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## Only 8 applied for citizenship under CAA in Assam

# People preferring Foreigners Tribunal: CM

**GUWAHATI, July 15:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said only eight persons have applied for citizenship under the CAA from the state so far.

Speaking at a press conference here, Sarma noted that out of these applicants, only two have proceeded to attend interviews with relevant authorities.

The Centre on March 11 implemented the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 CAA by notifying the rules, four years after the law was passed by Parliament to fast-track citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, who came to India before December 31, 2014, and stayed here for five years.

"We conducted outreach programmes in the Barak valley and approached many-Hindu Bengali



families and asked them to apply for citizenship under CAA. They refused to do so saying they would prefer fighting their cases at the Foreigners Tribunal (FT)," Sarma said. Foreigners' Tribunals are

of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), told him that they have documents to prove their Indian citizenship and prefer the FT route than applying through the CAA. Legal experts said people declared foreigners by the FTs can subsequently apply under the CAA if their nationality verdict is unfavourable.

"While a case for citizenship is going on, there is no question of applying for the same under a new law," a senior advocate said.

According to legal provisions, only the FTs can declare a person a foreigner in Assam, and subsequently higher courts can be approached if the verdict is not favourable. Asked whether the state government is dropping cases in FTs against Hindu-Bengalis, Sarma clarified, "This is misleading. We (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## SC issues notice on NTA's plea seeking transfer of petitions

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** The Supreme Court on Monday issued notices to private parties on a batch of pleas filed by the National Testing Agency (NTA) seeking transfer of cases pending against it in various high courts on the NEET-UG row to the top court to avoid multiplicity of litigations.

Earlier, a vacation bench had on June 14 issued notices to the parties on similar pleas by the NTA.

The NTA had submitted that several pleas seeking cancellation of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Under Graduate (NEET-UG), 2024 over allegations of question paper leak and other malpractices are pending in several high courts.

Advocate Vardhaman Kaushik, appearing for the NTA, urged a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice JB Pardiwala on Monday that the fresh batch of pleas be also transferred to the apex court as they pertained to the same issue.

"Issue notice and tag," the bench said, adding that these pleas will also be taken up together with the pending petitions on the NEET-UG row on July 18.

The NTA also urged the bench to stay the pending proceedings in various high courts. The CJI said once the Supreme Court has issued notices on transfer petitions, the high courts, procedurally, do not proceed with



the hearing. The bench asked the NTA counsel to bring this to the notice of the high courts concerned.

The top court was hearing as many as five petitions seeking transfer of cases from various high courts to it.

Earlier, the bench had on July 11 adjourned till July 18 the hearing on a clutch of other petitions seeking cancellation, re-test and probe into alleged malpractices in the conduct of NEET-UG, 2024 as the responses of the Centre and the NTA were not received by some parties. The bench had also said it has received a status report from the CBI on the progress (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### HT BRIEFS

#### Drug peddlers

**TEZPUR:** Acting on a tip off, Tezpur police apprehended five drug peddlers with fifty number of drug containers at Dulabari area under Tezpur Sadar police station in Sonitpur district on Monday. The arrested drug peddlers were identified as Rajib Islam (32) and Fajilul Islam (21) son of Rahul Amin of Lakhimpur Bangalmora area, Jiabur Rahman (27) son of Amiruddin of Hojai-Doboka area and Fakaruddin Ali (30) of Lakhimpur Channari area.

#### Youth empowerment

**GUWAHATI:** Assam chief minister of Himanta Biswa Sarma has emphasised the state's efforts in youth skill development on World Youth Skills Day. Taking to micro-blogging site X, the chief minister highlighted various important initiatives carried out by the Assam government to improve the skills of the youth. He stated, "Today is #WorldYouthSkillsDay, a subject close to my heart and a focus area of our Govt. A look at few initiatives we've undertaken: Establishment of Assam Skill University; Transformation of 77 ITIs and Polytechnics into Centres of Excellence."

#### Negative marking

**GUWAHATI:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Monday that the Assam Direct Recruitment Examination (ADRE) for Grades III and IV will now feature negative marking for incorrect answers. This change comes in response to an unparalleled rise in the number of applicants. Sarma also informed that a remarkable 1.1 million candidates have applied for around 13,000 positions, making it a significant jump from the previous year. There will be negative marking for wrong answers, making this exam particularly challenging.

## Assam improves position in SDG index, says CM

**GUWAHATI, July 15:** Assam has improved its position in the national index for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2023-24, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday.

Addressing a press conference here, he said that the northeastern state has entered the 'Front Runner' category with a score of 65 as against the national SDG score of 71. "The NITI Aayog published the report and mentioned that Assam is one of the fastest-growing states in the country. Our target is to surpass the national score in the next two years," Sarma said.

Assam had joined the SDG index in 2016 and it was in the 'Aspirant' category with a score of 49. The state improved its ranking and entered the 'Performer category' in 2019 with a score of 55 and 57 in 2020.

"Earlier, Assam was a burden on India but now it is not. We have done well in poverty alleviation, clean water supply, green energy, economic growth, industry, innovation, infrastructure and sustainable cities," the CM said.

He, however, said the higher education sector performed poorly with an individual score of 16.5 and it negatively impacted the state's position.

"With new schemes, we hope that the gross enrolment ratio will increase substantially. We expect to clock 19 points in higher education within two years," Sarma added.

Uttarakhand and Kerala have emerged as the top performing states in NITI Aayog's SDG India Index 2023-24, which evaluates the progress of states and union territories on (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Assam not to send non-Muslim immigrants entering state before 2015 to Foreigners Tribunal

**GUWAHATI, July 15:** The Assam government has asked its border police unit not to forward cases of non-Muslim illegal immigrants entering the state before 2015 to the Foreigners Tribunal, and advised them to apply for citizenship under the CAA.

In a letter to the special director general of police (Border), Home and Political secretary Parth Pratim Majumdar referred to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and said all those non-Muslim immigrants who entered India from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan by 2014 are eligible to be granted Indian citizenship.

The letter, issued on July 5, asked the Assam Police's border wing not to forward the cases of persons belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi, Jain and Christian communi-



ties who entered India prior to December 31, 2014 directly to the Foreigners Tribunal (FT).

Majumdar stated that such persons should be advised to apply on the citizenship portal for consideration of their application by the Indian government.

"However, this facility will not be available to people who entered into

## Assam flood situation improving

**GUWAHATI, July 15:** The flood situation in Assam continued to improve significantly on Monday as water level has been receding fast from different parts of the state, officials said.

The India Meteorological Department's Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) in Guwahati has also not issued any warning except predicting some rains in Barak valley and a few districts of central Assam.

Meanwhile, a report by Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) on Sunday night said that one person each died in Karimganj and Nilabazar revenue circles of Karimganj district.

With this, the total number of people losing their lives in this year's flood, landslide, storm and lightning has increased to 109. The report said more than 5,97,600 people are hit due to flood in Cachar, Chirang, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## CM Himanta hands over appointment letters to 41 youths

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, July 15:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday distributed appointment letters to 41 youths and claimed that his government has given jobs to 97,495 people in the last three years.

The said letters were distributed for different positions in education department at a function held at Lok Sewa Bhawan in Dispur.

"In an attempt to reach the target of providing jobs to 1 lakh youth of the state, chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma today presented appointment letters to 41 youth for different positions in education department," an official statement said. It may be noted that 22 candidates have received the compassionate appointment in the directorate of higher education, 11 assistant professors and one librarian under the directorate of technical education seven lecturers of DIET under SCERT. "With these appointments the total number of giving new jobs reached 97,495," the statement added.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarma said, "Our promise of providing one lakh jobs to the youth, is achieving new benchmarks with each passing day. The remaining 13,000 posts will be filled by April 2025".

The chief minister further said that the appointment of youth maintaining transparency and meritocracy in government of jobs has augured an atmosphere of trust and belief in the state.

"Present state government has set a precedence of appointing 97,495 youth transparently. In the coming 15 August another one thousand youth will be absorbed in government jobs," the statement quoted him as saying.

The chief minister also said after fulfilment of the target of 1 lakh government jobs, government would work for taking the target to 1.5 lakh in its five year in office.

Sarma asked the new appointees to dedicate themselves in the service of the people and contribute to the growth of the state.

Later, the chief minister during his speech elaborated on the future roadmap for a start up revolution in the state.

"Start up ventures have the potential of creating employment avenues besides stimulating the growth of the state," he added.

He, therefore, asked the newly inducted assistant professors of engineering colleges to help the students to imbibe the skill and passion for start up ventures. Minister for Welfare of Tea Tribes and Labour Welfare Sanjoy (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## K P Sharma Oli sworn in as Nepal's Prime Minister for 4th time

**KATHMANDU, July 15:** K P Sharma Oli on Monday was sworn in as Nepal's 45th Prime Minister, the fourth time for him, to lead a new coalition government that faces the daunting challenge of providing political stability in the Himalayan nation.

The leader of Nepal's largest communist party was appointed as prime minister on Sunday by President Ram Chandra Paudel to lead the coalition government with the Nepali Congress (NC), the largest party in Parliament, apart from other smaller parties.

Oli, 72, succeeds Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda,' who lost the vote of confidence in the House of Representatives (HoR) on Friday, leading to the formation of the new government. Chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), Oli was sworn in by President Paudel at Shital Niwas, the main building of Rashtrapati Bhawan at a ceremony that was delayed by more than half an hour.

According to the news portal MyRepublica, the swearing-in ceremony was delayed due to the failure of

the Nepali Congress to finalise the names of its ministers to join the government amid disputes within the party. The President also administered oaths to the two Deputy PMs - Prakash Man Singh and Bishnu Paudel - and 19 other ministers. Singh would also look after the Urban Development Ministry while Vishnu Prakash Paudel would look after the Finance Ministry.

Arzoo Rana Deuba, wife of Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba is the Foreign Minister in the cabinet while Nepali Congress chief whip Ramesh Lekhak is appointed as the home minister. There are 10 cabinet ministers from the Nepali Congress; eight, excluding the Prime Minister, from the CPN-UML, two from the Janata Samajwadi Party and one from the Loktantrik Samajwadi Party in the government. Local media also pointed out that the new cabinet is devoid of Dalit members and has only two women members. Soon after the swearing-in ceremony, Oli paid his tributes to martyrs by laying (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



## 'There is no doubt that the major challenge faced by the world today is terrorism'

# Fight against three evils - terrorism, separatism and extremism - a priority in SCO: Jaishankar

**ASTANA, July 15:** With terrorism becoming a threat to regional and global peace, the perpetrators, facilitators, financiers and sponsors of heinous acts of terrorism "need to be identified and punished," External Affairs minister S Jaishankar has said, in a veiled jibe at Pakistan.

In a recent interview with Astana-based Kazinform News Agency, he also emphasised that the "fight against the three evils -- terrorism, separatism and extremism -- is a priority in SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation)".

The 24th Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of State was held on July 4 in the Kazakh capital Astana, under the presidency of Kazakhstan. Jaishankar led the Indian delegation to the Summit. Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also attended the summit.

"There is no doubt that the major challenge faced by the world today is terrorism. It has become a threat to regional and global peace, and it demands urgent action from all of



us," he said. "Combating terrorism requires a very comprehensive approach - not just the perpetrators of heinous acts of terrorism, but the facilitators, financiers and sponsors of terrorism - they all need to be identified and punished," Jaishankar said. The minister emphasised that he "strongly believes" that SCO through the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) has a "reasonable standing" to propose measures

against terrorism in the region. Jaishankar said he is happy that Kazakhstan, during its chair, negotiated an updated programme to combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism, which was adopted at the Astana Summit, according to the transcript of the interview shared by the Ministry of External Affairs.

During the SCO New Delhi Summit last year, one of the two joint statements adopted was on 'Countering Radicalisation leading to Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism,' which included various elements of radicalisation - including ideology, media campaign, as well as radical and terrorist content on the internet, he said and added,

"Kazakhstan, during their chairmanship, carried forward the spirit of that joint statement."

"The updated programme to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism is critical and timely. But I want to emphasise that what is more important is the actual implementation of the programme that we have now successfully drawn up, which includes an unambiguous commitment by all the Member States to getting rid of all forms and manifestations of terrorism in the region, including cross-border terrorism," the Minister said.

Speaking about the importance and potential impact of the two significant initiatives, related to terrorism and the SCO Anti-Drug Strategy, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Jitendra Singh to hold meetings with party leaders

**GUWAHATI, July 15:** Congress general secretary in-charge of Assam, Jitendra Singh, arrived here on a three-day visit aimed at bolstering the party's organisational strength and expanding outreach among the public.

Upon his arrival at the airport, Singh was welcomed by state party president Bhupen Kumar Borah and other prominent leaders, according to a party spokesperson. Shortly after, Singh, accompanied by Borah and other leaders, proceeded to Mayong in Morigaon district to meet flood-hit people. "Besides Singh and Borah, leader of opposition in the state Assembly, Debabrata Saikia, several MLAs and other leaders took stock of the flood situation," the spokesperson added.

The visit is primarily to take stock of the party's presence at the grassroots level, strengthen organisational base and prepare for the future, he said. The AICC general secretary is scheduled to return to Guwahati in the evening, where he will attend a meeting with party leaders. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## BJP's tally falls below 90 in RS but set to rise after bypolls

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** The BJP's tally in Rajya Sabha has dipped below 90 for the first time in several years but the party and its allies are expected to not only recoup the their losses but also make some gains when by-elections to fill the existing vacancies are held in the coming weeks. While the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is confident of winning two seats each in Bihar, Maharashtra and Assam and one each in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tripura due to their numerical superiority over the opposition, the four new nominated members are also expected to be pro-treasury benches whenever the government names them.

Though nominated members are usually independent in the House in terms of their party affiliation, they are traditionally supportive of the agenda of the government which picks them.

The current strength of Rajya Sabha is 226 with the BJP having 86 followed by 26 of the Congress and 13 of the Trinamool Congress (TMC). There are currently 19 vacancies.

The ruling Congress is looking to win the lone seat in Telangana at the expense of the BRS but its gain will be cancelled in Rajasthan where the BJP, which has a strong majority, will pick up the seat vacated by K C Venugopal, a senior member of the opposition party who won the Lok Sabha poll from Alappuzha in Kerala.

The BJP is also confident of winning the solitary seat in Haryana where the poll will be held to fill the vacancy caused by the election of its Rajya Sabha MP Deepender Singh Hooda to Lok Sabha.

The Congress, though, hopes that a few MLAs, who are either independent or affiliated to the regional parties and are looking for political alternatives ahead of the assembly polls expected in October, may





# Exports rise 2.56 pc to USD 35.2 bn in Jun; trade deficit widens to USD 20.98 bn

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** India's merchandise exports in June increased 2.56 per cent to USD 35.2 billion despite global challenges, even as the trade deficit widened to USD 20.98 billion during the month.

According to the government data released on Monday, imports rose about 5 per cent to USD 56.18 billion in June due to the increase in inbound shipments of crude oil, pulses, and electronic goods.

The trade deficit, or the gap between imports and exports, during June 2023 was USD 19.19 billion.

India's merchandise exports grew 9.1 per cent to USD 38.13 billion in May, even as the trade deficit widened to a seven-month high of USD 23.78 billion.

Cumulatively, the merchandise exports in April-June this fiscal climbed 5.84 per cent to USD 109.96 billion, and imports grew 7.6 per cent to USD 172.23 billion.

The trade deficit during April-June 2024 widened to USD 62.26 billion compared to USD 56.16 billion in the same period last year.

Briefing media on the data, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said going by the current trend, the country's total exports of goods and services may cross USD 800 billion this fiscal.

During the first quarter of 2024-25, the exports of goods and services stood at about USD 200 billion, he added.

"If the current trend continues, we will certainly cross USD 800 billion this fiscal," Barthwal said, adding the major drivers of export growth are engineering, electronics, pharmaceuticals, coffee and chemicals. He added that the ministry is focussing on six major sectors (engineering, textiles and



apparel, electronics, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and plastics, and agriculture) and 20 countries to boost exports.

Oil imports rose by 19.62 per cent to USD 15 billion in June. It was up by 23 per cent at USD 51.5 billion during April-June 2024-25.

However, gold imports dipped by 38.66 per cent to USD 3 billion in June this year and 1.91 per cent during the first quarter of this fiscal at USD 9.51 billion.

Silver imports jumped to USD 210.7 million in June from USD 44.14 million in June 2023. Similarly, during April-June, these imports more than doubled to USD 482.78 million from USD 184.18 million in April-June 2023-24.

According to the data, the estimated value of services exported in June is USD 30.27 billion compared to USD 27.79 billion in June 2023. Imports of services are projected to have increased to USD 17.29 billion during the month from USD 15.61 billion in June 2023.

Further, the data showed that India's shipment to the major export destinations - the US, UAE,

Malaysia, Bangladesh, Tanzania, the Netherlands, and Singapore recorded healthy growth in June.

When asked about container shortages being faced by exporters, Additional Secretary in the ministry Anant Swarup said the department is holding regular meetings with exporters and they have so far not reported any shortages. "Even the Ministry of Shipping has confirmed that there is no shortage of containers being reported at any of the ports," Swarup said.

Talking about non-trade barriers (NTBs), Barthwal said the department has constituted a task force to look into the issues and help exporters. "We are also working on a digital platform, whereby it will become easier for our exporters to tell us which are the NTBs they are facing so that we can take up those with our missions abroad," Barthwal said.

On various occasions, Indian export sample tested in other countries gets rejected. It has heavy cost implications for Indian exporters, as they have to either destroy that consignment or bring it back.

"So, this portal will help our exporters in meeting the non-tariff measures, which are imposed by different countries so that they (domestic exporters) can produce according to those jurisdictions," he added. India's many food and agriculture products face problems due to higher pesticide levels, presence of pests and contaminations due to foot and mouth disease.

Key Indian export items that routinely face high barriers include chillies, tea, basmati rice, milk, poultry, bovine meat, fish, chemical products to the EU; sesame seed, black tiger shrimps, medicines, apparel to Japan; food, meat, fish, dairy, industrial products to China; shrimps to the US; and bovine meat to South Korea. Most non-tariff measures (NTMs) are domestic rules created by countries with an aim to protect human, animal or plant health and the environment. NTM may be technical measures like regulations, standards, testing, certification, pre-shipment inspection or non-technical measures like quotas, import licensing, subsidies, and government procurement restrictions.

When NTMs become arbitrary, beyond scientific justification, they create hurdles for trade and are called NTBs (non-tariff barriers).

Commenting on the trade data, FIEO President Ashwani Kumar said the third consecutive increase in merchandise exports shows the resilience of the sector. Kumar said if there were no logistics disruptions like lack of container availability, shipping space, irregular shipping schedule and ships skipping Indian ports, exports would have recorded close to double-digit growth in June 2024. (PTI)

## Imports from Bangladesh aggravate jute sector crisis: Stakeholders

**KOLKATA, July 15:** A body of jute suppliers have written to Union Minister Giriraj Singh, alleging that raw material imports from Bangladesh, either directly by mills or through third parties, have adversely impacted the industry and farmers.

In a letter to the textile minister, the Jute Balers' Association has raised concerns over the "unregulated import of raw jute" from the neighbouring country and "low orders" for mills have led to a severe payment crisis for domestic raw jute suppliers.

Indian Jute Mills Association has also raised concerns over the issue and sought intervention from the central and state governments to tide over the crisis.

A meeting between the industry stakeholders and the ministry is expected later on Monday, an official said. The balers' association, which has been serving the sector for over 115 years, outlined the critical issues threatening the industry's survival.

"Despite a bumper crop year in 2023-24, where domestic supply was sufficient, mills have continued to import large quantities of raw jute from Bangladesh. In June 2024 alone, 73,000 bales, or 22 per cent of the total 3,34,000 bales, were imported," Jute Balers' Association secretary Pulak Jha said in the letter. "There is an opening stock of 3 million bales of raw jute for the jute season as of July 1, 2024, and the new crop is also

around the corner. These factors caused prices to plummet below the minimum support price (MSP)," Jute Balers' Association senior functionary Om Prakash Soni told PTI. Prices of the golden fibre fell below ₹ 5,000 per quintal, while the minimum support price (MSP) is ₹ 5,335 per quintal for the 2024-25 season, he said.

There has been a bar on the use of imported jute in making bags for food grain packaging but the "influx of cheaper and low-grade jute from Bangladesh has exacerbated the crisis", an industry stakeholder said. "With mills facing liquidity issues, payments to suppliers are getting delayed, hindering their ability to purchase fresh jute from farmers." (PTI)

## WPI inflation surges to 16-month high of 3.36 pc in June on costlier vegetables

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** Wholesale inflation in the country surged to a 16-month high of 3.36 per cent in June on account of rise in prices of food articles, especially vegetables and manufactured items.

This was the fourth consecutive month when inflation witnessed an upward journey.

The wholesale price index (WPI) based inflation was 2.61 per cent in May. It was (-) 4.18 per cent in June 2023.

Wholesale inflation had touched a high of 3.85 per cent in February 2023.

"Positive rate of inflation in

June, 2024 is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, manufacture of food products, crude petroleum & natural gas, mineral oils, other manufacturing etc.," the Ministry of Commerce & Industry said in a statement on Monday.

As per the data, inflation in food articles rose 10.87 per cent in June, as against 9.82 per cent in May.

Inflation in vegetables was 38.76 per cent during June, up from 32.42 per cent in May.

Onion inflation was at 93.35 per cent, while potato was 66.37 per cent in the month under review.

Pulses inflation rose 21.64 per cent in June.

During the month, inflation in other food items like fruits stood at 10.14 per cent, cereals at 9.27 per cent, and milk at 3.37 per cent.

The upmove in the WPI inflation in June 2024 was broad-based, driven by all the major segments except fuel and power, ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said.

Looking ahead, she said, the headline WPI inflation is expected to dip to about 2 per cent in July 2024, driven by a favourable base, as well as some cooling in global commodity prices. (PTI)

## Mcap of BSE-listed firms hit new all-time high of ₹ 455 lakh crore

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms hit a new all-time high of ₹ 455 lakh crore on Monday, helped by a record-breaking rally in equities.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 145.52 points or 0.18 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 80,664.86. During the day, it rallied 343.2 points or 0.42 per cent to 80,862.54.

Thanks to the bull run in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms surged to a lifetime high of ₹ 4,55,06,56,48 crore (USD 5.45 trillion).

In two days of market rally, investors' wealth jumped ₹ 3.85 lakh crore.

"The Indian market continues to experience optimism driven by positive expectations from the upcoming Union Budget, robust FII inflows, and better-than-expected results from the IT sector. Additionally, the initial results from PSU banks have triggered a strong rally in the PSU index," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Among Sensex components, State Bank of India, NTPC, Ultra-Tech Cement, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Tata Motors, Maruti and ITC were the biggest winners.

On the other hand, Asian Paints, Tata Steel, Axis Bank, JSW Steel, Tech Mahindra and Tata Consultancy Services were among the laggards. (PTI)

## As tomato prices soar over ₹ 80/kg, ICAR's hybrids offer hope for mkt stability

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** As tomato prices across India touch a staggering ₹ 80/kg, two hybrid varieties developed by a Bengaluru-based institute under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research could potentially safeguard against future crises, a top official said on Monday.

However, their success hinges on wider adoption and increased cultivation area.

The hybrid tomato varieties, Arka Rakshak and Arka Abedh, developed by the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), boast an impressive shelf life of up to three weeks, significantly longer than conventional 7-10 days. This characteristic could prove crucial in stabilising supply chains disrupted by erratic weather patterns, particularly the heavy rainfall that has plagued tomato-growing regions this season.

"We have developed a tomato variety that has a longer shelf life of three weeks. We need to expand the area under these varieties," Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Director General



Himanshu Pathak told reporters on the sidelines of the institute's 96th Foundation and Technology Day celebrations.

