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Emergency-era Preamble amendment a 'festering wound': VP Dhankhar

NEW DELHI/GUWAHATI, June 28: Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday said the words inserted in the Preamble of the Constitution through an amendment during the Emergency era were a 'festering wound', lending weight to the call by a top RSS leader for a review of the added terms 'secular' and 'socialist'.

Wading into the political row sparked by RSS general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale's call for a national debate on whether the terms 'secular' and 'socialist' to define India's foundational values should remain in the Preamble, Dhankhar said the Preamble is sacrosanct and "not changeable". He further said the added words were a "sacrilege to the spirit of Sanatan."

Echoing Dhankhar's views, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also joined two union ministers—Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Jitendra Singh—to support the idea mooted by Hosabale.

Sarma claimed that 'socialism' and 'secularism' are Western concepts, and said these words should be struck off the Constitution. These words have no place in Indian civilisation, he said at a book launch event in Guwahati.

While Chouhan said "there is no need for socialism

in India" and that "secularism is not the core of our culture", Singh said any right-thinking citizen will endorse the call for a review because everybody knows that these words were not part of the original Constitution written by Dr B R Ambedkar. The two ministers made the comments on Friday.



The Congress and other opposition parties have slammed the call made by the second senior-most functionary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on Thursday, terming it "political opportunism" and a "deliberate assault" on the soul of the Constitution.

Dhankhar said the words inserted in the Preamble in 1976 during the period of Emergency, were a "nasoor" (festering wound) and could cause upheaval. The changes signalled a betrayal of the "wisdom" of the framers of the Constitution, he added.

"It is nothing but belittling the civilisational wealth and knowledge of this country for thousands of years," the vice president said at a book launch event in Delhi.

Dhankhar described the Preamble as a "seed" on which a Constitution grows. He also underlined that the preamble of no other Constitution has undergone a change except that of India. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Sarma calls 'socialism' and 'secularism' Western impositions, seeks their removal from Constitution's Preamble CM for removing 'socialism, secularism' from Constitution

GUWAHATI, June 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma claimed on Saturday that 'socialism' and 'secularism' are "Western concepts", and these words should be struck off the Constitution.

He said these words were included in the Preamble of the Constitution by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi when the country was under Emergency rule, and these have no place in the Indian civilisation.

"How can I be secular? I am a hardcore Hindu. A Muslim person is a hardcore Muslim person. How can he be secular?" Sarma said.

He was speaking after launching a book titled 'The Emergency Diaries: Years That Forged a Leader' in Assam, which is based on first-person anecdotes from associates who worked with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, then a young RSS pracharak, and used other archival material.

The book chronicles the 1975-77 Emergency era and Prime Minister Modi's role in the 'resistance movement'. Sarma said that the words 'socialism' and 'secularism'



were not part of the original Preamble and were inserted through the 42nd amendment to the Constitution during the Emergency period under former PM Indira Gandhi. "It changed the way people perceived our Constitution and damaged our national life," he claimed.

He maintained that the word 'secularism' was not put in the original Constitution as Article 14 ensures that the state shall not dis-

criminate on any basis.

The word 'secularism' was inserted by people who view it from the Western angle, and it needs to be struck off from the Preamble, Sarma added.

Sarma maintained that the Indian concept of secularism is not about being neutral, but it is about being 'positively aligned'.

"We are a spiritual nation. If people are told that they can have

good roads but cannot visit temples or 'namghars' (Vaishnavite places of worship), our people will choose going to temples. We are not like countries like China, which have an authoritarian rule," he said. Sarma said the Western countries have to be "neutral" as they have their own history of conflict between monarchy and church, which is not applicable for a nation like India with its 5,000-year-old civilisational history.

"After taking oath, we all finally first go to Kamakhya temple and Bordowa (Vaishnavite saint Sankardeva's birthplace), Muslims go to Mecca. We cannot be neutral but we are inclusive," he asserted. The CM also claimed that the Western concept of socialism was also imposed by Gandhi, while the Indian economic principle was based on "trusteeship" and helping the marginalised. He said that socialism is from countries like Russia and China and is a concept based on 'conflict', with Left supporters many times making its "positive comparison with communism". (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta pays obeisance to goddess Kamakhya

GUWAHATI, June 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma paid obeisance to goddess Kamakhya at the temple premise atop Nilachal hills in Guwahati on Saturday, visiting the 'shaktipeeth' at the end of the annual Ambubachi Mela.

Accompanied by his wife and their two children, he prayed for the well-being and peace of all.

"Jai Ma Kamakhya. Let the blessings of Ma be endowed on everyone's families forever," Sarma posted on X after the 'darshan'. In another post on social media, he said, "We are feeling blessed after offering our prayers to the mother goddess after Ambubachi nibriti, along with my wife, son and daughter." "We prayed that the mother goddess keeps showering her blessings on all," Sarma added.

The chief minister and his family offered 'jal arpan' at the Saubhagya Kunda and completed 'parikrama' of the temple during the visit. The four-day Ambubachi Mela had ended with the opening of temple doors on Thursday.

The mela is held for four days every year when the temple doors are closed, coinciding with the ritualistic menstrual cycle of Goddess Kamakhya. (PTI)

Heroin seized in Cachar

GUWAHATI, June 28: A suspected peddler has been arrested and heroin worth over ₹ 5 crore seized from him in Assam's Cachar district, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. The arrest and recovery were made during an operation on Friday.

"Acting on credible intelligence, @cacharpolice conducted a decisive anti-narcotics operation in Silchar," Sarma said in a post on X. He said that 1.109 kg of heroin worth ₹ 5.55 crore was seized. (PTI)

Manipur civil society organisations to hold talks with Centre in Delhi on June 30

IMPHAL, June 28: A delegation of civil society organisations in Manipur will hold talks with the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi on June 30 over the current situation in the ethnic strife-torn state, officials said on Saturday.

A team of All Manipur United Clubs Organisation (AMUCO), Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) and Federation of Civil Society Organisations (FOCS) will hold a discussion with officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs in the national capital on Monday, they said.

Addressing a press conference, COCOMI convenor Khuraijam Athouba said, "A delegation of AMUCO, COCOMI and FOCS will meet officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs on June 30. We will apprise them of the concerns and frustrations of the people."

AMUCO senior member S Bhubon said the main priority is to ensure that the territorial boundary of Manipur is not affected.

"We would highlight the short and long-term measures that need to be taken up to stop threats faced by farmers in the peripheral areas of the Imphal valley."

Opening of highways to all is another serious issue, and the plight of internally displaced people and their resettlement will also be discussed, he added.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. The Centre had on February 13 imposed the President's rule in Manipur after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned.

The state assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation. (PTI)

India most ancient living civilisation due to immortal ideas, philosophy of seers: PM Modi



NEW DELHI, June 28: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday India is the most ancient living civilisation of the world due to the immortal ideas and philosophies of its saints and seers.

Speaking at the centenary celebrations of Jain spiritual figure Acharya Vidyanand Maharaj Ji's birth anniversary here, PM Modi paid rich tributes to his contribution in different fields and asserted that his ideas have inspired the government's welfare schemes.

Be it providing house, drinking water or health insurance, the government is ensuring saturation coverage of its welfare measures so that no one is

left behind, he said. PM Modi also referred to the preceding speech of a Jain seer, noting that he was apparently blessing Operation Sindoor.

The prime minister's mere mention of "Jo humein chhedega" brought massive cheers from the audience but he did not dwell any further on the issue.

PM Modi asserted that India is a country where service and humanity is central to its ethos. "When for ages, efforts were being made to quell violence with violence, then India introduced to the world the power of 'ahimsa' (non-violence)," he said. "We have kept the sentiment of serving humanity supreme. Our ethos for serving is unconditional and beyond selfishness, and inspired by 'paramartha' (the Supreme Being)," the PM said.

In his address, he added that his government is working by taking inspiration from those ideals. Whether it is PM Awas Yojana, Jal Jivan Mission, Ayushman Bharat (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam's Tamulpur adjudged top development block by Niti Aayog

GUWAHATI, June 28: Assam's Tamulpur Development Block has been adjudged the best among 500 Aspirational Blocks across the country by Niti Aayog in its latest ranking for the first three months of this year.

"Congratulations to Team Tamulpur for being adjudged as the Best Development Block among 500 Aspirational Blocks by @NITI Aayog," Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma posted on X on Saturday, lauding the achievement of the area under Bodoland Territorial Region of the state.

"This recognition reaffirms Tamulpur's efforts in 40 core growth areas of health, education, agriculture, infra, nutrition, etc," Sarma added.

An official statement from Tamulpur said the ranking was announced based on performance assessment for the months of January, February and March 2025.

The ranking is based on 40 key performance indicators across critical sectors such as health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development, and infrastructure development.

In recognition of this national achievement, Tamulpur Development Block has been awarded Rs 3 crore by NITI Aayog to further strengthen development efforts in the region. At a virtual event on Friday during the announcement of the rankings, Tamulpur district commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Shukla shares Indian sweets with ISS crew, tells PM

NEW DELHI, June 28: India's Shubhanshu Shukla and other astronauts on the International Space Station relished delicacies such as 'gajar ka halwa', 'moong dal halwa' and 'aam ras' as they began their 14-day stay on the orbital lab.

Shukla shared these details in an 18-minute interaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday from the International Space Station that is orbiting the earth at an altitude of 400 km.

"Yes, I brought 'gajar ka halwa', 'moong dal ka halwa' and 'aam ras'. I wanted everyone who has joined me from other countries to enjoy the rich Indian cuisine. All of us had it together and everyone liked it," Shukla told the prime minister. (PTI)

Himanta says sorry for insult by Jayanta

Assam journo protest minister's 'derogatory words' Govt reaffirms respect for journalists

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, June 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday expressed regret over the remarks made by a cabinet colleague towards a journalist and reiterated his government's unwavering respect for the press and its role in a democratic society.

Addressing the issue after widespread protests by journalists across Assam over Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah's comments, the Chief Minister said that if any derogatory statement had been made, it was deeply unfortunate and unacceptable.

"I apologise on behalf of my cabinet if any journalist felt insulted. Though I haven't heard what was said, I will personally speak to the minister and ask him to apologise. Journalists

are not part of our political conflicts," Sarma said.

The controversy erupted on Friday during a press conference when Minister Baruah reportedly declined to answer a question posed by a reporter from a local satellite news channel, which has been critical of his alleged involvement in the allocation of government subsidies under a dairy promotion scheme. The minister had stated that he would respond only to the channel's owner and not to "low-class" individuals, a comment that drew sharp reactions from the media fraternity.

Journalists from across Assam, including in Guwahati, Sivasagar, Samaguri and Dibrugarh, wore black badges and staged demonstrations, demanding an (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Unfair trade practices by Bangla suppliers forced India to restrict import of jute: Officials

NEW DELHI, June 28: India imposed restrictions on the import of jute and allied fibre products from Bangladesh in view of its "unfair trade" practices including circumvention of anti-dumping duty that harmed Indian farmers, people familiar with the matter said on Saturday.

The new restrictions will apply to imports into India of Bangladesh's jute and allied fibre products across all land and seaports, with the exception of the Nhava Sheva seaport in Maharashtra.

The punitive measures were announced on Friday and they came into effect immediately.

There has been a sharp downturn in India-Bangladesh relations after deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled Dhaka and took shelter in India in August last year in the



face of a massive anti-government protest. Bangladesh must not be allowed to persist with "unfair trade" practices that harm the livelihood of Indian farmers and mill workers in a sector that forms the economic backbone of rural regions, said an official on condition of anonymity.

The market access extended

by India in good faith cannot be undermined to the detriment of India's economic interests, said another official.

India's decision on Bangladesh jute and fibre products came weeks after it put restrictions on ready-made garments and several other consumer goods through land ports. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Move aims to simplify permits, ensure legal timber traceability, and integrate trees into farming systems Centre issues model rules to ease tree felling on agricultural land, boost agroforestry

NEW DELHI, June 28: The Centre has issued model rules for the felling of trees on agricultural land in a bid to promote agroforestry with the aim of doubling farmers' incomes, increasing tree cover outside forests and mitigating climate change.

In a letter sent to all state governments on June 19, the environment ministry said the objective of 'Model Rules for Felling of Trees in Agricultural Lands' is to enhance the ease of doing business in agroforestry and incentivise farmers to integrate trees into their farming systems without facing undue procedural hurdles.

The government has been promoting agroforestry to double farmers' income, enhance tree cover outside forests, mitigate climate change, reduce timber imports and ensure sustainable land use. It also supports India's climate goals under the Paris Agreement.

A key barrier is the lack of clear, harmonised rules for felling trees on agricultural land which affects



cultivation and marketing of agroforestry produce, according to the ministry.

According to the model rules, the State Level Committee (SLC) already formed under the Wood-Based Industries (Establishment and Regulation) Guidelines, 2016 will also serve as the committee for these rules. It will now also include officials from revenue and agriculture departments. The committee will advise the state government on

how to promote agroforestry and increase timber production from agricultural lands by simplifying rules for felling and transit of trees, especially species with commercial value.

It will empanel agencies for verification of applications and transit of timber from agricultural lands.

Applicants must register their plantation land on the National Timber Management System (NTMS) portal. They have to enter

land ownership details and the location of their agricultural land.

They must give basic plantation details, including the number of saplings by species, planting date (month and year) and the average height of seedlings.

Applicants will also have to update this information as required by the SLC. For lands with more than 10 trees, the applicant must apply online through the NTMS, giving detailed information about the trees to be felled.

The verifying agency will do a field visit and prepare a report with details about the land, trees and the estimated quantity of timber. Based on this, a felling permit will be generated.

For applications for the felling of up to 10 trees, applicants need to upload tree photos to the NTMS. The system will estimate the tree size (girth, height), yield and species. Applicants also need to inform the planned felling date. After felling, they must upload stump photos.

The department concerned may also send an officer to verify. In this case, the no objection certificate for felling will be issued automatically through the portal. Divisional forest officers will monitor how verifying agencies are functioning. They will submit a report every quarter to the SLC on the performance of these agencies.

Currently, most states have their own laws or rules that regulate the felling of trees on agricultural land. Some states have exempted certain tree species from requiring felling permission, while others require clearance even on private land depending on the species and location. The new mechanism aims to simplify the process of obtaining permission for tree felling on agricultural land and to transform agroforestry in India into a more organised and structured sector.

Currently, many farmers struggle to get fair market prices for timber because they lack verifiable proof that the wood is legally harvested and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

MCL to start operation in two new coal mines in Odisha's Talcher area by FY 2029-30

SAMBALPUR (Odisha), June 28: Mahanadi Coalfield Ltd (MCL), a subsidiary of Coal India Ltd (CIL) is going to start operation in two of its new mines having total coal reserve of 35 million tonnes (MT) in Talcher coalfield area of Odisha's Angul district, a senior company official said.

"We are going to start operation of the Subhadra coal mine having a reserve of 25 MT in Talcher area by the end of financial year 2025-26," chairman cum managing director (CMD) of MCL, Uday A Kaole, said during a media interaction here.

Similarly, the Balabhadra coal mine with a capacity of 10 MT will be made operational by the end of financial year 2029-30, he said.

At present, MCL is operating 18 coal mines in Angul, Sundargarh and Jharsuguda districts in Odisha of which three are underground mines and the remaining 15 are open-cast mines.

Among the coal mines, the public sector company has seven op-



erational mines in Angul district which include Jagannath, Bhubaneswari, Bharatpur, Hingula, Lingaraj, Kaniha and Talcher (UG). Now, the company is going to start exploration from Subhadra and Balabhadra mines, he said.

To maintain transparency in its mining activities, MCL has installed CCTVs in 98 per cent of its

operational areas while the remaining 2 per cent will be done soon, the CMD said, adding, "We are also using artificial intelligence (AI) for real-time tracking of coal transportation vehicles which are GPS enabled."

He further said MCL has a reserve of about 35 MT of coal to ensure that there will be no crisis of

coal for power generation.

The company has produced 225 MT of coal during 2024-25 with a growth of 9 per cent compared to its previous financial year. The total coal dispatch was 210 MT, which also registered a growth of 6 per cent, he said.

The CMD said that "98 per cent of our total coal production is being done through eco-friendly surface mines, which is highest in the country."

The coal-producing company has targeted to achieve net zero carbon emission by FY 29. It has planned to set up several renewable energy projects including solar, wind and pumped storage power plant projects in different parts of the state with an estimated investment of Rs 17,900 crore, another official of the company said.

Further, the company has set a target to produce 239 million tonnes of coal in FY26, which is expected to reach 300 MT by the fiscal 2029-30, he said. (PTI)

Grand Continent to launch its first overseas hotel in Dubai

CHENNAI, June 28: Hospitality service provider Grand Continent Hotels and Resorts Ltd is set to make its first overseas expansion with the launch of a hotel in Dubai, a top official said here on Saturday.

The Bengaluru-headquartered company has drawn up plans to open 4 more hotels in the country as it targets to operate 5,000 hotels by 2028, Grand Continent Hotels and Resorts Chairman and Managing Director Ramesh Shiva said.

"It is a 125-room facility. It is our first international property. We will be launching it in three months in Dubai," he told reporters.

Shiva, a hospitality industry veteran, on Saturday inaugurated the 22nd property, a 72-room capacity hotel 'Grand Continent Premiere T Nagar' at Thirumalai Pillai Road in Chennai. Each room measuring 28 sq mts to 48 sq mts would be targeting travellers of both business and leisure. It is equipped with a rooftop swimming pool, multi-cuisine restaurant, unwind bar, state-of-the-art boardroom among others. On the capital expenditure made for the new property, he said for a property like this T Nagar hotel, the investment would be around ₹ 7-8 lakh per room. "I would say about ₹ 5-6 crore will be the capital expenditure for this facility," he said.

Commenting about the future expansion plans, Shiva said they have planned to open a 42 room capacity hotel in Dwaraka, Gujarat (42 room capacity hotel), a 82 room capacity hotel in Jaipur, Rajasthan, 92 rooms in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh and a 35 room facility in Gurgaon. The launch of these hotels would happen in 2025 and 2026, he said. To a query, he said the company would open hotels in Sri Lanka and Dubai. "Domestic market will be our strong market. We will also have properties in Sri Lanka and Dubai," he said.

In Dubai, initially it would be a property managed by Grand Continent Hotels and after three months it would become a 'leased property' in line with the company's strategy. Nearly 75 per cent of the customers come from the corporate segment while 20 per cent would be leisure and the remaining account for people going on pilgrimage to places like Tirupati or Ayodhya, he noted. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

Nauchad Ali, S/O- Jangser Ali, resident of Vill- Bhotpukhuri P.O- No.1 Punia, P.S- Kharupetia, Dist. Darrang (Assam) do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that I am a permanent resident of above mentioned address and a citizen of India by birth. That my actual and correct name is NAUCHAD ALI and my father's actual and correct name is JANGSER ALI as well as my mother's actual and correct name is AS NESSA. That my name has been recorded in my H.S. Pass Certificate vide Roll 0415, No. 10153 as MD NAWSHAD ALI in place of NAUCHAD ALI and my father's name has also been recorded in the same as MD JANIB ALI in place of JANGSER ALI as well as my mother's name has also been recorded in the same as WASNESA BEGUM in place of AS NESSA. That NAUCHAD ALI and MD NAWSHAD ALI are the same and one person and also JANGSER ALI and MD JANIB ALI are the same and one person as well as AS NESSA and WASNESA BEGUM are the same and one person. That this affidavit is required to produce before the concerned authority as a piece of document in order to substantiate the above facts and circumstances. That the statements made by me in the above paras are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I sign this affidavit on this 19th day of April, 2025 at Mangaldai.

Tata Steel aims to have 20 pc diversity workforce by 2028

JAMSHEDPUR, June 28: Commemorating a decade of MOSAIC, the diversity and inclusion initiative, private steel major Tata Steel on Saturday said it aimed to have 20 per cent diversity in its workforce across the group by 2028.

For Tata Steel, the commitment to diversity goes beyond policy implementation. It actively seeks to redefine norms in typically male-dominated sectors, the company said in a statement.

