities as a competent T20 batter. Both of them tick all the



boxes for this format. While over the past few years, Rohit and Kohli have skipped a lot of bilateral series, especially in the shortest format, their international retirement from the format is bound to be felt more strongly.

The skills and quality that the two modern greats brought to the table will be hard to replicate but as it is the order of nature, the old guard has to make way for the new one.

Zimbabwe certainly isn't the most formidable opposition but in T20 format, the gulf between sides is comparatively lesser than the other two traditional forms of the game.

The hosts, led by the gutsy Sikandar Raza, who played for Punjab Kings in the IPL recently, could prove to be a handful on nippy afternoons at the Harare Sports Club where the ball will jag around during the afternoon starts.

Some solid performances in this series will keep these youngsters in contention for future when the first team players of the world cham-



pion side are back on national duty. Shivam Dube, Sanju Samson, and Yashasvi Jaiswal will be available from the third match onwards and some of the young men would only get a couple of games to prove their mettle.

In future, the likes of T20 captain-in-waiting Hardik Pandya, his likely deputy Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, and Kuldeep Yadav will also be back playing the format and there won't be too many vacancies in the playing eleven. From now till the 2026 T20 World Cup in India, the national team will play 34 games in the shortest format.

While skipper Gill is expected to open, one needs to see whether his best friend Abhishek gets his maiden India cap or the seasoned CSK skipper and captain of the Asian Games gold medal-winning team Ruturaj Gaikwad ends up being the chosen one.

In case Abhishek opens, Gaikwad could come in at No.3 or swap positions with the Punjab south-

paw. Parag's chances of a debut are brighter compared to Abhishek as he can bat at No. 4 in the first match, a slot he made his own for the Royals.

Rinku Singh, the designated finisher of the Indian T20 team for years to come, is expected to arrive at No. 5 in this new look line-up while one among Jitesh Sharma or Dhruv Jurel will bat at No. 6 while donning the big gloves.

If one looks at selection pattern, Jurel was the second keeper behind Sanju Samson for this series and Jitesh was a late entrant because of the unavailability of the World Cup squad members.

Hence Jurel, who made an impressive Test debut against England is likely to play in the first two games before Samson arrives.

In the bowling department, Avesh Khan and Khaleel Ahmed, the two standbys during the T20 World Cup are certainties and Mukesh Kumar, who is a very steady death bowler could be the third seamer pipping Harshit Rana, who is a better slogger with the willow.

Washington Sundar with his all-round abilities will hold his place till Dube arrives while leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi is expected to play all games.

**Squads**  
**India (first 2 games):** Shubman Gill (c), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Abhishek Sharma, Rinku Singh, Dhruv Jurel (wk), Riyan Parag, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Avesh Khan, Khaleel Ahmed, Mukesh Kumar, Tushar Deshpande, Sai Sudharsan, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Harshit Rana.

**Zimbabwe:** Sikandar Raza (captain), Faraz Akram, Brian Bennett, Johnathan Campbell, Tendai Chatara, Luke Jongwe, Innocent Kaia, Clive Madande, Wessly Madhevere, Tadiwanashe Marumani, Wellington Masakadza, Brandon Mavuta, Blessing Muzarabani, Dion Myers, Antum Naqvi, Richard Ngarava, Milton Shumba.

Match Starts at 4:30 pm IST/(PTT)

## Logistical hassles galore in Caribbean's first ICC event in 14 years

**NEW DELHI, July 5:** The recently-concluded T20 World Cup, which was the first ICC men's event in the Caribbean in 14 years, was a success on many fronts but the logistical challenges involved in staging the massive event in the region caused a lot of discomfort to the game's stakeholders, including the players and fans.

Cricket West Indies reaped the benefits of hosting the big-ticket competition that gave the governing body financial security for the foreseeable future. The ICC fulfilled its vision of hosting a World Cup in a region outside the big three (India, Australia, England).