Pathak emphasised that climatic aberrations frequently affect the production of staple vegetables like tomato, potato, and onion. In response, ICAR's research has prioritised increasing crop shelf life to mitigate supply fluctuations and subsequent price volatility.

Arka Rakshak, India's first triple disease-resistant tomato F1 hybrid

developed in 2012, is currently cultivated in 7,000 hectares, according to IIHR senior scientist Chandrashekar C. The hybrid technology has been licensed to 11 companies, which are estimated to have made a turnover of ₹ 3,600 crores from seed sales during 2012-22. Arka Abedh, released three years ago, offers an even longer shelf life of three weeks and is suitable for distant markets.

Both varieties offer resistance to multiple diseases, including

Tomato Leaf Curl Virus, Bacterial Wilt, and Early Blight.

While these hybrid varieties show promise, their success in stabilising market prices will largely depend on government initiatives to promote wider adoption among farmers. IIHR has recently partnered with the National Seed Corporation to increase seed sales and coverage. As tomato cultivation spans 8-10 lakh hectares in India, the exact data on the coverage of these two varieties remains unclear, making it challenging to formulate future expansion plans.

With consumers grappling with high vegetable prices, the onus now lies on the government to leverage this agricultural innovation for public benefit. As per the government data, retail tomato prices are ruling high in the range of ₹ 80-83/kg in Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata on Monday. A similar trend was seen in many consuming centres. The development of these long-shelf-life tomatoes underscores the potential of agricultural research in addressing market volatility. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## People preferring Foreigners

cannot drop any case. We are simply advising that before initiating a case, individuals should apply through the CAA portal. Even if a case is filed, there won't be any outcome because these people are eligible for citizenship."

The CM said he will request the Advocate General to flag the issue of CAA so that FTs can give time to people whose cases are going on to apply for citizenship under the newly implemented law. "I can't give a direction to court to pause while deciding citizenship cases. The FT judges themselves have to decide as they know the latest situation," he added.

However, Sarma acknowledged that a letter was issued in the first week of July by the Home Department to Assam Police's border wing. The letter instructed them not to refer cases of people from Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi, Jain, and Christian communities who entered India before December 31, 2014, directly to the FTs.

Issued by Home and Political secretary Parth Pratim Majumdar to the Special director general of police (Border), the letter directed that such people should instead be advised to apply through the citizenship portal for their applications to be considered by the Indian government. "It was just a statutory order. There is nothing objectionable in that and it was as per law," Sarma added.

Asked about such few number of applications in CAA, Sarma said the opposition myth that 15-20 lakh Bangladeshis will get citizenship in Assam has been busted. "In the anti-CAA movement, five Assamese youths lost their lives. So they made the sacrifice to prevent only these eight people! This abysmally low number of eight applications, of which only two turned up for interview, is a bit surprising for us also," he added. To a query if fear psychosis of being tagged as 'Bangladeshi-turned-Indian citizen' is preventing Hindu-Bengalis from applying through CAA, Sarma said no such factor is working in the Barak valley but it is true to a certain extent in the Brahmaputra valley. Sarma said anyone who came to Assam in 2015 or later will be deported back to their country of origin.

According to the Assam Accord, names of all foreigners coming to the state on or after March 25, 1971 would be detected and deleted from electoral rolls and steps would be taken to deport them. The final NRC was released on August 31, 2019 by excluding 19,06,657 persons. A total of 3,11,21,004 names were included out of 3,30,27,661 applicants. On people facing issues due to blocking of Aadhaar cards, Sarma said around nine lakh cards were blocked as people had applied during update work of the NRC. "At that time, the government had transformed the Aadhaar centres to NRC centres. These people had gone there to get Aadhaar, but it was blocked due to a clash of timing only. We are examining the list now," he added. The CM said that after the assessment, the state government will actively take up the issue with the Centre. (PTI)

## SC issues notice on NTA's

made in the probe into alleged irregularities in the conduct of the exam. In an additional affidavit filed in the apex court on July 10, the Centre had said data analytics of the results of NEET-UG 2024 was conducted by IIT Madras which found there was neither any indication of "mass malpractice" nor a localised set of candidates benefiting from it and scoring abnormally high marks.

The government's assertion assumed significance in view of the observations made by the top court on July 8 that it may order a re-test if there were large-scale malpractices in holding the exam on May 5.

The Centre's affidavit had said experts from IIT Madras have found that the marks distribution follows the bell-shaped curve that is witnessed in any large-scale examination indicating no abnormality. A bell curve describes the shape of data conforming to a normal distribution. The NTA had also filed a separate additional affidavit on the similar lines and said it has carried out an analysis of distribution of marks at the national, state and city level. While hearing the pleas on July 8, the top court had observed that the sanctity of the examination has been "breached".

Saying that a re-test may be ordered if the entire process was affected, the bench had sought details from the NTA and the CBI, including the timing and manner of the alleged paper leak, besides the number of wrongdoers to understand the extent of irregularities claimed by the petitioners. Over 23.33 lakh students had taken the test on May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including in 14 cities overseas. The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) is conducted by the NTA for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions across the country. (PTI)

## Assam improves position

social, economic and environmental parameters, while Bihar has been adjudged as the worst performer. According to the report, India's overall Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) score increased to 71 in 2023-24, compared to 66 in 2020-21, supported by significant progress on eliminating poverty, providing decent work, economic growth, climate action and life on land. (PTI)

## Assam flood situation

Darrang, Dhemaji, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Golaghat, Jorhat, Kamrup, Kamrup Metropolitan, Karimganj, Majuli, Morigaon, Nagaon, Nalbari and Sivasagar districts. Cachar is the worst hit with nearly 1.16 lakh people suffering, followed by Dhubri with almost 81,500 lakh people and Nagaon with more than 76,000 people reeling under flood waters, it added. "Flood water is receding from almost all inundated areas of the state. As the rain has stopped, the condition is likely to improve further," a senior official of ASDMA said. The administration has been operating 172 relief camps and relief distribution centres across 13 districts, taking care of 58,816 displaced people at present. The authority has distributed 594.48 quintals of rice, 110.95 quintals of dal, 28.82 quintals of salt and 2,580.04 litres of mustard oil among the flood victims of the state during the last 24 hours.

At present, 1,342 villages are under water and 25,367.61 hectares of crop areas have been damaged across Assam, the ASDMA said. Embankments, roads, bridges and other infrastructure have been damaged by flood waters in Dhemaji, Golaghat, Nagaon, Tamulpur, Cachar, Chirang, Darrang, Dhubri, Goalpara and Karimganj.

At present, the mighty Brahmaputra is flowing above the danger marks at Nimatighat, Tezpur and Dhubri. Its tributaries Burhidighat in Chenamuri and Disang at Nanglamuraghat are flowing above the danger levels. On account of widespread flooding, over 2,83,700 domestic animals and poultry are affected across the state. (PTI)

## CM Himanta hands over

Kishan, PHE etc minister Jayanta Mallabarua, Power etc minister Nandita Gorlosa, secretary education Narayan Konwar and a host of the other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

## K P Sharma Oli sworn

a wreath at Lainchaur-based Sahid Smarak. He then visited the UML's central office in Chyasaal to pay homage to three veteran Communist leaders. The Kathmandu Post reported.

Later, as he assumed office in Singha Durbar, the officials at the Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers welcomed him.

However, within hours of the swearing-in, three advocates -- Deepak Adhikari, Khagendra Prasad Chapagain and Shailendra Kumar Gupta -- filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court of Nepal challenging Oli's appointment arguing that it was unconstitutional and sought its annulment. The advocates argued that the president should call for the formation of a new government under Article 76 (3) if a government formed as per Article 76 (2) fails the floor test in the House of Representatives.

The apex court has set July 21 as the date for a preliminary hearing in the case.

Earlier on Sunday, President Paudel had appointed Oli as the new Prime Minister under Article 76-2 of the Constitution of Nepal, according to a notice issued by the President's Office.

On Friday night, Oli had staked his claim to become the next Prime Minister with the backing of NC President Deuba and submitted the signatures of 165 House of Representatives (HoR) members -- 77 from his Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) party and 88 from the Nepali Congress (NC). Oli will now need to secure a vote of confidence from Parliament within 30 days of appointment, which he is likely to secure easily as the minimum number to form a government in the 275-strong HoR is just 138.

Prachanda faced the vote of confidence as earlier last week. Oli's party withdrew its support to that coalition and inked a new seven-point deal with Deuba to form a new coalition government. According to the July 1 deal between NC and CPN-UML, the two parties will lead the government on a rotational basis until the next general elections scheduled for 2027.

Nepal has faced frequent political turmoil as the country has seen 14 governments in the past 16 years after the Republican system was introduced. The priority for the new Oli government, just like it was for its predecessors, will be to breathe some life into a stagnant economy. The Kathmandu Post newspaper said in an editorial.

"A message of political stability given through a two-thirds majority will help. Yet both in and outside the country, there is a justified suspicion over the longevity of this 'unnatural' Congress-Communist coalition," it said. (PTI)

## Jitendra Singh to hold

Singh will also hold a series of meetings with leaders and office-bearers of the party's different wings and formations on Tuesday, the spokesperson said. On Wednesday, the state in-charge will meet top functionaries of the party before returning to New Delhi in the evening, he added. (PTI)

## Fight against three evils

adopted at the Astana Summit, Jaishankar said, "Drug trafficking is another issue that we need to combat together, and is very closely related to two other issues in the region -- terrorism and stability in Afghanistan." "There is a consensus on the establishment of an Anti-Drug Centre in Dushanbe. This is a welcome move and is much needed. The Anti-Drug Centre together with the proposed Universal Centre will be an effective weapon in combating drug trafficking," Jaishankar added.

The Astana Declaration issued after the July 4 summit also said, "The Member States are unanimous in recognising the need to improve SCO mechanisms to counter security challenges and threats and expand specialised cooperation in the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism, as well as drug trafficking, arms smuggling and other types of transnational organised crime."

"Today, after decades of taking measures against terrorism in global forums, including through the UN Security Council, terrorism continues to be a threat to the region. The UN-designated terror outfits are still functioning in the region," he said, referring to wanted Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists like Hafiz Saeed receiving state support. The SCO was founded at a summit in Shanghai in 2001 by the presidents of Russia, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. India and Pakistan became its permanent members in 2017. (PTI)

## BJP's tally falls below

The Election Commission (EC) is yet to announce the date for elections to fill the 11 vacancies effected by the resignation of as many members. Ten of them were elected to Lok Sabha while one MP, K Keshava Rao of the BRS, quit after joining the Congress.

Out of the total 19 vacancies in the 245-member Rajya Sabha, four are from Jammu and Kashmir where there is no assembly currently after the erstwhile state was made a Union Territory in 2019. (PTI)



## Minister inaugurates ₹1.16 crore JJM project, assures flood-affected communities of govt support

# Union minister Jual Oram visits Sivasagar



**HT Correspondent**

**SIVASAGAR, July 15:** Union minister for Tribal Affairs Jual Oram visited the flood-hit areas of Sivasagar district on Monday with Guardian minister Ranaj Pegu and inaugurated a ₹1.16 crore JJM project in Demow Ahom Pathar. The minister visited Katori, Bhekuri Chapor, and Bamrajabari in Panidihing, met with tribal people from different groups, and assured them of all possible help from the government to overcome the post-flood challenges they face. The minister also met with people living near the rivers Deroi, Desang, Dikhow, Dihing, and the Brahmaputra during his visit, and exchanged interactions with the people of Gohainbari TE. Union minister Oram was accompanied by Thowra MLA Sushanta Borgohain and district commissioner Aditya Vikram Yadav.

The minister later met with district officials at Siu-Ka-Pha Bhawan and took

stock of the progress made in implementing the PM flagship schemes and tribal affairs-related works in the district. In the morning, the minister offered prayers at the historic Sivadol.

It is to be mentioned here that four persons died in the recent flood in the district, affecting nearly 80,000 people across 159 villages in four revenue circles: Sivasagar, Demow, Nazira, and Anguri. Additionally, 1800 hectares of crops were destroyed. The deceased were identified as Abhijit Changmai (45) of Barpatra Gohain Gaon, Gita Lakhuwa (35) of Rajmai, Sukumari Sonar (13) of Bheoguri Dubi, and Parameswar Sahini (30) of Dhaibari. The Sivasagar district administration provided shelter to 7,678 people in 27 relief camps. The flood affected 114,503 animals in the district and damaged 40 Anganwadi Centres, 59 school buildings, 26 PWSS, 2 health centres, 2 embankments, 13 roads, 1 bridge, and countless private houses.

## Dhemaji Railway Station to undergo major redevelopment

₹6.34 crores allocated for modern amenities & infrastructure enhancements



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 15:** In a bid to enhance rail facilities in north-east and Assam, ₹10,369 crores have been allocated in the interim Budget 2024-25 for railway infrastructure projects. Under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS), 60 stations in the north-east are being redeveloped with world-class modern amenities and facilities. Among the selected railway stations, Dhemaji Railway Station will receive a significant facelift under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme at a cost of ₹6.34 crores. The revamping of this station will provide modern, state-of-the-art amenities to railway users in the nearby areas.

Dhemaji Railway Station is an important station that serves Dhemaji town and falls under the Tinsukia division of NFR. Significant physical progress has been achieved in the various ongoing and proposed redevelopment works at the station. Moreover, plans for 12m wide FOBs with retail kiosks and other passenger amenities are underway. New FOBs with lifts will be installed to ensure efficient connectivity between platforms and station areas,

with special consideration for accessibility by divyangjan. Locations for FOBs have been finalised, and a separate master plan is being prepared.

New toilet blocks will be constructed separately for male and female passengers, alongside other amenities. Plans for platform layout, signage, drainage, cable routes, etc., are also in progress. The station will include provisions for rainwater harvesting, sewage treatment plants, electric substations, EI buildings, and solar plants. Proper lighting and signage will ensure the station premises are safe and easily accessible for all passengers. Improved parking facilities and beautification of the circulating area are also planned. A separate entry-exit path will be developed to enhance passenger accessibility.

The upgrade of this station will create new opportunities for employment and business, and enhance travel convenience for passengers. The upgraded station will serve as a hub for socio-economic activities in the vicinity, promoting connectivity and economic growth.

## Forester suspended for mishandling primate carcass

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, July 15:** Pankaj Hazarika, a forester I under Mariani range of Jorhat forest division, has been suspended by the Forest Department authorities after a video clip showing him dragging the carcass of a primate while driving a motorbike went viral on Sunday.

Range officer of Mariani, Animesh Kalita, said that Hazarika was found dragging the carcass of a rhesus macaque monkey that was discovered on the Dhodar Ali beside the famous Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary. Kalita stated that the act of dragging the animal to a nearby camp was improper on his part, so action was taken.

The Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary is renowned for the hoolock gibbon, the only ape found in the country.

## Sankari sangeet workshop concludes in Morigaon

**HT Correspondent**

**MORIGAON, July 15:** A 15-day summer workshop initiated by Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya, Morigaon, commenced on July 1, 2024, concluded successfully on Monday. The workshop aimed to introduce the timeless creations of the saint Srimanta Sankaradeva to the younger generation through dance, musical instruments, and theatre.

Organised by the Cultural Affairs Department, government of Assam, in collaboration with Jagiroad Cultural Center, Morigaon, the Sankari Sangeet Workshop saw participation from 95 students in dance, 12 in bayan, 5 in borgeet, and 35 in ankiya natak.

The workshop featured six renowned Sankari musicians: Prasanna Kumar Medhi, Tapas Bardoloi, Utpala Hokai, Kumkum Parashar Deka, and Jagriti Bardoloi. Mrin Deka led the workshop, and the closing ceremony took place at Jagiroad Cultural Center.

Angshuman Dutta, district cultural officer, Morigaon, inaugurated the event, which was chaired by Gyanmohan Deka, president of Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya. The ceremony was attended by officials including Jitram Deuri, vice president of Srimanta Sankaradev Sangha, Morigaon district, Diganta Mahanta, secretary, Ajay Kumar Deoraja, president of Sanskriti Sakha, and Ramajit Bardoloi, vice president.

The workshop concluded with the successful staging of the Sankari drama 'Parijat Haran' directed by Prasanna Kumar Medhi, with co-direction from Tapas Bardoloi and Utpala Hokai. Parents and guardians supported the event, which contributed significantly to the mental and physical development of the students.

## AGS Biswanath holds inaugural executive meeting

**HT Correspondent**

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, July 15:** The first extended executive meeting of the newly formed district committee of Assam Gorkha Sammelan (AGS) in Biswanath district was convened at the AGS office premises under the chairmanship of Hari Prasad Sarma. The meeting commenced with the lighting of earthen lamps in front of the portrait of Adi Kabi Bhanu Bhakta Acharya by the dignitaries. Dr Khemraj Nepal, a distinguished writer and lexicographer, graced the occasion as the keynote speaker, highlighting the life and literary contributions of Adi Kabi Bhanu Bhakta Acharya.

## Drug peddler apprehended in Itakhola

**HT Correspondent**

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, July 15:** Acting on a tip-off, a team of Biswanath Police led by Amit Kumar Hojai, APS, additional SP (Crime), Shyamal Jyoti Saikia, officer-in-charge of Sootea PS, Abhijit Bharali, IC Itakhola Outpost, apprehended Khairul Islam (21) from Itakhola Tengabasti area, originally from Chariduar PS. The police recovered 48 suspected heroin vials totaling 64 grams from his possession on Sunday night around 9:30 pm.

According to Shyamal Jyoti Saikia, officer-in-charge of Sootea PS, the police received confidential information about the drug peddler. The team laid in wait at Tengabasti for the peddler to arrive in a car with registration number AS 23 D 0114. Upon his arrival, the police apprehended him, seized the drugs, and impounded his vehicle. Further investigation is ongoing. The Khanamuk area and Itakhola have emerged as hotspots for drug peddling. While police have apprehended several drug peddlers, the trade continues to thrive. Concerned citizens have urged the police and civil administration to address the issue seriously.



## AASU protests against waterlogging on NH-37 in Dibrugarh



**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, July 15:** The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) staged a protest on Monday along National Highway-37 in Banipur, Dibrugarh district, condemning the persistent waterlogging issues plaguing the area.

For over 25 days, the stretch of NH-37 passing through Banipur has remained submerged, forcing residents to navigate knee-deep waters.

AASU members voiced strong

criticism against the BJP government and the newly formed Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation (DMC) for their failure to address the longstanding waterlogging problem.

"The NH-37 has been inundated for the past 25 days, causing immense hardship to the local residents. This highway connects Tinsukia and Arunachal Pradesh, yet the district administration has failed miserably to drain the water," lamented an AASU member.

He continued, "Due to the incompetence of the concerned departments, the people of Dibrugarh are suffering. Instead of resolving the issue, these departments have been blaming each other, exacerbating the problem. This year's waterlogging situation has set a new record."

"We have issued warnings to the DMC and other concerned authorities to take immediate action. If they fail to resolve the issue within the given timeframe, we will escalate our protests," declared the AASU member.

Continuing rainfall over five hours recently exacerbated waterlogging across Dibrugarh city, further aggravating the plight of residents during the monsoon season. Earlier, members of the Chitra Mukti Sangram Samiti (CMSS) had also protested on NH-37 in Chabua town, Dibrugarh, using fishing nets as a symbolic gesture against the ongoing waterlogging issues.

## Inter-school football tournament concludes

**HT Correspondent**

**MORIGAON, July 15:** A three-day-long Morigaon district inter-school football tournament, under the aegis of the Morigaon District Sports Office, commenced on July 11, 2024, and concluded on Sunday evening at the Morigaon School field. In the Under-15 category (Boys), Rangadoria High

School defeated Bangfou Belonguri High School by 1-0 and qualified to play in the Pili Choudhary Inter-District Football Tournament. In the Under-17 category (Boys), Rangadoria High School qualified for the Inter-District Deukan Football Tournament by defeating Charabahi High School by 3-0. Additionally, in the Under-17

category (Girls), Ouguri High School defeated Kushtoli Barangani High School by 1-0 and qualified to play in the Inter-District Nipendra Narayan Football Tournament, which will be held from July 25, 2024. This information was stated in a press release by Simanta Basia, senior physical instructor, DSO, Morigaon.

## District authorities set ambitious target of planting 15 lakh saplings

# Sonitpur prepares for Amrit Brikhya Andolan 2024

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, July 15:** A preparatory meeting to discuss and plan for the upcoming Amrit Brikhya Andolan 2024 in respect of Sonitpur district was held on Monday under the chairmanship of district commissioner Deba Kumar Mishra at the Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office, Sonitpur, Tezpur.

Opening the meeting, the district commissioner welcomed all stakeholders to the meeting and informed the gathering that the time frame for this year's Amrit Brikhya Andolan is from August 1 to August 15, 2024. He added that the district target for this year's Amrit Brikhya Andolan is the planting of 15 lakh saplings, which is three times last year's target. Addressing the gathering, the divisional forest officer of Western Assam Wildlife Division, Pi-



raisoodan B, mentioned the stellar performance of Sonitpur in last year's event and urged everyone to maintain the momentum. He added that the primary objective of the meeting was to strategise the distribution and collection of the saplings for the upcoming event. The district commissioner, in his closing remarks, directed all concerned depart-

ments to submit a plan for distribution and collection points of saplings within 5 days. Chief executive officer of Zilla Parishad, Karabi Saikia Karan, additional district commissioner, Twahir Alam, divisional forest officer (Territorial), Nripen Kalita, and other officials of all concerned departments were present at the meeting.

## Death of worker in Sootea

**HT Correspondent**

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, July 15:** Arun Karmakar, a daily wage earner, tragically passed away while uprooting paddy seedlings in a field at Nalbari village in the eastern part of Sootea on Monday. According to reports, Arun, hired by a resident of Nalbari village for the task, collapsed due to heat exhaustion amidst the scorching heat.

## Tensions flare in Margherita after brutal attack



**HT Correspondent**

**MARGHERITA, July 15:** Tension prevailed at Mission Tinali under Margherita Police Station in Tinsukia district on Monday afternoon when two youths brutally at-

tacked another youth over a land dispute and used communal slurs.

On Monday, noted businessman of Margherita Arup Paul's son, Abhishek Paul, went to Mission Tinali, Margherita, where two

youths, identified as Sushengfha Buragohain, son of Deep Buragohain, and Shivam Deka Phukan, son of Jitu Deka Phukan, both residents of Margherita, brutally beat Abhishek Paul without any provocation and fled the scene using communal slurs.

Abhishek Paul told media persons in Margherita that he and his friend Subrata Debnath had gone to Changlang Tinali, Margherita, to inspect a plot where he planned to open a hospital. In the meantime, the two youths, Sushengfha Buragohain and Shivam Deka Phukan, brutally attacked him and fled the scene.

An FIR has been lodged at Margherita Police Station by Abhishek Paul. Attempts to contact the youths who attacked him were unsuccessful at the time of filing this report.

It may be mentioned that Sushengfha Buragohain is the son of Deep Buragohain, proprietor of Hotel Blue Moon, located at Chariali, Margherita.