Tata Steel's progressive HR policies offer equal benefits for LGBTQIA+ partners, gender-neutral parental leaves, support for gender transition, and inclusive relocation and travel benefits, it said.

About MOSAIC, the company said it started in 2015 with the vision of making inclusion a lived experience across the organisation. This year, the company is marking a decade of MOSAIC alongside pride month, reinforcing its continued commitment to building a more inclusive workplace.

MOSAIC, which is anchored in

five strategic pillars - recruitment, sensitisation, retention & development, infrastructure, and celebration, addresses the unique needs of diverse communities, including women, persons with disabilities, the LGBTQIA+ community, and affirmative action groups.

Atrayee Sanyal, Chief People Officer, Tata Steel, said: "For over a century, Tata Steel has been a pioneer in people-centric HR policies, consistently evolving with the times to stay not only relevant but also purpose-driven. Our commitment has always been to foster a more equitable and inclusive workplace - one where individuals are valued for who they are and empowered to contribute meaningfully."

"At the heart of our approach lies a deep belief in diversity and in creating an ecosystem where everyone can thrive and bring their best, most creative selves to work. This year, as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of MOSAIC - our diversity and inclusion journey that began in 2015 - we do so with even

greater clarity, conviction, and commitment than when we first set out," it said.

Since its launch a decade ago, MOSAIC has shaped several transformative inclusion efforts across Tata Steel. These included the Women of Mettle scholarship (2017), Women@Mines (2019), Queerious - a case study competition for LGBTQIA+ students, and the integration of transgender Heavy Earth Moving Machinery (HEMM) operators at its mines (2021).

In 2023, the company introduced Ananta Quest for students with disabilities and onboarded its first batch of female firefighter trainees. Most recently, in 2024, Tata Steel operationalised India's first all-women mining shift at Noamundi.

These initiatives have helped break industry stereotypes and foster a workplace where inclusion is embedded in everyday practices—allowing every individual to thrive, contribute, and grow without barriers. (PTI)

BNI Calibre's 'CALIBIZ' mega business exhibition inaugurated in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 28: The two-day mega business exhibition 'CALIBIZ', organised by the BNI Calibre chapter, was inaugurated on Saturday at Hotel Viswaratna, AT Road, Guwahati.

The event, which promises to be the city's largest business showcase, was formally inaugurated in the presence of Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup (Metro) Sumit Sattawan, CMD of AM Television Sanjive Narain, Executive Director of BNI Guwahati & Greater Assam Siddharth Garodia, along with President Parminder Kaur, Vice President Pooja Agarwal, Secretary Treasurer Aditya Dewra, Lead Visitor Host Rajiv Chauhan and other members of BNI Calibre.

According to an official statement, the exhibition will be held on June 28 and 29, offering a comprehensive platform for over 60 business exhibitors from a wide range of unique categories to showcase their products and services.

The event aims to facilitate meaningful business interactions, networking, and opportunities for collaboration among entrepreneurs, professionals, and consumers under one roof.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, Executive Director Siddharth Garodia highlighted that CALIBIZ is designed to bring together varied businesses and provide them with an avenue for increased visibility and

growth. He said the event represents a significant moment for the BNI Calibre chapter and the city's business community at large.

President Parminder Kaur noted that with the onset of the festive season, CALIBIZ is well-timed to serve as a one-stop destination for customers and businesses alike. She described the exhibition as Guwahati's biggest business event and encouraged the public to take advantage of the diverse offerings.

Vice President Pooja Agarwal described CALIBIZ as a continuation of the chapter's legacy of innovation and creativity. She said this year's edition promises to be the biggest and best version so far.

Echoing her sentiments, Secretary Treasurer Aditya Dewra and Lead Visitor Host Rajiv Chauhan emphasised that the exhibition would serve as a powerful platform for participants to connect, collaborate, and explore new business opportunities.

The organisers informed that visitors will also have the opportunity to engage in one-on-one business sessions with exhibitors, allowing for more direct and impactful interactions.

The event is expected to draw more than 5,000 visitors over the course of the two days.

In addition to the exhibition, a variety of activities and surprises have been planned to enhance the visitor experience.

Minister Ashok Singhal inaugurates Northeast India's largest lighting experience center

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 28: Light Art Studio unveiled its flagship lighting boutique in Guwahati, heralded as the largest lighting experience center in Northeast India.

The grand launch ceremony, held on June 27, was inaugurated by the Minister of Health and Welfare, Ashok Singhal, who praised the studio's dedication to innovation, aesthetics, and quality in lighting solutions.

According to an official statement, the state-of-the-art boutique, strategically located near the Audi Showroom at Vasudha Estate in Lalmati, offers an immersive retail experience that merges advanced lighting technology with premium design.

Designed to cater to a broad clientele including homeowners, architects, interior designers, and hoteliers, the studio is positioned as the region's definitive destination for high-end lighting and automation solutions.

The launch was attended by the studio's directors Vijay Agarwal, Ritesh Agarwal, and Ankit Agarwal, along with several dignitaries and industry stakeholders.



Speaking on the occasion, Ritesh Agarwal highlighted that the experience center showcases a vast collection of over 5,000 designs.

The boutique features an extensive range of offerings including decorative lights, Hybec commercial and architectural lighting, in-house designer fans, home theatre systems, home automation solutions, optical fibre and star ceilings, smart home switches, and digital door locks.

Ankit Agarwal added that the aim of the boutique is to elevate the way people in the region engage with lighting design, seamlessly blending functionality with

artistic expression. "Our offerings bridge beauty with functionality, creating illuminated environments that inspire," he said.

The launch witnessed an enthusiastic response from members of the design, real estate, and hospitality sectors, underscoring the boutique's potential to contribute significantly to Guwahati's growing status as a hub for architectural and lifestyle innovation.

Light Art Studio's new facility marks a pivotal moment for the lighting industry in the Northeast, setting new benchmarks for design-driven retail experiences.

Contd. from Page 1...

CM for removing 'socialism,

"These concepts were never for India. Our economic principle is of sharing the riches... This socialism made us lose our competitiveness and capabilities, and we were left behind in the global race," Sarma said.

"The BJP didn't have to even demolish this concept of socialism. P V Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh demolished it and brought liberalisation," he added. He was referring to Prime Minister Rao and then Finance Minister Singh who were credited with bringing economic liberalisation in India in the early 1990s.

Sarma said the economic liberalisation was taken forward by the later BJP governments, and its benefits are now being made available to the marginalised and poor sections. Sarma said that the time is ripe to discuss the 'damage' caused by the Emergency to the nation, and start "erasing the Emergency legacy, just as colonial legacies are being erased". "We must not forget the Emergency as we cannot repeat the Emergency," he added. He claimed that Gandhi had brought in Emergency to save her own chair and there was no situation of unrest in the country to justify it.

The Emergency declared on June 25, 1975, by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi lasted until March 21, 1977. It was marked by widespread press censorship, arrests without trial and the stifling of dissent in academia, politics and civil society. Sarma also questioned Gandhi's leadership, referring to the formation of Bangladesh.

"By winning the war against Pakistan, what did she do to help the Northeast? She could have redrawn the map for NE's straight access to the rest of the country and not remain dependent on the 'chicken neck' corridor. She could have asked Bangladesh to take back the illegal immigrants and they would have obliged," he claimed. "She was a powerful leader, but what is her contribution to the nation. Even Hitler was powerful but he damaged Germany," Sarma added. (PTI)

Himanta says sorry for insult

apology from the minister and seeking assurance against future instances of verbal abuse or disrespect by public representatives.

Chief Minister Sarma, in his response, urged for a clear distinction between media house owners and working journalists. "Owners and journalists are not the same. Journalists are to be respected, regardless of who owns the platform. Our political criticism of media owners should not be viewed as an attack on journalists," he said.

Sarma also acknowledged the financial hardships faced by working journalists, especially those in rural areas. "Many journalists do not have houses of their own. When they or their family members fall ill, they often seek assistance from me. I am happy to help, but the media owners, who earn substantial profits, should also take responsibility and ensure their journalists are adequately paid," the Chief Minister said.

He cited instances of rural correspondents being paid as little as Rs 100 per news item. "That is why I make it a point to give them a byte, so that their reports are used and they are paid. It is a matter of dignity," he added.

Calling for structural reforms in the media sector, Sarma advocated for a fixed minimum wage and regulated eight-hour shifts for journalists to ensure their professional and personal well-being.

He reiterated his government's commitment to safeguarding press freedom and ensuring a respectful working environment for journalists. "We may disagree with media narratives at times, but there should be no room for disrespect," the Chief Minister said, reaffirming that any lapse in this regard would be addressed promptly and sensitively. (With inputs from PTI)

India most ancient living civilisation

Yojana, and other such welfare schemes, they signify the "sense of service" towards the last person in the social hierarchy, he said. All should walk together and grow together - this is the inspiration of Acharya Vidyand Mahara Ji, and "this is our resolve," PM Modi said. The event was held at the Vigyan Bhawan and hosted by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the Bhagwan Mahaveer Ahimsa Bharti Trust, Delhi, to honour the 100th birth anniversary of one of India's most revered Jain spiritual leaders, scholars, and social reformers. The revered saint was born on April 22, 1925 in Shedbal, Belagavi (now in Karnataka).

"He received his initiation at a young age and went on to become one of the most prolific Jain scholars of modern times, having memorised over 8,000 Jain Agamic verses," the ministry said.

He authored more than 50 works on Jain philosophy and ethics, including Jain Darshan, Anekantvad and Mokshmag Darshan. Modi extolled Acharya Vidyand Mahara Ji's legacy and his contribution to revival of the Prakrit language, restoration of many old temples and his contribution in the fields of literature and music. His life was a unparalleled confluence of 'vidya' (knowledge) and 'anand' (bliss), the PM said. "Our India is the oldest living civilisation in the world, we are immortal for thousands of years, because our thoughts are immortal, our thinking is immortal, our philosophy is immortal," he said. And, the source of this philosophy is "our saints, seers, mahants and acharyas". He asserted that voices of Indian Tirthankars, saints and seers, their teachings, are equally contextual in different eras. Hailing the Jain seer being celebrated as a "Yug Purush" and "Yug Drashta", Modi underlined that through his literature and music, he had endeavoured to revive the ancient Prakrit language. Prakrit is one of the oldest languages of the world. It is the language of sermons of Bhagwan Mahaveer. Ancient texts of Jainism are scripted in this language, he said.

Because of those who "neglected their own culture", this language was going out of vogue, the PM said.

"We made his efforts, the effort of the government, and last year in October, our government accorded it the status of a Classical Language," he added. Prakrit, representing a spectrum of Middle Indo-Aryan languages, is integral to understanding India's rich linguistic and cultural heritage. "In our mission to digitise ancient manuscripts, a large section of it includes religious texts related to Jainism and manuscripts associated with acharyas," Modi said. "We want to go further on this subject," he said, adding that mother tongues are being promoted in higher education as well.

In his address, he again emphasised that his government has vowed to rid the country of "slavery mindset".

He also reiterated his nine pledges and urged people to follow them. The pledges are: saving water, planting a tree in mother's memory, cleanliness, going 'vocal for local', travelling to explore different places in the country, adopting natural farming, having a healthy lifestyle, sports and yoga adoption, and helping the poor. Rashtrasan Paramparacharya Shri 108 Pragyasagar ji Muniraj and Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat were also present on the dais at the event.

The Jain seer in his address recalled the renaming of Rajpath in New Delhi a few years ago, and demanded that India Gate be rechristened to 'Bharat Dwar', as well as a Prakrit research institute be set up in Delhi. The centenary year will be observed from June 28 to April 22, 2026, with a range of cultural, literary, educational and spiritual initiatives across the country, aimed at "celebrating the life and legacy of Acharya Shri 108 Vidyand Mahara Ji", the ministry said in a statement on Friday. (PTI)

Assam's Tamulpur adjudged top

credited the success to the collective efforts of all officials and stakeholders. "It is primarily due to the team efforts of all the officials that we have been able to achieve this top position for Tamulpur Development Block at the national level," he said.

Chakravarty highlighted the district's progress through innovative interventions such as the Panchamrit initiative in the health sector, Mission Vikalp and other multi-sectoral development programmes. (PTI)

Unfair trade practices by

Under the provisions of SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area), jute from Bangladesh enjoys a duty free access to India.

However, the Indian jute industry has, for long, suffered due to the adverse impact of dumped and subsidised imports of jute products, particularly yarn, fibre and bags?from the neighbouring country, the people cited above said. There is credible evidence that Bangladeshi jute exports continue to benefit from state subsidies extended by the government of Bangladesh, they said. In response to these concerns, the Directorate General of Anti-Dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD) conducted detailed investigations and imposed anti-dumping duty (ADD) on jute and goods originating from Bangladesh, the people said. But, the imposition of ADD has not yielded a substantial reduction in imports, they said. Apart from various subsidies, common malpractices by Bangladeshi exporters include circumvention of anti-dumping duty through technical exemptions, mislabelling, exports through ADD exempted firms and "misdeclaration" to secure higher subsidies, the people said.

The restrictions are aimed to counter unfair trade practices, promote 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliance), and protect rural livelihoods tied to India's domestic jute economy, the people cited above said. "To safeguard the interests of the domestic jute industry and to counter the unfair trade practices employed by the Bangladeshi exporters acting in collusion with Bangladeshi establishment, it has been decided to restrict Bangladesh imports of jute and jute products to India through only from Nhava Sheva port," said one of the people.

"The imposition is expected to streamline the quality checking, prevent misdeclaration and fraudulent labelling, thereby neutralising the malpractices that have plagued the industry for long," the person said. "The government is also taking steps to ensure that exporters in Bangladesh do not circumvent the aforesaid restrictions by routing their jute exports through third countries," he added. (PTI)

Centre issues model rules to ease

not linked to deforestation. The absence of standardised documentation or traceability systems often discourages buyers, especially exporters and wood-based industries, from procuring directly from farmers.

The NTMS creates a digital trail proving that the timber came from legally managed, non-forest land. Such transparency and certification can help farmers command better prices, especially from organized domestic buyers and international markets. The system also aligns with the EU Deforestation Regulation which requires companies importing timber and related products into the EU to prove that their supply chains are not linked to deforestation after 2020. (PTI)

Emergency-era Preamble amendment

"The Preamble of a Constitution is not changeable. But this Preamble was changed by the 42nd Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1976," he said, noting that the words "socialist", "secular", and "integrity" were added.

He said it was a travesty of justice that something that cannot be changed was altered "casually, farcically, and with no sense of propriety" and that too during Emergency when several opposition leaders were in jail.

"And in the process, if you deeply reflect, we are giving wings to existential challenges. These words have been added as nasoor (fester wound). These words will create upheaval," Dhankhar cautioned.

"We must reflect," he said, adding that B R Ambedkar did painstaking work on the Constitution and he must have "surely focused on it. The BJP cited the then prime minister Indira Gandhi's comments questioning the usefulness of the Indian Constitution and her assertion of changing it to hit back at the Congress.

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said the Congress should not divert from the Emergency-era excesses on people and tender an apology. As the country observed the 50th anniversary of Emergency, it is imperative to discuss the sufferings the then government inflicted on people so that it is never repeated, he told reporters.

He cited media reports of that period which quoted Indira Gandhi from her press conference and address to convey her critical take on the Constitution. She once spoke in favour of making basic changes in the Constitution and asked, at another occasion, if it serves democracy. Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta also questioned the inclusion of the words 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble, saying such changes should be made through national consensus, not under the "cover of authoritarianism."

Former Union Cabinet Minister Satyanarayan Jatiya said the Preamble reflects the core values of the Constitution, and its sanctity must be preserved. "No single leader can alter its structure based on personal ambition," he said, accusing the then government of acting in a manner similar to the colonial regime. (PTI)

Congress MP alleges misuse of public funds, seeks PM's intervention over 'political favouritism' in dairy scheme

Gogoi writes to PM demanding inquiry into beneficiaries of dairy project

GUWAHATI, June 28: Assam Congress president and Lok Sabha MP Gaurav Gogoi on Saturday alleged that family members and associates of ministers and MLAs of the ruling dispensation were getting benefits of a government scheme, depriving genuine beneficiaries in the state.

He also criticised Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's role in it through "open endorsement of political favouritism" and attempting to justify the selection of such connected people as beneficiaries.

Gogoi, in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requested a review of beneficiaries of the Assistance to Entrepreneur for Establishment of Commercial Dairy Farming (2022-23) in Assam.

The allegations by the Deputy Leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha came following reports of the inclusion of family members of ministers and MLAs in the list of beneficiaries under the dairy farming promotion scheme.

Gogoi noted that the scheme receives substantial financial support from the Assam government and each unit is eligible for up to ₹ 50 lakh in subsidy, with the objective to promote genuine entrepreneurship in the dairy sector.



"However, multiple reports and official documentation point to irregularities in the selection of beneficiaries. Several recipients of the scheme's benefits appear to be family members or associates of ministers and MLAs in the state government, while long-standing dairy farmers, particularly in districts like Bongaigaon, have reportedly been overlooked despite having applied multiple times and fulfilling the

eligibility requirements," he said in the letter.

The exclusion of experienced dairy entrepreneurs raises concerns about the fairness and transparency of the selection process, he added.

"Equally alarming is the response from the chief minister of Assam, who chose to justify the inclusion of ministers' family members in the list of dairy scheme bene-

ficiaries," Gogoi said, referring to Sarma's statement that the ministers' families will need a source of income when out of power.

He maintained that this "open endorsement of political favouritism" has fuelled public outrage for undermining the constitutional values of equality and justice.

It also reflects a breach of the oath of office, which obliges public representatives to act impartially and in the public interest, he added.

Gogoi also mentioned the Gorukhuti agricultural project, funded through public money and intended for community benefit, which has also come under scrutiny.

Referring to the procurement of Gir cows for the project and allotment of several of these high-yield cattle to private parties, the Congress leader said, "Official records indicate that these were allocated to several elected representatives, including the firm owned by the wife of Jayanta Malla Baruah (cabinet minister and Nalbari MLA), Bhupen Pegu (Jonai MLA), Utpal Borah (Gohpur MLA), Diganta Kalita (Kamapur MLA), and Dilip Saikia (MP)."

Saikia is also the president of the state BJP unit.

BJP unit.

Gogoi said that such actions go against the very principles of transparency, accountability and equitable access.

"If politically connected individuals are allowed to siphon off benefits meant for the poor, we risk alienating the very people these schemes are meant to uplift," he said, urging the PM to initiate an inquiry.

"I trust that this matter will be taken with the seriousness it deserves. I look forward to your prompt intervention on these issues," Gogoi added.

The state Congress president had earlier raised the matter on X and alleged that ₹ 50 lakh of taxpayers' money was handed to a minister for his private dairy farm.

He had hit out at the chief minister's response to the allegation by stating, "What will they do after losing power?"

Gogoi had claimed that it was not the first time those close to the BJP-led government have reaped "outsized benefits".

"This is not governance, but rather a betrayal of the oath of office. Public money is misused to secure private futures, and power is treated as entitlement, not responsibility," he added, pointing out that these schemes were meant for the common people. (PTI)

Commemoration programme honours legacy of Hareswar Goswami

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 28: The 28th death anniversary of Hareswar Goswami, a distinguished academician and founding president of the Nagaon Zila Sahitya Sabha, was observed with a solemn memorial programme at the Kamaladevi Toddy Bhavan under the aegis of the Nagaon Zila Sahitya Sabha on Saturday. Goswami, who also served as Vice President of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, was remembered for his multifaceted contributions to Assamese literature, education, and public life.

The programme was presided over by Nabin Borthakur, Vice President of the Nagaon Zila Sahitya Sabha.

The event began with the ceremonial lighting of candles at the portrait of Hareswar Goswami by senior journalist Kanak Hazarika and Tridip Laskar, Convener of the Sabha's History Compilation Sub-Committee. Former president of the Nagaon Zila Sahitya Sabha and eminent writer Rottimohan Nath inaugurated the programme and delivered the keynote address.

In his speech, Nath described Goswami as a visionary social reformer and a tireless contributor to the advancement of society. He praised Goswami's active involvement in public life and his unwavering dedication to societal welfare.