The locals fans were also thrilled to see top-flight cricket being played in the Caribbean after a long time but the same could not be said about the overseas fans who had to take great pains to watch their teams in action.

Before the caravan moved to the Caribbean for the Super 8s, the talk around the games in co-host USA was mainly around the undercooked drop-in pitches in New York. Logistical issues began to crop up only when the teams had to play their Super 8 games in the Caribbean with only a travel day in between.

For example, eventual champions India played three Super 8 games at three different venues and the semifinal in Guyana in a space of seven days, followed by the final against South Africa in Barbados 48 hours later. The other teams too had their fair share of logistical hurdles.

"I love coming to the Caribbean as cricket is loved here. I have enjoyed my cricket here. There is so much history of cricket, there are so many great players from this country."

"However, the logistics are a big challenge, but that is fine. At the end of the day, you are a professional sportsman. You have to manage everything around it. And to bat here is also fun. The wickets are good here," India skipper Rohit Sharma told select media after leading his team to a much-awaited win in an ICC final.

Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott had also been vocal about how



the scheduling left his team sleep-deprived before the lost semifinal against South Africa. The fact that a record 20 teams took part in the event only made things tougher on the logistical front.

"The West Indies hosted a men's ICC event after 14 years and I don't think it will stage another one anytime soon. The infrastructure is just not there," said a well-known broadcaster, whose patience was tested while trying to catch a charter flight from Guyana to Barbados ahead of the final on June 29.

The Indian fans, who mostly came from USA, UK and Canada, did not have access to charter flights and therefore, they were forced to take flights with layovers as long as 20 hours.

A lot of them had match tickets but were not able to book flights. Match tickets were available outside the Kensington Oval even on the day of the final.

"I had to pay USD 3000 for my wife and I to travel from Guyana to Barbados for the final with an overnight stay in Trinidad. There was no other option," said Mitesh Bohra, a US-based techie who is originally from Indore.

UK-based Minesh Patel, who was in India for the ODI World Cup last year before returning to the country for the five-match India-England Test series earlier this year, narrated his travails.

"I have been to football matches, they are very well-organised, the whole ticketing process. Here the ticketing process was awful. The tickets were out in February, everybody went for them. Then all of a

sudden, all the major games were sold out," said Minesh.

"I managed to get a few tickets but then a month later, the ICC released some more but when I checked, everything was sold out. And month later released some more, but by then the flight prices had gone up."

"But when you got to the ground, half the grounds were empty, not even half full. The reselling websites were selling the tickets for thousands of dollars but nothing was there on the official ICC site."

He said that he bought tickets for the India-USA game in New York for USD 300 but a month after his purchase, he realised that lower category tickets were eventually made available for USD 200. He wondered why the entire lot could not be put on sale at the same time.

"So, they were asking for premium tickets initially but there were lot of other tickets available afterwards. The ICC should give us the entire ticketing schedule months in advance so that people are aware," added Minesh, who covered six India games in this edition. The ICC along with local organisers had a massive task at hand which they pulled off eventually. However, for the fans and other stakeholders, a lot was left to be desired.

"The ICC men's T20 World Cup 2024 is the largest ICC event ever delivered, with 20 teams, 55 games and in nine venues across seven countries. This is a huge logistical exercise which was handled extremely well by our hosts Cricket West Indies," an ICC spokesperson said. (PTT)

## Praggnanandhaa holds Caruana, Gukesh draws with Giri

**BUCHAREST (ROMANIA), July 5:** Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa played out a draw with Fabiano Caruana of the United States, while world championship challenger D Gukesh also split points with Dutchman Anish Giri in the eighth and penultimate round of the Superbet Classic chess tournament here.

For the fourth time, the day did not produce a single decisive game and draws on all five boards meant that Caruana kept his slender half point lead going in to the final round in the 10-player round-robin tournament, a part of the Grand Chess tour.