No.FDW.114/FOREST/MMDRRF/2024/802

Tender No. BTC/Forest/Kokrajhar/01/2024

Dated, Kokrajhar the 05<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

### PRESS NOTICE

The Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests cum CHD, BTC, Kokrajhar, invites bids for the following works under MMDRRF Fund for the year 2024-25 from the eligible contractors of Class-I (A, B, C) & Class-II category of PWD /WR, Assam and BTC, Kokrajhar to be executed under Chirang Forest Division, Kajalgaon, BTC, Assam.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (In Rs.)	Last date of bid submission	EMD (in Rs.)	Cost of Bid Document (In Rs.)
1	Earth filling and sand gravelling of patrolling road connection No. 3 Samodwisa to Dholpani RF Boundary under Chirang Forest Division (Part-I)	15,00,000.00	25-07-2024	2% for General & 1% for Reserved category	0.03% of Estimate Cost
2	Earth filling and sand gravelling of patrolling road connection No. 3 Samodwisa to Dholpani RF Boundary under Chirang Forest Division (Part-II)	15,27,000.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
3	Earth filling and sand gravelling of patrolling road connection No. 3 Samodwisa to Dholpani RF Boundary under Chirang Forest Division (Part-III)	15,40,000.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
4	Earth filling and sand gravelling at Runikhata Forest range Compound for the year 2024-25.	15,00,000.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
5	Earth filling and sand gravelling of patrolling road from Kusundwisa Boundary to Dholpani RF under Chirang Forest Division (Part-II)	19,10,000.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
6	Earth filling and sand gravelling of patrolling road from Kusundwisa Boundary to Dholpani RF under Chirang Forest Division (Part-I)	19,00,000.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
7	Earth filling and sand gravelling of patrolling road from Kusundwisa Boundary to Dholpani RF under Chirang Forest Division (Part-III)	19,30,000.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
8	Const. of solar operated drinking water facility at Deosri Camp under Runikhata Range of Chirang Forest Division, Kajalgaon	19,87,665.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
9	Const. of solar operated drinking water facility at Runikhata under Runikhata Range of Chirang Forest Division, Kajalgaon	19,87,665.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
10	Installation of solar operated deep tube well at No. 1 Khusundwisa FRA village.	15,50,000.00	-do-	-do-	-do-

The details may be seen in the Office of the undersigned during Office hours.

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/133

Sd/- Suman Mohapatra (IFS),  
Addl. PCCF cum CHD, BTC, Kokrajhar



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*He who is brave is free.*  
-Lucius Annaeus Seneca

## SC ruling and AIMPLB's stand

A significant political confrontation is brewing over the Supreme Court's ruling on maintenance for divorced Muslim women. The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has vowed to challenge the verdict, arguing that the Supreme Court has overstepped its bounds in matters of Muslim marriage and divorce. The AIMPLB's steadfastness in defending Islamic personal laws contrasts sharply with other religious communities, which typically do not confront the judiciary so openly. The Supreme Court's decision, delivered by Justices BV Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih, has thus stirred significant controversy within the Muslim community. The Supreme Court's authority is now under scrutiny. The response of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's NDA government to this defiance will be closely monitored. The AIMPLB plans to seek a review of the decision by a larger bench of the Supreme Court, banking on Chief Justice DY Chandrachud to uphold Sharia law. The issue of maintenance for divorced Muslim women is particularly sensitive, given Sharia's allowance for men to have up to four wives, which can result in multiple ex-wives potentially seeking maintenance. The financial implications for Muslim men are a point of contention. The AIMPLB argues that Sharia law, which it staunchly defends, anticipated such situations and provides protections for Muslim men. The organization views itself as the guardian of Sharia and is committed to maintaining its integrity against what it perceives as majoritarian pressures.

Historically, the Congress party has supported the status quo on this issue, as seen in the aftermath of the Shah Bano case when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi used his parliamentary majority to overturn a Supreme Court ruling. Now, Muslim men look to Rahul Gandhi for similar support, despite the BJP's recent efforts to appeal to Muslim women by abolishing triple talaq. The AIMPLB's decision to challenge the Supreme Court's ruling on Section 125 of the CrPC underscores the deep divide within the Muslim community. Many Muslim women recognize the injustices they face but are often reluctant to speak out against Sharia and male dominance. The BJP, under Prime Minister Modi, has championed the cause of Muslim women, but this has not translated into electoral support from the community. Instead, there is growing discontent within the NDA over perceived Muslim appeasement. This conflict has broader political ramifications. Any concession to the AIMPLB's demands could be used to fuel Hindu-Muslim polarization, particularly in states facing upcoming elections. This marks a significant escalation, with the AIMPLB openly challenging the Supreme Court and asserting the primacy of the Quran over the Indian Constitution.

The Supreme Court had asserted that maintenance under Section 125 of the CrPC is religion-neutral and applies to all married women, regardless of their faith. The AIMPLB's rejection of this principle sets the stage for a major political and judicial battle. The Supreme Court's order on maintenance for divorced Muslim women has sparked a significant political and legal confrontation. The AIMPLB's determination to uphold Sharia law against the Supreme Court's ruling highlights the complex interplay of religion, law, and politics in India. The outcome of this clash will have profound implications for the nation's legal and social fabric. The AIMPLB's challenge to the Supreme Court's ruling on maintenance for divorced Muslim women highlights a deep-seated conflict between religious laws and the Indian Constitution, with significant political and social implications.

# "A call to action for the new ENPO leadership"

As the newly elected team of the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) steps forward to assume their duties, the weight of a great and historic legacy rests upon their shoulders. They are tasked with carrying forward the democratic, peaceful movement for Frontier Nagaland Territory, a cause that demands not just leadership, but highest degree of honesty and integrity, courage, resilience, and an unshakable commitment to the principles that have guided their predecessors.

In moments of doubt, let the words of the ancient warrior Horatius resound in your hearts - The New ENPO Leadership 2024: "Then out spake brave Horatius, The Captain of the gate: 'To every man upon this earth, Death cometh soon or late. And how can man die better than facing fearful odds, For the ashes of his fathers, And the temples of his Gods.'"

These lines are a timeless reminder that the honest pursuit of justice often requires confronting daunting challenges. The path you all tread is not an easy one, but it is a noble one. The outgoing ENPO team has set a remarkable example through their tireless efforts, highest degree of honesty & integrity and steadfast dedication. They have laid a foundation of hope and progress, upon which you - The New ENPO leadership, now have the honour and responsibility to build. Their historic achievements are not just a reflection of their leadership, but a call to action for you all to take up the mantle and continue the journey with the same courage and determination.

The movement for Frontier Nagaland Territory is more than a political cause; it is a quest for truth and justice. It is about ensuring that the forgotten voices of Eastern Nagaland's invisible people are heard, their rights restored and respected, and their rightful place in the democratic fabric of India acknowledged. As you lead, remember that you are not

just advocating for a new territory in the state of Nagaland but safeguarding the future and rights of our forgotten, invisible Eastern Naga people.

Leadership in this context requires not just strategic thinking and political acumen but also a deep empathy for the people you represent. It means understanding their struggles, aspirations, and dreams. It means being their voice in forums where they have been historically marginalised. It means fighting for their rights and ensuring that their contributions to the larger narrative of Nagaland and India are recognised and celebrated. This is a task that demands both heart and mind, passion, and intellect.

Fear is a natural response to the unknown and the formidable challenges that lie ahead. Yet, it is in overcoming this fear that true leadership is forged. The obstacles you face may seem insurmountable at times, but it is in these moments of adversity that your resolve will be tested and strengthened. Draw inspiration from the bravery of Horatius, who stood firm in the face of overwhelming odds for a cause greater than himself. Your cause, too, is greater than any individual or any individualistic aspiration—it is all about the future of Eastern Nagaland and its people.

The path to achieving Frontier Nagaland Territory will require unity and solidarity among the people you lead. It is essential to foster a sense of trust, collective purpose and shared destiny. Engage with the people, listen to their concerns, and involve them in the movement. Their support and active participation are crucial for the success of this endeavour. Together, you can create a force that is unbreakable, a movement that is unstoppable.

Innovation and adaptability are key in navigating the complex political landscape. Be open to new ideas and approaches. Learn from the experienced advisors and stal-

warts and adapt their suggestions and strategies to fit your unique context. Embrace change and be willing to evolve as leaders. The ability to think creatively and act decisively will set you apart and propel the movement forward.

Transparency and integrity should be the bedrock of your leadership. The people of Eastern Nagaland place their trust in you, and it is imperative to honour that trust by being accountable and honest in all your actions.

Lead by example, and let your conduct be a reflection of the values and principles that the Eastern Naga people stand for. This will not only earn you respect but also inspire others to join and support the movement with genuine commitment.

The road ahead will be fraught with challenges, but each challenge is an opportunity to demonstrate your strength and resolve. Every obstacle overcome is a step closer to realising the dream of Frontier Nagaland Territory. Celebrate each victory, no matter how small, and use it as fuel to keep pushing forward. Remember that great movements are built on the accumulation of small, consistent efforts and the relentless, honest pursuit of a just cause.

Your predecessors have shown that it is possible to make significant strides through democratic process even in the face of adversity. They have proven that determination, coupled with strategic action, can yield remarkable results. Learn from their experiences, build on their successes, and continue the momentum they have created. Their journey is now a part of your history, and their legacy is a source of strength and inspiration for you.

As you embark on this journey, let the spirit of Horatius guide you. Embrace the courage to face fearful odds, the resolve to protect the ashes of your fathers, and the dedication

to uphold the temples of your Gods. Lead with passion, wisdom, and an unyielding commitment to the cause which has become a source of life for each and every eastern naga. The people of Eastern Nagaland look to you all with hope and expectation, and you all - The New ENPO leaders have the power to transform that hope into reality.

The movement for Frontier Nagaland Territory is not just a political struggle; it is a demonstration of the enduring spirit of a people who "refused" to be sold out, silenced and surrendered. It is a demand for Constitutional justice and a call for a new world.

As the newly elected team of ENPO, you have the honour and responsibility to lead this movement into a new era. You are the torchbearers of a legacy that spans decades, and your actions will shape the future of Eastern Nagaland.

In the face of adversity, let the words of Horatius be your rallying cry: "To every man upon this earth Death cometh soon or late. And how can man die better than facing fearful odds, For the ashes of his fathers, And the temples of his Gods." With these words in your heart, step forward with confidence and courage.

Spearhead the Frontier Nagaland Territory movement fearlessly, carry forward the great and historic legacy of the outgoing ENPO team without fear, and lead our people to a future where their voices are heard, their lost rights are restored and respected, and their rightful place in the democratic fabric of India is secured.

Let the light of your vision guide you through the darkest times, illuminating the path forward. Never lose sight of the dreams that drive this movement and the aspirations that bind our people together. In every challenge, see an opportunity to demonstrate the resilience and strength of our people. In every setback, find a lesson that brings you closer to your goals.

As you march forward, know that the spirit of

your ancestors marches with you, giving you the strength to face any obstacle.

Be the embodiment of hope and perseverance. Let your leadership inspire others to rise, to believe, and to act. As the stewards of this historic movement, your actions today will resonate through generations, leaving an indelible mark on the shining fabric of India's history. Stand tall, stand firm, and let the legacy of courage, honour, and justice be the beacon that guides your way.

Show our people that together, you can achieve the impossible. Let every step you take be filled with purpose and every decision be guided by a vision of a brighter future. In times of doubt, look to our people thrown on the margins whom you will serve and find strength in their sorrows, suffering and hopes. Build bridges where there are divides, foster understanding where there is discord, and create a future where every voice is heard and valued.

As you navigate the challenges ahead, remember that your strength lies not just in your leadership but in the collective power of our people. Each member of the Eastern Naga community is a vital part of this movement, and their contributions are essential to its success. Encourage them to take an active role, to speak out, and to work together towards the common goal of a glorious rise of just and prosperous Frontier Nagaland.

Take pride in the epic democratic, peaceful struggle of your predecessors and let it be the driving force behind your efforts. The epic stand, glorious victories and historic successes that ENPO registered in the past three (3) years is a source of inspiration and a reminder of what you are fighting for.

Protect it, celebrate it, and let it guide you in your mission to raise Frontier Nagaland Territory to restore the lost Constitutional rights of eastern naga people. With every step forward, hon-

our the legacy of those who came before you and pave the way for those who will follow.

Lead with integrity, compassion, and unyielding resolve. The path ahead may be challenging, but it is also filled with opportunities to make a lasting impact. Your actions will shape the future of Eastern Nagaland, and your leadership will inspire generations to come. Stand firm in your beliefs, stay true to your values, and let the spirit of Horatius be your guide as you lead our people towards a brighter, more just future.

The journey ahead is not just a political endeavour but a manifestation of the enduring spirit of Eastern Nagas that refuses to be sold out, silenced and surrendered. It is a call for justice and a demand for the restoration of lost Constitutional rights. As the newly elected team of ENPO, you have the honour and responsibility to lead this movement into a new era. You are the torchbearers of a legacy that spans generations, and your actions will shape the future of Eastern Nagaland.

With courage, determination, and the support of our Eastern Naga people, you have the power to make a difference. The movement for Frontier Nagaland represents the strength and character of Eastern Nagas and the enduring spirit of those who have come before you. As you embark on this journey, remember that you are not alone. The hopes and dreams of Eastern Nagas are with you, and together, we achieve greatness in the name of Justice, Equality, Liberty, and Fraternity and in the name of our Nation to redeem the sorrows and suffering of decades of forgotten, invisible Eastern Naga People.

SO GENTLEMEN, No Retreat. No Defeat. No Surrender. ENPO Warriors let us march forward to the rising Sun. FRONTIER NAGALAND TERRITORY is waiting for us. (The author is a Senior Faculty, Dept. Of Political Science, Tetso college and Director, Project Constitutional Justice)

## Erdogan just used the Syrian conflict for his personal political goals

By: Manish Rai

For quite some time now tensions have been rising in Syrian opposition-held areas over Turkish moves towards rapprochement with Syria. The recent violence against Syrians in Turkey acted as a catalyst and sparked retaliatory riots in opposition-held areas of north-western Syria.

Hundreds of Syrian demonstrators, some armed, took to the streets in protest. Some tore down Turkish flags, hurled rocks and targeted Turkish commercial trucks. In recent days, anger has boiled over and anti-Turkish sentiments are clearly visible on streets. Many people in Turkish-controlled zones in North Syria are demanding the withdrawal of Turkish forces, exacerbating the already volatile situation. At some places Turkish-trained Syrian opposition forces fired at Turkish armoured vehicles, prompting Turkey to deploy additional troops to the region to maintain control.

As a result of the confrontations many people were killed and injured in exchanges of fire with Turkish troops as per Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, a war monitor. Turkish President Erdogan recently said that "There is no reason not to establish relations with Syria". He also emphasized while speaking to reporters that Ankara has no plans or goals to interfere in Syria's internal affairs. What he said is in total contradiction to what Turks are doing in Syria since the start of Syrian conflict in 2011.

Many senior Syrian opposition figures now are of the view that Ankara has abandoned the Syrian revolution. Turkey has been one of the main backers of the Syrian opposition groups since the start of Syrian conflict and supported the overthrow of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. But, in reality Turks always used the Syrian conflict next door just to serve their own vested interests. The Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has

sold the Syrian opposition on many occasions since 2016, allowing the Assad regime to reoccupy many areas controlled by Turkish-backed groups.

Ankara's initial policy in the Syrian civil war was ostensibly in support of the moderate Syrian opposition. However, Turkey opened its borders to foreign fighters who travelled to Syria via Turkey in 2012 and 2013 and fuelled extremist groups, including ISIS. Emergence of ISIS irked the international community and in turn they reduced support for the Turkish backed rebels and shifted focus to helping groups fighting Islamic State, such as the Kurdish People's Defence Units (YPG). Turkey then readjusted its policy in Syria and pushed the mostly Arab Syrian rebels to fight the Kurds. Throughout the conflict the Free Syrian Army (FSA) has been the armed opposition group mostly aligned with and most dependent on Turkey.

After 2015, when Turkey shifted to its strategy of containing the PYD/YPG led Syrian Kurds by creating buffer zones in northern Syria. It used FSA groups as irregular forces in its hybrid military operations: Operation Euphrates Shield, 2016, Operation Olive Branch, 2018, and Operation Peace Spring, 2019. These groups were renamed as the Syrian National Army (SNA). Turkey supplies the SNA with training, salaries and weapons in exchange for its participation in Turkish military operations.

These groups were also comfortable with collaborating with Turkey and supporting Turkish operations against the Kurdish forces east of the Euphrates River. As in exchange they were getting Turkey's support in fortifying and defending parts of north-western Syria. Not only this, Turks also used these Syrian opposition groups in places like Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh as cannon fodder. Unfortunately, these groups didn't realise that they are playing in the hands of Turks and it's just a matter of time

that they will also be sold by Ankara. Turkey followed a divide-and-rule policy in Syria in which as per the requirements they fielded Syrians against each other. In sum, Turkey's vision of resurrecting the 'revolutionary' cause in the Syrian civil war for its own benefit, has been effectively executed through institutionalised control over the Syrian opposition groups.

Today Turkey is open to a new era of ties with the Syrian government of Bashar-Al-Assad only to serve its greater strategic interests. The Syrian opposition, meanwhile, appears to be merely a sideshow for Turkey. It is unlikely that the opposition will accept the settlement between Turkey and Syria without clear and specific commitments and a regional political cover for issues related to a potential political and constitutional change in Syria. But Turkey would not allow their higher-order interests to be governed by client groups like Syrian opposition. Ankara will try to contain key Syrian opposition armed factions and possibly eliminate those it suspects of opposing its new agenda.

At this point in time the most suitable option for opposition groups is to join forces with the Kurds in northern Syria and form a joint political and military command. This would give Arab and Kurdish opposition groups control over roughly 35-40 percent of Syrian territory and a sizable part of the total population.

Despite the animosities that developed between Arabs and Kurds during the previous war years it will be mutually beneficial to form such an alliance if the alternative is their political demise. The United States most probably will also consider supporting this alliance, especially given its efforts in the past to unite the Kurds and to include them in the Syrian Negotiating Committee, as well as its call for the revitalization of trade between Kurdish- and opposition-controlled regions. (IPA Service)

## The perennial floods of Assam: A decades-long crisis

By: Dipak Kurmi

For generations, students in Assam have penned essays about the annual floods that ravage their state. Shockingly, even after four decades, this natural disaster continues to wreak havoc on the lives of millions in Assam and its neighboring regions. The recurring floods not only destroy crops and property but also claim lives, leaving behind a trail of devastation that affects the socio-economic fabric of the entire region.

**The Scale of Destruction:** In 2024, the second wave of floods in Assam affected over 2.7 million people across 30 districts, submerging more than 3,500 villages. The disaster management authorities reported nearly 100 lives lost to the deluge. The flood waters from major rivers like Brahmaputra, Barak, Kushiara, and many others inundated over 63,000 hectares of crop area and impacted more than a million domestic animals and poultry.

The floods don't discriminate between rural and urban areas. Even Guwahati, the largest city in Assam, experienced flash floods in its low-lying areas. The disaster damaged crucial infrastructure, including embankments, roads, bridges, and buildings, further complicating rescue and relief efforts.

**Impact on Wildlife:** The floods also take a heavy toll on Assam's rich biodiversity. Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to the largest population of one-horned rhinoceros in the world, faces inundation every year. In 2024, the park lost 174 wild animals, including 10 rhinos and 144 deer, to drowning and other flood-related causes.

The flooding forces animals to seek higher ground, often leading them to cross National Highway 715 on the park's southern border. This dangerous journey results in many animals being killed by speeding vehicles, despite efforts by authorities to enforce speed limits and escort vehicles through the affected areas.

**Government Response and Chal-**

**lenges:** Both the central and state governments have pledged support to tackle the flood situation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah assured full cooperation with the state government. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma personally visited flood-affected areas to assess the situation and interact with displaced families.

Despite these efforts, the perennial nature of the floods highlights the inadequacy of current measures. The shift in approach from flood control to flood adaptation underscores the complexity of the problem. While government schemes are announced and implemented, their effectiveness remains questionable.

**The Human Cost:** Beyond the immediate destruction, the floods have far-reaching consequences on the lives of Assam's residents. Many families face permanent displacement from their ancestral villages, effectively rendering them "people from nowhere."

The loss of cultivable land to river bank erosion further exacerbates their vulnerability to future crises. In the aftermath of the floods, vector-borne diseases like dengue and malaria often strike the affected population, compounding their misery. The economic impact of the floods can alter the course of many families' lives forever, pushing them into cycles of poverty and displacement.

**Regional Impact:** The flood problem is not limited to Assam alone. Neighboring states like Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram also experienced relentless rains and subsequent flooding. In Manipur, swollen rivers submerged large areas of arable land and residential localities, highlighting the regional nature of this crisis.

**The way forward**  
Addressing the perennial flood problem in Assam and the surrounding regions requires a multi-faceted approach:

**1. International Cooperation:** The Indian government needs to engage in discussions with upper-riparian countries like Bhutan and Tibet (China) to establish a system for timely alerts about un-

usually high rainfall and hydroelectric activities.

**2. Flood Adaptation Measures:** There's a need to redefine flood adaptation strategies to not only mitigate damage but also bring positive outcomes for the affected populations.

**3. Infrastructure Development:** Investment in flood-resistant infrastructure and proper urban planning can help reduce the impact of annual flooding.

**4. Wildlife Protection:** Implementing more effective measures to protect wildlife during floods, including the construction of more highlands within national parks and improved traffic management on highways bordering these areas.

**5. Community Preparedness:** Enhancing community-level disaster preparedness through education, training, and the establishment of early warning systems.

**6. Media Role:** Continuous factual reporting by mainstream media can enhance government agencies' ability to provide timely relief and rehabilitation to affected villagers.

**7. Long-term Solutions:** Focus on finding permanent solutions to recurring flood problems, including sustainable river management and erosion control measures.

The perennial floods in Assam represent a complex challenge that requires a coordinated effort from all levels of government, civil society, and the international community. While complete mitigation may be impossible, there's significant room for improvement in how we prepare for, respond to, and recover from these annual disasters.

As climate change threatens to exacerbate extreme weather events, the urgency to address this issue has never been greater. The lives and livelihoods of millions hang in the balance, and the time for decisive action is now. Only through sustained effort and innovative solutions can we hope to break the cycle of destruction that has plagued Assam for generations and build a more resilient future for its people. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpld@gmail.com)



# Consuming the Ambani wedding (and its performance) in this world

By: Narendra Pachkhédé

“The breakdown in the old agreements about reality is now the most significant reality. Reality is not just something given; it’s an argument and always has been — *Salman Rushdie, Languages of Truth, CBC Radio 2021.*”

Many countries held their elections, people voted for new governments, and the cricket World Cup concluded. Films won Oscars, countries went to war, and people died while the saga of the Ambani wedding continued.

The ubiquitous wedding with a constant flood of videos surfacing on social media, the vicarious thrill of partaking in such a grand event was undeniable. Love it or cancel it, it was impossible to ignore. They have averaged an event every five weeks over the past seven months.

Finally, now a public event. The wedding took place on July 12 and a grand reception will be held on July 14. With this culmination, a new notion of publicness emerges where the personal and public conjoin the politics, ethics and emotions in a New India.

Unable to make sense of this display of wealth at a time when quiet luxury is trending, The Guardian called one of the events “an ode to excess” and “unashamedly flashy.” When considering the Ambani wedding, one cannot help but draw a literary comparison to F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, which vividly captures the spirit

and complexities of the post-Gilded Age, portraying the lavishness and extravagance of the Roaring Twenties. Mukesh Ambani mirrors a John Rockefeller, a picture of immense wealth and influence.

Santosh Desai, a cultural commentator, observed, “This trend reflects India, which values grandeur over elegance, where size often precedes quality. This obsession with scale is evident in the grand national monuments erected nationwide. The symbolism of a new India favours size and bold statements over beauty and subtlety.”

Celebrations of this magnitude, invariably, are less about personal joy and more about public spectacle. In societies where modern production conditions prevail, life is an immense accumulation of spectacles. Representation has supplanted everything that people directly lived. As Guy Debord says, “The spectacle is not a collection of images but a social relation among people, mediated by images that monetise our friendships, opinions, and emotions.” Our internal thoughts and experiences are now commodifiable assets as we are activated as prosumers, making us content creators rather than passive consumers. However, we often end up just circulating content.

This form of contemporary culture is completely overrun and wholly determined by consumer culture, foreclosing alternative ways of inhabiting the world. Images are powerful as they modulate feelings, gestures, and thinking that affect

how we structure existence and define and perceive social space.

The spectacle dominates our everyday language and imagery, influencing how we communicate and exchange ideas within our community. It shapes our ability to interact effectively and intensely with one another.

**The spectacle and bare life**

If you see what you think you see, then let us turn the tables and ask what you don’t see.