Dr Hemanta Kumar Goswami, noted poet and literary figure, also addressed the gathering as keynote speaker. He provided a detailed account of Hareswar Goswami's life, highlighting his achievements in education, culture, and spiritual pursuits. Dr Goswami described him as a staunch nationalist who played a prominent role in the Assam Movement.

Several speakers at the memorial recalled Hareswar Goswami as an inspiring educator, a talented actor, and a guiding force in the literary and cultural landscape of Assam. They reflected on his invaluable service to the Nagaon Zila Sahitya Sabha and his tenure as a member of the Assam Public Service Commission. The programme was attended by prominent literary figures, including Mrinal Hazarika, Executive President of the Kuli Sub-Committee of Asom Sahitya Sabha, and Rajiv Hazarika, Secretary of the Nagaon Zila Sahitya Sabha. Sanjiv Goswami, son of Hareswar Goswami, also addressed the gathering, sharing heartfelt memories and reflecting on his father's enduring legacy.

The event served as a tribute to Hareswar Goswami's enduring influence on Assamese intellectual and cultural life, reaffirming his stature as a respected figure in the region's literary and educational circles.

Guardian Minister Pijush Hazarika reviews welfare schemes in Sonitpur

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, June 28: Minister for Water Resources, Information and Public Relations and Guardian Minister of Sonitpur district, Pijush Hazarika chaired a review meeting on Saturday at the conference hall of the Deputy Commissioner's office in Tezpur to assess the progress of various government welfare schemes in the district.

The minister took detailed stock of key state initiatives including the Chief Minister's Atmanirbhar Assam Abhiyan 2.0, Orunodoi 3.0, and the Chief Minister's Women Entrepreneurship Abhiyan.

He directed officials to maintain vigilant monitoring of the schemes initiated under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to ensure their effective and timely implementation.

Emphasising transparency and accountability, the minister further instructed that benefits from these schemes must be extended strictly to eligible beneficiaries.

The meeting was attended by Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rabha, Bar-



chala MLA Ganesh Kumar Limbu, Rangapara MLA Krishna Kamal Tanti, Sonitpur Deputy Commissioner Ankur Bharali, and officials from various departments under the district administration.

Later in the day, Minister Hazarika visited Borachuburi in Da-Parbatia under the Tezpur Assembly Constituency to inspect the damage caused by severe flooding and erosion resulting from a new channel of the Brahmaputra river.

During his visit, he interacted with local residents and reviewed

the ground situation.

The minister instructed engineers of the Water Resources Department to expedite anti-erosion measures in the affected area and take urgent steps to close the newly formed channel.

Officials noted that once closed, the channel's obstruction is expected to make several flood-prone areas under the Tezpur Assembly Constituency—including Tezpur Medical College and Hospital, the ITBP base, and parts of the Barchala constituency—flood-free.

28th death anniversary of Bir Chilagang Basumatary observed in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 28: The 28th death anniversary of Bir Chilagang Basumatary, the founder chairman of the now-defunct Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), was observed on Saturday at his burial site, Bir Chilagang Puri, located in Bongshigaon near Dotma in Kokrajhar district.

Bir Chilagang Basumatary, a key figure in the Bodo community's struggle for a separate Bodoland within the framework of the Indian Constitution, passed away on June 28, 1997, following a prolonged illness.

He is survived by his wife, two sons, and a daughter.

The commemoration was organised by the Bir Chilagang Basumatary Trust in collaboration with local citizens to honour the contributions and sacrifices of the late leader for the welfare and advancement of the Bodo community.

People from various organisations, political affiliations, and local residents gathered at the burial site to offer floral tributes and

pay their respects.

Among those present at the solemn occasion were the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Pramod Boro; former BTC chief Hagrama Mohilary; Lok Sabha MP Joyanta Basumatary; MLAs Lawrence Islary and Jiron Basumatary; ABSU Vice President Khwrmmdao Wary; and several other dignitaries.

Ramani Basumatary, widow of the late leader, led the floral tributes, joined by leaders from diverse organisations across communities.

In his address, CEM Pramod Boro described Bir Chilagang Basumatary as a visionary leader who devoted his life to the progress and upliftment of the Bodo community.

He emphasised Basumatary's significant role in the Bodo nation-building process and his relentless pursuit of statehood for Bodoland within India.

He also referred to the late leader as a man of deep philosophy whose leadership was rooted in the

well-being of the society.

Boro informed that the BTR government has taken steps to construct Bir Chilagang Basumatary Mini Stadiums across all 40 constituencies of the council.

Additionally, he mentioned the establishment of the Martyr Sujit Narzary Memorial Auditorium across the region and the implementation of various welfare initiatives aimed at improving the lives of the people.

Urging the community to remember and honour the contributions of such great individuals, Boro called for collective effort in continuing their legacy.

He underscored the unity within the Bodo community, noting that while political views may differ, the commitment to the welfare of the people remains unwavering.

He further highlighted the peace and harmony prevailing in the region since the signing of the Bodo Peace Accord, affirming that the government of BTR is dedicated to inclusive development and ensuring progress for all communities in the region.

Dead body recovered in Jagiroad

HT Correspondent

JAGIROAD, June 28: The Jagiroad Railway Police on Saturday recovered the body of a man from the railway tracks between Khetri and Tetelia stations. The deceased, estimated to be around 45 years old, was found wearing black pants and measured approximately 5.8 feet in height.

In-charge of the Jagiroad Railway Police, Rajani Kanta Bharali, informed that the body has been sent to Morigaon Civil Hospital for post-mortem examination. It will be preserved at the hospital for the next 72 hours, the official added.

Centenary souvenir on Golap Borbora to be published by Gauhati University



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 28: A general meeting was convened at the office of the Vice Chancellor, Gauhati University, to deliberate on the publication of a commemorative souvenir marking the 100th birth anniversary of Golap Borbora, the first non-Congress Chief Minister of Assam and an influential figure in the state's socio-political landscape.

The meeting was held to formally initiate plans for the centenary publication and to bring together individuals closely associated with Borbora's legacy.

According to an official statement, the meeting witnessed the participation of several eminent personalities, including Dr Nani Gopal Mahanta, Vice Chancellor of Gauhati University; Kuntal Moni Samah Bordoloi, IAS, Officer on Special Duty to the Chief Minister of Assam; Dr Arupjioti Choudhury, Vice Chancellor of Madhabdev University; Padma Shri awardee and noted social worker Ajoy Kumar Dutta; distinguished author Dr Ranjit Sabhapandit; Pankaj Borbora, son of the late Golap Borbora; and Abhinav P Borbora, grandson of the late leader.

During the course of the meeting, Dr Nani Gopal Mahanta, Dr Arupjioti Choudhury, and Kuntal Moni Samah Bordoloi were unanimously selected as Editors of the forthcoming centenary souvenir.

The editorial team is tasked with curating a comprehensive and insightful publication that will serve as a valuable repository of historical and personal material related to Golap Borbora.

The souvenir will include personal letters, interviews, diary entries, and rare photographs, offering a nuanced portrayal of Borbora's life, political ideology, and his lasting contributions to Assam.

The proposed publication is being undertaken as a tribute to Golap Borbora's enduring legacy and is intended to highlight the values and vision he championed throughout his political career.

The initiative is viewed as a collective endeavour to document and celebrate the journey of a leader who played a formative role in shaping modern Assam and whose influence continues to resonate in the state's public and political discourse.

Jorhat district admin unveils two-day programme to mark 42nd district day

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 28: The Jorhat district administration has announced a series of events to celebrate the 42nd Jorhat District Day on July 1, 2025.

Addressing the media at the conference hall of the Jorhat administrative complex on Friday, District Commissioner Jay Shivani outlined the detailed schedule of the two-day celebration aimed at engaging the public and promoting local culture, heritage, and development.

According to the District Commissioner, several competitions including logo designing, mascot creation, essay writing, quiz, and photography were launched online for students on June 24 and will continue until June 30.

The essay competition is based on the theme "Your dream of a de-

veloped Jorhat by 2047," with the best entries to be showcased at the main event venue on July 1.

The winning logo will be featured on the official Jorhat district flag, which will be hoisted on the same day. So far, over 60 logo designs have been submitted.

The four municipal boards under Jorhat have been assigned the task of selecting locations and organizing a wall painting competition, which will take place on either June 30 or July 1.

Photography entries are also being submitted online, with all creative themes required to centre around Jorhat and its unique identity. On June 30, a cultural procession featuring children in traditional Assamese attire will take place.

A district-level fair will be inaugurated the same day at the Jorhat

Stadium complex.

The fair will include displays of handlooms, handicrafts, indigenous cuisine, and traditional items produced by local startups and will continue until July 4.

Blood donation camps will be organized in Jorhat and Teok on June 30, and in Teok and Titabar on July 1. Simultaneously, Gram Sabhas will be conducted in each Gaon Panchayat across the district over the two days.

Officials from various departments will attend these Gram Sabhas to inform residents about government schemes and to collect feedback and grievances.

A special programme will be held on June 30 at the Lachit Barphukan campus in honour of the legendary Assamese general known for his bravery.

NFR revises timings of 23 trains across network to improve punctuality

Revised schedules to be rolled out in phases from June 29 to July 5 for better train operations across Northeast

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 28: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has announced a revision in the timings of 23 trains at selected stations across its network as part of its efforts to enhance punctuality and improve overall passenger convenience.

According to an official statement, the revised schedules will be implemented in phases beginning June 29 and will continue until July 5, 2025. The changes will come into effect for two trains from June 29.

Train No 13173 (Sealdah-Sabroom) Kanchenjunga Express will follow revised timings at Hojai, Lanka, Lumding, and New Jalpaiguri.

Train No 12515 (Coimbatore Junction-Silchar) Express will also run as per the new schedule at Hojai, Lumding, Maibang, and New Jalpaiguri.

From June 30, revised timings will apply to five trains.

These include Train No 12424 (New Delhi-Dibrugarh) Rajdhani Express at Guwahati and Chaparmukh stations and its return service Train No 12423 (Dibrugarh-New Delhi) at Guwahati and Rangia.

Train No 13181 (Kolkata-Silghat Town) Kaziranga Express will follow updated timings at New Coochbehar, New Alipurduar, and Fakirganga stations.



Train No 13175 (Sealdah-Silchar) Kanchenjunga Express and Train No 15625 (Deogarh-Agartala) Express will also follow new timings at multiple stations including Lumding, Chaparmukh, and New Jalpaiguri.

On July 1, Train No 13182 (Silghat Town-Kolkata) Kaziranga Express will operate as per revised timings at New Coochbehar, while Train No 12507 (Thiruvananthapuram Central-Silchar) Express will follow new timings at Hojai, Lumding, Maibang, and New Jalpaiguri.

A larger set of changes will take effect from July 3, involving seven trains.

Train No 12345 (Howrah-Guwahati) Saraighat Express will have revised timings

at Kamakhya and Guwahati. Train No 13063 (Howrah-Balughat) Express, Train No 15464 (Siliguri Junction-Balughat) Express, and Train No 13147 (Sealdah-Bamanhat) Express will see changes at multiple stations including Malda Town, New Jalpaiguri, and Bamanhat.

Train No 13149 (Sealdah-Alipurduar Junction) Kanchan Kanya Express and Train No 13431/13432 (Nabadwip Dham-Balughat-Nabadwip Dham) Express will also follow revised schedules at selected stations.

From July 4, four more trains will run as per new timings.

Train No 12346 (Guwahati-Howrah) Saraighat Express will follow the revised

schedule at Guwahati, Kamakhya, New Bongaigaon, and Malda Town.

Train No 75723 (New Bongaigaon-Guwahati) DEMU, Train No 13246 (Rajendra Nagar-New Jalpaiguri) Capital Express, and Train No 13150 (Alipurduar Junction-Sealdah) Kanchan Kanya Express will also follow updated timings at various stations including Katihar Junction, Siliguri Junction, and New Jalpaiguri.

The final set of changes will take effect on July 5.

Train No 15626 (Agartala-Deogarh) Express will have revised timings at Chaparmukh.

Train No 13245 (New Jalpaiguri-Rajendra Nagar) Capital Express and Train No 75707 (Radhikapur-Siliguri Junction) DEMU will also operate as per revised timings at New Jalpaiguri and Radhikapur respectively.

The NFR stated that these schedule changes are part of broader infrastructure improvements that have enhanced train speeds and operational efficiency, ensuring a faster, safer, and more punctual travel experience.

Passengers are advised to check the National Train Enquiry System (NTES) for real-time updates on train running status and schedules before commencing their journey.

EDITORS PICK

A China-led trilateral nexus as India's new challenge

By: Harsh V. Pant & Aditya Gowdara Shivamurthy

Last week, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh held their first trilateral meeting in Kunming, China. The discussions focused on furthering cooperation and exploring the possibilities of deeper engagement. This meeting closely follows another trilateral meeting between China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, held in May, with the aim of extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and increasing cooperation. These trilaterals, led by China, come at a time of Pakistan's little relevance to the region, India's increasing relations with Afghanistan, and New Delhi's deteriorating ties with Bangladesh. The use of trilaterals underscores China's fresh attempts at making Pakistan a stakeholder in the region and keeping New Delhi preoccupied with immediate concerns.

A war that shaped alignments

The 1962 war between India and China has largely shaped regional alignments and geopolitics. Following the war, China found Pakistan to be an ally that could keep India engaged with immediate threats and limit it from challenging Beijing's interests, security, and status. On the other hand, Pakistan deemed China to be a country that would unquestionably offer economic and military assistance to support its aggression against India. To date, Pakistan is highly dependent on China for assistance, investments and infrastructure development. In fact, by the end of 2024, Pakistan had a loan of over \$29 billion from China. It is estimated that over 80% of Pakistan's arms imports are from China. In addition, China has also shielded Pakistan-backed terrorists at the United Nations Security Council and other multilateral platforms.

This camaraderie was largely visible during India's Operation Sindoor in May 2025. China termed India's retaliation to the Pakistan-sponsored attack in Pahalgam as "regrettable" and urged a political solution and dialogue. It backed Pakistan's stance of initiating an investigation into the Pahalgam terror attack in April 2025. The latest escalation also saw Pakistan deploying various Chinese-made hardware and weapons that ranged from surveillance radars, drones, missiles, guidance systems, and fighter jets. In the immediate aftermath of Operation Sindoor, Pakistan's Foreign Minister met his Chinese counterpart to reaffirm its "iron-clad friendship." The trilateral with Afghanistan and other countries likely emerged from this meeting.

The resurfacing of an idea

This idea of China and Pakistan using plus one against India is not a new phenomenon. Even in 1965, Pakistan flirted with the idea of using East Pakistan, China and Nepal to cut off India from its strategic Siliguri corridor. This idea of using South Asian countries seems to have resurfaced as both China and Pakistan face a confident India. Pakistan-sponsored terror attacks in Uri (2016), Pulwama (2019), and Pahalgam have seen India retaliate in a befitting manner. It has shown that India will no longer tolerate Pakistan's nuclear blackmail. India has also used its diplomatic clout and growing economy to isolate Pakistan. India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, halting trade, restricting port access, and targeting military installations — all as a part of its retaliatory measures against the Pahalgam attack — has damaged Pakistan military's operational capacities and confidence, highlighting Rawalpindi's limitations and weaknesses. India's military and diplomatic responses to Chinese border intrusions in Doklam and Galwan have also likely taken Beijing by surprise. New Delhi has also increased close cooperation with like-minded countries to limit Chinese aggressions.

At the same time, India's pragmatic engagement and domestic politics of the region have slowed down China's momentum in South Asia. In the Maldives, Beijing appears reluctant to trust President Mohamed Muizzu and the country's economy, despite his initial anti-India rhetoric. Mr. Muizzu has now turned to India to keep the country's economy afloat. In Nepal, despite signing the framework for Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) cooperation, major differences in funding remain unresolved and the progress of projects has been slow. In Sri Lanka, President Anura Kumara Disasanayake is developing close ties with India by respecting its redlines. Despite ideological and historical differences with Delhi, he visited India before China. In the case of Bangladesh, despite differences, India has not hindered the trilateral energy cooperation with Nepal.

These increasing anxieties are likely to have motivated China to push for trilaterals with Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Before their respective regime changes in 2021 and 2024, both countries were staunch supporters of India's fight against both Pakistan and its state-sponsored terrorism. With the change in regimes, however, Pakistan and China have attempted to draw both countries closer to their orbit. They remain cautious of pragmatic engagement between India and the Taliban, fearing that Pakistan would lose its leverage. At the same time, Pakistan has increased security, economic and political engagements with the new government in Bangladesh.

Historically, both Bangladesh and Afghanistan have enjoyed close ties with Pakistan and provide a fertile ground for cross-border terrorism. Pakistan's influence, supported by China and its economic clout, could thus create new terror and security-related challenges. This will help Pakistan become a relevant country in the region, create rifts between India and its neighbours, and keep Delhi preoccupied with immediate security and terror-related challenges, making way for Chinese BRI projects, interests and investments in the region.

China efforts and setbacks

The developments in the region demonstrate, once again, that China, and not Pakistan, is India's biggest challenge. With both Pakistan and China confronting a confident India, China sees an opportunity to challenge India through the trilateral nexus. At a time when India is seeking support from South Asian countries to fight terrorism, Chinese efforts will create new setbacks. South Asian countries will thus have to learn to balance between India and China, as Beijing uses Islamabad to create new complexities in the region. On its part, Delhi will have to continue to express redlines and convey the point that any misadventures by its neighbours could have severe economic, military, and political costs. (Courtesy: ORF)

SC ruling on maternity benefit as fundamental right is a big step

By: Rohit Mani Tiwari

On May 23, while delivering a historic judgment in *K. Umadevi v. State of Tamil Nadu* (2025), the Supreme Court unequivocally declared that 'leave and benefit due to maternity situation of a woman' are fundamental rights. The Court linked several previous cases, international conventions, treaties, and prevalent socio-economic reality of the nation to grant 'maternity leave as fundamental right under Art. 21'. In *Suchita Sri-vastava v. Chandigarh Administration* (2009), it was noted that women's 'reproductive rights' was an integral part of personal liberty and hence fell within the ambit of Article 21.

In *Umadevi*, the Court added that 'international conventions', such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ('UNDHR'), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ('CEDAW'), the International Covenant on SEC Rights, and ILO basic framework on 'Maternity Protection' (2000) provide for a 'broad spectrum of reproductive rights includes maternity benefits.' As such, maternity leaves were integral to maternity benefit and hence formed an essential part of personal liberty under Art. 21.

The Court enunciated that the global community "recognise maternity rights are at the intersection of several human rights and protected under human rights laws as well." In one stroke of the pen, the Court conferred status of fundamental right to maternity rights and benefits. It is an exquisitely written judgment. The assured and protected maternity sabbath is not merely a guarantee of constitutionalism but a mandate of a civilised society under international framework.

The most salient feature of the judgment is that the Court reminds the State its commitment to these international laws under Article 51(c) of the Constitution, especially regarding ILO's framework (2000) on 'maternity protection, right to proceed to freely, with dignity and assurance that right to return to same role, status and entitlements are in safe hands of employers and State'.

The Court lauded the enactment of the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 ('MB Act') and



urged the world of work to look for guidance under its provisions as a comprehensive legal framework. It does not bar any worker who is a mother from availing maternity benefits and leaves. The Court hailed the MB Act as 'North Star' as "it affords women much flexibility and enable to live an autonomous life as worker and mother."

Now that maternity benefits have been recognised as a fundamental right, it shall dawn a new era in constellations of fundamental rights. The employers cannot evade or hide behind the ambiguity of maternity laws or resource crunch or simple ignorance.

There is also a procedural question involved in this new fundamental right of maternity benefit: Whether an aggrieved woman can directly approach directly either the Supreme Court or the High Court under the writ jurisdiction of Articles 32 and 226 of the Constitution, overriding the relief structure of the MB Act?

Similarly, another question that emerges is: whether, after the judicial acceptance of maternity right as a 'human right', the NHRC/SHRC shall exercise jurisdiction on these matters directly?