With 5 points in his kitty from eight games, the American continued to be followed by Praggnanandhaa, Gukesh and Alireza Firouzja of France, who all are a half point behind.

Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France share the fifth spot on four points each ahead of Wesley So of the United States, Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan and Giri on 3.5 points each. (PTT)

## Kohli, Jadeja thank Mumbai Police for 'phenomenal job' managing victory parade

**MUMBAI, July 5:** Floored by the grand reception and also the comprehensive police presence that ensured an orderly conduct of proceedings for most part, star India Virat Kohli on Friday thanked the Mumbai Police for doing a "phenomenal job" in crowd control during the victory parade of the T20 World Cup-winning Indian team here.

The side returned to a euphoric reception on Thursday after a 16-hour non-stop flight from Barbados. It was hosted for breakfast by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi before heading to Mumbai for the victory parade which was attended by lakhs of fans.

It culminated into a felicitation ceremony at the iconic Wankhede stadium where the players danced and took a victory lap after sharing their thoughts on the triumph that ended a trophy drought of 11 years.

"Deep respect and heartfelt thanks to all the officers and staff of @MumbaiPolice & @CP-MumbaiPolice for doing a phenomenal job during Team India's Victory Parade. Your dedication and service is highly appreciated. Jai Hind," Kohli posted on 'X'.

The 35-year-old, who was adjudged player of the match in the seven-run final win over South Africa last Saturday, flew out to London early this morning after completing the engagements here.

He had announced T20 international retirement at the end of the final.



All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja also posted a similar note of thanks for the police force that was deployed to manage the sea of humanity that descended on Marine Drive to greet the players and be a part of the celebrations.

"Big thank you to Mumbai police. You did a fantastic job last night #realhero," he said.

India captain Rohit Sharma, who also announced his T20 international retirement at the end of the World Cup, was welcomed enthusiastically by his neighbours and friends at his Mumbai house.

Fans also thronged the complex to catch a glimpse of him and he duly obliged amid heavy police presence, waving and smiling at them.

"...this is for you," read his post, prefixed with the emoji of the national flag, on 'X'. Senior off-spinner R Ashwin, who was not a part of the squad in the Americas, said he felt overwhelmed while watching the celebrations. (PTT)

## Stay calm, sleep well: PM Modi tells Paris-bound athletes; asks for mom-made 'churma' from Neeraj



**NEW DELHI, July 5:** Neeraj Chopra shared his fitness concerns, P V Sindhu talked about the significance of self-belief and Nikhat Zareen could barely hide her excitement about being a first-time Olympian during a light-hearted interaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who advised the Paris-bound group to stay calm and sleep well for best results.

The interaction, held on Thursday, also featured the men's hockey team and the 21-strong shooting contingent in person, while some others, including Chopra, Sindhu and

Zareen, joined online from their respective training bases abroad.

Chopra, who has been troubled by an adductor niggle for the past couple of months, said he wants to reach Paris "fully fit" to defend his Olympic gold in javelin throw.

"We are now training in Germany and it is going very well. This time I am playing in less competitions because on and off I am suffering from an injury. But now it is a lot better, a few days back I played a competition in Finland and that was pretty

good," Chopra told the PM, referring to his top finish in the Paavo Nurmi Games last month.

"We have one month before the Olympics and I am trying to reach Paris completely fit and give 100 per cent for my country," he added.

"Olympics comes in four years and I would like to tell every athlete that you get this chance once in four years and we must try to find out what is that thing which can push us to give our best."

Chopra advised his fellow Paris-bound athletes to be fearless while competing in the world's biggest sporting extravaganza.

"Tokyo was my first Olympics and in first Olympics, the result was pretty good. I won gold for the country. There was no fear in my mind, and I had self belief because I had good training," he said.

"I would tell every athlete not to fear anyone or anything. We don't have to fear Europeans or Americans because they are also human beings like us."

"If we can recognise ourselves, we have been living outside our homes for long time and training hard, so nothing is impossible." (PTT)

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