Do you remember the photograph of 36-year-old Inas Abu Maamar weeping as she holds Saly’s sheet-covered body in a hospital morgue? That powerful image, captured by Reuters photographer Mohammed Salem, won him the 2024 World Press Photo of the Year award for depicting a Palestinian woman cradling her five-year-old niece’s body in the Gaza Strip.

The contrast between the Ambani wedding and the ongoing genocide is like watching a split-screen movie where two vastly different worlds occupy the same space. The ongoing Gaza genocide foregrounds the bare life of the Palestinians, which the philosopher Giorgio Agamben describes as a situation where people lack legal and political safeguards, leaving them vulnerable to fundamental survival concerns and draws attention to the complex dynamics of sovereignty and the human condition.

The media’s normalisation of this stark dichotomy serves as a clever mask, blurring the distinct ideas, values, beliefs, and actions and presenting them as

an unquestionable reality, conventional wisdom, or unavoidable outcome.

This normalisation process concerns how society regards specific values and behaviours as standard and expected. When we turn “normal” into a verb, we can see that normalisation is a social decision and process that goes unseen and is less likely to be questioned. We take normalisation for granted as a characteristic of everyday power.

In his 1975 work *Governing the Social* in Neoliberal Times, Michel Foucault compellingly exposes the hidden dynamics of power that shape what is considered normal in society. This power, he argues, not only influences individuals but also moulds ideas and behaviours. Recognising and understanding the mechanisms through which power normalises and shapes subjects in neoliberal societies is essential.

The Ambani wedding during an ambient genocide foregrounds the issue of a contested public imagination and the manufacture of a social imaginary. It is all about juxtaposition, context, and demand for the audience’s attention. It has directly impacted our ability to analyse reality and imagine it.

**Imaginal sculpture**

The Ambani wedding is like an imaginal sculpture—a meticulous collage of popular culture, tradition, politics and history in which disparate elements resonate harmoniously. It offers a multifaceted exploration of the contemporary moment.

The imagery from the Am-

bani wedding impels viewers into an immersive exploration, inviting them to decipher the intricate language of our present condition and unearth the underlying archaeology of its structures. This visual spectacle fosters a nuanced understanding of the complicated interplay between memory and political syntax.

In its fleeting materiality, the imagery of the Ambani wedding assumes the role of powerful artefacts of political affect. These circulating images give rise to what Chiara Bottici describes as “imaginal politics,” urging us to rethink how politics and our collective imagination intersect. They invite us to imagine a reality that transcends conventional boundaries, blending the tangible with the intangible and bridging individual and societal perspectives.

The concept of the imaginal stands out as the most compelling theoretical tool for understanding the complex relationship between politics and our capacity to create images. Applying this framework to contemporary politics reveals that it can illuminate many paradoxes. One of the most striking revelations is a political landscape flooded with images yet astonishingly devoid of genuine imagination. This analysis highlights the superficial nature of political imagery while exposing the more profound, often overlooked absence of creative thought that defines our current political climate.

The wedding’s poignant focus on the public sphere and its performativity testify to an

unwavering commitment to the public, extending its impact beyond its fleeting existence. Its allure and significance beckon us to engage with a deeply perceptive and evocative narrative, compelling us to fathom the intricate relationship between memory and the syntax of politics on a profound and persuasive level.

As Santosh Desai observed, “Imagine a world where desires know no bounds, financial constraints fade away, and choices are limitless. We often ponder this question in our dreams, which is an opportunity to explore what could be. Yet, the answer to any question in India inevitably leads to Bollywood.” So, an Ambani wedding needs a splash of Bollywood fantasy. What does that say about Bollywood’s chokehold on our imagination?

But do we have the capacity to imagine? Are we allowed to imagine? Can we build our capacities to imagine? Do we have sites for imagination?

**Social imaginary**

So, the more profound question is: What does it tell us about the state of our social imaginary?

The social imaginary is the invisible force that holds society together. It creates the network of meanings and structures that guide our actions, values and shared identity. Social imaginaries explain how social, cultural, and political phenomena are understood and problematised. Explorations of social imaginaries comprise inquiries not only into horizons of cultural meaning that fundamentally shape

each society but also into their further articulation as instituted (and instituting) cultural projects of power and social doing.

Emphasising the importance of imagination and creativity in societal change, the Greek-French philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis offers a thought-provoking perspective on how we engage with reality. He argues that we create and explore new paths to understand the world instead of seeking absolute truth. As we navigate this metaphorical labyrinth, we simultaneously build new connections. He asserted that individuals and societies should strive for self-determination and self-creation, rejecting the notion of pre-determined social structures or historical inevitability.

As reality has fallen apart, Castoriadis explains that our social and historical world—our lifeworld—is understood in fragments. We learn it by questioning, debating, and engaging with it. He calls this process “thoughtful doing,” which is crucial for social, cultural, and historical development. Does Ambani’s wedding offer us that moment of thoughtful doing?

Through ‘thoughtful doing’, Castoriadis highlights the importance of active and reflective engagement in shaping our understanding of reality. This approach fosters continuous growth and deeper insights into the cultural and historical contexts that define our lives.

Let’s hope we don’t have to survive a post-wedding avalanche of events. (Courtesy: *The Wire*)

## Why the last king of Kandy had to spend his final years in an Indian fort

By: Ajay Kamalakaran

On a warm February morning in 1816, large crowds gathered by the seaside in Pulicat, north of Madras. Word had spread in the town that the king of Kandy was arriving on a ship along with his royal entourage. The crowds anticipated a spectacle and a spectacle is what they got. Sri Vikrama Rajasinha, who had spent the month-long journey from Colombo on board the HMS Cornwallis, mostly just wearing a sarong, decided to dress in full regalia before getting off the ship in India.

“It would be difficult to describe this dress,” William Granville, a British civil servant who was tasked with looking after Sri Vikrama, wrote. “He wore enormously white trousers of satin striped yellow, green and red, with a multitude of gold buttons down their outward seams from the hip to the ankle. A white satin waistcoat richly embroidered with gold flowers, a gold band encircled the edge round the neck. The sleeves were short, widely puffed and slashed after the Spanish fashion.” Sri Vikrama had been the last holdout against European imperialism in Sri Lanka, then called Ceylon. But once the British fully occupied the island, he was deposed and exiled to India.

When he stepped off the HMS Cornwallis, Sri Vikrama “wore a wide point lace ruff, round his neck, and beneath it a most beautiful lace tippet, starched which hung in the shape of a semi-circle down his back and over his shoulders,” Granville continued. “His head was adorned with a white satin Kandy cap. The top of his cap rose like a cone, and was surmounted by a small spire, to which were attached several horizontal gold crosses, one above another, and from the points of each cross hung some beautiful gems, rubies, emeralds and sapphires.”

The crowd watched in admiration as the bejewelled king and his royal entourage of 60 people came on to the shore. Thousands rushed to pay homage. “One cannot fully understand the enthusiasm of the crowds, unless we recognise that by the 1800s under Lord Wellesley’s campaigns much of South India fell under British control or hegemony and hence the public adulation of the captive king who represented that political tragedy in a related nation with historical ties and marriage alliances with Telugu and Tamil peoples,” Gananath Obeyesekere, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at Princeton University, wrote in his book *The Doomed King: A Requiem For Sri Vikrama Rajasinha*.

Starting from 1816, the 35-year-old king, the last sovereign of the kingdom of Kandy, spent 17 years in exile in Vellore Fort. This was a steep fall for a man who reigned over vast tracts of lush, fertile land and was responsible for the construction of the Octagonal Pavilion of the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, as well as the city’s central lake.

**Fall of Kandy**

“The circumstances that produced the deposition of Sri Vikrama Rajasinha were both local and global,” Australian historian Robert Aldridge wrote in the essay *Out of Ceylon: The Exile of the Last King of Kandy*. “In Ceylon, the kingdom of Kandy—several other kingdoms had disappeared in the wake of the Portuguese invasion—was a Buddhist polity that traced its ancestry back for two and a half millennia on an

island with a rich cultural past evidenced by the archaeological sites at the earlier capitals of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa.”

Sri Vikrama was the last of the four kings of the Nayakkara Dynasty. “In 1739, the last Sinhalese king of Kandy died without an heir; the new king, Vijaya Rajasinha, his brother-in-law, began the Nayakkara dynasty,” Aldridge wrote. “The Nayaks originally came from Madurai, in southern India, and there is considerable historiographical debate about the degree to which the new rulers were indigenized in Kandy.”

The Nayak rulers spoke Tamil and Telugu and were Shaivites, but on the island, they were noted for fulfilling their responsibilities as defenders of Buddhism.

“As far as Sri Vikrama was concerned, as with all Lankan kings, consecration implied minimally the following features: first, consecration rites with Buddhist monks chanting pirit were accompanied or followed by the astrological calculations of Brahmin priests or purohitas,” wrote Obeyesekere.

By the time of Sri Vikrama’s consecration in 1798, a large part of the island had been under European occupation, first by the Portuguese, then the Dutch and finally the British. “Although an unrealistic aspiration, Sri Lankan kings, from the time of European invasions beginning in 1506, refused to recognise the legitimacy of the foreign conquest of the island, who, from their viewpoint, were on sufferance,” Obeyesekere said. The British East India Company took over the Dutch possessions on the island by the end of the 18th century and appointed a British governor. With their sights set on the Kandyan kingdom, the new occupiers waged a war on it in 1803 and made their first attempt at deposing Sri Vikrama. Fortunately for him, they made no meaningful gains in the war.

The next decade was filled with tensions between the Kandyan kingdom and the British, who looked to take advantage of internal political fissures in the kingdom.

“Sri Vikrama Rajasinha had already alienated many of the Sinhalese chiefs, limiting their powers and the revenues they received, while the influence of his ‘Malabar’ relatives had grown ever greater at court,” Aldridge added. “The sangha had also been offended by royal actions, including plans to shift several temples and their monastic communities outside Kandy, urbanistic projects seen as an effort architecturally to ‘Hinduize’ the capital.”

In 1811, a plot was hatched by Pilima Talawe, the Kandyan chief minister and one-time mentor of Sri Vikrama, to assassinate the king. When it failed, Talawe was executed and his nephew Ehelepola appointed the chief minister. It turned out Ehelepola too eyed the crown and plotted to assassinate the king. When this plan failed as well, he fled Kandy into British territory. Sri Vikrama took revenge on the chief minister by executing his wife and three children.

This killing was used as one of the excuses by the British to stage a full-scale invasion of the kingdom in 1815 in what is called the Second Kandyan War. Fought mainly with Indian soldiers, the war lasted just 40 days. The city of Kandy fell to the British in February 1815.

“They arrived to find that the king had fled his capital, but soon they captured him not far away,” Aldridge wrote. “Hidden in a village house with two of his queens, he

was taken captive on 18 February 1815 by a group of Ceylonese, led by one of the rebel noblemen, with only a minor scuffle—the queens suffered some injury when their earrings were torn off by irregulars, though the king faced the distinct possibility of greater harm, as he was bound with vines and dragged across a meadow. Senior British figures propitiously arrived and tried to restore order; they gave some Madeira to the king and claret to the queens to lift their spirits.”

**Imprisonment and exile**

Kandy was annexed to the Crown territories under an agreement with ministers from the kingdom in what is called the Kandyan Convention of 1815. Sri Vikrama and his family were taken to a large house in Colombo that was specially fitted to accommodate them. There they lived in comfort for a year before the final decision was made to expel them to Vellore.

Sri Vikrama was put on the HMS Cornwallis on January 24, 1816, for Pulicat. The small cabin and the lack of privacy on the ship upset the deposed king, who had no idea what awaited him in the same fort in India where Tipu Sultan’s sons were imprisoned at one time. “Nevertheless, it is striking that although in deep distress at his fate during the long voyage to Madras he did manage to maintain his good humour and composure for most of the trip, in spite of moods of depression and the ups and downs of his emotions,” Obeyesekere added.

After arriving in Pulicat, the entourage was moved to Vellore. The family was given a privy purse from Ceylon and had fairly decent accommodation in Vellore Fort. The authorities in the fort were instructed by General Robert Brownrigg, governor of Ceylon, to treat the deposed king as a prisoner of war, “without splendour or honours”, with the caveat that “he should live in comfort though in perfect retirement”.

Sri Vikrama lived a mostly uneventful life in Vellore for 17 years.

“Any hopes of return faded, if he had ever, unrealistically, nursed such aspirations,” Aldridge added. “He celebrated the coming-of-age of his daughters and the birth of a son, mourned the death of his mother, quarrelled with his relatives, and entreated the British for various comforts.”

He died of complications related to dropsy (malfunction of the digestive power of the liver) at the age of 52 in January 1832. Two years later, most of the exiles—with the exception of the king’s son and close family—were allowed to return to Ceylon. The king’s descendants continued to receive pension, first from the British authorities and later from the government of independent Ceylon until the 1960s.

Sri Vikrama Rajasinha’s legacy is deeply contested in Sri Lanka with several contradictory accounts of his reign. Some see him as a benevolent ruler and some as a tyrant. Gananath Obeyesekere’s scholarly book, which analyses British and Sinhalese sources, gives a much clearer picture of the complicated man. The Kandyan ruler’s fate as an exile far away from his kingdom was shared later by the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, who was forced to live out his life in Rangoon, and Burma’s last king Theebaw Min, who spent the last three decades of his life in Ratnagiri. (Courtesy: *Scroll.in*)

## Could daily sauna time help prevent weight gain during menopause?

By: Paul Ian Cross

New research, presented at NUTRITION 2024—the annual meeting of the American Society for Nutrition, which took place from June 29 to July 2 in Chicago—highlighted heat treatments as a straightforward method to encourage healthier aging.

The findings of the study in question revealed that older female mice subjected to a daily 30-minute whole-body heat treatment gained less weight and exhibited better insulin utilization, aiding in blood sugar regulation, compared with older female mice who did not undergo daily heat treatment.

The researchers also explored the biological mechanisms behind these positive effects.

Women are more likely than men to have obesity or overweight, especially after menopause, due to the loss of estrogen in their bodies.

This study suggests that whole-body heat therapy could be an effective and noninvasive method for managing both age-related and menopause-related weight gain and insulin resistance.

**30-minute heat sessions for 12 weeks**

In the study, researchers used 10-month-old mice to model aging and mice with their ovaries removed to simulate postmenopausal conditions. To induce weight gain, the mice were fed a Western diet containing 45% of calories from fat.

One group of mice underwent daily 30-minute heat therapy sessions in a heat chamber set to 40°C (104°F) for 12 weeks, while the other group did not receive any heat treatment.

The aging mice that received heat treatment showed no tissue damage and had significantly lower levels of lactate dehydrogenase, indicating reduced aging-related tissue damage.

The therapy also effectively countered weight gain caused by a high fat diet in both aging mice and in mice with their ovaries removed.

Compared to the untreated mice, those that underwent heat therapy exhibited notable improvements in insulin sensitivity and insulin signaling, as well as decreased fat accumulation in critical areas like the liver and brown fat.

While adipose tissue stores energy, brown fat is a metabolically active type of fat that helps the body burn more energy.

**How heat helps the body burn more fat**

Rong Fan, a doctoral candidate, presented the study and also explained the key findings to *Medical News Today*.

“Our research shows that daily whole-body heat treatment (104-113°F) for 30 minutes can significantly reduce obesity and improve insulin sensitivity in older female mice and mouse models that simulate menopause. The 30-minute daily duration for heat treatment was chosen based on CDC guidelines, which recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week for adults,” — Rong Fan, study author

Fan said that the treatment works “by activating specific calcium channels in brown fat, a type of fat in our body that burns calories to produce heat.”

“This process helps the body increase its energy expenditure, similar to the metabolic effects of aerobic exercise. Essentially, this heat treatment helps improve metabolic health by partially mimicking some of the beneficial ef-

fects of exercise,” Fan explained.

Earlier research has shown that people tend to lose brown fat as they age and enter menopause, which contributes to a slower metabolism.

The researchers also investigated the molecular mechanisms behind the positive effects of heat therapy.

They discovered that heat activates several molecular processes that enhance the body’s fat-burning capabilities.

A key element is the protein TRPV1, which acts as a calcium ion channel in the cell membrane. When stimulated by heat, TRPV1 initiates a process known as futile cycling, where the body expends energy (in the form of ATP) to pump calcium ions across cell membranes. Activation of TRPV1 and the resulting calcium cycling also promote the breakdown and burning of fats, reducing fat accumulation in tissues like the liver and improving the body’s insulin sensitivity, which is vital for overall metabolic health.

This sequence of events suggests that regular heat exposure can mimic the effects of calorie burning and fat loss.

It could be especially beneficial for individuals who find physical activity difficult, offering a relaxing method to enhance metabolic health.

The researchers emphasise that further studies are needed to determine the optimal duration and intensity of heat exposure for health benefits in humans and to confirm its safety and effectiveness across different populations.

Mark A. Anton, MD, medical director at Slimz Weightloss, who was not involved in this research, said that the research “is quite promising as it highlights a non-invasive, low-cost intervention that could help mitigate menopause-related weight gain and insulin resistance.”

“The mechanisms identified, such as TRPV1-mediated futile calcium cycling, provide a scientific basis for the benefits observed with heat treatments,” Dr. Anton explained.

Regular sauna use could be a valuable addition to lifestyle

“As we age, our metabolism and energy expenditure decrease. In women, these changes often begin around ages 45-50, coinciding with menopause. This mid-life phase is critical for implementing effective and accessible intervention strategies. Our research highlights the potential of whole-body heat treatment as a simple, non-invasive method to address age-related metabolic challenges and improve overall health.” — Rong Fan, study author.

Anton noted that this study suggests that regular sauna use could be a valuable addition to lifestyle modifications aimed at combating age-related metabolic issues.

“While more human studies are needed, the potential to activate fat-burning processes and improve hormone function with such a simple intervention is exciting,” Anton said.

Fan pointed out that the implications of this research for patients and the public are significant, however more research is needed.

“Whole-body heat treatment could offer an effective way to combat obesity and enhance metabolic health, particularly for the aging population and individuals who are unable to engage in regular physical exercise,” she said.

“If future studies confirm these findings, especially in postmenopausal women, this approach could provide a new, non-drug method to manage weight and metabolic issues, improving health and quality of life as we age,” she added. (Courtesy: *Medical News Today*)



# From basement to battlefield: Ukrainian startups create low-cost robots to fight Russia

**NORTHERN UKRAINE, July 15:** Struggling with manpower shortages, overwhelming odds and uneven international assistance, Ukraine hopes to find a strategic edge against Russia in an abandoned warehouse or a factory basement.

An ecosystem of laboratories in hundreds of secret workshops is leveraging innovation to create a robot army that Ukraine hopes will kill Russian troops and save its own wounded soldiers and civilians.

Defense startups across Ukraine — about 250 according to industry estimates — are creating the killing machines at secret locations that typically look like rural car repair

shops. Employees at a startup run by entrepreneur Andrii Denysenko can put together an unmanned ground vehicle called the Odyssey in four days at a shed used by the company. Its most important feature is the price tag: USD 35,000, or roughly 10 per cent of the cost of an imported model.

Denysenko asked that The Associated Press not publish details of the location to protect the infrastructure and the people working there. The site is partitioned into small rooms for welding and body work. That includes making fiberglass cargo beds, spray-painting the vehicles gun-green and fitting basic electronics, battery-powered engines, off-the-shelf cameras and

thermal sensors.

The military is assessing dozens of new unmanned air, ground and marine vehicles produced by the no-frills startup sector, whose production methods are far removed from giant Western defense companies'.

A fourth branch of Ukraine's military — the Unmanned Systems Forces — joined the army, navy and air force in May.

Engineers take inspiration from articles in defense magazines or online videos to produce cut-price platforms. Weapons or smart components can be added later.

"We are fighting a huge country, and they don't have any resource limits. We understand that we can-

not spend a lot of human lives," said Denysenko, who heads the defense startup UkrPrototyp. "War is mathematics." One of its drones, the car-sized Odyssey, spun on its axis and kicked up dust as it rumbled forward in a cornfield in the north of the country last month.

The 800-kilogram (1,750-pound) prototype that looks like a small, turretless tank with its wheels on tracks can travel up to 30 kilometers (18.5 miles) on one charge of a battery the size of a small beer cooler.

The prototype acts as a rescue-and-supply platform but can be modified to carry a remotely operated heavy machine gun or sling mine-clearing charges.

"Squads of robots ... will become logistics devices, tow trucks, minelayers and deminers, as well as self-destructive robots," a government fundraising page said after the launch of Ukraine's Unmanned Systems Forces. "The first robots are already proving their effectiveness on the battlefield."

Mykhailo Fedorov, the deputy prime minister for digital transformation, is encouraging citizens to take free online courses and assemble aerial drones at home. He wants Ukrainians to make a million of flying machines a year.

"There will be more of them soon," the fundraising page said. "Many more."

Denysenko's company is work-

ing on projects including a motorized exoskeleton that would boost a soldier's strength and carrier vehicles to transport a soldier's equipment and even help them up an incline. "We will do everything to make unmanned technologies develop even faster. (Russia's) murderers use their soldiers as cannon fodder, while we lose our best people," Fedorov wrote in an online post. Ukraine has semi-autonomous attack drones and counter-drone weapons endowed with AI and the combination of low-cost weapons and artificial intelligence tools is worrying many experts who say low-cost drones will enable their proliferation.

Technology leaders to the United

Nations and the Vatican worry that the use of drones and AI in weapons could reduce the barrier to killing and dramatically escalate conflicts.

Human Rights Watch and other international rights groups are calling for a ban on weapons that exclude human decision making, a concern echoed by the UN General Assembly, Elon Musk and the founders of the Google-owned, London-based startup DeepMind.

"Cheaper drones will enable their proliferation," said Toby Walsh, professor of artificial intelligence at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. "Their autonomy is also only likely to increase." (AP)

## Pak government to ban jailed ex-PM Imran Khan's party for alleged anti-state activities

**ISLAMABAD, July 15:** In a controversial move, the Pakistan government on Monday announced that it will ban jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party for its alleged involvement in anti-state activities and slap cases against him and two of his senior party colleagues for treason.

"In view of the foreign funding case, May 9 riots, and the cipher episode as well as the resolution passed in the US, we believe that there is very credible evidence present to have Khan's party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) banned," Information Minister Attaullah Tarar made the surprising announcement at a press conference here.

Khan, 71, has been lodged at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi on account of multiple cases against him since his ouster as prime minister in April 2022. Upping the ante against PTI, the federal government has decided to ban the former ruling party as well as file cases against PTI founder Khan and former Pakistan president Arif Alvi for treason under Article 6, Geo

alliance has also decided to move a case against the then-prime minister, then-president Alvi and then National Assembly deputy speaker Qasim Suri.

"Whether it was the foreign funding case, the riots of May 9, or the manipulation of the cipher saga, in which the former Pakistani ambassador to the US, Asad Majeed — who authored the cipher — clarified that there was "no threat", the PTI continued decrying that the country was in danger.

"You tried to damage the country's diplomatic relations for the sake of your political interests and went on to get a resolution passed against Pakistan in the US," the Dawn newspaper quoting Tarar as saying.

Incidentally, the government's decision comes on the heels of relief given to the PTI by the Supreme Court in the case of the reserved seats as well as to Khan in the illegal m a r r i a g e case.

The development also comes following PTI vice chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi's indictment in cases related

# Serum Institute of India's new 'high efficacy' malaria vaccine rolls out in Africa

**LONDON, July 15:** A new "high efficacy" malaria vaccine co-developed by the Serum Institute of India (SII) and the University of Oxford was officially rolled out on Monday when Cote d'Ivoire in West Africa became the first country to begin administering R21/Matrix-M.

The vaccine, which was granted World Health Organisation (WHO) approval last year, is said to have undergone a rigorous regulatory process and clinical assessment and was found to be highly effective and affordable. As a low-dose vaccine, it can be manufactured at speed and scale which is seen as critical to stemming the spread of the mosquito-borne disease.