The MB Act provides 'an extraordinary relief mechanism' wherein a labour inspector is vested with power to issue 'orders'. This may lead to multiplicity of relief fora, hence causing confusion. The MB Act covers 'each

woman', whether permanent/regular/FTE/contractual in any standard or non-standard forms of employment without any cap or bar.

The relief under the MB Act already suffers from, what I call, 'jurisdictional irony'. Just to briefly elaborate it, the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 ('ID Act') also deals with employment disputes like non-payment of salary, termination of employment or unfair practice. But if such a dispute arises out of vindictive action of the management due to maternity conditions of women workers, it shall be dealt with under the MB Act. Now, the definition of 'appropriate government' is different in the ID Act and the MB Act. Hence most establishments that fall within one (Center/State) government for relief under the ID Act may not fall within the same jurisdiction under the MB Act.

For example, ordinarily termination of a woman worker in a bank would come under the Central Government due to the ID Act. But if suddenly that woman claims that she was terminated due to maternity conditions, her petition shall now be heard in the labour department of the State Government. This multiplicity of fora already confuses a lot of aggrieved women workers and deprives them of appropriate relief due to 'irony of jurisdictional issue.'

The elephant in the room is 'informal

workers'. According to the Periodical Labour Force Survey, "over 70% of Indian employment is in the informal sector and the overwhelming majority of these informal workers are women (the Court itself records that "now women constitute a sizable portion of our workforce."). How are they going to be impacted by the *Umadevi* judgment?

Now if maternity rights are fundamental rights, it brings into its fold private employers of MSMEs for deliverance of this right. How will these MSMEs afford to finance the benefits, especially for those who are hired for 'fixed short term'?

It is high time due thought may be given to observe ILO Maternity Protection Convention 183 in law. The Court understood "concept of maternity leave is a matter of not just fair play and social justice but is also a constitutional guarantee to women whereof the State is bound to act." In this regard, 'universal maternity contributory corpus' may be formed. Field experiences in enforcement of maternity laws reveal that several social-factors like stigma, taboo, fear, insecurity or illiteracy impede women workers from placing claims for maternity benefits.

For employers, this benefit is the most unprovisioned for. This social attitude must also be re-vamped through accelerated awareness about the MB Act. The Court itself acknowledges this and calls upon 'to bridge the gap between society and law'.

With this judicial position that maternity benefits are fundamental rights, the Court has brought a nationwide attention to provisions of MB Act and accorded it due publicity and clarity in its implementation. But vesting women with maternity benefits in a patriarchal and lopsided labour market like India is not a question of legality. It is a mix factual matrix of socio-economic and political realities. It has to be addressed keeping in mind international best practices. Moreover as Andre Beteille, an eminent Indo-sociologist, remarked about India, 'Laws set the path, it is society that travels upon.' India has to traverse the path the Court has illustriously set for the cause of women at work. (IPA Service)

India-US trade talks reach crucial stage as US seeks larger access to farm goods sector

By: Anjan Roy

As has been agreed earlier, a trade team of India is currently visiting the United States to work out details of the agreement on commerce between the two countries before the deadline of July 9 when the so-called reciprocal tariffs come into force. Trump advisers however have indicated that the deadline may be extended by a few more days. While negotiations have progressed in wide areas, a few major differences have cropped up in sensitive areas, including trade in farm products.

In any trade talks, it is the farm sector which poses the biggest hurdle even though farming does not contribute an overwhelming proportion of national income. This is due to the fact that issues relating to the farm sector are most sensitive and politically extremely critical. In the talks between USA and India currently undergoing, it is the insistence of the USA for access to Indian markets for farm goods that is proving to be a stumbling point. USA is a huge producer of items like corn, soya, wheat and several other items. India is also a major producer and the domestic demand in India is massive.

There are two outstanding issues. First, United States subsidies its farm sector to an extent that is impossible to match in India. For example, US cotton growers, a small portion of US agriculture, were receiving as much as \$100 billion in subsidy. This had created a stalemate in WTO negotiations between the US and the African countries.

Billions of dollars are handed over to the farmers in the name of environmental protections and other practices which virtually result in price subsidisation. They could sell much cheaper than their cost of production to capture markets.

Secondly, the USA has a large variety of genetically modified crops — the ubiquitously described GM crops. Introduction of such crops and their leakage into general farming could play havoc with the indigenous crops. These could altogether wipe out the indigenous crops and their strains much to the loss of genetic varieties of a country.

Hence, proper caution has to be taken before introduction and consumption of such crops in a new environment. Therefore, a critical view would have to be taken to introduce protection measures.

These tend to prolong free trade negotiations between countries. For example, in case of free trade

negotiations with Japan, the Japanese had refused any concession on farm products which had nearly wrecked the negotiations altogether. The Japanese maintained that they eat only the Japanese variety of sticky rice which is not produced in India. Many other farm products had also posed problems for the negotiators. Many other points crop up before the trade negotiators as well. One of these is the point about domestic content. That is, in many cases, countries work as mere point for routing products of other countries. Chinese products enter India through the Nepal corridor as India and Nepal trade without any tariffs. However, in ordinary course these Chinese products would have attracted much higher tariffs to enter the Indian market.

Hence, the trade negotiators have to work out norms for "domestic content" in traded goods. These requirements vary from a high of 80% domestic content requirements to a low of 30%, depending on the choices of countries involved.

One of the major complaints of U.S. against Mexico, its southern neighbour, has been that Mexico had often been used as a transshipment point for pushing Chinese goods into USA without virtually any Mexican "domestic content" in these products. But the current round of trade negotiations to avert kicking in the reciprocal tariffs has been like negotiating with a gun pointed at your head. Many of these detailed and finer points about a trade deal are being ignored and that could create a serious breach later on.

However, for India, merchandise trade between India and USA is not large in volume compared with the overall economies of the two countries. Even though critical in certain sectors, the merchandise trade does not have much larger macro-economic implications for India as well as for USA.

Where Indo-US trade has huge significance for the former is the extent to which we can retain the overall framework for services trade. India's IT and IT enabled sectors have life threatening exposure to USA. Most of our IT and related service exports are to USA and any restrictions on that sphere could be debilitating for India.

It appears that the current round of trade talks concentrate principally on the merchandise trade segment and the other areas like services trade are not being much disturbed. For this reason India should now be much more careful in dealing with services trade. (IPA Service)

Need for green cover in upcoming Medical College campuses

Sir/Ma'am

I recently had the opportunity to visit the Nalbari Medical College and Hospital. While I was pleased to see the impressive concrete infrastructure and the rapid development taking place, one aspect of the campus deeply concerned me — the lack of big trees and green cover. On a hot day, the environment felt extremely harsh and unbearable due to the absence of natural shade.

With the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam announcing the construction of several new medical colleges across the state, I sincerely hope that the government will prioritize environmental planning alongside infrastructure. It is my humble appeal that trees be planted well in advance of the construction process so that, by the time these institutions are functional, they provide not just medical facilities but also a comfortable and sustainable environment for patients, students, and staff.

A well-shaded campus not only enhances aesthetic appeal but also contributes to the physical and mental well-being of all who visit or work there. Let development go hand in hand with ecology.

Mowsam Hazarika

Guwahati-9

mowsam2000@yahoo.co.in

The cost of clean childhoods

Sir/Ma'am

There was a time when children returned home with mud on their knees and stories on their tongues. Games weren't scheduled it happened between school and sunset, on fields where arguments and friendships grew side by side. Outdoor sports taught us how to lose with grace, win without arrogance, and get up every time we fell. Outdoor games didn't just teach us to win. They taught us to fall. To lose. To argue, reconcile, to know that pain wasn't permanent and joy wasn't owed. The body learned rhythm, the mind learned resilience. And somewhere in that tangle of sweat and sunset, a soul began to form. But now, I see children behind screens that do not let them fall. Their days are too curated, their joys too clean. They know more buttons than bruises, more passwords than playgrounds. Their victories come in pixels, their defeats in silence. I don't blame them, not really. The world has changed. Safety is a concern, time is a thief, and ambition now wears a tie at age ten. But something essential is slipping through our fingers like the last warmth of dusk: the raw, imperfect education that only scraped knees and scolded afternoons could offer.

What we are missing is not just exercise. We are missing the shaping of the self.

Noopur Baruah,

Tezpur

barooahnoopur@gmail.com

Scholarship tests by coaching centres in educational institutions

Sir/Ma'am,

Some coaching centres conduct scholarship tests primarily as a strategy to collect students' contact details. After acquiring this information, these centres announce a certain percentage of fee concession for coaching related to competitive examinations, based on the test results. Subsequently, they impose artificial enrollment deadlines and persistently contact students through repeated phone calls, pressuring them to enroll without proper consideration. In such circumstances, it is essential for students to understand a key point — a fee concession alone should not be the sole reason for taking admission in any coaching centre. It is important to note that coaching is not a mandatory requirement for success in competitive examinations. Many students achieve success through self-study and strategic planning, without relying on coaching support. If a student decides to enroll in a coaching centre, it is wise and far-sighted to carefully evaluate the quality of education provided by the centre, the experience of the faculty, its previous results, the structure and content of the curriculum, and most importantly, the student's personal goals and individual learning needs before making a final decision.

Dr. Buljit Buragohain

Assistant Professor, Assam Don Bosco University,

Airport Road, Azarabuljit@gmail.com

NATO summit at Hague shows once again Europe has surrendered to Trump

By: Nitva Chakraborty

The Rambo of the global diplomacy Donald Trump joined the NATO summit at Hague on June 24-25 with a triumphant smile after organizing the ceasefire between Israel and Iran in their 12 day war and strongly imparting the signal that no one matters in the world affairs now excepting the U.S. President. The major European nations which were resorting to anti-Trump rhetoric in the last four months since the last February summit of NATO completely took an about turn and agreed to what Trump wanted. The NATO declaration issued on June 25 was a total vindication of Trump line on imposing 5 per cent of the members respective national incomes on defence spending gradually by 2035. Spain was the only dissenter but Trump threatened Spain and said that he would take care of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez later.

Just remember what happened at the last meeting of NATO and later at the Munich Security Conference of European nations in February this year. US vice president JD Vance termed the European nations as freeloaders and said that USA would no longer carry the burden of defending Europe. French President Emanuel Macron as also Germany talked of independent defence arrangement without depending on USA. European Union members prepared

alternative plan for a European security system on its own strength. Only NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, being a pragmatist remained silent. He knew how far the key powers of Europe could go with their plan without assistance from the USA.

So this time at the Hague summit, Rutte was ecstatic at the sight of Donald Trump. He presented the joint declaration as a victory of Trump. He sent a private message saying you will achieve something which no other American President, in decades, could have done. Rutte even said that Trump had done the right thing by persuading the Europeans to do what they did not do on their own.

After so much flattery and seeing the European leaders of NATO in bended knees, Trump was overwhelmed. "This was a tremendous summit, and I enjoyed it very much," he said at a news conference at the end of the meeting. He added that he understood the central role the United States plays in the defense of Europe. "They want to protect their country, and they need the United States and without the United States, it's not going to be the same," he said.

The NATO declaration made no mention of Ukraine's membership though that was at the agenda. That was done as per wishes of Trump that Ukraine need not be a member of NATO. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had a

meeting with Trump at Hague but he did not come out of the meeting pleased though the NATO sources said that Ukraine will be getting arms and equipment from NATO member countries. At the G-7 meeting in Canada last week, Trump could not meet the Ukrainian President because he had to rush to Washington on account of Israel-Iran war by skipping the second day of the summit.

In the last two weeks since June 13 when Israel started the war against Iran, Trump did not allow any power to take any initiative to stop the war. France, Germany and Britain talked with Iran about a formula but Trump totally ignored that. President Putin wanted to mediate but Trump just told him you look after Ukraine and nothing more. China circulated a four point proposal but it was not discussed at any level. So all through it was Trump and Trump alone who dealt with the issues of negotiations projecting himself as the only world leader who matters in the year 2025 in global diplomacy.

Gaza still remains an issue and Israel is killing Palestinians consistently. All nations are talking and giving statements but no country including China and Russia are taking concrete steps to stop the killings. This should be main priority of Trump if he really wants to emerge as a peacemaker. Gaza killings by Israel is the latest humanitarian disaster. It has to be stopped. (IPA Service)

Jyotiprasad's Joymoti: The Birth of Assamese Cinema

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Cinema is not merely an art form; it is an embodiment of social aspirations, political consciousness, and cultural expressions. In this regard, Assamese cinema made its historic entry into the national film narrative through a cinematic creation that was much more than a film — it was an act of resistance, a cultural renaissance, and a call for identity. Joymoti, released in 1935, was not only the first Assamese film but also one of the earliest Indian films that broke away from the mythological and formulaic tropes of early Indian cinema. Directed and produced by Jyotiprasad Agarwala, the revered 'Rupkonwar' of Assam, Joymoti was not born out of commercial ambition but out of a deeper, more powerful desire — the revival of Assamese identity and the assertion of regional culture through the most modern art form of the time. Jyotiprasad's Joymoti remains a watershed moment in the cultural history of Assam, and its significance lies not only in the fact that it was the first Assamese talkie but also in its bold ideological underpinnings, aesthetic innovation, and unwavering socio-political intent.

The 1930s was a turbulent decade, both for India and Assam. While the Indian national movement was at its peak, Assam was undergoing cultural erosion under colonial pressures and a struggle for linguistic and cultural recognition. Against this backdrop, Jyotiprasad, armed with experience

from Germany's UFA film studios and exposure to European art and cinema, envisioned a cinematic project that would be both a cultural milestone and a political instrument. He chose to adapt the historical figure of Joymoti Konwari, the Ahom princess who had embraced martyrdom rather than betray her husband Gadapani during the political conspiracies of the 17th century. But Jyotiprasad's interpretation of the tale was not just historical retelling; it was a cinematic reinterpretation designed to mirror the contemporary spirit of resistance against injustice and tyranny, both colonial and patriarchal.

The making of Joymoti was in itself a radical act. At a time when Assam had no cinematic infrastructure whatsoever — no studios, no trained technicians, no professional actors — Jyotiprasad created everything from scratch. He established the Chitran Studio in the Bholaguri Tea Estate, constructed makeshift sets using traditional Assamese materials like japi, xorai, and local architecture, and trained local talents in acting and filmmaking. The lead role of Joymoti was played by Aideu Handique, who went on to become the first Assamese film actress and tragically faced lifelong social ostracisation simply because she addressed her on-screen husband as "bongohordeo" (husband). This tragic incident itself is a commentary on how deeply patriarchal norms were challenged by this film. Jyotiprasad's decision to cast a woman in a lead role portraying



strength and sacrifice was a revolutionary departure from the trend of male-dominated narratives in Indian cinema of the time.

Stylistically, Joymoti was far ahead of its time. Instead of relying on theatrical overacting and loud dialogues, Jyotiprasad infused the

film with cinematic realism inspired by Soviet montage techniques, German expressionism, and Indian aesthetic sensibilities. The camera work, set design, costumes, and lighting all contributed to an immersive storytelling experience that focused on character development, emotional subtlety, and symbolic representation. Notably, he filmed mostly in natural light, as electricity was not available at the time, which gave the film a distinct organic visual tone. His innovation extended to sound design as well. Due to synchronization issues during post-production, Jyotiprasad invented a method of dubbing sound over the silent sequences, thus making Joymoti the first Indian film to introduce re-recording and post-synchronization — a technical achievement often overlooked in mainstream histories of Indian cinema.

The narrative of Joymoti was itself a powerful political allegory. The torture and execution of Joymoti for refusing to betray her husband becomes symbolic of resistance against tyranny, echoing Gandhian ideals of non-violence and moral courage. Unlike other films of the era that placed women in ornamental or romanticised roles, Joymoti was portrayed as a figure of moral fortitude, agency, and sacrifice. She neither begged for mercy nor submitted to power, instead choosing to uphold her principles even at the cost of her life. In portraying Joymoti as a feminist icon and a political symbol, Jyotiprasad constructed a narrative that was radical in both

content and form.

However, the film's reception was not proportionate to its revolutionary value. It was not commercially successful, partly because of its unfamiliar cinematic grammar and partly due to the socio-political environment of the time. Audiences, more accustomed to melodrama and religious epics, found Joymoti's realism and political undertones difficult to digest. Additionally, the lack of a proper distribution network and publicity further impeded its reach. Yet, commercial failure could not dim the glow of its significance. The film became a cultural document, a symbol of Assamese pride, and an inspirational touchstone for generations of filmmakers and artists.

The tragedy of Joymoti did not end with its box-office failure. Over time, many reels of the original print were lost, and only partial versions could be restored later with painstaking effort. Efforts by Altaf Mazid and other film archivists have helped salvage what remains, and the film is now preserved and studied as a crucial artifact in Indian cinematic history. Despite its partial loss, its legacy continues to resonate through its ideological depth, artistic brilliance, and cultural audacity.

In understanding Joymoti, one must also understand Jyotiprasad Agarwala not just as a filmmaker, but as a visionary cultural leader. He was a poet, playwright, freedom fighter, and above all, a renaissance figure who sought to awaken Assamese society through literature, art, and cinema. He understood the transformative potential of cinema not as mere entertainment but as a potent vehicle for social reform, cultural preservation, and political awakening. Through Joymoti, he laid the foundation of a regional cinema that was not merely regional in content but global in vision and universal in spirit. The courage it took to embark on such a project, at a time when the medium was nascent and the environment hostile, cannot be overstated.

Today, when Assamese cinema has evolved into a robust medium with diverse voices and narratives, the contribution of Joymoti stands as a towering beacon. It reminds us of the roots from which this cinematic journey began — roots nourished by ideals of courage, identity, resistance, and artistic excellence. As we celebrate the milestones of Indian cinema, it is imperative to remember that the genesis of Assamese cinema was not in glamour or commerce, but in conviction, rebellion, and cultural assertion.

Jyotiprasad's Joymoti was not just a film. It was an awakening. It was a cinematic revolution born out of love for one's land, language, and people. It was a protest etched on celluloid, a poem visualised in frames, and a legacy that continues to inspire. In honouring Joymoti, we honour not only the birth of Assamese cinema but also the soul of a people who dared to dream through the eyes of their beloved Rupkonwar. (The writer can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)

Banu Mushtaq's Heart Lamp Lights the world stage

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Banu Mushtaq has etched her name in literary history by becoming the first author writing in Kannada to win the prestigious International Booker Prize. Her winning work, Heart Lamp, a deeply evocative short story anthology translated into English by Deepa Bhashti, is also the first collection of short stories ever to win this global recognition. The book paints powerful portraits of the lived experiences of Muslim women in southern India — portraits that judges described as "astounding" in their depiction of survival and resilience.

Born and raised in a modest Muslim neighbourhood in a small town in Karnataka, Mushtaq's early life was shaped by the traditional religious education common among girls in her community. She studied the Quran in Urdu, the liturgical language of her faith, but her father envisioned a broader horizon for her. Defying prevailing norms, he enrolled her in a convent school where Kannada, the official language of Karnataka, was the medium of instruction. This decision laid the foundation for Mushtaq's literary journey, one that would eventually revolutionize Kannada literature.

Mushtaq embraced Kannada as her literary language with determination and passion. She began writing while still in school, at a time when many of her peers were being encouraged to marry early and retreat into domestic life. She chose a different path, continuing her education and pursuing college, determined to carve a space for herself beyond the confines of social expectations. However, life was far from easy. Her first published story came only after years of perseverance and during one of the most challenging periods of her personal life.

At 26, she married a man of her choosing, a decision that was followed by a phase of intense personal conflict. She has spoken candidly in multiple interviews about the emotional and mental toll of these years. Once an aspiring writer with a passionate heart, she found herself suddenly reduced to a life of domestic drudgery, expected to wear a burqa and stay within the bounds of her home. At 29, after the birth of her child, she was consumed by postpartum depression. In a moment of overwhelming despair, she attempted self-immolation — an act averted only at the last minute by her husband. That moment, as she recounts, became a turning point.