"Reducing the malaria burden is finally within sight. Today's start of the R21/Matrix-M™ vaccine roll-out marks a monumental milestone after years of incredible work with our partners at Oxford and Novavax," said SII CEO Adar Poonawalla.

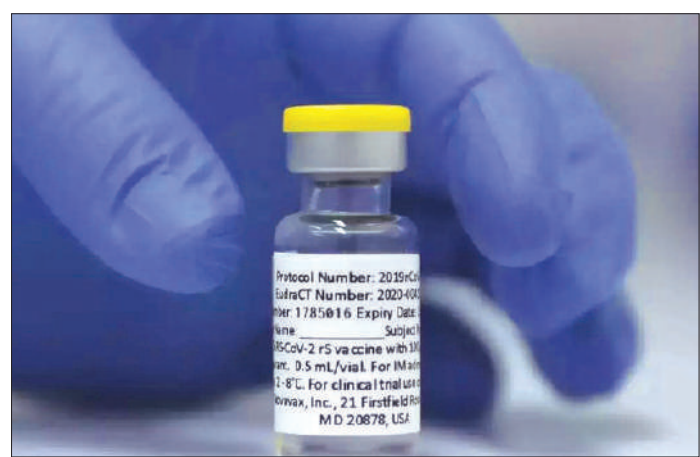
"At Serum, we believe that it is every person's right to have access to affordable and essential disease prevention. That's why we have

committed to producing 100 million doses of R21, which will protect millions of lives and alleviate the burden of this deadly disease for future generations," he said.

In anticipation of the roll-out, SII said it has manufactured 25 million doses of the vaccine and is committed to scaling up to 100 million doses annually. In keeping with its aim of delivering vaccines at scale and low cost, the Pune-headquartered company said it is offering the vaccine at less than USD 4 per dose.

"The roll-out of the R21/Matrix-M™ malaria vaccine marks the start of a new era in malaria control interventions with the high efficacy vaccine now accessible at a modest price and very large scale to many countries in greatest need. We hope that this vaccine very soon can be provided to all African countries who wish to use it," said Professor Adrian Hill, Director of the Jenner Institute at Oxford University.

R21/Matrix-M was co-developed by the university and SII leveraging Novavax's Matrix-M adjuvant technology. In December 2023, WHO granted it prequalifi-



cation status after trials demonstrated that the vaccine was well tolerated, with a good safety profile, with injection site pain and fever as the most frequent adverse events.

Although the number of malaria-related deaths has fallen from 3,222 in 2017 to 1,316 in 2020 in Cote d'Ivoire, the deadly disease still kills four people a day, mostly small children, and "remains the leading cause of medical consultations", according to the country's

Ministry of Health.

A total of 656,600 doses have been received, which will initially vaccinate 250,000 children aged between 0 and 23 months across 16 regions of Cote d'Ivoire. The R21/Matrix-M vaccine has also been authorised by Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic.

R21 is the second malaria vaccine available in Sub-Saharan Africa following RTS,S and wide implementation of the malaria

News said. Tarar said that if the country is to move in a forward direction, it cannot do so with PTI's existence.

"Our patience and tolerance are considered as our weaknesses. The PTI and Pakistan cannot co-exist as the government is trying to stabilise the country politically and economically, while efforts are being made to thwart its efforts," Tarar said and added that the federal government would move the apex court to file a petition to ban the party.

Tarar also announced that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led government and its coalition partners have decided to file a review appeal against the decision of the Supreme Court granting reserved seats to the PTI in the National Assembly. "The apex court gave relief to the PTI which had not even asked for it," the minister said.

The decisions were taken in light of the former ruling party's involvement in the May 9 events last year and the PTI's former or current leaders' attempts to sabotage Pakistan's deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Geo News added.

Referring to the time when the then-government decided to dissolve the assemblies during the no-confidence motion against Khan in 2022, the minister said the ruling

to the May 9 riots and Khan's arrest in cases linked to the incidents that took place following Khan's arrest in an alleged corruption case.

In a key judgment, the Supreme Court had last week declared that Khan's PTI was eligible for the seats reserved for women and minorities in the national and four provincial assemblies. If allotted thus, the PTI will become the largest party in the National Assembly with 109 seats.

On Saturday, a district and session court overturned the conviction of Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi, 49, in the un-Islamic marriage case related to the violation of the mandatory waiting period for a Muslim woman between two marriages.

The PTI founder and hundreds of his party colleagues are being tried under multiple cases, including one under the Official Secrets Act, in connection with the May 9 violent protests by his supporters that damaged key military installations across Pakistan last year.

Khan's party workers allegedly vandalised a dozen military installations, including the Jinnah House (Lahore Corps Commander House), Mianwali Airbase and the ISI building in Faisalabad. The Army headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi too was attacked by the mob for the first time. (PTI)

## CCP begins key meet to stem economic slowdown, a defining moment for Xi's leadership



**BEIJING, July 15:** China's GDP dipped to 4.7 per cent in the second quarter, the government said on Monday, as the ruling Communist Party began a key meeting stated to be a defining moment for President Xi Jinping's leadership to revive the world's second-largest economy.

The four-day meeting called the 'Third Plenum' is being attended by 376 full and alternate members of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee to primarily examine issues related to comprehensively deepening reforms and advancing China's modernisation to work out a course correction for the economy plagued by deepening demographic crisis, sluggish growth and mounting local government debts.

Kicking off the meeting Xi 71, who is also general secretary of the party, delivered a work report and expounded on a draft decision of the CPC Central Committee on further comprehensively

deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernisation, the official media reported.

The meeting, however, began here on a disappointing note for the party leadership as the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) announced the GDP for the second quarter expanded by 4.7 per cent well below the 5.3 per cent annual pace of growth in the first quarter of the year.

The silver lining for the CPC, which is searching for a new set of reforms to shake off the post-COVID lockdown blues, the economy posted a five per cent growth in the first half, within the range of the official growth target fixed for the year.

"The current external environment is complicated, while domestic demand remains insufficient. We still need to consolidate the foundation for economic recovery," the NBS said on Monday.

While the third plenum of the CPC was regarded as important

to set the reform agenda for the next decade, the meeting was seen as a defining moment for Xi, who is into the unprecedented third five-year term as the economy was unable to shake off its slowdown mode resulting in a sense of unease about the recovery in the near future.

Ahead of the meeting, Xi presided over a host of meetings to set the tone for the key plenum and chart the direction for the nation's future reform highlighting that "the furthering of reform must focus on refining and developing the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and advance modernisation of the country's governance system and governance capacity".

A readout of a key party meeting presided over by Xi in February said: "Reform measures need to be sharply focused, targeting the most pressing problems. Reform efforts must be substantial and impactful."

The event could be the most important "defining moment" of President Xi Jinping's rule since a similar gathering in 2013 that set out his vision for reforming the country, a political researcher from Tsinghua University, who requested anonymity, told the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post. (PTI)

## King Charles writes to Donald Trump after assassination attempt

**LONDON, July 15:** Britain's King Charles III has written to US presidential candidate Donald Trump after an assassination attempt on the former president during an election rally in the United States, Buckingham Palace said on Monday.

The 78-year-old Republican nominee for the November presidential race was addressing supporters in Butler, Pennsylvania, on Sunday when he was shot at by a gunman.

The British monarch's letter, the contents of which have not been disclosed by the palace, was delivered soon after by the UK Embassy in Washington DC.

In 2019, then as Prince of Wales, the royal hosted then President Trump and his wife Melania for afternoon tea at his Clarence House residence during a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit in London. His mother, the late Queen Elizabeth II, hosted a state banquet for Trump during his State Visit to the UK earlier that year.

The news of the King's letter came as Buckingham Palace announced that the 75-year-old monarch, who was undergoing treatment for an undisclosed form of cancer, will undertake two royal visits in October. After Australia, he and his wife Queen Camilla will visit Samoa to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meet-



ing (CHOGM) 2024.

"The King and Queen will visit Australia at the invitation of the Australian government, where their programme will feature engagements in the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales. Their Majesties' State Visit to Samoa will celebrate the strong bilateral relationship between the Pacific Island nation and the UK," Buckingham Palace said.

Meanwhile, world leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi have been condemning the assassination attempt on Trump, following which the suspected shooter Thomas Matthew Crooks was shot dead at the scene by Secret Service personnel.

Corey Comperatore, a 50-year-old volunteer fire chief, is said to have died at the rally as he attempted to protect his family members when the shots were fired. Two other people shot are in a stable condition, according to local Pennsylvania police. (PTI)

## A suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels strikes a ship in the Red Sea

**DUBAI, July 15:** A suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted a ship in the Red Sea on Monday, as a new U.S. aircraft carrier approached the region to provide security for the key international trade route that has been under assault since the Israel-Hamas war erupted nine months ago.

The captain of the ship reported being attacked by three small vessels, two of which were crewed and another uncrewed, off the coast of Al Hudaydah, Yemen, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said.

The "reported unmanned small craft collided with the vessel twice and the 2 manned small craft fired at the vessel," the UKMTO reported. "The vessel conducted self-protection measures, after 15 minutes the small craft aborted the attack."

The captain later reported two separate waves of missile attacks, approximately 45 minutes apart, that exploded in close proximity to the vessel. The ship, whose name and flag were not released, and all crew are reported safe, the UKMTO said in a warning to mariners.

The Houthis did not immediately comment. However, it can take hours or even days before they acknowledge carrying out an attack.

The aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt is approaching the Middle East to replace the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, which spent months in the Red Sea to counter the Houthis.

The U.S. Central Command said in a statement Sunday that its forces destroyed two uncrewed Houthi aerial vehicles and an uncrewed surface vessel in the Red Sea.

The rebels have targeted more than 70 vessels by fir-

ing missiles and drones in their campaign that has killed four sailors. They seized one vessel and sank two since November.

In June, the number of Houthi attacks on merchant vessels increased to levels not seen since December, according to the Joint Maritime Information Center, a coalition which is overseen by the U.S. Navy. U.S.-led airstrikes have targeted the Houthis since January, with a series of strikes on May 30 killing at least 16 people and wounding 42 others, the rebels say.

The Houthis maintain that their attacks target ships linked to Israel, the United States or Britain as part of the rebels' support for the militant group Hamas in its war against Israel. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the war — including some bound for Iran, which backs the Houthis. (AP)

## 6 firefighters have died battling a bushfire in SAfrica after storms batter other areas



**CAPE TOWN, July 15:** Six firefighters have died battling a bushfire in the eastern KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa and another two are in a critical condition, emergency services said Monday.

Authorities said they suspect that Sunday's fire may have been started by poachers trying to trap animals to kill.

Three firefighters died at the scene of the fire near the town of Boston, around 130 kilometers (80 miles) inland from the east coast city of Durban, emergency services spokesperson Roland Robertson said.

He said another three firefighters were treated and put on ventilators, but they all died soon after being admitted to the hospital.

One firefighter is still on

a ventilator in the hospital, and another is also in critical condition, he said.

Robertson said some of the poachers were also believed to have been injured in the fires near private farms as wind and dry ground caused them to burn out of control. No arrests of suspected poachers were reported.

Wildfires have burned in other parts of KwaZulu-Natal for the last week due to the heat and the wind, leaving at least seven other people dead in various parts of the province, the

## SLanka's top court dismisses rights petition on constitutionality of presidential poll

**COLOMBO, July 15:** Sri Lanka's Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a fundamental rights petition, which could have delayed the holding of the impending presidential election.

A three-member Supreme Court bench presided by Chief Justice Jayantha Jayasuriya imposed costs on the petitioner, a lawyer, who had filed a case calling to delay the election claiming that the 19th Amendment to the Constitution adopted in 2015 had not been properly passed as there was no referendum held to adopt it.

This was the second action filed in the Supreme Court over the presidential election, which is to be held between September 17 and October 16.

The opposition was seeing the court cases as moves by the government — President Ranil Wickremesinghe — to delay the holding of the election enabling him to continue in office without an election.

They charged 75-year-old Wickremesinghe, who succeeded

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, as the stop-gap president feared facing the election. Wickremesinghe, however, has assured that the election would be held on time by the independent elections commission. Earlier on July 10, the government had announced that the Sri Lankan Cabinet had approved a move to amend the Constitution giving clarity to the terms of both the president and Parliament, restricting it to five years only.

The terms for both posts are already five years as per the 19th Amendment since 2015. However, the problem was over Article 83, which said the term could be extended to six from five with a referendum.

A petitioner had approached the Supreme Court asking it to define if the terms were five or six years.

The Supreme Court had rejected the petition which sought a ruling on the seeming ambiguity between 30(2) and 83 in the Constitution, which means, it will be five years only. (PTI)



# Tripura minister-led team visits violence-hit Dhalai district

*People angry on alleged inaction*

**AGARTALA, July 15:** A four-member team headed by Tripura minister Tinku Roy on Monday visited violence-hit Gandatwisa in Dhalai district and faced ire of villagers whose houses were set on fire three days ago, following the death of a 19-year-old man in a clash between two groups.

During the minister's visit, the affected villagers ransacked the office of the Gandatwisa sub-divisional magistrate (SDM), alleging that the police and the local administration remained "inactive" when the mob attacked their houses on July 12.

A video clip shared on social media showed an angry youth telling the minister that as many as 11 scheduled wedding ceremonies in the area were cancelled due to the arson.

Roy, the social welfare minister, assured the angry villagers that the government would provide compensation to all the affected families and adequate security to avoid such inci-

dents in future. "When the team reached the area, the local people vented anger and alleged that the police and the administration remained inactive when their houses were set on fire on July 12," an official said.

State BJP vice presidents Subal Bhowmik and Rebati Tripura and MLA Rampada Jamatia were other members of the team.

Asked about the protest by villagers, the minister claimed that it was not so.

"The people, who have lost their houses and all belongings expressed their grievances. The chief minister has sent us. We listened to their problems. The government will release 25 per cent of the compensation in the next two days. We will take steps to bring normalcy in the area," he said.

Around 300 villagers whose houses were torched three days ago are yet to return to their homes, officials said.



They have been staying at a shelter after the July 12 arson in Gandatwisa, around 110 km from the state capital Agartala.

A team led by Dhalai district magistrate Sajū Vaheed held a meeting with the affected families on Sunday and assured them of the necessary

steps for providing security and compensation, the officials said.

"At least 40 houses were severely damaged and around 30 shops were looted by the attackers. The affected family members are now staying at the Gandatwisa Higher Secondary School. Four motorcycles were also

burnt on July 12 night. The situation has improved in Gandatwisa with the deployment of additional security personnel in the vulnerable pockets." Gandatwisa Sub Divisional Magistrate Chandrajay Reang told PTI earlier in the day.

The administration has taken all possible steps to provide compensation to around 80 families affected by the arson, he said.

The team led by the district magistrate also held a meeting with the members of a local committee to open the market, another official said. According to the officials, the attack on villagers stemmed from the clash between the two groups in the local market on July 7.

Parameshwar Reang, a college student, was critically injured in the clash and later succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment at GBP Hospital in Agartala on July 12.

Four people were arrested in connection with the death of the youth, police added. (PTI)

## Arunachal to bring legislation to curb malpractices in recruitment exams



**ITANAGAR, July 15:** The Arunachal Pradesh cabinet on Monday approved a legislation to curb malpractices during recruitment examinations, officials said.

The draft bill, which calls for stringent punishment including imprisonment with imposition of fine up to ₹ 1 crore, will be tabled in the next session of the assembly commencing from July 19.

The bill, after becoming an act, will ensure free and fair selection process of all posts under the state government and detect malpractices, a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO)

said. The cabinet also approved a proposal to bring various categories of posts under the Arunachal Pradesh Staff Selection Board (APSSB) into a common cadre.

It was necessitated to ensure a systematic human resource management in the APSSB for a free and fair recruitment process, the statement said.

Later, chief minister Pema Khandu and his cabinet were briefed by the Director General of Police (DGP) and other senior officials on the salient features and implementation strategy of the three new criminal laws. (PTI)

## 300 villagers whose houses set on fire yet to return homes

**AGARTALA, July 15:** Around 300 villagers whose houses were set on fire three days ago following the death of a 19-year-old man in a clash between two groups in Tripura's Dhalai district are yet to return to their homes, officials said on Monday. They have been staying at a shelter after the July 12 arson in Gandatwisa village, around 110 km from the state capital Agartala.

A team led by Dhalai district magistrate Sajū Vaheed held a meeting with the affected families on Sunday and assured them of the necessary steps for providing security and compensation, the officials said.

"At least 40 houses were severely damaged and around 30 shops were looted by the attackers. The affected family members are now staying at the Gandatwisa Higher Secondary School. Four motorcycles were also burnt on July 12 night. The situation has improved in Gandatwisa with the deployment of additional security personnel in the vulnerable pockets," Gandatwisa sub divisional magistrate Chandrajay Reang told PTI over the telephone. The administration has taken all possible steps to provide compensation to around 80 families



affected by the arson, he said. The team led by the district magistrate also held a meeting with the members of a local committee to open the market, another official said.

According to the officials, the attack on villagers stemmed from the clash between the two groups in the local market on July 7.

Parameshwar Reang, a college student, was critically injured in the clash and later succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment at GBP Hospital in Agartala on July 12.

Four people were arrested in connection with the death of the youth, police said. (PTI)

## Manipur govt to cancel licenses of security agencies not fulfilling criteria

**IMPHAL, July 15:** The Manipur government will soon start cancellation of licenses of those private security agencies in the state which do not fulfill the criteria of Private Security Agency Regulation Act (PSARA), 2005.

Manipur government joint secretary (Home), Dr Mayengbam Veto Singh said this while delivering a speech at the closing ceremony of the 2nd Batch Security Training of the Homeland Group which held recently at Hotel Imphal here.

The officer said that there is a growing demand for private security agencies in the state as the government securities and police cannot monitor or safeguard all the businesses and other indus-



trial establishments which are rapidly increasing with time.

He said that a total of 25 private security agencies are registered to the Manipur Home department. He questioned whether all of these agencies have necessary infrastructures like proper training grounds and adhere to other eligibility required

in the PSARA, 2005.

"In order to strictly implement the PSARA, 2005, the government will soon start taking up necessary steps such as checking the background of the private security agencies in the state. The licenses of those agencies which do not fulfill the criteria given in the Act will be cancelled", Veto Singh as-

sured.

While stating the importance of implementing the regulation in the state, the Joint Secretary pointed out that PSARA is a central government act enacted in 2005 to govern/control private security agencies and operate under a legal framework.

Also speaking on the occasion, Homeland Group Director RK Babloo said that the private security agency has been advancing rapidly in a short stint with many multi national companies and reputed hotels demanding to provide more security guards to them.

He also said the idea of providing security training to unemployed youths in the state under a joint venture of the Homeland Group and the state government. (NNN)

## Wild elephant tramples one in Meghalaya

**SHILLONG, July 15:** A 26-year-old man was killed on Saturday evening after being attacked by a wild elephant while attempting to drive away a herd threatening local vegetation in South West Garo Hills of Meghalaya.

The victim, identified as Rikrak S. Sangma, was the son of Meckenson Ch Marak and a resident of Jolgaongre village in South West Garo Hills.

Reports said that as soon as the local people received the information, they promptly rushed to the spot. The reports also said that the local people found the lifeless body of Rikrak Sangma. (NNN)

## Families of abducted students meet Guv in Manipur

**IMPHAL, July 15:** Families of the two students, namely Linthoingambi Hijam and Phijam Hemanjit Singh, who were allegedly abducted and murdered by armed persons, have submitted a memorandum to Manipur Governor Anusuiya Uikey on Monday.

The memorandum seeks either to find out the whereabouts of the two students or handover their mortal remains in case they were dead for performing their last rites.

Mention may be made that Linthoingambi (17) of Sagolband Tera Tongbram Leikai and Hemanjit (17) of Takyel Kolom Leikai in Imphal West district were found missing since July 6, 2023, after they drove together towards Bishnupur district in a motorbike.

The victims' families who were accompanied by the ex-MLA of Patsoi assembly constituency Akojiam Mirabai Devi met the Governor and submitted the memorandum at Raj Bhavan, Imphal at around 3 pm.

Speaking to media persons later, Mirabai lamented that

the government cannot trace the whereabouts of the two students till today nor their mortal remains have been handed over to the families even in case they had been murdered.

She decried that no significant development could be seen in connection with the case, except the government responding that the CBI has arrested some accused in connection with the incident and submitted the charge sheets of the case to the court.

Meanwhile, a Raj Bhavan source said the Governor assured the delegation that steps to deliver justice to the bereaved families have been taken up and justice will be delivered. She asked the DGP over the phone for taking up further steps to tracing out the mortal remains of the missing students and also asked the DGP to take inputs from the CBI. A meeting with Security Advisor Kuldeep Singh and the family members will be arranged, the Governor assured, the Raj Bhavan source added. (NNN)

## Restoration of Tuli paper mill in Nagaland begins

**DIMAPUR, July 15:** The initial restoration works for the Nagaland's paper mill, the Tuli Paper Mill, has begun, an official statement said on Monday.

Personnel from the private company 3A Capital Services Limited (3ACSL) which acquired Nagaland Pulp And Paper Company Ltd have been deployed to the site.

According to one of its officials, the company is currently at the audit phase to clear the pending liabilities of the previous employees of the mill and hoped to complete it by the end of the year so that restoration and revival works can begin extensively, it also said.

It may be noted that the Nagaland state government which previously owned 12% of the mill is now left with 3.51% while the Mumbai based private firm 3ACSL owns the lion's share of 96.49%. (NNN)

## 6 leaders join Cong in Nagaland

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, July 15:** In yet another boost to the Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (NPCC) after the recent victory in the lone Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland, former IGP Richard Yimto and his wife Shojila Yimto, former chairperson of the state BJP intellectual committee and former additional development commissioner Dr Temsuwati, NPF working committee member Dr Roland Lotha, NPF central youth wing vice president Yanger Jamir and BJYM leader Moses R Ovung joined the Congress party.

While Yimto and his wife joined the party on Sunday, Temsuwati, Lotha, Jamir and Ovung joined on July 12 in the presence of Lok Sabha MP from Nagaland S Supongmeren Jamir and AICC secretary in-charge of Nagaland Ranajit Mukherjee in Kohima.

MP Jamir and AICC secretary Mukherjee, along with senior NPCC officials, thanked the new entrants and accorded them a warm welcome into the party fold while highlighting the age-old secular and inclusive ideals of the Indian National Congress.

"We warmly welcome them into the Congress family fold and wish them all well in their endeavours," the NPCC communications department said in a release on Sunday.

## Protest demonstration against Manipur unrest in New Delhi

**IMPHAL, July 15:** The Delhi Meitei Coordinating Committee (DMCC) has announced that it will organize a protest demonstration in connection with the ongoing unrest in Manipur at New Delhi's Jantar Mantar on July 28.

Addressing a press conference held recently at the Manipur Press Club, Imphal, DMCC's Women Wing publicity secretary Naorem Lilina informed that the protest demonstration will be carried out from 1 pm till 3 pm of the day on four different agendas.

She said that the agendas include pressuring and demanding the central government to stop the central security forces deployed in the state for "taking sides with the Kuki militants or Kuki narco terrorists".

Lilina also said putting of fences between areas dominated

by different communities is ill-designed is akin to segregation and division of the various communities residing in the state. Lilina maintained that the demand for removal of these fences is another important agenda of the proposed protest demonstration.

She also said that the demand for the safe restoration/rehabilitation of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who are taking refuge in relief camps to their original places and elimination of the bunkers set up by the Kuki militants. Lilina alleged that these bunkers are used by the Kuki militants to attack the Meitei villages.

She then appealed to the people from the state staying in New Delhi to take part in the Jantar Mantar agitation. (NNN)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Meghalaya Pineapple Fest 2024 concludes

6.5 tonnes of organically grown sweet pineapples were sold

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 15:** The second edition of Meghalaya Pineapple Fest 2024, organised by the Government of Meghalaya, held at the iconic Dilli Haat, concluded recently.

Chief minister of Meghalaya, Conrad K Sangma visited the Meghalaya Farmers' Market and engaged with farmers and entrepreneurs, exploring the exhibits of the festival. Sangma underscored the government's investment of ₹ 5.63 crore in infrastructure and ₹ 1.39 crore in working capital, with ₹ 78 lakhs allocated specifically for pineapples until 2023. These efforts have resulted in tremendous achievements, including the export of 4.36 MT of pineapples to Lulu Group Abu Dhabi.

Close to 300 MT are also exported to EU countries after being freeze-dried at the PRIME Hub in Ri Bhoi District. Additionally, these initiatives have increased farmers' income by 30-122 percent, directly impacting 300 plus farmers and indirectly benefiting more than 5000.

The chief minister shed light on significant developments in the pineapple industry and informed that 11 Collective Marketing Centres (CMC) were set up for trading fresh pineapples. He also informed that 358 Integrated Village Cooperative Societies (IVCS) and 28 Organic Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) have been established to subvert the influ-



ence of middlemen and price fluctuations in the fresh fruits segment of the market. With upcoming initiatives like the launch of Agri Response Vehicles, Warehouses, and Farmer's markets, these co-operatives act as formidable trading partners for institutional buyers and as a capable exporter handling logistic issues.

With the aim of doubling farmers' income, the government has initiated mission-mode interventions for high-value commercial crops, Sangma stated. These interventions, covering Turmeric, Ginger, Mushroom, Apiculture, Spice, Khasi Mandarin, Pineapple and more, are designed to be holistic, community-centric endeavors with the farmer at the heart of it all, he

stated.

He also affirmed the support by the State government to farmer's collectives with interest-free working capital loans totaling ₹ 78.82 Lakhs have been provided in 2023-24 to aggregate a target volume of 540MT, eliminating the exploitative practice and, gap funding for logistics while marketing the produce beyond state borders with ₹ 8.12 Lakhs disbursed for trial marketing of pineapple supporting a trading volume of 22.3 MT in 2023.

The establishment of six processing units with a capacity of 1160MT/year, supported by an investment of ₹ 5.63 crore, has enabled the manufacturing of juices, concentrates, and pineapple candies. Sangma also mentioned ex-

ploring Community Public Private Partnerships (CPPP) to make the interventions holistic.

Meghalaya is promoting Umdihar IVCS to partner with IQF Pvt Ltd, Karnataka, which is an export-oriented enterprise to set up a frozen fruits processing unit under the CPPP model. The Umdihar PRIME Hub has processed 400 MT (2023-24) aggregating from 24 Co-operative societies across the state. The individually quick-frozen pineapple cubes are exported to European markets as ingredients in baby food.

The 5-day-long festival witnessed the presence of thousands of visitors savoring the state's organically grown pineapples and witnessing live performances by Meghalaya Grassroot Music Project (MGMP) artistes-ALIVE, Leonard H Syiemlieh, Ahaia. A remarkable sale of 6.5 tonnes (approx.) of organically grown sweet pineapples was sold from Day 1 to Day 4 of the Pineapple Festival. Meghalaya exported 9-10 tonnes for the Pineapple Festival 2024.

The Pineapple Festival has not only highlighted the agricultural excellence of Meghalaya but has also provided a vibrant cultural experience through music and arts. The collaboration with MGMP artists added a unique and lively dimension to the festival, drawing in crowds and fostering a deeper appreciation for the region's cultural richness.

No. TE(Ex) Admn-1/2024/525

### EDUCATIONAL NOTICE

FOR ADMISSION INTO 4-YEARS B.TECH. COURSES IN THE STATE GOVERNMENT ENGINEERING COLLEGES OF ASSAM FOR THE SESSION-2024-25.

In continuation of the Janasanyog/D/2185/24, dated 5/07/2024, published in the local dailies, it is brought to the notice of all concerned that the deadline for candidates to upload documents, choose branches and Engineering Colleges for admission into 4-years B.Tech. Courses in State Government Engineering Colleges of Assam for online counseling has been extended and the portal will remain open upto 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

Sd/-  
Director of Technical Education, Assam,  
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog/D/2554/24/16-Jul-24

### NOTICE

This is for information of all the eligible students of Anundoram Borooah Cash Award, 2024 (who have secured 75% and above marks in HSLC Examination, 2024 conducted by SEBA), that the link i.e. <https://bidyarthi.co.in> and [www.madhyamik.assam.gov.in](http://www.madhyamik.assam.gov.in) for submission of Bank A/c details is live/ open from 15.07.2024. The portal will be closed at midnight of 25/07/2024.

All the eligible candidates are requested to submit the required Bank A/c details along-with relevant documents/ particulars in the above mentioned portal.

The students are requested to follow the following instructions :

- The Bank Account must be in the name of the Awardee.
- Name of Account Holder should be exactly same as the name in SEBA Admit Card / Mark sheet.
- The Awardee should submit the correct IFS Code.
- The Bank account should be Active/ Operational.
- For Minor Account holder, the minimum transaction limit should be maintained.
- Care should be taken while entering the Bank Account details (e.g, Numeric 0 (zero) should be entered, not alphabet "o")
- Mobile number of the Awardee must be entered for future communication.

Janasanyog/D/2578/24/16-Jul-24

Sd/-  
Director of Secondary Education, Assam  
Kahilipara, Guwahati - 781019.



## 'Artful statistical jugglery': Cong slams govt over '8 crore new jobs' claim

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** The Congress on Monday countered the Centre's claim that eight crore new jobs have been created, alleging that the government has done some "artful statistical jugglery" to claim job creation as it has failed to pay attention to the "quality and circumstances" of employment.

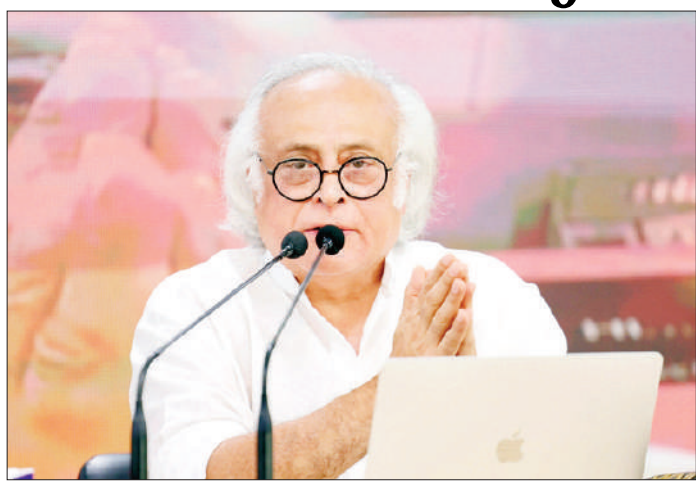
Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said that at a time when India faces a "severe Modi-made unemployment crisis", when lakhs of young people apply for each and every job, "the self-anointed non-biological PM is busy reacting the only way he knows -- by applying his patented 3D model of denying, distracting, and distorting".

He said that based on new RBI estimates, the government is claiming a booming job market.

"The self-appointed divinity himself has chimed in with the claim that the economy created 80 million jobs," Ramesh said in a statement.

The truth is that the alleged growth in employment figures doesn't square up to the grim realities of the Modi era economy, where private investment has been weak and consumption growth sluggish, he said.

"The government has done some artful statistical jugglery to claim job-creation, by adopting a very expansive definition of employment,



without paying attention to the quality and circumstances of employment: A large part of the claimed 'employment growth' is just recording unpaid household work done by women as 'employment'," Ramesh claimed.

"Amidst the poor economic climate, the share of salaried, formal employment in the labour market has decreased. Workers are moving to low-productivity informal and agricultural jobs -- this is an economic tragedy," the Congress leader said.

However, since the '80 million new jobs' headline elides discussion on the quality of jobs, the government touts the 'creation' of these

low-productivity, poorly paid jobs as an achievement, he said.

"This deception is also why the RBI's data shows an increase in employment during the COVID-19 pandemic years, when large sections of the economy fully shut down. While crucial sectors like education saw 12 lakh fewer jobs in 2020-2021, a whopping 1.8 crore 'jobs' were 'created' in agriculture," Ramesh said.

Thus, factory workers, teachers, miners, etc. who returned home during the pandemic and had to fall back upon farming in their family's fields or as tenants for a richer farmer registered as a "job created"

in agriculture, he argued.

"This travesty is the non-biological Prime Minister's economic legacy," Ramesh said.

He said the forthcoming Budget will also undoubtedly make use of the RBI data to paint a rosy picture of the economy.

"The reality on the jobs front, however, is extremely grim -- both because of mass unemployment and an abundance of low-quality employment. This dual tragedy will certainly get overlooked in the Budget speech next Tuesday," Ramesh said.

His remarks come after Prime Minister Modi on Saturday emphasised that creation of eight crore new jobs in the last three to four years has "silenced" those spreading fake narratives about unemployment.

Quoting a recent report of the Reserve Bank of India on the employment figure, the prime minister had asserted the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government continues to prioritise stability and growth and added that small and big investors have welcomed the NDA's third term with enthusiasm.

During the event launching projects costing ₹ 29,000 crore in road, railway, and port sectors, Modi took a swipe at opposition parties for "spreading misinformation" on job creation, labelling them as hindrances to progress. (PTI)

## China expert Vikram Misri takes charge as India's new foreign secretary

*Misri, a 1989-batch Indian Foreign Service officer who was serving as deputy national security advisor, succeeded Vinay Kwatra*



**NEW DELHI, July 15:** Seasoned diplomat Vikram Misri, widely regarded as an expert on China and national security, assumed charge as India's new foreign secretary on Monday.

Misri, a 1989-batch Indian Foreign Service officer who was serving as the deputy national security advisor, succeeded Vinay Kwatra.

He assumed charge of the key position at a time India is looking to navigate various geo-political challenges, including its frosty ties with China following the lingering eastern Ladakh border row and the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

He has served in various capacities at the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in the Prime Minister's Office and in various Indian missions in Europe, Africa, Asia and North America.

He has the rare distinction of serving as private secretary to three prime ministers -- Inder Kumar Gujral, Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi.

"Shri Vikram Misri assumed charge as Foreign Secretary today. TeamMEA extends a warm welcome to Foreign Secretary Misri and wishes him a successful tenure ahead," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on X.

Before he was appointed as the deputy NSA, Misri

served as India's ambassador to China from 2019-2021.

Misri is believed to have played a key role in talks between India and China after tensions flared significantly following the Galwan Valley clashes in June, 2020.

The ties between the two countries nosedived following a fierce clash in the Galwan Valley that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.

In his illustrious career, Misri also served as India's ambassador to Spain (2014-2016) and Myanmar (2016-2018) besides having stints in many Indian missions, including Pakistan, the US, Germany, Belgium and Sri Lanka.

Misri was born in Srinagar and had his early education there (Burn Hall School and DAV School) as well as in Udhampur (Carmel Convent School) in Jammu and Kashmir.

He finished his schooling from the Scindia School in Gwalior and went on to earn a Bachelor's degree with honours in history from the Hindu College in the University of Delhi and an MBA from XLRI, Jamshedpur.

Before joining the government, he worked for three years in the private sector in the fields of advertising and advertising film-making. Misri is a Fellow of the Aspen Institute USA's India Leadership Initiative (now the Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship). He is married to Dolly Misri and they have two children.

The government is also learnt to be in the process of appointing India's next envoy to the US and New Delhi's permanent representative to the United Nations in New York.

Kwatra is learnt to be among the front-runners for the ambassador's position in Washington. The post has been lying vacant since Taranjit Sandhu retired in January.

The position of India's permanent representative to the UN is also lying vacant after Ruchira Kamboj retired last month. (PTI)

## BJP used KP exodus issue to gain Hindu votes: Panun Kashmir

*Chungoo slammed the BJP government for its alleged bias and disrespect towards the community's issues*



**JAMMU, July 15:** Panun Kashmir on Monday criticised the BJP leadership, accusing them of using the issue of exodus of Kashmiri Hindus to blame their opponents and gain Hindu votes across India.

The organisation, which advocates for rights of Kashmiri Pandits, claimed that the BJP-led Centre has neglected the displaced community in the past 10 years.

It added that despite the neutralisation of Article 370 and the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories, the BJP government has shown indifference and bias towards Kashmiri Pandits.

"The BJP leadership has used Kashmiri Hindu religious cleansing to blame its opponents and to garner Hindu votes in the rest of India," Panun Kashmir chairman Ajay Chungoo told reporters here.

He also accused the party of treating "Kashmiri Pandits as second class citizens".

He emphasised that the commu-

nity members are not aligned with any political party and will pursue their freedom independently.

"Everybody should know that our community members are not stooges of any political party and will pursue their political freedom and choice as they wish. Like the Congress, the BJP has failed both Kashmiri Pandits and the nation in Jammu and Kashmir," Chungoo said.

He further said that as terrorist and separatist forces gain strength in Kashmir and Jammu, it is crucial for the government to stand with the people and protect their rights.

Panun Kashmir vowed to continue their struggle until a separate Union Territory is established for the permanent rehabilitation of Kashmiri Hindus.

Chungoo slammed the BJP government for its alleged bias and disrespect towards the community's issues.

"The BJP's hostile political and

ideological stance against Nehruvian policies seems to have translated into anti-Kashmiri Pandit bias among the party's top leadership over the years," Chungoo said.

He said the party has failed to do anything for the community and instead "treats the issues of the community with disdain, absolute disrespect and dismissiveness".

He also condemned the government for failing to increase sustenance allowances for Kashmiri Pandits over the past decade, despite the rising cost of living.

"A small fraction of the displaced population from Kashmir receives cash relief, contrary to the political perception created by the BJP across India. They have not seen even a cosmetic increase during BJP rule in New Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir despite steep price rise during this period on almost all items of day to day survival," the chairman said.

He added that this population segment constitutes a very small fraction of the total population of displaced people from Kashmir.

"An overwhelming majority of the internally displaced community have never received any cash relief contrary to political perceptions created by BJP in the rest of India," he said.

Chungoo further accused the BJP government of overlooking crimes against Kashmiri Pandits and failing to address their security concerns adequately.

He alleged that the BJP committed a grave crime against humanity by denying that the community suffered a genocide. (PTI)

with CM Shinde and other key leaders in the state. "I requested Sharad Pawar to look into this matter because the situation in the state, particularly in some districts, is very tense. The division between the Marathas and OBCs has reached such a level that they are not even going to each other's hotels for having food," he claimed.

"Pawar has agreed to take the initiative and discuss the issue with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and other important leaders in the state," said the NCP leader, who has also been opposing Maratha quota under the OBC category. Bhujbal also reminded Sharad Pawar of his decision, when he was the CM of Maharashtra, to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations in the state which offered the OBCs reservation in education and in the election to local governing bodies.

"When Pawar was the chief minister of Maharashtra, he had resolved the issues of OBCs in the state. Now, the situation demands his intervention again. Pawar also told me that he needs a couple of days to get better as he is not feeling well," Bhujbal said.

The minister also said that when went to Sharad Pawar's residence, he had to wait for nearly one-and-a-half-hours to meet him.

"Pawar was taking rest because he was not feeling well. He later woke up, and we had a discussion in his bedroom," he said.

Sources in the NCP suggested Bhujbal was having a feeling of not being heard in his party. He is with Ajit Pawar's outfit, but politically alienated within the party, they added.

Earlier, asked about Bhujbal's meeting with Sharad Pawar, state minister and BJP leader Sudhir Mungantiwar said it is a customary practice in Maharashtra for political leaders to engage in discussions with one another regardless of their ideological differences. (PTI)

## Have done no wrong, will abide by SC order, says Shivakumar after apex court dismisses his petition

**BENGALURU, July 15:** With the Supreme Court dismissing a petition filed by him challenging the CBI's FIR against him in the disproportionate assets case, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Monday said he has done no wrong and will abide by the SC order.

Also the state Congress President, Shivakumar, however, recalled that the state government had withdrawn sanction to the CBI to prosecute him and handed over the case to the Lokayukta. Hence, the CBI can't conduct the investigation.

The Supreme Court bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and S C Sharma said it was not inclined to interfere with the Karnataka High Court order.

"We had sought for FIR to be quashed, the High Court said it cannot be done, I had filed an appeal,

now I have got a message that they (Supreme Court) too have said it cannot be done. Will abide by whatever the court says," Shivakumar told reporters here.

"Investigation will be there (to face). Despite saying that the CBI should not do the investigation, they are doing it. The Lokayukta is also doing the investigation. Let them do it, I have done no wrong."

Pointing out that CBI continues to conduct the investigation, Shivakumar said, "once our government withdrew (prosecution sanction), once the case was given to Lokayukta, CBI cannot do the investigation, but they (CBI) have gone to the court and things are going on. I will give whatever is necessary, my assets and liabilities."

Asked whether this is being done intentionally, he said, "How can I

speak on the court (matters)? Will have to abide by the court, that's all."

The top court was hearing a plea filed by Shivakumar against the October 19, 2023 order of the high court which rejected his plea.

The HC also directed the CBI to conclude the investigation and file the report within three months.

The CBI has alleged that Shivakumar amassed assets disproportionate to his known sources of income between 2013 and 2018. He was a minister in the previous Congress government during this period.

The FIR was filed by the CBI on September 3, 2020. Shivakumar challenged the FIR in the high court in 2021.

The previous BJP government had granted sanction to the CBI to prosecute Shivakumar, following

which an FIR was lodged against him and investigation undertaken on alleged charges of disproportionate assets.

The current Karnataka cabinet headed by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on November 23, held that the previous BJP government's move to give consent to the CBI to investigate the DA case against Shivakumar was not in accordance with law and decided to withdraw the sanction. Subsequently a government order was issued in this regard.

Based on the Income Tax Department's search operations in Shivakumar's home and offices in 2017, the Enforcement Directorate started its own probe against him.

Based on the ED investigation, the CBI sought sanction from the state government to file an FIR against Shivakumar. (PTI)

## Kejriwal lost 2 kg in prison, being monitored by AIIMS medical board, say Tihar sources

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** A day after the AAP claimed that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had lost 8.5 kg in prison, Tihar jail sources on Monday said he had only lost 2 kg and he was being regularly monitored by a medical board of AIIMS. The sources said the jail administration has written to the Delhi government's Home Department regarding the allegations levelled by AAP ministers and leaders, saying that such a narrative "confuses and misleads the public". Senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh said that with this, the Tihar authorities have accepted that Kejriwal has lost weight. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had on Sunday alleged that the BJP was conspiring to harm Kejriwal's health by keeping him in jail and that he was not getting the necessary medical attention as a diabetic.

Delhi cabinet minister Atishi had expressed concern over Kejriwal's "unexplained weight loss of 8.5 kg" since his arrest and claimed that his sugar level had dropped below 50 mg/dL more than five times in prison.

According to Kejriwal's health report shared by the Tihar sources, Kejriwal weighed 65 kg when he first came to prison on April 1 and 66 kg between April 8 and 29. When he returned to prison on June 2 after a 21-day bail, his weight was 63.5 kg.

"On July 14, his weight was 61.5 kg. So, effectively, he lost 2 kg," an official source said. According to the sources, Kejriwal is being provided home-cooked food but he has been regularly returning portions of it since June 3. A medical board of AIIMS has been constantly monitoring the chief minister and his wife Sunita Kejriwal remains in regular touch with the board, the sources said. They said the jail administration has written to the Delhi government's Home Department rejecting the AAP's allegations regarding Kejriwal's health.

In its letter, the prison administration said that "such a narrative confuses and misleads the public with false information and ulterior motives with intent to browbeat the prison administration". (PTI)

## Bhujbal meets Sharad Pawar to discuss Maratha quota, OBC protest issues

**MUMBAI, July 15:** Maharashtra minister Chhagan Bhujbal on Monday met NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar at his residence here and sought his intervention into the Maratha quota issue and objections over it by OBC leaders.

Speaking to reporters later, Bhujbal said had a meeting with Pawar for nearly one-and-a-half-hours and the latter told him that he would discuss the matter with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and other leaders in the next two days. Bhujbal, an OBC leader who belongs to the rival NCP led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, met former Union minister Sharad Pawar at his 'Silver Oak' residence in Mumbai. The visit came a day after his veiled attack at Sharad Pawar for the opposition's boycott of an all-party meeting on the Maratha quota issue.

Leaders of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), which comprises the Congress, NCP (SP) and Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), did not turn up at the all-party meeting convened by CM Shinde on July 9, claiming the opposition was not taken into confidence on the Maratha reservation issue.

Bhujbal on Sunday claimed the opposition leaders stayed away from the meeting on July 9 "after a phone call from Baramati at 5 pm".

Notably, Baramati Lok Sabha constituency in Pune district is the bastion of 83-year-old veteran politician Sharad Pawar.

Activist Manoj Jarange has been demanding reservation for the Maratha community under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category. Some OBC activists recently held an agitation, seeking an assurance that their quota will not be affected.

After the meeting on Monday, Bhujbal said Sharad Pawar told him he would discuss the ongoing deadlock over Marathas demanding their inclusion in the OBC category for quota

with CM Shinde and other key leaders in the state. "I requested Sharad Pawar to look into this matter because the situation in the state, particularly in some districts, is very tense. The division between the Marathas and OBCs has reached such a level that they are not even going to each other's hotels for having food," he claimed.

"Pawar has agreed to take the initiative and discuss the issue with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and other important leaders in the state," said the NCP leader, who has also been opposing Maratha quota under the OBC category. Bhujbal also reminded Sharad Pawar of his decision, when he was the CM of Maharashtra, to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations in the state which offered the OBCs reservation in education and in the election to local governing bodies.

"When Pawar was the chief minister of Maharashtra, he had resolved the issues of OBCs in the state. Now, the situation demands his intervention again. Pawar also told me that he needs a couple of days to get better as he is not feeling well," Bhujbal said.

The minister also said that when went to Sharad Pawar's residence, he had to wait for nearly one-and-a-half-hours to meet him.

"Pawar was taking rest because he was not feeling well. He later woke up, and we had a discussion in his bedroom," he said.

Sources in the NCP suggested Bhujbal was having a feeling of not being heard in his party. He is with Ajit Pawar's outfit, but politically alienated within the party, they added.

Earlier, asked about Bhujbal's meeting with Sharad Pawar, state minister and BJP leader Sudhir Mungantiwar said it is a customary practice in Maharashtra for political leaders to engage in discussions with one another regardless of their ideological differences. (PTI)

## Uddhav Thackeray victim of betrayal: Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati

**MUMBAI, July 15:** Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati, the Shankaracharya of the Jyotish Peeth in Uttarakhand, who turned down the invitation to the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya, on Monday said Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray is a victim of betrayal.

"Uddhav Thackeray has been betrayed and many people are anguished by it. I met him today as per his request and told him that people's pain won't subside till he becomes the chief minister again," he told reporters after meeting Thackeray at the latter's residence Matoshree in Bandra.

"He (Uddhav) said he will do whatever was needed as per our blessings," Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati said.

Betrayal is the biggest sin, he said, adding, "The one who betrays can't be a Hindu. The one who tolerates betrayal is a Hindu."

"The entire populace of Maharashtra is anguished by the betrayal and this was reflected in the recent (Lok Sabha) elections," he said.

"We don't have anything to do with politics, but we are talking about betrayal which is a sin as per religion," he added. On the laying of a foundation stone of a Kedarnath temple in New Delhi on July 10 by Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, the seer said, "When the address for Kedarnath is in the Himalayas, how can it be in Delhi? Why are you confusing the people?" The Shankaracharya also attended a puja ceremony at Matoshree bungalow. (PTI)

## Amit Shah congratulates Indore for setting tree plantation world record

**BHOPAL, July 15:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah has congratulated Indore for setting a Guinness World Record of "the most trees planted by a team in 24 hours" and said Mother Earth is smiling at the city.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Sunday said that Indore, already the cleanest city in India and MP's economic capital, has now achieved the world record of planting more than 11 lakh saplings in a single day. Yadav in a post on X shared the Guinness World Records certificate and pictures of receiving it.