Her stories in Heart Lamp embody this very spirit of silent yet fierce resistance. They do not offer loud proclamations or dramatic revolts, but rather depict women negotiating their survival with grit and grace. These are stories of quiet rebellion, of everyday courage, and of dignity in the face of stifling circumstances. In a literary landscape where Muslim women are often reduced to symbolic figures or tragic tropes, Mushtaq restores their complexity, agency, and humanity. Her characters endure injustices, challenge them when possible, and navigate their world with resilience that may not make headlines but is deeply transformative for their lives.

Her work reflects not just personal trials but also a broader political and social

commentary. After a stint in journalism, where she worked with a local tabloid and participated in the Bandaya movement — a progressive literary and social movement focused on fighting injustice — Mushtaq turned to law to support her family. Yet, throughout these shifts in her career, writing remained her steadfast companion. She published six short story collections, a novel, and an essay collection, becoming a towering figure in contemporary Kannada literature.

Her frankness and fearlessness have also made her a target of religious conservatives. In 2000, after she publicly supported women's right to pray in mosques, she received threats, and a fatwa was issued against her. One man even attempted to attack her with a knife but was stopped by her husband. Yet, none of these threats silenced her. Mushtaq has continued to write with fierce honesty, taking on themes that challenge patriarchal interpretations of religion and advocate for women's rights.

Her success with Heart Lamp has been monumental not just for herself, but for Kannada literature and for South Asian languages as a whole. Her translator, Deepa Bhashti, who shares the £50,000 prize, is the first Indian translator to win the International Booker. Bhashti expressed hope that this recognition will lead to greater interest in translating

works from and into Kannada and other regional languages, which are often overlooked in the global literary scene. In her acceptance speech, Mushtaq eloquently captured the soul of her literary philosophy. She reminded the world that "no story is ever small," and that literature remains one of the last sacred

spaces where human beings can inhabit each other's minds, even if just for a few pages. Her words, like her stories, spoke to the quiet power of empathy and the transformative potential of storytelling.

The impact of her work had already begun to ripple through literary circles even before the Booker win. In 2024, Haseena and Other Stories, an English translation of five of her earlier short story collections, won the PEN Translation Prize. Critics and readers alike have lauded her work for its authenticity, psychological depth, and socio-political insight. Her writing demands attention — not through grand gestures but through careful, compassionate exploration of the margins of society.

Banu Mushtaq's life and work offer a masterclass in perseverance, truth-telling, and literary integrity. She has challenged restrictive traditions, spoken out against gendered oppression, and given voice to women whose stories might otherwise have been lost in silence. Through Heart Lamp, she has held up a mirror to society and, in doing so, illuminated the lived realities of countless women like herself — strong, complex, and unyielding. With this historic International Booker win, she not only secures her place in world literature but also opens the door wider for the stories that wait to be told from every corner of India and beyond. (The writer is a Poet, Science Journalist, Sustainability Advocate, Former Director, Assam Seed & Organic Certification Agency, Ex-Joint Director of Agriculture, Assam)



From the stove to the moon - A journey from the heat of the stove to the poetry of the moon

By: Sonal Sharma

Priyanka Saurabh's poetry collection 'Chulhe se Chaand Tak' is not just poetry, it is the journey of a woman's soul. This is the voice that was suppressed for centuries, but it still kept burning — with rotis, between plates, and through the ink dissolved in tears.

The poems in this collection bridge the gap between tradition and resistance, which patriarchy has deepened over generations. In these poems, the woman is not just an 'inspiration', but she is poetry itself — which has emotion, rhythm and anger as well.

◊ A cry from the soul of a woman: 'The journey from the stove to the moon'

The title poem of the collection is the soul of this compilation. It is the story of an anonymous, unseen woman who is not recorded in history but has been the foundation of every home. The opening lines of the poem itself shock the reader:

"The number of wars in history that I could not create,

She has fought so much — silently, but with full strength."

This poem tells us that every daily activity of a woman is a struggle — the dough kneaded in the plate, the utensils cleaned, the ashes of the eyes — everything is a symbol of revolution. When she reaches the moon from the stove, it is not just a geographical but a spiritual and ideological flight. The poem says:

"When the poem recognized this,

Then the first complete story of a woman was written."

◊ The silent sobs of patriotism: 'From the veil to the echo'

This poem considers the death of a martyr not just as the death of an individual but as a void for the entire society. This work is not a heroic tale but a bundle of emotions in which the pain of every member resonates:

"Sister's Rakhi is martyred,
Who now searches for the wrist only in photographs.

A mother's love is martyred,
Which burns like a lamp on Diwali — without any answer."

Here, Priyanka has given such a poetic shape to the breaking fabric of a soldier's family that it seems

more credible and poignant than any reportage.

◊ Redefinition of love: 'Those women were lucky'

This poem creates a new language of love in contemporary feminist discourse. It does not make women an object of worship, but gives them a touch of equality. Priyanka Saurabh writes:

"The man who does not worship in love,
But could give a touch of equality.

who does not consider a woman 'less',
I could never say 'never'."

The most important thing about this poem is that it presents 'love' without glamour, in a very intimate way — where the woman becomes a person and not just a shadow woven into relationships.

◊ Mahabharata of introspection: 'You are not Shakuni, but why do you pretend to be one?'

This work is a self-critical presentation, which communicates with the reader. The poem is not addressed to anyone else, but to oneself — an attempt to recognize the conspiracy within oneself:

The Mahabharata within you,
It is still incomplete, ongoing.
Wake up from the war inside you,
And accept your shadow."

This poem in very few words creates that restlessness which urges to change the individual, not the society.

◊ The tragedy of education and bias: 'Dronacharya's class policy'

Priyanka's poem exposes our socio-educational structure. Through an iconic symbol like 'Dronacharya', she succeeds in showing that justice demands not only education but also courage:

"Distributing knowledge was my duty,
But justice was lost somewhere.
Class policy held him captive."

This poem talks about the failure of teachers who limit knowledge to a particular class.

✧ Crafts and Language

Priyanka's language is simple but powerful. She speaks through symbols — paraat, dupatta, bangles, veil, rakhi, shadow — all these become living characters of her poetic world. She has woven each poem not just in verses but in consciousness.

There is no pretentious style in her poems. She weaves deep meanings with ease. This collection does not run after rhyme or ornamentation, but seeks the essence.

'Chulhe se chaand tak' is the voice of that woman



who for centuries was kept as just an 'inspiration'. This collection says that now is the time when the woman herself should become a poem — a weapon — and write the definition of her dreams.

This poetry collection is a must for every reader who wants to live poetry and not just read it. It has tears, resistance, and most importantly — hope.

This collection is a powerful signature among the new female voices in Hindi poetry, which resonates in the mind of the reader for a long time.

Name of the book: From the stove to the moon (Hindi poetry collection)

Author: Priyanka Saurabh

Publisher: R.K. Features, Pragyanashala (Registered)

Bhiwani, Haryana, India

First edition: 2025

ISBN: 978-0-6335-1903-2

Price: ₹250

Language: Hindi

Type: Poetry Collection

Page Number: 111

Print Type: Paperback / Traditional Print

A Forgotten Sigh Inks...

By: Bipul Chandra Kalita

A forgotten sigh for your insulting smile
Of our youthful seasons
Of love, faith and betrayal
Inks unforgettable dark history in my heart
And paints invisible sufferings in my mind!

We hesitate not to exchange our ego-centric eyes,
Forget not to weigh each other's hidden pain and open laughter,
And try to forgive each other for both sides' wrong calculations!

Memories hide their faces to avoid irreparable damages
Of insight
Of two sufferers of inner-conflicts
So as to make the deepest sigh get apparently forgotten!

That the desires of a poor heart got hurt in the bud
Restructured me on your face,
Strengthened me to stand on my pointed foresight
And refined me to refine you in years passed by,
Enabling us to weigh and evaluate love's purity and depth!

Now, I'm sure, we are free birds that can touch the sky;
Feel free to trace the map of your heart's geography,
I'm everywhere in it
To locate its emotional, passionate and intellectual boundaries!

Mother

By: Baharul Islam

Mother-
The name is so tasty so sweet
She is everything
She is the shelter in storm
My mother is my heart
In crucial times-
She automatically comes and carries
Comfort and inspire.

Mother is the ocean of life
Light of heart
River of love and affection
She is the coldest
With her warmth everywhere
She is the only friend
When there's enemies everywhere.

My mom is my favourite
Everyone of the world
Comes for selfish interest
But only she
Toils for my best
Ready to give everything I need...

Dharma of Nature

By: Otteri Selva Kumar

To that wind
Don't know anything
Even if it is known, it will not be said
Breathing breath into man
From...
to survive
Gives comfort
Same with comfort
And other creatures
It gives life
However
As long as it's comfortable
Wind is windy...
It stormed
Just when it changes
Not just rain
This soil too
People and trees
After damaging it unjustly
Then...
It gets quiet
This is nature's dharma...?

At least 60 people killed in Israeli strikes in Gaza as ceasefire prospects inch closer

DEIR AL-BALAH, June 28: At least 60 people were killed across Gaza by Israeli strikes, health workers said Saturday, as Palestinians face a growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and ceasefire prospects inch closer.

The strikes began late Friday and continued into Saturday morning, among others killing 12 people near the Palestine Stadium in Gaza City, which was sheltering displaced people, and eight more living in apartments, according to staff at Shifa Hospital, where the bodies were brought.

More than 20 bodies were taken to Nasser Hospital, according to health officials. A strike midday Saturday killed 11 people on a street in eastern Gaza City, and their bodies were taken to Al-Ahli Hospital.

The strikes come as US President Donald Trump says there could be a ceasefire agreement within the next week. Taking questions from reporters in the Oval

Office Friday, the president said, "we're working on Gaza and trying to get it taken care of."

An official with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press that Israel's Minister for Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer will arrive in Washington next week for talks on Gaza's ceasefire, Iran and other subjects. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media.

Talks have been on again off again since Israel broke the latest ceasefire in March, continuing its military campaign in Gaza and furthering the Strip's dire humanitarian crisis.

Some 50 hostages remain in Gaza, fewer than half of them believed to still be alive. They were part of some 250 hostages taken when Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, sparking the 21-month-long war.

The war has killed over 56,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's



Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants. It says more than half of the dead were women and children.

There is hope among hostage families that Trump's involvement in securing the recent ceasefire between Israel and Iran might exert more pressure for a deal in Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu is riding a wave of public support for the Iran war and its achievements, and he could feel he has more space to move toward ending the war in Gaza, something his far-right governing partners oppose. Hamas has repeatedly said it is prepared to free all the hostages in exchange for an end to the war in Gaza. Netanyahu says he will only end the war once Hamas is

disarmed and exiled, something the group has rejected.

Meanwhile hungry Palestinians are enduring a catastrophic situation in Gaza. After blocking all food for 2 1/2 months, Israel has allowed only a trickle of supplies into the territory since mid-May.

Efforts by the United Nations to distribute the food have been plagued by armed gangs looting trucks and by crowds of desperate people offloading supplies from convoys.

Palestinians have also been shot and wounded while on their way to get food at newly formed aid sites, run by the American and Israeli backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, according to Gaza's health officials and witnesses.

Palestinian witnesses say Israeli troops have opened fire at crowds on the roads heading toward the sites. Israel's military said it was investigating incidents in which civilians had been harmed while approaching the sites. (AP)

Thousands mourn top Iranian military commanders, scientists killed in Israeli strikes



DUBAI, June 28: Thousands of mourners lined the streets of downtown Tehran on Saturday for the funeral of the head of the Revolutionary Guard and other top commanders and nuclear scientists killed during a 12-day war with Israel. The caskets of Guard's chief Gen. Hossein Salami, the head of the Guard's ballistic missile program, Gen Amir Ali Hajizadeh and others were driven on trucks along the capital's Azadi Street as people in the crowds chanted: "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."

Iran's Revolutionary Guard was created after its 1979 Islamic Revolution. Since it was established, it has evolved from a paramilitary, domestic security force to a transnational force that has come to the aid of Tehran's allies in the Middle East, from Syria and Lebanon to Iraq. It operates in parallel to the country's existing armed forces and controls Iran's arsenal of ballistic missiles, which it has used to attack Israel twice during the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

Over 12 days before a ceasefire was declared on Tuesday, Israel claimed it killed around 30 Iranian commanders and 11 nuclear scientists, while hitting eight nuclear-related facilities and more than 720 military infrastructure sites. More than 1,000 people were killed, including at least 417 civilians, according to the Washington-based Human Rights Activists group.

Iran fired more than 550 ballistic missiles at Israel, most of which were intercepted, but those that got through caused damage in many areas and killed 28 people.

Saturday's ceremonies were the first public funerals for top commanders since the ceasefire, and Iranian state television reported that they were for 60 people in total, including four women and four children. Authorities closed government offices to allow public servants to attend the ceremonies.

Iran has always insisted its nuclear programme is only for peaceful purposes. But Israel views it as an existential threat and said its military campaign was necessary to prevent Iran from building an atomic weapon. (AP)

Salami and Hajizadeh were both killed on the first day of the war, June 13, as Israel launched a war it said meant to destroy Iran's nuclear program, specifically targeting military commanders, scientists and nuclear facilities.

There was no immediate sign of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in the state broadcast of the funeral. Khamenei, who has not made a public appearance since before the outbreak of the war, has in past funerals held prayers for fallen commanders over their caskets before the open ceremonies, later aired on state television. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was on hand, and state television reported that Gen Esmail Qaani, who heads the foreign wing of the Revolutionary Guard, the Quds Force, and Gen. Ali Shamkhani were also among the mourners.

Shamkhani, an adviser to Khamenei who was wounded in the first round of Israel's attack and hospitalized, was shown in a civilian suit leaning on a cane in an image distributed on state television's Telegram channel.

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Netanyahu denounces report that Israeli soldiers have orders to shoot at Palestinians seeking aid

JERUSALEM, June 28: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz emphatically rejected a report in the left-leaning Israeli daily Haaretz on Friday, which claimed Israeli soldiers were ordered to shoot at Palestinians approaching aid sites inside Gaza.

They called the report's findings "malicious falsehoods designed to defame" the military.

More than 500 Palestinians have been killed and hundreds more wounded while seeking food since the newly formed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation began distributing aid in the territory about a month ago, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Palestinian witnesses say Israeli troops have opened fire at crowds on the roads heading toward the sites. Reacting to the Haaretz piece, Israel's military confirmed that it was investigating incidents in which civilians had been harmed while approaching the sites. It rejected the article's allegations "of deliberate fire toward civilians."

The foundation, which is backed by an American private contractor, has been distributing food boxes at four locations, mainly in the far south of Gaza, for the past month.

"GHF is not aware of any of these incidents but these allegations are too grave to ignore and we therefore call on Israel to investigate them and transparently publish the results in a timely manner," the group said in a social media post.

Palestinians trying to find food have frequently encountered chaos and violence on their way to and on arrival at the aid sites. Tens of thousands are desperate for food after Israel imposed a 2 1/2 month siege on Gaza, blocking all food, water and medicine from entering the territory pending the setup of the GHF sites.

The bodies of eight people who died Friday had come to Shifa Hospital from a GHF site in Net-

zarim, although it was not immediately clear how they died, Dr. Mohamed Abu Selmyia, the hospital's director, told The Associated Press. A GHF spokesperson challenged the report, saying they did not know of any incidents at or near their sites Friday.

Twenty other bodies his hospital received Friday came from airstrikes across north Gaza, he said.

Thousands of Palestinians walk for hours to reach the hubs, moving through Israeli military zones where witnesses say Israeli troops regularly open fire with heavy barages to control the crowds. The Israeli military says it has only fired warning shots.

Mohammad Fawzi, a displaced man from Rafah, told the AP that he was only able to get empty boxes, not food, from the aid site in the Shakhoush area in Rafah when he trekked there early Thursday morning.

"We've been shot at since 6 am up until 10 am just to get aid and only some people were able to receive it. There are martyrs and injured people. The situation is difficult," he said.

The group Doctors Without Borders on Friday condemned the distribution system as "a slaughter masquerading as humanitarian aid" and called for it to be immediately shut down.

More than 6,000 people have been killed and more than 20,000 injured in Gaza since the ceasefire collapsed on March 18. Since the war began, more than 56,000 people have been killed and 132,000 injured, according to the health ministry.

The Gaza Health Ministry doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants, but has said that women and children make up more than half the 56,000 dead. Israel says it only targets militants and blames civilian deaths on Hamas, accusing the militants of hiding among civilians, because they operate in populated areas. (AP)

Pakistan welcomes Court of Arbitration's ruling on J&K hydroelectric projects

ISLAMABAD, June 28: Pakistan on Saturday welcomed the ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague over two hydroelectric projects in Jammu and Kashmir and indicated its readiness for talks with India on issues relating to Indus Waters Treaty.

The "high priority", at this point, is that "India and Pakistan find a way back to a meaningful dialogue, including on the application of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)," Pakistan said in a statement released early on Saturday.

India on Friday strongly rejected the ruling saying it has never recognised the so-called framework for dispute resolution with Pakistan. India rejects this so-called "supplemental award", the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, referring to the ruling in the case related to Pakistan's objections to Kishenganga and Ratle hydropower projects.

In its ruling, the Court of Arbitration said India's decision in April to keep the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance "does not

limit" its competence over the dispute and that its ruling is binding on the parties.

However, India has never recognised the proceedings at the Permanent Court of Arbitration after Pakistan raised objections to certain design elements of the two projects under the provisions of the Indus Waters Treaty.

On the other hand, Pakistan said the ruling a "major legal win" emphasising that it is a "clear message that India cannot unilaterally suspend or sideline the treaty."

The MEA called out Pakistan by saying that "this latest charade at Pakistan's behest is yet another desperate attempt by it to escape accountability for its role as the global epicentre of terrorism."

"Pakistan's resort to this fabricated arbitration mechanism is consistent with its decades-long pattern of deception and manipulation of international forums," it said in a statement.

The illegal Court of Arbitration, purportedly constituted under the Indus Waters Treaty 1960, albeit in brazen violation of it, has issued

what it characterizes as a 'supplemental award' on its competence concerning the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir," the MEA said.

"India has never recognised the existence in law of this so-called Court of Arbitration," it said.

The MEA said India's position has all along been that the constitution of this so-called arbitral body is in itself a serious breach of the Indus Waters Treaty and consequently any proceedings before this forum and any award or decision taken by it are also illegal for that reason. A day after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, India took a series of punitive measures against Pakistan that included putting the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 in "abeyance".

"Following the Pahalgam terrorist attack, India has in exercise of its rights as a sovereign nation under international law, placed the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism," the MEA said. (PTI)

Protesters gather in Bangkok to demand Thai prime minister's resignation over leaked Cambodia call

BANGKOK, June 28: Thousands of protesters gathered in Thailand's capital on Saturday to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, part of the brewing political turmoil set off by a leaked phone call with former Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Paetongtarn faces growing dissatisfaction over her handling of a recent border dispute with Cambodia involving an armed confrontation May 28. One Cambodian soldier was killed in a relatively small, contested area. The recorded phone call with Hun Sen was at the heart of the demonstration Saturday and has set off a string of investigations in Thailand that could lead to Paetongtarn's removal.

Outrage over the call mostly revolved around Paetongtarn's comments toward an outspoken regional army commander and her perceived attempts to appease Hun Sen, the current Cambodian Senate president, to ease

tensions at the border.

Protesters held national flags and signs as they occupied parts of the streets around the Victory Monument in central Bangkok. At a huge stage set up at the monument, speakers took turns expressing love for Thailand following the intensified border dispute.

Protesters chanted, sang and danced to songs stoking nationalist sentiment.

Tatchakorn Srisuwan, 47, a guide from Surat Thani province, said he arrived in Bangkok by an overnight train to demand Paetongtarn's resignation over the leaked call.

"From a heart of a Thai person, we've never had a prime minister who's so weak," he said. "We don't want to invade anyone, but we want to say that we are Thai and we want to protect Thailand's sovereignty." Many of the leading figures in the protest were familiar faces from a group popularly known as Yellow Shirts, whose clothing colour indicates loyalty to the Thai monarchy. (AP)

Putin accuses West of encouraging separatism in Russia

MOSCOW, June 28: President Vladimir Putin has accused the Western nations of encouraging separatism in Russia. Putin's criticisms of the West came amid Russia's ongoing tensions with the Western nations over the conflict in Ukraine.

"No one has wished to pay attention to the Islamic State, as long as it operates against Russia. Explosions in Moscow, and all that. This is still happening today," Putin told journalists at the Belarus capital Minsk on Friday. "No one wants to pay attention to this. Everything is fine, as long as it is against Russia," he said on the sidelines of the summit of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

"The same happened when the collective West encouraged separatism in our country, and such an instrument of the fight against Russia as terrorism," the Russian president said. Russia Today, the state-run television, quoted Putin as saying that Moscow will no longer play "one-sided" games with the West. "Western nations have repeatedly betrayed Russia by not fulfilling their promises related to NATO expansion and resolving the Ukraine conflict," he said. (PTI)

B'desh reaffirms commitment to minority rights

DHAKA, June 28: Bangladesh has said that it remains firmly committed to safeguarding the rights of all communities and protecting places of worship but building religious structures on public land is not permissible "under any circumstances".

The Foreign Ministry's statement on Friday came a day after India denounced the reported destruction of a Durga temple in Dhaka and stressed the responsibility of Bangladesh's interim government to protect Hindus as well as religious institutions.

The ministry claimed that the temple in Dhaka's Khilkhet area was built on land owned by Bangladesh Railways, and its removal was carried out following due process to recover public land, the state-run BSS news agency reported.

It alleged that the temple started as a makeshift pavilion, with organisers attempting to make the temporary structure permanent despite repeated reminders.

On June 26, Bangladesh Railways proceeded with the "peaceful" eviction of all unauthorised structures along the rail track in Khilkhet area," it said.

"While the laws of the land ensure full protection to all places of worship without discriminating against any built-in conformity with law, it is not permissible for any to build any religious structure encroaching public land under any circumstances," the ministry said.

"Bangladesh remains firmly committed to safeguarding the rights of all communities, including protection of the places of worship," it added.

During a briefing on Thursday, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We understand that extremists were clamouring for demolishing the Durga temple in Khilkhet, Dhaka."

"The interim government, instead of providing security to the temple, projected the episode as illegal land use...and they allowed the destruction of the temple today," he said.

"This has resulted in damage to the deity before it was shifted. We are dismayed that such incidents continue to recur in Bangladesh," he added. (PTI)

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Driven to starvation, Sudanese people eat weeds and plants to survive as war rages

CAIRO, June 28: With Sudan in the grips of war and millions struggling to find enough to eat, many are turning to weeds and wild plants to quiet their pangs of hunger. They boil the plants in water with salt because, simply, there is nothing else. Grateful for the lifeline it offered, a 60-year-old retired school teacher penned a love poem about a plant called Khadija Koro. It was "a balm for us that spread through the spaces of fear," he wrote, and kept him and many others from starving.

A.H., who spoke on the condition his full name not be used, because he feared retribution from the warring parties for speaking to the press, is one of 24.6 million people in Sudan facing acute food insecurity — nearly half the population, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. Aid workers say the war spiked market prices, limited aid delivery, and shrunk agricultural lands in a country that was once a breadbasket of the world.

Sudan plunged into war in April 2023 when simmering tensions between the Sudanese army and its rival paramilitary the Rapid Support Forces escalated to fighting in the capital Khartoum and spread across the country, killing over 20,000 people, displacing nearly 13 million people, and pushing many to the brink of famine in what aid workers deemed the

world's largest hunger crisis.

Food insecurity is especially bad in areas in the Kordofan region, the Nuba Mountains, and Darfur, where El Fasher and Zamzam camp are inaccessible to the Norwegian Refugee Council, said Mathilde Vu, an aid worker with the group based in Port Sudan. Some people survive on just one meal a day, which is mainly millet porridge. In North Darfur, some people even sucked on coal to ease their hunger. On Friday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the Sudanese military leader Gen Abdel-Fattah Burhan and asked him for a week-long ceasefire in El Fasher to allow aid delivery. Burhan agreed to that request, according to an army statement, but it's unknown whether the RSF would agree to that truce.

A.H. said aid distribution often provided slight relief. His wife in children live in Obeid and also struggle to secure enough food due to high prices in the market.

His poem continued: "You were a world that sends love into the barren time. You were a woman woven from threads of the sun. You were the sandalwood and the jasmine and a revelation of green, glowing and longing."

Fighting restricted travel, worsening food insecurity

Sudanese agricultural minister Abu Bakr al-Bashari told Al-Hadath news channel in April that there



are no indicators of famine in the country, but there is shortage of food supplies in areas controlled by the paramilitary forces, known as RSF.

However, Leni Kinzli, World Food Programme Sudan spokesperson, said 17 areas in Gezeira, most of the Darfur region, and Khartoum, including Jebel Aulia are at risk of famine. Each month, over 4 million people receive assistance from the group, including 1.7 million in areas facing famine or at risk, Kinzli said.

The state is suffering from two conflicts: one between the Rapid Support Forces and the army, and another with the People's Liberation Movement-North, who are fighting against the army and have ties with the RSF, making it nearly impossible to access food, clean water, or medicine. He can't travel to Obeid in North Kordofan to be

with his family, as the Rapid Support Forces blocked roads. Violence and looting have made travel unsafe, forcing residents to stay in their neighbourhoods, limiting their access to food, aid workers said. A.H. is supposed to get a retirement pension from the government, but the process is slow, so he doesn't have a steady income. He can only transfer around USD 35 weekly to his family out of temporary training jobs, which he says is not enough. Hassan, another South Kordofan resident in Kadugli said that the state has turned into a "large prison for innocent citizens" due to the lack of food, water, shelter, income, and primary health services caused by the RSF siege.

International and grassroots organisations in the area where he lives were banned by the local government, according to Hassan,

who asked to be identified only by his first name in fear of retribution for speaking publicly while being based in an area often engulfed with fighting. So residents ate the plants out of desperation. "You would groan to give life an antidote when darkness appeared to us through the window of fear," A.H. wrote in his poem. "You were the light, and when our tears filled up our in the eyes, you were the nectar."

Food affordability

Vu warned that food affordability is another ongoing challenge as prices rise in the markets. A physical cash shortage prompted the Norwegian Refugee Council to replace cash assistance with vouchers. Meanwhile, authorities monopolize some markets and essential foods such as corn, wheat flour, sugar and salt are only sold through security approvals, according to Hassan.

Meanwhile, in southwest Sudan, residents of Nyala, the capital of South Darfur, rely on growing crops, but agricultural lands are shrinking due to fighting and lack of farming resources.

Hawaa Hussein, a woman who has been displaced in El Serif camp since 2004, told the AP that they benefit from the rainy season but they're lacking essential farming resources such as seeds and tractors to grow beans, peanuts, sesame, wheat, and weika — dried powdered okra. Hussein, a grand-

mother living with eight family members, said her family receives a food parcel every two months, containing lentils, salt, oil, and biscuits. Sometimes she buys items from the market with the help of community leaders.

"There are many families in the camp, mine alone has five children, and so aid is not enough for everyone... you also can't eat while your neighbour is hungry and in need," she said. El Serif camp is sheltering nearly 49,000 displaced people, the camp's civic leader Abdalrahman Idris told the AP. Since the war began in 2023, the camp has taken in over 5,000 new arrivals, with a recent surge coming from the greater Khartoum region, which is the Sudanese military said it took full control of in May.

"The food that reaches the camp makes up only 5 per cent of the total need. Some people need jobs and income. People now only eat two meals, and some people can't feed their children," he said. In North Darfur, south of El Fasher, lies Zamzam camp, one of the worst areas struck by famine and recent escalating violence. An aid worker with the Emergency Response Rooms previously based in the camp who asked not to be identified in fear of retribution for speaking with the press, told the AP that the recent wave of violence killed some and left others homeless. (AP)

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Graduating doctors encouraged to lead with compassion, embrace technology, and strengthen rural healthcare delivery

Governor urges compassionate, tech-driven healthcare at TRIHMS graduation ceremony

HT Correspondent

NAHARLAGUN, June 28: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd) graced the second Graduation Ceremony of the 2019 MBBS Batch of Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIHMS) as the Chief Guest at the TRIHMS Complex, Naharlagun, on Saturday.

During the event, the Governor awarded graduation certificates to 46 medical students, including 29 from Arunachal Pradesh.

According to an official statement, the Governor described the ceremony as a significant milestone, not just for the graduating doctors but also for society.

He commended the graduates for their perseverance, sacrifice, and commitment, reminding them that their white coats represent both personal achievement and a lifelong responsibility to serve humanity with empathy, integrity, and skill.

In his address, the Governor stressed the principle of "Service before Self," stating that the medical profession is not only a career but a moral calling.

He urged the graduates to serve where their presence is most needed, particularly in rural and underserved

communities.

He also encouraged them to remain lifelong learners, grounded in humility and guided by strong ethical values.

The Governor remarked that true education begins outside the classroom, in hospital wards, outreach camps, and patient interactions.

He called upon the young doctors to combine scientific knowledge with compassion, to lead with empathy, and to let humility shape their approach to healing.

Acknowledging the contributions of TRIHMS to the state's healthcare system, the Governor praised Director Dr Moji Jini and the faculty for their efforts in building a strong foundation for medical education in Arunachal Pradesh.

He noted that TRIHMS has swiftly emerged as a vital centre for education, innovation, and community healthcare.

The Governor also highlighted the national healthcare vision under the Viksit Bharat@2047 initiative and underscored the importance of aligning with India's developmental goals.

He advocated for enhancing healthcare infrastructure, expanding rural services, and incorporating technology into medical education.

He recommended integrating Artificial Intelligence, telemedicine, and digi-



tal health solutions into the curriculum, alongside modules on ethical practice, soft skills, and cultural sensitivity.

healthcare approach, making special mention of the 'Heal in India' initiative aimed at positioning the country as a global centre for wellness and medical excellence.

He highlighted the role of technology, including digital health IDs and telemedicine services, in improving healthcare access and reducing financial burdens for patients, especially in remote areas.

Addressing the TRIHMS faculty, the Governor called for a balanced approach in teaching, with equal emphasis on infrastructure development and nurturing socially conscious, compassionate doctors.

He stressed the need for mandatory rural postings and stronger linkages between medical colleges and local health systems to reduce gaps in healthcare delivery.

During the ceremony, Dean and Principal of TRIHMS, Dr Shyamal Bhat-tacharya, administered the graduation oath to the students.

The occasion also featured addresses by State Health and Family Welfare Minister Biyuram Wahge, Rajiv Gandhi University Vice-Chancellor Prof S K Nayak, TRIHMS Director Dr Moji Jini, and Dr Mika Umpo.

Several academic excellence awards were presented during the event.

Hage Sonya (2020-21), Tsering Pema (2021-22), Prem Lata (2022-23), Smile (2023-24), and Dr Badal Kumar Pandit (2024-25) received the Minoti Riba Memorial Gold Medal in Anatomy.

Resum Kamki (2020-21), Dibyardarshi Suman (2021-22), and Dr Phancha Wangsu (2024-25) received the Nirmali Taba Memorial Gold Medal in ENT.

Dr Indira Moyong from Roing, Lower Dibang Valley, was awarded as the Topper of the Final Year MBBS Examination held in 2024.

The Governor also presented diploma certificates to postgraduates in various disciplines.

Dr Angellie Kahmei and Dr Sushamanka Das received diplomas in Obstetrics and Gynaecology; Dr Animesh Namdeo and Dr Millo Apo in Anaesthesiology; Dr Lenong Lego in Radiodiagnosis; and Dr Taru Tari in Radiology.

The Graduation Ceremony at TRIHMS marked a memorable day, celebrating the achievements of young medical professionals and reinforcing the state's commitment to building a compassionate, technology-driven, and inclusive healthcare system.

Minister Nyato Dukam invites entrepreneurs to build a 'Viksit Arunachal' under UNNATI 2024



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, June 28: The Investment and Entrepreneurship Workshop on the Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme (UNNATI 2024) and other industrial investment schemes was held on Saturday at the State Banquet Hall in Itanagar.

The event was addressed by Minister of Industries Nyato Dukam, who called upon entrepreneurs and investors to seize the opportunity presented by the scheme to transform Arunachal Pradesh into a thriving hub of inclusive and sustainable industrial growth.

According to an official statement, Minister Dukam welcomed stakeholders with an optimistic vision for the future of the state, stating, "If you wish to build in India, Arunachal Pradesh is your launchpad."

If you seek to invest in sustainability, we offer the greenest canvas. If you dream of bridging tradition with innovation, we welcome you with both hands."

He further urged everyone present to come together to script the next chapter of Arunachal's development, one that is inclusive, sustainable, and truly transformative.

The workshop is being jointly

organised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Government of India, and the Department of Industries, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

The event witnessed participation from over 300 aspiring entrepreneurs from across the state, along with banking officials, consultants, industry experts, departmental heads, and other key stakeholders.

Designed to catalyse industrial growth in the Northeast, the workshop aims to promote policy awareness, enhance financial access, strengthen B2B and B2G linkages, and support digital onboarding of entrepreneurs.

Minister Dukam emphasised the importance of regular dialogue between the government and entrepreneurial communities to shift Arunachal Pradesh from a consumer-driven to a producer-driven economy.

He reiterated the government's commitment to building an investment-friendly ecosystem through progressive policy reforms and robust infrastructure.

Addressing the gathering, Moshesh Chai, advisor to the Minister of Industries, urged participants to contribute toward building a truly

'Viksit Arunachal'.

He highlighted the state's strategic location bordering Myanmar, Bhutan, and Tibet and stated that, with collective effort from all stakeholders, Arunachal Pradesh could serve as a vital gateway for regional trade and industry.

Dr Chai also pointed to the shift from the Government of India's 'Look East' to 'Act East' policy under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and called upon the entrepreneurs to leverage this momentum and make UNNATI 2024 a success on the ground.

Chief Secretary Manish Gupta, in his remarks, underscored the importance of strengthening the state's secondary and tertiary sectors.

He praised the organisers for arranging such a significant and timely event, stating that it would play a pivotal role in realising the Prime Minister's vision of a 'Viksit Arunachal'.

Industries Secretary Saugat Biswas also addressed the attendees, highlighting the key features and opportunities presented by the UNNATI 2024 scheme.

He elaborated on the day's agenda, which includes technical sessions on the UNNATI scheme, inter-departmental discussions with DPIIT representatives, experience-sharing forums, B2G meetings, and other activities designed to support and strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the state.

The workshop reflects a consolidated effort by the central and state governments to unlock Arunachal Pradesh's industrial potential and position it as a leading destination for sustainable investment and innovation in the Northeast.

Ronie Chowpoo becomes first Arunachali to command Indian naval warship

ITANAGAR, June 28: Commander Ronie Chowpoo from Arunachal Pradesh's Namsai district has become the first officer from the state to command a frontline Indian naval warship in the Eastern Fleet, an official statement said on Saturday.

His appointment marks an important milestone and serves as an inspiration to the youth of Arunachal Pradesh, it said.

Commander Chowpoo, a first-generation Indian Navy officer, was commissioned into the executive branch of the Navy in 2008. A specialist in communication and electronic warfare, he has served on various frontline warships, including guided missile destroyers and frigates, the statement said.

Over the course of his distinguished career, he has held key operational and staff appointments at Naval headquarters, Fleet headquarters, and other strategic institutions, it added.

An alumnus of Rashtriya Indian Military College (RIMC) Dehradun, and the prestigious National Defence Academy (NDA) Khadakwasla, Commander Chowpoo's professional journey reflects determination and excellence.

His rise from the 'Land of the Rising Sun' to commanding a warship in the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet, also called the 'Sunrise Fleet', underscores a powerful story of perseverance and commitment, it said.

Heartfelt congratulations have poured in for Commander Chowpoo and his family on this landmark accomplishment. (PTI)

Governor celebrates 72nd birthday with students of Oju Mission School



HT Correspondent

NAHARLAGUN, June 28: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd) celebrated his 72nd birthday with the children of Oju Mission School during a heartfelt visit to the institution on Saturday.

Accompanied by the First Lady of the State, Anagha Parnaik, the Governor spent the day interacting with students and staff of the school, which is run by the Oju Welfare Association (OWA) and has long been known for its inclusive and value-based approach to education.

According to an official statement, this was the Governor's first visit to the school located at Papu Nallah in Naharlagun.

During the visit, the Governor and the First Lady toured the newly constructed academic block and inspected the smart classroom facilities.

They were also shown student projects and a photo gallery highlighting the transformative journey of OWA in the fields of education and social service.

The celebration of the Governor's birthday in the midst of

school children brought an added sense of joy to the occasion.

Students presented a vibrant lineup of cultural performances to welcome the guests, showcasing their talent and enthusiasm.

The Governor was visibly moved by the display and commended the students for their discipline, creativity, and spirit.

In his address to the students, Governor Parnaik encouraged them to continue cultivating their curiosity and love for learning.

He noted that education is not merely a process of gaining knowledge, but a lifelong journey of discovering one's potential and building character.

Calling the students "The Shining Stars," the Governor urged them to aim high, stay focused on their dreams, and not be discouraged by setbacks.

He reminded them that failure is often a stepping stone to success and that resilience is essential for personal growth.

Stressing the values of integrity, hard work, and service to society, the Governor spoke of the importance of good citizenship.

He also emphasized the need for holistic development that includes

physical fitness, intellectual alertness, and moral strength.

Citing the guiding principle of the National Defence Academy, he shared the mantra that cadets must be "physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight," encouraging the young students to incorporate these ideals into their own lives.

To mark the occasion, the Governor and the First Lady participated in a tree plantation drive on the school campus under the theme 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam'.

The initiative, aimed at promoting environmental consciousness and respect for maternal values, served as a symbolic gesture of growth and nurturing.

Oju Mission School continues to serve as a sanctuary of hope and opportunity for underprivileged children in the region, offering them access to quality education in a caring and principled environment.

The visit of the Governor and the First Lady, coupled with their inspiring words and meaningful gestures, brought a memorable moment of encouragement and recognition for the students and staff alike.

Recognition brings long-overdue honour to Nocte leaders who led 19th-century resistance against British rule

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, June 28: In a significant move to honour the indigenous resistance against British colonial rule, the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Tirap district, has formally recognised the contributions of two revered Nocte leaders—Wangto Lowang, the then Chief of Kheti village, and Wangmaan Lowangdong, the then Chief of Borduria village.

According to an official statement, both leaders played decisive roles in two separate uprisings during the 19th century that resisted British expansion into their territories, now part of modern-day Arunachal Pradesh.

The statement documents the events of the Anglo-Nocte War of 1842, which was spearheaded by Wangto Lowang.

This armed resistance began on November 25, 1842, when Captain J Brodie, Sub-Assistant of Sibsagar, Assam, led a contingent of British forces toward Kheti in an attempt to assert colonial authority over Wangto's autonomous domain.

The ensuing confrontation saw the death of one British soldier and injuries to four others, forcing the British detachment to retreat.

In retaliation, a larger punitive expedition was mounted by the British under the leadership of Captain Brodie, Captain S F Hanay, Lieutenant Rowlett, and Lieu-

tenant Reid.

This combined force, composed of detachments from the Assam Light Infantry Battalion, the 2nd Sebundies, and the Local Artillery Company, launched an attack on Kheti on December 23, 1842.

Despite a fierce and courageous resistance by Wangto Lowang and his villagers, the vastly superior British force eventually overpowered them.

The villagers were forced to abandon Kheti, which was subsequently burned down.

To reinforce British control and suppress further resistance, an army outpost was established at the neighbouring village of Khela.

The first Anglo-Nocte War thus concluded on December 29, 1842, leaving behind a legacy of unyielding indigenous defiance.

Equally significant was the Nocte resistance led by Wangmaan Lowangdong in 1875.

The conflict had its roots in August 1874, when Colonel R.H. Keatinge, the first Chief Commissioner of British Assam, issued a notice announcing the British intent to annex the tea gardens of Namsang and Hukanjuri, along with the land between them.