Earlier on Sunday, Union minister Shah participated in the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign and planted a sapling in Indore.

"Congratulations, Indore! The city of Indore has set a surreal world record by planting 12 lakhs saplings in a day under PM Shri @narendramodi Ji's campaign



'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam'. They have set an example that will be followed by millions in the years to come. Mother Earth is smiling at Indore," Shah said in a post on X late Sunday night.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

launched the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign on June 5 to mark World Environment Day.

Under the drive, approximately 140 crore trees will be planted across the country, including 5.5 crore in Madhya

Pradesh, which Shah has described as the "lungs of Bharat".

Indore, which has been recognised as the country's cleanest city for several years as per the Swachh Survekshan, will see 51 lakh saplings planted during this campaign, as per officials.

The plantation drive was carried out at the BSF Academy's Revati Range, which was divided into nine zones and 100 sub-zones. Besides 2,000 BSF jawans, more than 100 NRIs, NCC cadets from 50 schools, a large number of citizens, and members of various social organisations participated in the plantation drive, officials earlier said.

According to the Guinness World Record website, the previous record for the most saplings planted in 24 hours was 9,21,730. It was achieved by the Assam (India) government's Forest Department at Udalguri on September 13 and 14, 2023. (PTI)



## Bombay HC pulls up prison authorities for 'perfunctory' approach while declining furlough to convicts

**MUMBAI, July 15:** The Bombay High Court has deprecated the repeated practice of state prison authorities of passing orders in a "perfunctory" manner while refusing convicts the benefits of parole and furlough.

A division bench of Justices Bharati Dangle and Manjusha Deshpande, in the order on July 10, said merely because the report from a local police station raises objection to parole or furlough of a convict, which is most of the times without any basis, the benefit of parole or furlough cannot be curtailed.

The court was hearing a petition filed by murder case convict Tabrez Khan, challenging an order passed by the prison authorities refusing him furlough on the ground that an adverse report was submitted by a local police station. The HC quashed the prison authorities' decision and granted furlough to Khan.

The high court noted that in August 2022, the state prisons department issued a circular instructing prisons authorities to not reject parole and furlough applications only on the ground of an adverse police report.



"We hope and trust that the Inspector General of Prisons and Correctional Services is conscious of these directives/guidelines issued by his own department," the HC bench said.

The ground for the rejection of furlough was "perfunctory", it said.

The court said the provisions of parole and furlough exist in the prison system to enable a convict to continue maintaining his family ties and discharge of his family responsibilities, and a convict who undergoing sentence of imprisonment was entitled to these benefits.

"Time and again we have noticed that the prison authorities who are empowered to secure the release of a convict have acted in a perfunctory manner merely by expressing disinclination that his discharge or release from prison is likely to result in some untoward situation including he being indulged in an offence," the bench said.

"We do not think that the laws are insufficient to take care of such a situation," it added.

The Inspector General of Prisons and Correctional Services, in an affidavit, submitted to the HC that the police raised an objection to release Khan on furlough leave as there was a possibility of threat to the lives of witnesses and that he may commit another crime.

The Deputy Inspector General of Prisons, Central region, while refusing Khan furlough also noted there were other cases pending against him and that he was associated with a gangster. Khan was convicted in a murder case. He is undergoing sentence in the case at the Nashik central prison, and is also accused in a few other cases in which he has been granted bail.

The high court, however, said the remark of Khan being associated with a gangster was made without furnishing any iota of material.

"We hope and trust that the authorities will refrain from making such remarks which are totally unfounded and scribed just with an intention to deny the benefit available to a convict, who despite being incarcerated is not denuded of his right under Article 21 of the Constitution of India," the HC said. (PTI)

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## Union Budget: Space industry demands tax holidays, PLI scheme

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** Import holidays, GST exemption for components of launch vehicles, productivity-linked incentives (PLI) and government stepping in as a customer are some of the expectations of the private space sector from Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as she presents the Union Budget next week.

"More money for space related acquisitions, tax holidays, import holidays, and PLI scheme for space," Pixxel Space co-founder and CEO Awaish Ahmed told PTI when asked about his wishlist for the budget.

Industry bodies Indian Space Association (ISpA) and Satcom Industry Association (SIA-India) have sought greater government expenditure on the space sector in the form of an anchor customer for the nascent private sector.

"ISpA calls for a commitment from the government to procure and adopt space technology solutions across various governance areas such as agriculture, disaster management, infrastructure planning and development monitoring, urban development, and remote area connectivity," ISpA director general Lt Gen Anil K Bhatt (retd) said.

Bhatt also sought extension of GST waiver on satellite launch services to other critical components of satellites, ground systems, and launch vehicles.

He also wanted the finance minister to consider tax exemptions/tax holiday and custom-duty exemptions for space sector firms and reduction of tax rate on interest on foreign borrowings.

"The prompt implementation of the Space Activities Act is crucial for addressing legal and standards related issues, providing a clear regulatory framework

for the industry," Bhatt said.

"The Budget should prioritize measures to propel the commercial space sector, with a focus on nurturing deep-tech space startups," SIA-India president Subba Rao Pavuluri told PTI.

Arpan Sahoo, co-founder and CEO of space startup KaleidEO said while current tax and customs exemptions benefit systems and sub-systems, there is a need to extend these to component levels.

"This is crucial for startups operating with limited resources, allowing them time to scale over the next decade," Sahoo said.

"As a sunrise industry, more demand generation from the government is essential to drive non-linear growth," he said.

SIA-India director general Anil Prakash made a strong pitch for a substantial increase in the space budget to align with space-faring nations, alongside dedicated funds for local manufacturing and capability building.

Prakash urged the government to recognize the potential of market segments such as rural broadband, enterprise connectivity, maritime, aviation, and disaster management.

"A portion of the unutilized Universal Service Obligation Fund could be allocated for satellite services to improve connectivity and bridge the digital divide in rural/remote areas of the country," he said.

ISpA also said a Digital Public Infrastructure and Digital Public Goods approach for Earth observation based geospatial analytics and insights can unlock value and innovation to several stakeholders well beyond the space sector. (PTI)

## Kerala man stuck inside hospital lift for two days rescued, three employees suspended

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 15:** A 59-year-old man was stuck in a lift at the Government Medical College Hospital in the Kerala capital for two days, but the officials responsible for its operation were unaware of the situation until Monday morning, prompting the authorities to initiate disciplinary action against them for their alleged lapses.

Ulloor resident Ravindran Nair, a patient who came for a medical check up, had been stuck inside the lift of the OP Block of the government medical college here since Saturday and was rescued by an operator who had arrived for routine work, police said.

He has been admitted to the hospital for a detailed medical examination.

"He (Nair) got into the lift to go to the first floor but claims that the lift came down and did not open. He says he shouted for help, but no one came. His phone was also switched off," police said. State Health Minister Veena George has ordered a probe into the incident and sought a report in this regard.

The health department has also suspended three staff members -- two lift operators and a duty sergeant -- in connection with the incident.

The officials said that the incident came to light on Monday morning, when the lift operator came for routine work.

The man's family had on Sunday night filed a missing case with the medical college police.

Speaking to the media in the hospital, Nair said the lift got stuck, and he kept pressing the alarm, but no one came to the rescue.

"I tried calling all the emergency numbers listed inside the lift, but no one answered. The alarm was also sounded, but no one came. After some time, I understood that it was the second Saturday and a Sunday the next day, and then I waited for help.

"Later, after some time, I lost track of time inside the lift. This morning, an operator came, and I pressed the alarm. We both forcefully opened the door from both sides, and I jumped out of it," Nair said.

The man said he was sure that someone would come and operate the lift on Monday.

Nair's son, Hari Shankar, said his father was pretty shaken up as he had been inside the lift for almost two days.

"My father says he kept on ringing the alarm inside the lift, but no one came to the rescue," he said.

Thirumala native Nair had gone to the medical college hospital to seek treatment and got stuck in the lift on Saturday around 12 noon.

As his phone was not reachable, family members approached the medical college police station on Sunday evening and lodged a complaint. However, the medical college officials maintained that the lift was not a regularly used one. (PTI)

## 2 arrested in GTB Hospital firing case, cops say shooter still at large

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** The Delhi Police has arrested two people in connection with the fatal shooting of a 32-year-old man inside a ward in the GTB Hospital here, officials on Monday said. Police nabbed Faiz (20) from Loni in Uttar Pradesh and Farhan from Chauhan Banger area in Delhi, but said they might not have been involved in actual firing of shots Sunday evening.

They said the Faiz and Farhan were allegedly involved in providing a motorcycle to four accused who went to the hospital. The four accused reached the GTB Hospital on that motorcycle, the police said.

One of the four entered the ward number 24 and shot fires at the patient, killing him at the hospital bed.

"We are interrogating them (Faiz and Farhan) and will take their police remand to know about the one who shot the person (patient). Our teams are working round the clock to nab rest of the accused. They will be nabbed soon," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) Surendra Choudhary said.

The attackers had gone to the hospital to kill a gangster -- a rival of the Hasim Baba gang who was also shot at by some people on June 12 and was admitted in the same wards for some time -- but they shot dead Riyazuddin who was lying on the bed opposite to him. Police



also said the shooters had proper instruction on how they can escape from the hospital after committing the crime.

"On Sunday, the GTB Enclave police registered a case of murder on the statement of Tarranum Malik. She told police that her brother Riyazuddin was fired upon by an unknown person inside ward number 24 of the GTB Hospital, where he was undergoing treatment," DCP Choudhary said.

The officer further said that the video footage from the cameras near the have been obtained. The CCTV footage from cameras on the ground floor were also obtained which show four people entering the hospital emergency gate.

"Multiple teams were formed to investigate the case and to nab the accused. Teams identified the people in the footage based on inputs. Their social media handles were also obtained and

their mobile numbers were checked. We checked the call details and some more suspects were identified," said the DCP.

Police said that after checking call details, Faiz was arrested from Laxmi Garden area in Loni of Uttar Pradesh.

"During interrogation, Faiz revealed that one Faheem alias Badshah Khan is the mastermind of the incident. Faiz and his two brothers -- Faujaan and Moin Khan -- usually meet Faheem who is an associate of the Hasim Baba gang and works for the gang," said the DCP, adding that one more suspect Farhan (whose age is not yet known) was also nabbed from Chauhan Banger area.

During interrogation, they said that Faheem used to call all of them at his flat in Babarpur here.

"On the day of the incident, they were at Faheem's flat in Babarpur. Faheem instructed them to kill a person (other than the deceased) who was admitted in the same ward. Faiz and Farhan also disclosed that Faheem instructed them how to flee from the GTB Hospital after committing the firing," DCP Choudhary said.

The officer further said they were instructed to go to the GTB Hospital in the afternoon and to shoot the target.

Further investigation is underway and efforts are on to nab other accused, said the DCP. (PTI)

## Resident doctors at Delhi's GTB Hospital on indefinite strike after patient killed inside ward



**NEW DELHI, July 15:** Resident doctors of Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital here went on an indefinite strike on Monday morning but left the emergency services operational after a patient was shot dead while a doctor was treating him.

A 32-year-old man was shot dead by a teenager inside a ward of the GTB Hospital here on Sunday in front of doctors and his relatives. The victim, Riyazuddin, was admitted to the hospital on June 23 and was undergoing treatment for an abdominal infection.

According to doctors of the Delhi government-run hospital, three doctors were present in ward 24 when the assailant pushed aside a doctor and shot Riyazuddin.

Members of the Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) began the strike at 9 am on Monday but emergency services are operational, RDA president Nitesh Kumar told PTI.

The strike is being led by junior doctors with the support of the Delhi Nursing Federation and other associations. The protesters raised slogans, demanding improvement in the security situation at in hospital.

The medical professionals at the hospital are attending to only emergency patients, while the outpatient department, laboratories and other departments are closed, a member of the RDA said.

Another member said, "We are arranging everything for the association so we can stay on strike until our voices are heard by the administration department and the government."

He said the RDA will stand res-

olute over their safety demands.

The protesters claimed that although the administration had agreed to their demands last time, no training was provided to the security personnel, and security arrangements have not been enhanced yet.

In reply to the hospital administration's letter to the RDA for a meeting, the association said everything will be discussed among all its members and doctors who are on strike in front of the media, not in a room with just two to three members.

The administration opposed this, the RDA claimed.

The indefinite strike by the hospital's RDA was announced on Sunday after their long-pending demand of giving doctors ample security allegedly went unheeded by the Delhi government.

"Our repeated appeals for enhanced security have been ignored, culminating in this tragic event (patient's killing). Until the Delhi government ensures a secure environment for everyone within the hospital, we cannot continue our duties," an RDA spokesperson had said in a statement.

"The strike will continue until fundamental improvements in security are effectively implemented and communicated," the statement said.

The killing of the patient in the hospital's ward has been condemned by other doctors' bodies as well.

Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj had said, "A security review of all hospitals will be carried out and no negligence will be tolerated."

The Federation of Resident Doctors Association (FORDA) has described the incident as a "mafia-like killing."

"The recent incident of violence at GTB Hospital underscores the urgent need for enhanced security measures for our doctors," FORDA president Aviral Mathur had said. (PTI)

## India, US carry out mega wargame in Indian Ocean

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** Indian Navy's frontline warships carried out a mega military exercise with the Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group of the US in the Indian Ocean, demonstrating the growing strategic congruence between the two sides in the key maritime domain.

The USS Theodore Roosevelt is a Nimitz-class, nuclear-powered, aircraft carrier of the US Navy.

A carrier battle group or carrier strike group is a mega naval fleet comprising an aircraft carrier, accompanied by a large number of destroyers, frigates and other ships.

The Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group operated alongside forces from the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean on July 12, the US embassy said in a readout.

The wargame came amid increasing concerns among democratic countries over China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the larger Indo-Pacific region. The Indian Navy's deployment included guided missile destroyer INS Visakhapatnam and replenishment ship INS Aditya.

"This joint maritime activity advanced interoperability between the two major defence partners and under-

scores their shared commitment to upholding a free and open Indo-Pacific," the embassy said.

The US and Indian military forces focused on improving shared maritime domain awareness and information sharing, enhancing replenishment and logistics interoperability and improving combined air-to-air capabilities, it said.

"Participating units include the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, Carrier Air Wing 11, and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Daniel Inouye," it said.

The USS Theodore Roosevelt is currently operating with carrier strike group nine after conducting this joint maritime activity in the 7th Fleet area of operations.

The 7th Fleet is the US Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

The Indian Navy routinely participates alongside US Navy units in multilateral exercises across the Pacific, including Southwest Asia and littoral Africa. (PTI)

## Body of missing sanitary worker found in Kerala canal

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 15:** The Kerala government said on Monday that the body of a sanitary worker, Joy, who had gone missing while cleaning a canal filled with waste and filth in the state capital two days earlier, had been found.

The government authorities confirmed that the body found in the Amayizhanchan canal on Monday morning was indeed that of 47-year-old Joy.

The decomposed body was found in the canal on the Pazhavangadi-Thakarakambam-Vanchiyoar road by corporation sanitation workers, who immediately alerted the police and the ward councillor.

An expert team from the Indian Navy had joined the massive search and rescue operation on Monday morning to trace the sanitation worker, Joy, who had been swept away while cleaning the Amayizhanchan canal on Saturday.

With the authorities officially identifying the body of Joy, multiple agencies, including the police, Fire Force, and NDRF, ended their 46-hour-long massive rescue operations.

The body has been sent to the Government Medical College Hospital for

further examination.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan condoled the death of Joy, terming it as "extremely sorrowful."

"Joy's body, which was missing since Saturday, was found this morning near Thakarakambam-Vanchiyoar. I convey my deepest condolences and grief over Joy's tragic death. I share the grief of the family members," Vijayan said in a statement here.

He said a 46-hour long continuous rescue operation was carried out to find Joy.

"The rescue operation was coordinated by bringing together various departments. All government agencies worked together and took all possible humanly measures to ensure the success of the operation. The help of technology, including gen robotics, was also used for the rescue operation," Vijayan said.

He said in the highly complex rescue operation, the Fire Force, their scuba diving team, National Disaster Response Force, Police, Navy's expert team, and sanitation workers joined hands and worked tirelessly.

"We express our heartfelt gratitude to all of them for their service," the chief minister said. (PTI)

## Thousands pull chariots in Lord Jagannath's return car festival in Puri



**PURI, July 15:** Thousands of devotees pulled the chariots of sibling deities - Lord Jagannath, Devi Subhadra and Lord Balabhadra - on the 'Bahuda Yatra' or return car festival on Monday.

Though the pulling of chariots was slated to start at 4 pm, it began ahead of the schedule amid chants of 'Jai Jagannath' and beating of cymbals.

Devotees start pulling Lord Balabhadra's chariot 'Talapadma' at 3.25 pm and Devi Subhadra's 'Devadalan' at 4 pm. Pulling of Lord Jagannath's chariot 'Nandighosh' began at 4.15 pm.

The chariot pulling started after Puri's titular king 'Gajapati Maharaj' Divya Singha Deb performed 'cheerapahanna', a ritual during which he swept the three chariots with help of golden broom by sprinkling sacred water.

The deities left the Jagannath temple on July 7 during the Rath Yatra and reached Gundicha temple, considered their birthplace. They stayed there for a week and on Monday are now returning to the Jagannath temple. This journey is known as the 'Bahuda Yatra'.

Earlier, the trinity was ceremonially taken to their respective chariots from the Gundicha Temple in presence of lakhs of devotees.

A total of 180 platoons (1 platoon comprises 30 personnel) of police force and 1,000 officers were deployed to maintain law and order and crowd management during the 'Bahuda Yatra'.

Additional Director General of Police (Law & Order) Sanjay Kumar said adequate security arrangements have been made and the entire temple town is under CCTV surveillance. Around five lakh people are expected to congregate for the festival. The deities will remain seated on the chariots in front of the 'Singha Dwar' (Lion's Gate) of the 12th-century shrine on Monday night. The 'Sunabesha' (golden attire) ritual, in which the deities are decked in gold jewellery, will be performed on chariots on July 16. (PTI)

### NAME CHANGE

I, SAKIL MUSTAK AHMED do hereby declare that I am a permanent resident of the below mentioned address. That my actual and correct name is SAKIL MUSTAK AHMED. That in my testimonials, qualification certificates and in Marksheets my name mentioned as Md. Sakil Mustak Ahmed. In AADHAR Card and PAN CARD my name is mentioned correctly SAKIL MUSTAK AHMED. That I have applied for an Indian passport Where my name is mentioned correctly as SAKIL MUSTAK AHMED. That MD SAKIL MUSTAK AHMED and SAKIL MUSTAK AHMED are the same and one person.

Sd/- SAKIL MUSTAK AHMED S/O NURJAMAL HOQUE R/O- Niz Dalgaon, Dalgaoan Grant PO- Dalgaoan PS Dalgaoan Dist- Darrang (Assam)

## Jammu Smart City plans green buildings along Tawi river

**JAMMU, July 15:** In a significant move towards enhancing urban sustainability, Jammu Smart City Ltd (JSCL) is considering establishing green buildings on the reclaimed land and adjoining areas of the Tawi riverfront development project, an official said on Monday.

These green buildings are expected to incorporate energy-efficient designs, renewable energy sources, and sustainable construction materials, contributing to a reduced carbon footprint and enhanced quality of life for residents, the official said.

The Tawi riverfront project in the heart of Jammu is being developed on the lines of Gujarat's Sabarmati riverfront, aimed at enhancing the aesthetic value of the water body by improving natural purifying capabilities and promoting environmental and urban infrastructure sustainabil-



ity. The project also aims to make recreational, residential, commercial, and green spaces on the reclaimed land and the adjoining warehouse.

The official said that under the

financial business plan for land monetisation of these reclaimed areas.

The meeting, also attended by additional general manager urban, JSCL, Deepika Gupta, focused on detailed discussions regarding architectural plans, development control regulations, and the integration of essential facilities and green spaces.

JSCL is a special purpose vehicle constituted in August 2017 for the implementation of the development works aimed at giving a new look to the city of temples.

Emphasizing the project's significance, Thusoo urged CBRE to expedite the formulation of a land monetization strategy for the reclaimed lands on the Tawi riverfront.

"This project holds immense potential for Jammu Smart City and is poised to significantly bolster tourism in the region," Thusoo said. (PTI)

guidance of JSCL Chief Executive Officer Rahul Yadav, a meeting was convened by JSCL Project Director Sunil Thusoo, with real estate consulting firm CBRE to strategize the



# Kim Kardashian shares pictures from Ambani's wedding festivities, writes 'India has my heart'

**MUMBAI, July 15:** American actor-socialite Kim Kardashian shared more pictures from her visit to India to attend Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's wedding.

Kim, 40, arrived in India alongside her sister Khloe Kardashian on Friday morning. Both the sisters were quick to share updates on their respective Instagram handles and also took a rickshaw ride around the city before the main event.

Kim has now posted more pictures from the grand gala on her Instagram.

The posts had pictures of her dressed in red outfit that's accessorised with a matching veil, emerald headband and bracelet.

The post also featured her posing alongside Isha Ambani and the newlyweds Anant and Radhika. She captioned the post, "Indian has my" and added a heart emoji along.

The wedding took place on July 12 and was attended by several notable personalities from across the fields including celebrities, sports players, politicians and others.

It also witnessed performances by several international artists. Anant is the son of Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani and Radhika is the daughter of pharma tycoons Viren and Shaila Merchant.

The Kardashian sisters trip to India will feature on their popular reality TV show The Kardashians. (PTI)



## Don't stereotype, don't lampoon: Hindi films and SC verdict on portrayal of differently abled

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** Differently abled and derision have often gone hand in hand in mainstream Hindi cinema with numerous instances of impairments, visual, speech, physical and others, being used to get laughs – mostly unkind. A trend activists and lawyers hope will end with the Supreme Court's recent "game changing" verdict. Stereotyping differently abled persons in cinema perpetuates discrimination and inequality, the apex court said last week while asking filmmakers to refrain from misleading portrayals and laying down terms such as "crippled" and "spastic" that should not be used.

Humour can be an important element because it sometimes spreads the message about disability and acts as a tool for awareness, said Nipun Malhotra, who filed the petition that led to the Supreme Court verdict.

"But there is a subtle difference between humour that is creating awareness and laughing at situations with people in disability space and humour that laughs at the disability itself. The Supreme Court, in its judgement, has beautifully separated that as 'disability humour which is acceptable' and 'disabling humour that is not acceptable'," the founder of the Nipman Foundation told PTI. Activist lawyer Gaurav Bansal said the court has shown its "humane side" and the government should act proactively. Bansal and his associates had earlier filed a petition against the title of "Mental Hai Kya", a 2019 film starring Kangana Ranaut and Rajkumar Rao later retitled as "Judgemental Hai Kya".

"It is also the duty of the Central Board of Film Certification to look into these things," he added.

The examples of movies lampooning the differently abled are plenty.

The success of Rohit Shetty's 2006 "Golmaal", for instance, actually spawned a multistarrer franchise. The laughs came mainly from the many discomfiting situations centred around Lucky, a character with speech disability played by Tusshar Kapoor. It also featured a blind couple, essayed by Paresh Rawal and Sushmita Mukerjee, for laughs. Then there was the 2004 "Mujhse Shaadi Karogi", starring Salman Khan, Akshay Kumar and Priyanka Chopra Jonas, which had the late Kader Khan playing Duggal Sahab, a person with a different disability every day.

"Judaai", the 1997 hit featuring Sridevi, Anil Kapoor, and Urmila Matondkar, featured a character played by Upasana Singh with a speech disorder. The film continues to be an active part of the meme culture in the era of social media. (PTI)

## 'PHIR AAYI HASSEEN DILLRUBA' SET TO PREMIERE ON NETFLIX ON AUGUST 9

**MUMBAI, July 15:** Taapsee Pannu and Vikrant Massey's lovers on the run Netflix drama "Fir Aayi Hasseen Dillruba" is set to premiere on August 9.