Lieutenant Holcombe, Assistant Commissioner of Jeypore, Assam, conveyed the notice to Wangmaan, warning him against retaliation and pointing out the vulnerability of Borduria village



Cannonball believed to be from the Anglo-Nocte War of 1842.

to British attacks. Faced with the threat of British aggression but unwilling to expose his people to direct conflict, Wangmaan orchestrated a covert form of resistance.

He pressured the Chief of Ninu village and allied leaders to ambush and kill Lieutenant Holcombe and his survey team by threatening to cut off essential salt supplies and block a crucial trade route to Assam.

The killing of Holcombe sparked the Anglo-Wancho War of 1875.

Following a detailed investigation, C U Aitchison, Secretary to

the Government of British India, concluded that Wangmaan had masterminded the incident and had a central role in directing the course of the conflict.

As a result, on May 18, 1875, the British annexed the contested tea gardens and the surrounding land.

Wangmaan was ordered to recover and hand over all arms lost in the battle at Ninu and to apprehend at least one fugitive involved in the attack.

The official recognition of these acts of resistance was made possible through archival research conducted by Wangtum H Lowang,

Young Arunachal shuttlers win bronze at National Ranking Tournament

Tamin and Tagu's performance not only brought laurels to the state but also demonstrated the rising standard of badminton among youth players in Arunachal Pradesh

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, June 28: The Arunachal State Badminton Association (ASBA) has congratulated young shuttlers Kyon Tamin and Debia Tagu for securing a bronze medal in the Under-13 category at the prestigious Yonex Sunrise All India Badminton Ranking Tournament held in Goa.

According to an official statement, the duo's remarkable performance at the national-level competition has been lauded as a significant achievement for the state's sporting fraternity.

Expressing pride in their success, ASBA Secretary-General Bama Tago said the medal win was a testament to the players' hard work and the effective coaching system they have been part of.

Tago, who is also a member of the Tournament Committee in the Badminton Association of India, highlighted that the pair's strong showing amid stiff competition was one of the key highlights of the tournament, particularly for Arunachal Pradesh.

The Yonex Sunrise All India Badminton Ranking Tournament is considered one of the most competitive events in the national badminton circuit, attracting top young talents from across the country.

Tamin and Tagu's performance not only brought laurels to the state but also demonstrated the rising standard of badminton among youth players in Arunachal Pradesh.

The official statement further reiterated ASBA's commitment to nurturing emerging talent and providing promising athletes with the necessary training, infrastructure, and exposure to help them compete at higher levels.

The association assured that it would continue working towards creating more such opportunities to enable its players to perform on both national and international platforms.

ASBA has extended its heartfelt congratulations to Kyon Tamin and Debia Tagu for their impressive achievement and wished them continued success in their future badminton endeavours.

Article 370 was against Dr Ambedkar's ideology of one Constitution for united India: CJI Gavai

NAGPUR, June 28: Chief Justice of India B R Gavai on Saturday said Dr B R Ambedkar envisioned one Constitution for the country to keep it united and never favoured the idea of a separate constitution for a state.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Constitution Preamble Park here, the CJI said the Supreme Court drew inspiration from Dr Ambedkar's vision of a united India under a single constitution while upholding the Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370 that granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

Gavai was part of a five-judge Constitution bench, headed by then Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, that unanimously upheld the Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370, which bestowed special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

"When Article 370 was challenged, it came before us, and when the hearing was underway, I recalled Dr Babasaheb's words that one Constitution is suited for a country... If we want to keep the



country united, we need only one Constitution," he said, while addressing the gathering in Marathi.

On August 5, 2019, the Centre decided to strip Jammu and Kashmir of special status and divide it into two Union Territories.

Gavai said Dr Ambedkar had been criticised, saying the Constitution provides for too much fed-

eralism, and in times of war, the country may not remain united.

However, he had responded, saying the Constitution would suit all the challenges and keep the nation united, the CJI said.

"See the situation in the neighbouring countries, be it Pakistan, Bangladesh or Sri Lanka. Whenever our country faces challenges,

it has remained united," Gavai said. Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said he was happy that CJI Gavai inaugurated the Constitution Preamble Park and unveiled a statue of Dr Ambedkar.

Freedom, equality and brotherhood were Dr Ambedkar's valuable gift to the country in the form of the Constitution, he said.

Gadkari said that the Constitution has clearly stated the responsibilities and rights of the four pillars of democracy, i.e. executive, judiciary, legislature and media.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said Gavai was performing his responsibility as the Chief Justice of India ably. Highlighting the importance of the Constitution, Fadnavis said the government has decided that the Preamble of the Constitution should reach every student to mark the Amrit Mohotsav of the Constitution.

"If we accept the values of the Preamble, 90 per cent of the country's problems will be solved forever," he said. (PTI)

Preamble sacrosanct, words added during Emergency a 'festering wound', says Dhankhar

NEW DELHI, June 28: Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday asserted the preamble of a constitution is "not changeable" but was changed in India during the Emergency which signals a betrayal of the "wisdom" of the framers of the Constitution.

He also said the words inserted in the Preamble in 1976 during the period of Emergency, were a "nasoor" (festering wound) and could cause upheaval.

"It is nothing but belittling the civilisational wealth and knowledge of this country for thousands of years. It is a sacrilege of the spirit of Sanatan," the vice president said at a book launch event here.

Dhankhar described preamble as a "seed" on which a constitution grows. He also underlined that the preamble of no other constitution has undergone change except that of India.

"The Preamble of a constitution is not changeable. But this Preamble was changed by the 42nd Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1976," he said noting that the words "socialist", "secular", and "integrity" were added. He said it was a travesty of justice that something that cannot be changed was altered "casually, farcically, and with no sense of propriety" and that too during Emergency when several opposition leaders were in jail. "And in the process, if you deeply reflect, we are giving wings to existential challenges. These words have been added as nasoor (festering wound). These words will create upheaval," Dhankhar cautioned. "We must reflect," he said, adding that B R Ambedkar did painstaking work on the Constitution and he must have "surely focused on it".

His remarks came after the RSS on Thursday called



for reviewing the words 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble of the Constitution, saying they were included during the Emergency and were never part of the Constitution drafted by Ambedkar.

The Congress and other opposition parties have slammed RSS general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale's call for a national debate on whether the terms 'secular' and 'socialist' should remain in the Preamble, terming it "political opportunism" and a "deliberate assault" on the soul of the Constitution.

As Hosabale's strong pitch for a review of the two words inserted in the Preamble of the Constitution during the Emergency days (1975-77) kicked up a political row, an article published in an RSS-linked magazine Organiser said it is not about dismantling the Constitution but about restoring its "original spirit", free from the "distortions" of the Congress' Emergency-era policies. (PTI)

Move to bring NRC through backdoor: TMC on EC's special intensive revision of electoral roll

NEW DELHI, June 28: The Election Commission's special intensive revision of the electoral roll is a "sinister move" to bring the National Register of Citizens (NRC) through the backdoor, Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien claimed on Saturday and compared it to 'ancestor passes' in Nazi Germany.

At a press conference here, he said the INDIA bloc parties were united on the issue and would take action soon. O'Brien also questioned the timing of the move, announced months ahead of Assembly elections in Bihar and set to be carried out in West Bengal before next year's polls. It is the BJP's "desperate attempt" to win in West Bengal, he claimed.

The Trinamool Congress' Rajya Sabha floor leader said, "It is a sinister move to bring NRC through the backdoor."

"In 1935, under the Nazis (in Germany), you were supposed to be given an ancestor pass... Is this the new version of that Nazi ancestor pass?" he posed.

"Why is this exercise being suddenly done right now? We have evidence as to why it is being done now. It is because the latest internal survey of the BJP for Bengal shows 46-49 seats for the party in the state's assembly polls (early next year). In their desperation to attempt to change things you do such things," he claimed.

The Election Commission last Monday issued instructions to carry out a Special Intensive Revision in Bihar to weed out ineligible names and ensure all el-

igible citizens are included in the electoral roll, allowing them to exercise their franchise in the polls slated later this year.

A similar review of electoral rolls will be done by the end of this year in five states that are going to polls in 2026, which includes West Bengal.

Trinamool's Rajya Sabha MP Sagarika Ghose claimed West Bengal was the "real target" of the exercise. "On June 26, the ECI announced that Special Intensive Revision will be conducted for Bihar Assembly polls, but the real target is Bengal."

Her party colleague and another MP in the Upper House of Parliament, Saket Gokhale, expressed similar views. "The Modi government is taking away your right to vote and bringing in the NRC using the Election Commission. The purpose of this new exercise is to manipulate Bengal elections for the BJP and then replicate this model all over India," he alleged.

"The ECI must be forced to roll back and scrap this dangerous and sinister programme which will be used for deleting voters and even snatching their citizenship," Gokhale said.

O'Brien asserted the INDIA bloc parties will take up the issue both inside and outside Parliament. "We are all on the same page on this. We will not wait for Parliament to start. This cannot wait," he said.

"Even though Parliament is not in session, there is still good coordination among the INDIA bloc parties," he said. (PTI)

EC begins intensive revision of Bihar voters list, says only Indian citizens can vote

NEW DELHI, June 28: The Election Commission on Saturday said the special intensive revision of electoral rolls in Bihar has begun and reminded of a constitutional provision that says only Indian citizens can vote. In a statement, the EC said, "The Constitution of India is supreme. All citizens, political parties and the Election Commission of India follow the Constitution." The statement comes as opposition parties questioned the intent behind the intensive revision.

The poll authority reminded that Article 326 specifies eligibility to become an elector -- only Indian citizens, above 18 years and ordinary resident in that constituency are eligible to be on voters list.

Several opposition parties have said that the exercise carries the risk of willful exclusion of voters using the state machinery.

The poll authority is carrying out an intensive review of electoral rolls this year in six states beginning with Bihar to weed out foreign illegal migrants by checking their place of birth.

Bihar is going to polls this year while assembly polls in these five other states -- Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal -- are scheduled in 2026.

The move, which would be later expanded to other states, assumes significance in the wake of a crack-

down in various states on illegal foreign migrants, including from Bangladesh and Myanmar. The EC said the special revision has already started successfully in Bihar for verifying the eligibility of each elector with "full participation" of all political parties.

The poll panel already has nearly 78,000 booth level officers (BLOs) and is appointing over 20,000 more for new polling stations, it said.

More than one lakh volunteers will be assisting genuine electors, particularly the old, sick, persons with disabilities, poor and other vulnerable groups during the special intensive revision. All recognised national and state political parties have already appointed 1,54,977 booth level agents (BLAs). They can still appoint more, it pointed out.

BLAs are party workers who coordinate with BLOs during boreotation or revision of voters list.

EC said printing as well as door-to-door distribution of new enumeration forms for all the existing 7,89,69,844 electors of Bihar has already started in each of the 243 Assembly Constituencies of the state.

Out of the existing 7,89,69,844 electors, 4.96 crore electors, whose names are already in the last intensive revision of Electoral Roll on January 1, 2003, have to "simply verify so, fill the Enumeration Form and submit it". (PTI)



Uneconomical, impractical: Experts on Railway decision to cap passenger waiting list at 25 pc

NEW DELHI, June 28: The Railway's decision to limit the passenger waiting list to 25 per cent of the capacity of each class has been flagged by reservation supervisors, ticket booking clerks and some senior commercial officers as uneconomical for the railways and inconvenient for travellers.

The ministry, however, has justified the decision, saying less than one-fourth of the total number of waiting passengers get confirmed berths on an average and the 25 per cent cap has been placed in view of that.

"The decision was made after meticulously studying the waiting list confirmation pattern," said Dilip Kumar the Executive Director of Information and Publicity, Railway Board.

He highlighted that earlier, there was an allegation that the Railways allowed a lot of passengers to book berths in the waiting category which led to crowding in trains. "It was also alleged that the Railways earned money on ticket cancellation."

Refuting the charge, Kumar stressed the Railways was more concerned about passenger comfort than monetary benefits.

The Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) implemented the 25 per cent cap decision on June 16 for trains with reservation facilities. This came around two months after the ministry, through a circular, conveyed its decision on the matter to all principal chief commercial managers and the CRIS managing director.

The April 17 circular stated, "The matter has been reviewed and it has been decided that the maximum current waiting list limit will be revised to 25 per cent of the re-defined capacity of each class available at originating as well as roadside stations."

It added, "This logic will also be applicable for issuing of waitlisted tickets from remote locations as well as tickets booked under Tatkal scheme. This waiting list limit shall, however, not be applicable to the tickets issued on concessional fares, warrants etc."

The circular directed CRIS to "make necessary modifications in the software and inform the date of effect to all zonal Railways".

Railway officials said such a cap was in place earlier as well but more and more people were allowed to reserve seats/berths in the waiting category.

According to a 2013 circular, the waiting list cap on AC/EC and 2 AC classes was 30 and 100 respectively. Similarly, the first class, 3AC/Chair Car and sleeper class had 30, 300 and 400 waiting limits, respectively.

Over a week after the implementation of new waiting norms, a section of experts as well as reservation officials termed the decision "impractical".

"Waiting lists give a demand trend based on which we make decisions to run special trains. How will we do it now when the waiting lists of all trains will be capped at 25 per cent?" said a retired senior railway commercial officer who termed waiting lists valuable data to make future decisions.

Reservation supervisors said there have been cases in which due to bulk cancellations, trains departed with some available seats and despite giving confirmed berths to all waiting list passengers, some remained vacant causing a loss to the Railways.

"On one hand seats/berths remain vacant and on the other needy people are unable to travel," a supervisor said.

"Agents often do bulk booking on routes high on demand. They go for cancellations before 48 hours of a train's departure so that they have to pay just the nominal cancellation charges. In such cases, there is a high possibility that availability of seats/berths will be created before the train's departure," another reservation supervisor said.

He added, "This will create opportunities for brokers and touts operating at the current booking window at stations to mint money for passengers as they have prior information of berth positions due to their nexus with lower-level ticket booking staff." (PTI)

Neighbourhood specialist, spy craft master Parag Jain appointed new RAW chief

NEW DELHI, June 29: Parag Jain, one of the brains behind the meticulous planning of 'Operation Sindoor', has been appointed as the new Chief of the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), according to an official order issued here on Saturday.

The two-year tenure of Jain, an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the 1989 batch of the Punjab cadre, officially begins on July 1. He takes over from Ravi Sinha, who retires on June 30. "The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Shri Parag Jain, IPS to the post of Secretary, Research &

Analysis Wing (R&AW) under Cabinet Secretariat for a tenure of two years from the date of assumption of the charge of the post until further orders, whichever is earlier..." the order read. The decision to appoint Jain as chief of the external intelligence agency was made by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet earlier this week, officials said.

Before this, Jain was the head of the Aviation Research Centre, an organisation that deals with aerial surveillance, SIGINT operations, photo reconnaissance flights (PHOTINT), monitoring of borders and imagery intelligence (IMINT).

Decline in percentage of zero-dose children due to govt's proactive, inclusive approach: Health Ministry

NEW DELHI, June 28: India's percentage of zero-dose children to the total population has declined from 0.11 per cent in 2023 to 0.06 per cent in 2024, positioning it as a global exemplar in child health, as acknowledged by the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation in its 2024 report, the Union Health Ministry said here.

According to WHO, zero-dose children are defined as those who lack access to or are never reached by routine immunisation services. They are operationally measured as those who did not receive their first dose of DTP (diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis).

The ministry credited the decline in such children to its unwavering commitment to immunisation evident through its Universal Immunization Programme (UIP), which provides free vaccination services annually to 2.9 crore pregnant women and 2.6 crore infants (0-1 year).

At the same time, it asserted that any comparison of India with any other countries with high burden zero dose children needs to take into consideration India's large population size and high vaccination coverage rate.

Vaccination remains one of the most powerful and cost-effective public health interventions, the ministry said in a statement, noting that the government has taken a proactive and inclusive approach to reach underserved populations.

"Our healthcare workers ASHAs and ANMs conduct over 1.3 crore immunisation sessions across the country," the statement said. "As a result of the continued, sustained efforts and intensified

implementation of vaccination drives and campaign across the country, the percentage of zero-dose children to the total population has declined from 0.11 per cent in 2023 to 0.06 per cent in 2024," it said.

The approach remains progressive, and continuous efforts are being made in the current year to further reduce the burden of zero-dose children in the country, it said.

These achievements have positioned India as a global exemplar in child health, as acknowledged by the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) in its 2024 report, it said.

The effect of the increased number of lifesaving vaccines in reducing mortality and morbidity in children due to diarrhoea, pneumonia, meningitis and encephalitis is also clearly observable, the statement said.

According to the latest SRS (2020-22), the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in India has declined from 130/lakh live births in 2014-16 to 88/lakh live births in 2020-22. The United Nations Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group (UN-MMEIG 2000-2023) report says that the MMR in India stands at 80 per lakh live births, reflecting an 86 per cent decline relative to the global reduction of 48 per cent since 1990, it said.

According to the United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UNIGME 2024 Report), India achieved a 78 per cent decline in the Under-Five Mortality Rate (U5MR) surpassing the global reduction of 61 per cent and 70 per cent decline in the



Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR) compared to 54 per cent globally during 1990 - 2023.

In addition to focused attention on increasing vaccination coverage, India's UIP embodies a comprehensive range of vaccines recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). Till 2013, there were only six available vaccines in the programme.

Currently, India's UIP covers 12 vaccine-preventable diseases and has seen significant expansion, the statement said. With continued focus on improving vaccine coverage, India has taken a proactive and inclusive approach to reach underserved populations.

The Government of India in consultation with all states and UTs, has launched targeted campaigns to address challenges among zero-dose children, particularly in urban slums, peri-urban areas, migratory populations, hard-to-reach regions, and communities affected by vaccine hesitancy.

"To amplify our reach, we are

leveraging technology and community engagement. The U-WIN platform tracks immunisation status digitally, ensuring no child is missed.

"Public awareness campaigns are being intensified using mass media, community radio, social media, and even street plays to educate families. Healthcare workers, ASHAs, and ANMs will go door-to-door, not just to vaccinate, but to sensitize the beneficiaries about the benefits of vaccination," the statement said.

Some key initiatives include roll out of Zero Dose Implementation Plan 2024 across 143 districts in 11 states with a high burden of unvaccinated children; Mission Indradhanush (since 2014), intensified in 2017 in collaboration with state governments, it has vaccinated 5.46 crore children and 1.32 crore pregnant women -- previously unreached or under-vaccinated.

The initiatives also include Pulse Polio Campaigns, and Village Health and Nutrition Days

Resolve to make India a world leader in every sphere by 2047: Shah

GODHRA, June 28: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday called for the youth to resolve towards making India a world leader in every sphere by 2047, when it celebrates the centenary of its independence.

He also recalled the contributions of tribal leader Govind Guru of India's freedom struggle, saying he awakened the conscience of the people from the region during the British rule. Shah was addressing via video link a programme where development works worth Rs 125 crore for Shri Govind Guru University at Vinzol near Godhra in Gujarat's Panchmahal district were launched.

Describing Govind Guru a hero of India's freedom movement who fought against the British rulers, Shah said, "Around 1,512 tribal brothers and sisters were martyred in that struggle against the British, and Mangadh (in Gujarat) became an important place in the history of India's fight for independence."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken forward the heroism of Govind Guru, and is determined to make India a great nation by 2047, he said. "It is a matter of importance for all of us. Our youth and children should make a resolution of creating an India where it attains the first position in every field in the world when the country celebrates the centenary of its independence," Shah added. The Union minister said the idea of setting up the Govind Guru University was conceived by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his tenure as Gujarat chief minister. (PTI)

(VHNDs) organised regularly for immunisation and outreach activities at the community level.

The annual birth cohort in India (2.6 crore) exceeds the total population of several countries, including New Zealand, Australia, Finland, and Switzerland.

Given the varying sizes of the countries across the globe, the percentage comparison shows it at par with the vaccination coverage levels observed in many high-income countries for e.g., New Zealand (DTP-1 93%), Germany & Finland (DPT-3 91%), Sweden (MCV-1 93%), Luxembourg (MCV-2 90%), Ireland (PCV-3 83%), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Rota C 90%). (WUNEIC report 2023), the statement said.