A sequel to the 2021 film "Hasseen Dillruba", the film traces the journey of ill-fated lovers Rani and Rishu.

Directed by Jayprad Desai, penned and co-produced by Kanika Dhillon, the film stars Pannu, Massey, Sunny Kaushal and Jimmy Shergill and is backed by Anand L Rai's Colour Yellow Productions and Bhushan Kumar's T-Series Films. As per the official synopsis, the story picks up where the first film left off and follows Rani Kashyap and Rishabh Saxena as they seek a fresh start in the vibrant city of Agra.

With authorities on their trail and drops of blood marking their path, their quest takes a dramatic turn with the arrival of Sunny Kaushal's character, Abhimanyu, introducing a fresh layer of intrigue to the drama. The lovers find new enemies with Jimmy Shergill and many more who want to foil their 'happily ever after'. (PTI)



## Bollywood celebrities visit Kuttaru Koragajja temple

**MANGALURU (KARNATAKA), July 15:** A host of celebrities, including Bollywood actors Katrina Kaif, Suniel Shetty, and his son Ahan and daughter Athiya, as well as star cricketer K L Rahul visited the Kuttaru Koragajja Shrine



in Mangaluru on Sunday and offered prayers.

Koragajja is a prominent folk deity worshipped in the coastal regions of Karnataka, and is particularly popular in Mangaluru.

Shetty, who has roots in Tulunadu, and his family members, took part in the Kola (a traditional ritual) in deity's honour, along with Kaif.

Taking pictures or videos within the Koragajja shrine was restricted in the past. However, on this occasion, due to the presence of Bollywood celebrities, temple authorities allowed photographs to be taken in front of the constituency gate and even inside the office.

Snapshot of Katrina Kaif in front of the temple has already gone viral on social media. (PTI)

## No 'good news', for now enjoy 'Bad Newz': Vicky Kaushal on Katrina Kaif's pregnancy rumours

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** Actor Vicky Kaushal on Monday dismissed media reports about wife Katrina Kaif's pregnancy as "speculation", saying they will happily announce whenever they have "good news".

Kaushal, who is currently promoting his upcoming comedy "Bad Newz", was in the city to promote the movie ahead of its Friday release. The film also stars Tripti Dimri and Amy Virk.

"As far as the good news that you spoke about is concerned, we will be very happy to share it with you when we have it. But till then, there is no truth to that, there is only speculation which is coming from the media. So please, enjoy 'Bad Newz' for now, we will share with you when there is time for good news," Kaushal said at a promotional event here.

When the host requested the media to not ask personal questions, the actor quipped, "There is a very good line in the picture, which is 'Don't get personal'."

Pregnancy rumours gained prominence when a picture of the couple walking on the streets of London became viral on social media with many

fans speculating that Kaif was sporting a baby bump.

Kaushal later shared plans for Kaif's 41st birthday tomorrow.

"Thanks for mentioning her birthday, it's a very special day and the plan is to just spend some quality time together. I'm rushing back to her birthday now... I've been busy with the promotions and she has also been travelling," he said.

"Bad Newz" revolves around a woman (Dimri) who is carrying twins, but with different fathers, played by Kaushal and Virk.

The actor has become an internet sensation with "Tauba Tauba", a post-credit number that's being constantly recreated in reels. Kaushal's dancing in the song has been praised by industry seniors like Salman Khan and Hrithik Roshan.

"I am overwhelmed but in a very nice way. We have worked for many years to get such a response, so that we do something like that which people love a lot, make reels, make videos. Of course, everyone in the team gets happy when the film earns well and the box office does well but the love, the acceptance from the people, this is what we actually work for," Kaushal said, adding that

Roshan has always been an inspiration. "So to get feedback from them feels like getting an Oscar," he added.

Dimri said what was surprising was that Kaushal learned the choreography in just three days from Bosco Martis and Caesar Gonsalves.

Kaushal said they shot the song after they were done with the film.

"Then there was a conversation about a collaboration with Karan Aujla. We loved the track and we were very excited. Bosco sir has choreographed many songs with many artists... Got three-four days to learn it and Bosco sir taught me and you have witnessed the result," he said.

As the son of action director Shyam Kaushal, the actor said he understands the effort by the people working behind the camera.

"The step that everyone is talking about was given to me by Bosco sir... It takes an army to create a song or a film so they should be applauded equally."

The actor, who made his debut with "Masaan", also reflected on completing 12 years since his first audition.

"It feels surreal, it feels magical, I am still in a dream sequence and the dream

is still going on and I don't want to wake up."

Dimri, 30, who got immense popularity after her role in "Animal", said she is glad that people are now revisiting her performance in "Laila Majnu".

"Every other day there is some or other person that is texting me for 'Laila Majnu' and that is what we act for and I am very grateful that the film got so much love."

Dimri said she loves working in drama and comedy, which she hadn't tried until now, was fun but challenging. "Drama is my favourite genre but as an actor I feel it's really important that you try challenging yourself and comedy seemed difficult to me right from the beginning. So, it was a good thing that I was offered this film... It was difficult because I was working with Vicky and Amy and both are great actors and their comic timings are great. It was a learning experience," she added.

Virk, a huge singer-star in Punjab and someone who has also worked in Hindi hits such as "Bhuj" and "83", said there isn't much difference between the two industries now. (PTI)





# It is a good thing that everyone is performing: Gill on competition for openers' slots



**HARARE, July 15:** The competition for the openers' slots has intensified following India's T20I series win in Zimbabwe and for contender Shubman Gill, that can only be a "good thing".

Gill, who is expected to open alongside Yashasvi Jaiswal in the three T20Is in Sri Lanka later this month, was the leading run getter in the five-match series in Harare. He was not part of the T20 World Cup squad in the USA and the Caribbean.

For the major part of the se-

ries, India played as many as four openers in the playing eleven and all of them did well including Gill, Jaiswal, Abhishek Sharma and Ruturaj Gaikwad.

Gill captained India's second string team and played as an opener in all the five matches with Jaiswal joining him at the top from the third game onwards.

For the first two games, he opened with Punjab teammate Abhishek Sharma who scored a hundred and a fifty in his debut

series. Among the four openers, Gill had the lowest strike rate, 125.92, compared to Jaiswal's 165.88, Gaikwad's 158.33 and Abhishek's 174.64.

"It's a good thing that everyone's performing. It shows that everyone is hungry and nobody is ready to take it easy. For any country or board, that's always a good thing," said Gill on Sunday referring to the openers.

Following the retirement of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli from T20Is, the selectors will

have a problem of plenty when it comes to picking the openers for the Sri Lanka series.

"Anyone who got the opportunity grabbed it with both hands. The openers to bowlers to all-rounders to spinners, everyone made a mark and I think the selectors have now seen everything and it's up to them to name the squad for the next series," he said after India's 4-1 series win over Zimbabwe.

On captaining the team through the series, Gill said he

enjoyed every bit of the challenge.

"One thing about captaincy I feel is how much confidence you can show in your players. I try to do that and make them believe that if you try and execute the plans, the results will always follow," Gill said.

"After losing the first match, we were under a bit of pressure. It's not easy to play back to back games and the series was planned in a way that there were two back-to-back games, a couple of days rest and then again back-to-back games.

"It's never easy playing a series like that but I think the way we came back after losing the first T20I was really remarkable."

India bounced back to win the series 4-1 after losing the opener.

"Seeing everyone hungry and so quickly adapting to the situation and assessing the conditions was truly spectacular to watch," said Gill.

With the ball moving around in the powerplay, the opener thought it was important to be a little cautious early in the innings.

"I think, as per the conditions of the wicket, there were some challenging conditions, especially in the powerplay, the ball was always doing something or the other. As an opening batter, my focus was to see out 4-5 overs and not concede any wicket," he added. (PTI)

## More support staff than players in India's Olympics TT squad but head coach says it's fine



**NEW DELHI, July 15:** The Olympic-bound Indian table tennis team is currently training in the German city of Saarbrücken with the support staff outnumbering the players who will be competing in Paris.

Italy's Massimo Costantini, who has returned as India's head coach for a third time ahead of the Paris Olympics, is getting help from former player Sourav Chakrabarty as the other national coach of the contingent.

What is unusual is that as many as four personal coaches have been cleared by the government to travel with the squad with all three members of the women's team wanting their own through their stay in the Summer Games beginning July 26.

Two masseurs and a physio are the other members of the nine-man support staff while six members form the playing contingent (three men, three women).

Star women's player Manika Batra, Sreeja Akula and Archana Kamath will lean on their respective personal coaches during the course of their campaign in Paris.

In the three-member men's team, India's flag-bearer Sharath Kamal will have Chris Pfeiffer by his side at the Games. Harmeet Desai and Manav Thakkar are the other members of the men's unit.

The presence of so many coaches can lead to floating of too many ideas in the camp but

Costantini, who has been with the squad for more than a month, doesn't see it as a problem.

"The personal coaches are a part of the team mechanism. They will have their ideas and I have my own ideas. I will listen to them and they will listen to me and eventually the final call lies with me. I don't see anything wrong in that," Costantini told PTI from Saarbrücken.

However, only designated team coaches will have field of play access while the personal coaches can only watch the action from the stands and will also stay outside the Games' village.

The Indian table tennis unit had courted a major controversy during the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 when Manika refused the court-side help of then national coach Soumyadeep Roy and later accused him of match-fixing.

That incident led to the suspension of Table Tennis Federation of India due to a "sorry" state of affairs in the national sports federation.

Ahead of the 2024 edition, all the personal coaches left with the Indian contingent for Saarbrücken last week. The team will train there till July 21 before heading to Paris.

The individual events will precede the team event in which India has secured a first ever qualification in both the categories. The seedings will be announced on Tuesday. (PTI)

## Golf: Lahiri stumbles in final round, Garcia rallies to win play-off in Spain

**SOTOGRADE (SPAIN), July 15:** The title slipped through Anirban Lahiri's hands as the Indian was unable to hold on to his four-shot lead before being outwitted by seasoned local favourite Sergio Garcia in the play-offs to finish second at Liv Golf Andalucia here.

As Lahiri shot two-over 73 on the final day, Garcia, who started the day seven shots behind the Indian, carded five-under 66 and reached a five-under total for a

play-off, which the Spaniard won. Garcia started the day at even par, seven shots behind overnight leader Lahiri.

But the Spanish star played flawless golf for 17 holes, posting six birdies and applying pressure on Lahiri, who was trying to break his own winless drought of nine years. While Garcia suffered his only bogey of the day with a three-putt at the par-three third to wrap up his five-under 66, Lahiri birdied the par-five 17th. That

put the tournament in Lahiri's hands going to the par-four 18th, the most difficult hole on the course this week.

Lahiri found the middle of the green with his approach shot and rolled his birdie attempt to three feet to set up the potential winning par. But with a chance to win the individual title and secure the team title for the Crushers, he missed the putt for a final-round 73 to drop back to five under and set up the double

playoff.

It was an unprecedented day in LIV Golf's young history, captain Garcia and his Fireballs GC produced a storybook finish for their Spanish fans on home soil.

Garcia rallied from seven strokes down to win his first LIV Golf individual title on the second sudden-death playoff hole against Crushers GC's Anirban Lahiri. Garcia's teammates Abraham Ancer and David Puig beat the Crushers duo of captain

Bryson DeChambeau and Paul Casey in the team aggregate-score playoff as the Fireballs — with three Spaniards on the roster — swept both trophies at Real Club Valderrama.

For Garcia, the script couldn't have been written any better, as he won for the first time after three previous playoff losses.

For Lahiri, the winless run since his 2015 win at Hero Indian Open at home, continues despite close finishes in Liv golf. (PTI)

## Alcaraz wants seat at adult table after his fourth Grand Slam

**LONDON, July 15:** Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic did not manage to collect four Grand Slam titles before turning 22, the way Carlos Alcaraz has. None of the members of the so-called Big Three was able to triumph at both the French Open and Wimbledon in a single season before turning 22, the way Alcaraz just did, capped by a 6-2, 6-2, 7-6 (4) win against Djokovic on Sunday in the final at All England Club for a second consecutive trophy there.

Alcaraz is aware of where many of his achievements — particularly with regard to his age — place him in the history of the game. Those are not the milestones that interest him, however. He wants to do more, win more. He wants to reach elite status.

"Get closer to the legends," is the way Alcaraz put it in Spanish on Sunday. "That's my objective."

The list of what Alcaraz is accomplishing in his still-in-its-early-stages career keeps growing.

His 2022 US Open title made him the first teenager to reach No. 1 in the ATP rankings. His French Open championship last month made him the youngest man with major titles on hard, grass and clay courts. Sunday's victory made him only the third man to win Wimbledon multiple times before turning 22, joining Boris Becker and Bjorn Borg. It also made him the second man in the Open era, which dates to 1968, to start a career 4-0 in Slam finals, joining Federer.

"Well, obviously I've seen, and I've heard, all the stats that I am the youngest to win at Roland Garros and Wimbledon the same year" (or) to win whatever. I honestly try not to think about it too much. Obviously it's a really great start of my career, but I have to keep going. I have to keep building my path," Alcaraz said, between tugs

at the shoulders of his white T-shirt. "At the end of my career, I want to sit at the same table as the big guys. That's my main goal. That's my dream right now," he continued. "It doesn't matter if I already won four Grand Slams at the age of 21. If I (don't) keep going ... it doesn't matter."

It's hard not to appreciate his talent as it stands now.

The forehands struck with such force that crowds gasp. The serves that topped 135 mph (218 kph) against Djokovic. The returns that produced five winners and 14 break points on Sunday. And that's to say nothing of the speed and on-the-run creativity that turn opponents' apparent point-closing shots into remarkable winners at the other end of the court.

"Just overall, the way I felt on the court today against him, I was inferior," said Djokovic, who only broke Alcaraz once. "That's it. He was a better player. He played every single shot better than I did."

Pretty high praise.

Daniil Medvedev, the 2021 US Open champion and five-time Slam runner-up, also was effusive in his assessment after losing to Alcaraz in the semifinals Friday.

"We all have, a little bit, our preferences: Someone prefers defense; someone prefers counterattack; someone prefers to be super aggressive," Medvedev said. "He can do all of it."

Perhaps.

Do not think for a moment that Alcaraz is satisfied. To give one example: He spent extra time working on his serving during the Wimbledon fortnight.

"I have to keep improving everything, I guess," Alcaraz said. So how far can he go?

Seems rather premature to start discussing whether he can approach the Grand Slam totals of Djokovic (24), Nadal (22) or Federer (20). (AP)

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The individual events will precede the team event in which India has secured a first ever qualification in both the categories. The seedings will be announced on Tuesday.

"Olympics is an event of life. The focus of the camp here is on footwork and stamina. Both mental and physical fitness is key especially in best of seven games scenario," Costantini said.

"The mind and body have to be in sync for the players to excel. We are training in a pressure free environment," added the Italian. (PTI)

## Indian cricket has lot of depth but transition should be gradual: Vikram Rathour

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** Outgoing batting coach Vikram Rathour knows that a tough transition period awaits India in the near future but having worked with the available talent pool, he feels the side is well-equipped to handle the phase provided it unfolds in a "controlled and gradual manner".

While Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will still play ODIs and Tests for now, India will have to grapple with the transition phase in another couple of years when they move towards the last phase of their respective careers?

"It is never going to be easy to replace people of Rohit and Virat's calibre," Rathour, also a former selector, told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"The recently-concluded series against Zimbabwe (on Sunday) gave us some glimpse into how the T20 team will look like in future. But we still have a few years in Test and ODI cricket to get to that point," said one of the key members of Rahul Dravid's

coaching team.

Having served as both national selector and one of the coaches of the senior team, Rathour has an inside view of Indian cricket's talent pool and he finds it reassuring.

"I won't be too concerned about it. We have a lot of depth in Indian cricket. There are lots of very talented and skilful players who are coming through the system. The only thing we need to make sure is the transition is done in a controlled manner. It needs to be gradual.

He feels that by the time, Rohit and Kohli bid adieu to all formats, the younger stars would be well-settled, forming the nucleus for the next 10 years.

"I am hoping that by then, players like Shubman Gill, Rishabh Pant, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel to name a few, would establish themselves and will make the transition smooth.

"In ODIs also, we have experienced players like Shreyas Iyer,



KL Rahul and Hardik Pandya to take over," Rathour said in a confident analysis.

Just as Kohli and Rohit carried India's batting on their shoulders for more than a decade, the next decade could well belong to Gill and Jaiswal.

"There are many exciting players coming through but these two are equipped to play all three for-

nets, I can't find any technical reasons why Rinku cannot be a successful Test batter. I understand he has made his name as a terrific finisher in T20 cricket but if you look at his first-class record, he is averaging in high 50s.

"He (Rinku) is also blessed with a very calm temperament. So all these factors indicate that if given an opportunity, he can develop into a Test cricketer," Rathour said.

One question that Rathour would face at every second press conference during his tenure was Kohli's extended lean patch after the 2019 World Cup and he maintained it was a "phase that everyone has to go through".

"There were no technical issues that we worked on specifically during this phase. The constant messaging to him was to keep working hard and believe in his methods. Eventually he came back stronger and an even better player," he said. (PTI)



## Remember their faces: Kohli says good luck to India's Olympic-bound athletes

**NEW DELHI, July 15:** Indian cricket's reigning superstar Virat Kohli has urged the nation to get behind its Olympic-bound contingent, asking the fans to join him in supporting the athletes as "they inch closer to the podium with dogged determination" in the quadrennial showpiece starting July 26 in Paris.

In a little over a minute long video post on social media, featuring some Paris-bound athletes like javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra and boxing hope Nishant Dev, Kohli said it is time for India to be recognised as a global sporting powerhouse.

"There was a time when the world could only think of India as a land of snake charmers and elephants. Over time, that has changed. Today we are known to the world as the largest democracy, a global tech hub," he said.

"We are known for cricket and Bollywood, for start-up unicorns and as the fastest growing econ-



omy in the world. So, what is the next big thing for this great nation? Well, that will be more gold, more silver and more bronze," he added.

He then went on to address Indian sports fans, asking them to support the 118-strong group of

athletes, who would be aiming to better the country's best ever performance of seven medals achieved in the previous Games in Tokyo.

"Our brothers and sisters are headed to Paris, hungry for medals. A billion of us will be watching them nervous and excited as our athletes set foot in the tracks and fields and courts and rings."

"Every neighbourhood, every corner of India will hear a chorus of voices chanting 'India, India, India'. Join me in remembering their faces as they inch closer to the podium with the dogged determination of waving the Tiranga with pride. Jai Hind and good luck India," Kohli, who is currently in London on a break after India's T20 World Cup triumph in the West Indies last month, said in his monologue.

Most of the Indian competitors are currently training abroad and will head to the French capital from their respective bases.

India's medal hopes will rest on shooting, badminton, wrestling and boxing aside from the expectations of a second successive podium finish from Chopra, who scripted history with his javelin throw gold in Tokyo. (PTI)

## Police complaint against Yuvraj Singh, 3 other ex-cricketers for 'mocking' people with disabilities



**NEW DELHI, July 15:** A police complaint has been filed against former cricketers Harbhajan Singh, Suresh Raina, Yuvraj Singh and Gurkeerat Mann for allegedly mocking people with disabilities in a video that was uploaded on Instagram.

The complaint was lodged by Arman Ali, the executive director of the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP), with the SHO of the Amar Colony police station here.

Besides the cricketers, the complaint has also been filed against Sandhya Devanathan, the Vice President and Managing Director of Meta India.

In the complaint, social media platform Instagram, which is owned by Meta, has been accused of violating the Information Technology Act, 2000, by allowing such content to be posted.

A police officer said the complaint was received at the Amar Colony police station and it will be shared with the cyber cell of the district for further probe into the matter.

The former cricketers shared the video on Instagram after India Champions beat Pakistan Champions by five wickets in the World Championship of Legends final.

In the video, Yuvraj Singh, Harbhajan Singh and Raina are seen limping and holding their backs to show the physical toll taken by the matches on their bodies.

"Body ki Tauba Tauba ho Gayi in 15 days legends cricket... Every part of the body is sore. Straight competition to our brothers @vickykaushal09 @karanaujla our version of Tauba Tauba dance. What a SONG," the caption of the video read.

Disability activists have found the video to be in poor taste. The National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled called the video "totally disgraceful".

The complaint stated that Instagram failed to adhere to its user guidelines, thus enabling the dissemination of derogatory content.

"This video is a blatant violation of Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which guarantees every person the right to life with dignity."

"It also breaches Section 92 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and contravenes the Supreme Court's guidelines established in the case of Nipun Malhotra v. Sony Pictures Films India Private Limited (2004 SCC Online SC 1639)," Arman Ali said in the complaint.

He urged the authorities to take immediate and appropriate action against the individuals involved and emphasised the need to hold public figures accountable for their actions, especially when they undermine the dignity of vulnerable communities. Speaking to PTI after lodging the complaint, Ali said a simple apology from these cricketers would not do. "They must be penalised for their actions," he said. (PTI)

## Golf: Randhawa tied 7th in Swiss Senior

**GENEVA, July 15:** Jyoti Randhawa ended a creditable tied seventh, while Jeev Milkha Singh signed off tied 20th after a roller-coaster final round in the Legends Tour's Swiss Senior Open here.

Jarmo Sandelin of Sweden ended a long wait for his second Legends Tour win as he won the tournament with a final round of 67 and a total of 10-under 200.

Randhawa, playing his rookie season on the Tour for Over 50s in Europe, added a third round 69 to his first and second round efforts of 66-69 for a six-under total that fetched him a top-10 finish.

Randhawa had three birdies and two bogeys in his final round.

India's other star in field, Jeev (69-72-68) was at two-under. Jeev had five birdies against three bogeys. (PTI)

## Rohit says he will continue to play Tests and ODIs 'at least for a while'

**DALLAS (USA), July 15:** India captain Rohit Sharma says he will continue to play Test and ODI cricket "at least for a while" after ending his T20 international career with a World Cup win last month.

Rohit has been on a break since the title win in the West Indies. He was rested from the recent T20 series against Zimbabwe and is also set to miss the limited-overs tour of Sri Lanka later this month.

"I just said it. I don't look that far ahead. So clearly, you will be seeing me play at least for a while," the 37-year-old said at an event here on Sunday night.

Earlier in the month, BCCI secretary Jay Shah had confirmed that Rohit will captain India in the ongoing World Test Championship cycle and the Champions Trophy



next year in February-March.

Rohit had led India in the 2022 T20 World Cup where the team was ousted in the semifinals by eventual champions England. A year later, India reached the final of the 50-over

World Cup at home under his leadership, but succumbed to Australia in the summit clash at Ahmedabad.

Rohit left T20Is with 4231 runs from 159 matches, having made five hundreds and 32 fifties. (PTI)



Government of Assam



Ek Kadam Swachhata Ki Aur

## Let us all join hands to STOP DIARRHOEA

In an initiative to manage the persistent issue of childhood diarrhoea and strive for zero child deaths, Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin, Assam, launches

# STOP Diarrhoea Campaign

**1 July to 31 August 2024**

**Widespread mostly after floods, diarrhoea is both preventable and treatable**  
**Here's how you can contribute to counter the menace of diarrhoea post-flood**

**Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma**  
Chief Minister



### Disinfect Water Sources

Clean hand pumps, ring wells and other water sources after floods and also get them disinfected



### Avoid Bathing in Stagnant Water

It can be a breeding ground for bacteria



### Clean Thoroughly after Floods

Ensure all household areas are disinfected



### Dispose Child Faeces Safely

Keep the environment safe for everyone



### No Open Defecation

Use toilets to keep your surroundings clean



### Drink Safe Water

Use water from trusted sources only



### Wash Your Hands with Soap

Regular hand washing can prevent the spread of germs



Issued in public interest by Swachh Bharat Mission - Gramin, Public Health Engineering Department, Assam