The comparative results of countries on zero dose children as a percentage of the total population shows that Yemen (1.68%), Sudan (1.45%), Angola (1.1%), Afghanistan (1.1%), Nigeria (0.98%), DR Congo (0.82%), Ethiopia (0.72%), Indonesia (0.23%), Pakistan (0.16%) have far more zero dose children as a percentage of their population compared to India's (0.11) during 2023 as per the last Wuneic report released.

Any comparison of India with any other countries with high burden zero dose children needs to take into consideration India's large population size and high vaccination coverage rate, the statement said. Therefore, any interpretation or analysis based on isolated factors does not lend credence to the country's progress on its immunization program, it emphasised. (PTI)

Prime suspect in vehicle theft cases in Kohima held

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 28: Kohima police arrested a prime suspect in multiple vehicle theft cases in Kohima town. Kohima police PRO, in a release, on Friday said acting on vital leads obtained through extensive analysis of CCTV footage from different parts of the town, and with the support of local community members, the police teams were able to zero in on the prime suspect, identified as Bioso Jingru (25) of Trongar village under Tuensang district, on June 24.

The police launched the operation following multiple complaints of missing vehicles from various locations in Kohima town to identify and apprehend those involved in vehicle theft.

The accused is currently in police custody, and a case has been registered for further investigation.

The PRO said preliminary interrogation revealed that the stolen vehicles were disposed of in Senapati district in Manipur.

Acting on this information, police have recovered one stolen motorcycle, and efforts are on to recover more, the release said.

The Kohima police urged the public to continue supporting law enforcement efforts by reporting suspicious activities promptly.

Former CM says BJP working with Centre and allies; peace remains top priority amid suspended Assembly

Efforts underway to form a popular government in Manipur: N Biren Singh

IMPHAL, June 28: Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Saturday said efforts are underway for setting up of a popular government in the state which is now under President's rule.

Speaking at the sidelines of a programme at BJP state headquarters, Singh expressed hope that a new government will be formed in Manipur soon.

"We are working to form a government at the earliest. We are a national party. After looking into the ground situation, I have faith that a government will be formed soon. BJP and its allies want a popular government as well. We are working for restoration of popular govt," he said.

"We, BJP, haven't criticised anybody. We are concentrating only on the present crisis. We are approaching the Central government and concerned persons to bring an amicable solution and peace in the state. In the meantime, we are also working to restore a popular government with frequent gatherings of MLAs. Everybody wants restoration of peace. Peace is compulsory. In the last seven or eight months, there



have been no reports of fighting between communities," the former CM said.

Singh said the central government is trying to restore peace in the state.

To a media query, Singh said "I have said earlier that illegal im-

migrants and drug cartels have affected the entire North East as well as the whole nation..

Slowly, everyone has come to understand this issue. This change is a positive sign and together we can fight these elements.

Meanwhile, BJP Manipur unit

president Adhikarimayum Sharda Devi speaking at a book release function said that now is not the time for elections but to focus on peace initiatives.

She told reporters, "The people want a popular government. BJP is trying to bring a popular government and will work by understanding the desire of the people. Now is not the time to discuss for election but to focus on the process and progress of towards peace initiatives. I want to appeal to them to understand the pulse of the people and work accordingly."

Sharda said, "The question of whether BJP is united or not will be known gradually. There is something called slow and steady wins the race.

The Centre had on February 13 imposed President's rule in Manipur after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned.

The state assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation. More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. (PTI)

Northeast has more young population than rest of country: Conrad Sangma



KOHIMA, June 28: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma has said that the northeast region has more young population than the rest of the country.

Addressing the 5th Regional Catholic Youth Convention here on Friday he said, "The northeast is not just young it is younger than the rest of India".

"This makes our youth not only our greatest strength but also our greatest challenge. How we nurture them will determine the destiny of Nagaland, Meghalaya, and the entire northeast," Sangma said.

Emphasising the importance of purpose, goal-setting, and entrepreneurship among youth, he said that "without a goal, you could be working endlessly and achieving nothing."

He said, "Reservation has made our youth complacent. We must compete not because we are guaranteed a seat, but because we can win it on merit."

Calling for a cultural shift, Sangma urged the youth to believe in themselves and embrace entrepreneurship.

"Why do we wait for others to start businesses in our states? Our youth should become the job creators," he said, citing his government's extensive startup and entrepreneurship initiatives in Meghalaya.

Underscoring the urgency of youth empowerment, Sangma warned that an unchannelled youth population could become a liability rather than an asset. "The same youth who can build our region can also become a destructive force — it all depends on how we guide them," he said.

"Above all, be good human beings. No amount of power or suc-

cess can replace humility, respect, and fear of the Lord," Sangma said.

The convention is being organised by North Eastern Regional Youth Commission in collaboration with Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM) North East and hosted by Nagaland Catholic Youth Movement. (PTI)

ENGINEERING WORKS IN LUMDING DIVISION

Zone Notice No.: LMG/Engg/47 of 2025 (Item No. 10 to 11). Dated: 26-06-2025. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN-10: Brief Description of Item:** Zone No. 10/Lumding-Lumding to Maibong Km. 1.61 to 66.1 including quarry area of Maibong end, Microwave station building and quarters of Radhadesa, Hatikhali and Maibong. **Tender Value:** ₹3,12,25,468.73/-; **Earnest Money:** ₹3,06,100/-; **SN-11: Brief Description of Item:** Zone No. 11 /Lumding-Maibong (excluding) to Jatinga Lampur (excluding) Km.66.1 to 109.3(BG) including Haflong Town, Rly. colony, Microwave, Station building and quarter at Hasanahaju, Lower Haflong, Haflong Town and Jatinga Lampur crossing, Jatinga Lampur (including) to New Harangajao (excluding) Km. 109.3(BG) (between Lower Haflong-Jatinga) to Km. 118.91 (BG) (Betn. Jatinga Lampur-New Harangajao) including all Tunnels under IOW (T) Jatinga, New Harangajao (excluding) to Chandranathpur (excluding) Km. 118.91 (between New Harangajao-Ditochcher) to Km. 148.9(BG) (betn. Damchhara - Chandranathpur) including Microwave complex at Harangajao. **Tender Value:** ₹4,68,00,801.67/-; **Earnest Money:** ₹3,84,000/-; Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. on 21-07-2025 and opening at 15:00 hrs. on 22-07-2025. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on 21-07-2025 in the website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (W), Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers with a Smile

Naga Parliamentarians' Forum mourns death of former MP B D Behring

Forum remembers Behring as tireless advocate of tribal rights and social justice in Manipur

IMPHAL, June 28: The Naga Parliamentarians' Forum, Manipur (NPFM) said today that it was "deeply saddened by the untimely demise" of B D Behring, former Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and former Member of the Manipur Legislative Assembly.

"His sudden passing has brought profound sorrow to the people of Manipur, especially to the weaker and underprivileged sections of society", the forum said in a condolence message signed by its convenor Mani Charenamei and secretary Samuel Risom.

Born in 1953, B D Behring lived a life of 72 years, marked by "unwavering commitment" to justice and the dignity of the downtrodden, the condolence message said. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he devoted his entire life to fighting for the rights and upliftment of the marginalized, it also said. A leader of rare empathy, he was deeply sensitive to the sufferings of others and worked tirelessly to eliminate discrimination and injustice across the state, the message added.

As a social worker and people's representative, he relentlessly championed the cause of the tribal people advocating for fair representation in the Manipur Legislative Assembly, strengthening local self-governance institutions, and ensuring the meaningful implementation of Article 371(C) of the Indian Constitution, the message also said.



He fearlessly defended the constitutional rights of the hill people while promoting peaceful coexistence and fostering harmonious relations among all communities in Manipur, it further stated.

According to the NPFM, B D Behring also firmly upheld and supported the political aspirations of the Naga people to live under one political entity.

Even in poor health, he never shied away from attending important meetings, an embodiment of his steadfast spirit of service and deep love for his people, the message also said. In his passing, Manipur has lost one of its most dedicated and selfless sons, a loss that will be deeply felt and hard to replace, the NPFM stated.

"We extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and pray that God grants them strength, comfort, and peace during this time of grief", the message added. (NNN)

Tripura's security needs strengthening due to current situation in Bangladesh: CM

AGARTALA, June 28: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Saturday exhorted various agencies to enhance security and surveillance in the state, given the current situation in Bangladesh.

Tripura is surrounded by Bangladesh on three sides. Therefore, strengthening of security is needed, the chief minister said after inaugurating the state's first cyber police station here.

"We all know the present situation in Bangladesh. There is a need to enhance security arrangements. The northeastern state has been made into a corridor for the smuggling of drugs and narcotic items. Infiltration from across the border is also another problem," he said.

"There are reports that a section of people go close to the international border (Indian side) and have conversations with people living on the other side of the international border. The situation may turn ugly once AI-enabled 5G service is available," he said.

Referring to the shift from conventional warfare during 'Operation Sindoor', the chief minister said

cannons and the presence of forces were not seen in the conflict (With Pakistan).

"Modern warfare requires a click," he said.

"A mobile phone has become more dangerous than AK-47 rifles. Advanced technology has changed the form of battle, conflict or war," he said.

Terming cybercrime a kind of shadow warfare, he said the security forces need to fight the criminals digitally to prevent fraudulent activities.

Emphasising awareness among the people about cyber fraud activities, Saha said the security agencies are also required to upgrade their skills to foil fraudulent activities on digital platforms.

The Director General of Police (DGP), Anurag Dhankar, urged the people to contact the newly inaugurated cyber police station if they encounter any incident related to cybercrime.

The cyber police station is located in Agartala's AD Nagar and it will deal with all cyber-related crimes across the state. The Centre has given ₹ 45 lakh out of the total outlay of ₹ 5 crore. (PTI)



Kargil war hero Capt Kengurise remembered

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 28: The Indian Army and Assam Rifles commemorated the 26th Memorial Day of Kargil war hero Capt Neikezhakuo Kengurise, Maha Vir Chakra (Posthumous), at the Kengurise War Memorial, Nerhe Phezha, under Kohima district on Saturday.

Capt Kengurise laid down his life during Operation Vijay of the battle in 1999. Inspector General Assam Rifles (North) Maj Gen Manish Kumar attended the programme as the chief guest in the presence of the parents of Capt Kengurise, war veterans and ex-servicemen from Wokha and Kohima districts and others.

Following the wreath-laying at the memorial of Capt Kengurise by Maj Gen

Kumar and lighting of the Amar Jawan Jyoti, a documentary film on the life and gallant sacrifice of Capt Kengurise was screened.

A prayer ceremony was also conducted in his honour, followed by a ceremonial march past by contingents from 1 Nagaland NCC Battalion, the Fernbrook School Pipe Band, veterans, and the Assam Rifles Pipe Band. Capt Kengurise's parents were felicitated on the occasion for their strength, resilience, and the legacy of their brave son.

In his keynote address, Maj Gen Kumar highlighted Capt Kengurise's unmatched courage, leadership, and supreme sacrifice, stating that his story would continue to inspire future generations of Indians.

Bairabi-Sairang line: Decade-long endeavour to connect Mizoram's capital Aizawl to rail network

Once operational, people can travel to Aizawl via Silchar by train, enjoying the natural beauty, cultural diversity, rolling hills and dense forests of the state, known as the "Land of the Hill People"

NEW DELHI, June 28: The completion of the 51.38-km Bairabi-Sairang rail line, which is set to connect Mizoram's capital Aizawl to the country's rail network, involved overcoming immense geographical and logistical challenges.

"The line is ready with the approval from the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CSR) and very soon, it will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," a Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) official said.

Once operational, people can travel to Aizawl via Silchar by train, enjoying the natural beauty, cultural diversity, rolling hills and dense forests of the state, known as the "Land of the Hill People".

Officials said the line establishes Mizoram as the fourth northeastern state with its capital city linked to the national railway network.

According to the NFR, the line has 48 tunnels covering 12.853 km, 55 major and 87 minor bridges, five road overbridges and nine road underbridges, with one of the bridges numbered at 196 boasting of a height of 104 metres -- 42 metres taller than the Qutub Minar.

"The new line will not only bring benefits to the people of Mizoram through improved transportation and accessibility, but also enhance regional mobility, along with boosting local tourism," the NFR said.

"The path-breaking operation will also stimulate commercial activities, economic development and strengthen



train connectivity across the northeastern states, generating employment opportunities and promoting small-business growth near stations and goods sheds," it added.

Talking about the commencement of the project, a senior official said Modi remotely unveiled the plaque for the new rail line from Bairabi to Sairang at a ceremony held at the Maligaon Railway Stadium on November 29, 2014.

He added that the complete rail line was commissioned in four phases -- Bairabi-Hortoki (16.72 km) commissioned in July 2024, Hortoki-Kawnpui (9.71 km) in June 2025, Kawnpui-Mualkhang (12.11 km) in June 2025 and Mualkhang-Sairang (12.84 km) in

June 2025.

"The final stretch of the Bairabi-Sairang new line railway project, from Hortoki to Sairang, was thoroughly inspected by the CRS, Northeast Frontier Circle, between June 6 and June 10. This marks a significant milestone as it completes the entire 57.38-km rail line, paving the way for direct rail connectivity to Aizawl for the very first time," another official said.

The CRS authorised the operation of freight and passenger trains on the newly-laid broad gauge line between Bairabi and Hortoki on August 22, 2024.

"The revised sanctioned cost of the project is approximately ₹ 5,021.45 crore," the official said. (PTI)

ECF No: **ORDER** Dated: Guwahati, the 27th June, 2025

Whereas African Swine Fever (ASF) is a highly infectious hemorrhagic viral disease of pigs with 100 % mortality and occurrence of the same in the state of Assam since May, 2020 has devastated the piggery industry in the state,

And whereas incidences of the ASF have been alarmingly rising in the state of late,

In view of the above, transportation of live pigs by railways to and through the state of Assam is hereby banned for the time being with immediate effect and until further order to prevent further spread of the disease.

However, transportation of live pigs by road to and through Assam will continue subject to strict compliance of the SOP dated 27.06.2025 and subject to terms and conditions laid down in the Government of Assam Notification issued from time to time in respect of control and containment of African Swine Fever (ASF).

This order is issued in partial modification of the Order of this Department vide ECF No.240990/154 dated 2nd June, 2023.

DIPR /DH/LT/49/29-Jun-25 Sd/-
Secretary to the Govt. of Assam,
A.H. & Veterinary Deptt, Dispur, Guwahati-6

No.KMB-42/SOPD/2025-26/Pt.-III/2398 Dated: 27/06/2025

INVITATION OF BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Officer, on behalf of Kokrajhar Municipal Board, Kokrajhar invites bids from eligible contractors/firms/registered under Kokrajhar Municipal Board or APWD/BTC/PWD building Class-I (A/B/C) Class-II for the following work. Details may be seen at the office of the Kokrajhar Municipal Board, Kokrajhar during office hours.

Name of works	EMD (In Rupees)	Cost of work (In Rupees)	Completion period	Cost of tender (In Rupees)
Construction of road with drain at Sudempuri bye lane in near UN Brahmin Children Park at Ward No. 4 under Kokrajhar MB	Rs. 9,982.00 (Rupees nine thousand nine hundred eighty two) only for ST, SC and OBC category or Rs. 19,964.00 (Rupees nineteen thousand nine hundred sixty four) only for General category.	Rs. 9,98,177.00 (Rupees nine lakhs ninety eight thousand one hundred seventy seven) only	60 Days	210.00 (Rupees Two Hundred Ten) Only

Both (Technical & Financial) are to be submitted to the office of the Kokrajhar Municipal Board, Kokrajhar. Bids will be accepted up to 02:30 PM on 14/07/2025 and will be opened on 14/07/2025 at 3:00 PM in the office of the Kokrajhar Municipal Board, Kokrajhar.

Sd/-Chairperson
Kokrajhar Municipal Board,
Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/1260

No. KED/NT/66/2024-25/4144 Dated, Kokrajhar the 26 June/2025

DETAILS TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender in prescribed form affixing non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs.8.25 (Rupees eight & paise twenty five) only subsequently to be drawn up in printed "F-2" form with validity Eight (Ninety) days from the date of receipt of tenders are invited from the Registered Class - I (A, B, C) & Class II P.W.D. Electrical Contractor under P.W.D, Guwahati Electrical Circle, Guwahati - I and the Registered Class - III P.W.D. Kokrajhar Electrical Division of 2024-25 and having valid Electrical Contractor licence for the following electrical works and will be received in the Office of the undersigned up to 2.00 PM of 05/07/2025 and will be opened at 3.00 P.M. of the same date. The Contractors or their authorized agent may be present at the time of opening tender.

Sl No.	Name of Work	Approx. Estimated Value	Time of Completion	Earnest Money
1	Providing and Installation of CCTV Camera to the District & Sessions Judge Court Building at Kokrajhar in Kokrajhar District.	Rs. 10,85,817.00	30 (Thirty) Days	General 2 % (Two) P.C. of Tender value (1 % of Tender value in case of OBG/SC ST)
2	Supplying and installation of 20 KVA D.G. set with shed, split AC machine etc. at newly created District & Sessions Judge Court (5 Nos. Courts) at 1 ekamani in South Sa 1 mara-Mankachar District.	Rs. 20,47,011.00	60 (Sixty) Days	

Tender forms can be had from the Office of the undersigned and Executive Engineer, P.W.D. Kokrajhar Electrical Division, Kokrajhar during working hours and up to 2.00 P.M. 04/07/2025 on application mentioned registration No. etc. on payment of S.L. No. (1) Rs. 500.00 (Rupees Five hundred) only and S.L. No. (2) Rs. 1000.00 (Rupees One thousand) only per set by Indian crossed postal order payable to the Executive Engineer, P.W.D. Kokrajhar Electrical Division, Kokrajhar.

Sd/-Executive Engineer, P.W.D.
Kokrajhar Electrical Division, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/1254

TV ACTOR SHEFALI JARIWALA OF 'KAANTA LAGA' FAME DIES AT 42

MUMBAI, June 28: Popular TV actor Shefali Jariwala, who shot to fame with her breakout appearance in the remix track "Kaanta Laga" and also appeared on several reality shows, has died at the age of 42. Jariwala was rushed to Bellevue Multispecialty Hospital in suburban Mumbai by her husband, actor Parag Tyagi on Friday night. Her body later was taken to the Cooper hospital for post-mortem.

"She was brought to the hospital around 11:15 pm. The on-duty doctor declared her dead on arrival," a hospital source said. Many media reports claim that she died due to a cardiac arrest, though the official cause of her death is yet to be ascertained. A host of celebrities, including playback singer Sunidhi Chauhan, Aarti Singh, Mahira Khan, Rashmi Desai and Vikas Gupta, arrived at her residence in suburban Andheri to offer their condolences to the family.

Her funeral was held at Oshiwara Hindu crematorium on Saturday evening. The last rites were performed by Jariwala's husband, father Satish Jariwala, and younger sister Shivani Jariwala.

Several friends from the industry, including Mika Singh, Vikas Gupta, Shehnaz Gill, Bhaktiyaar Irani, Aishwarya Sakhuja and Ashok Pandit, were present at the crematorium.

Jariwala broke out in 2002 with the overwhelming success of "Kaanta Laga", a remix of the classic Lata Mangeshkar song from the 1972 film "Samadhi".

In the music video, directed by filmmaker duo Vijay Sapru and Radhika Rao, Zariwala showcased bold

dance moves that became the defining visual of the remix era.

In a 2020 interview with The Times of India, Jariwala recalled that she was studying engineering at Sardar Patel Engineering College in Gujarat when filmmakers Radhika Rao and Vinay Sapru spotted her outside the campus and offered her the music video.

"I was in college then and I come from a family of academicians, so my parents told me to focus on my studies. But I wanted to do it because I was getting paid for it. I earned ₹ 7,000 from that song, and I wanted to see myself on TV," she said. She also revealed that her father was against the idea of her featuring in the music video.

"My father was completely against it. So first, I took my mom into confidence and then, we both convinced my father. And that song turned out to be such a hit that it was like a fairytale for me. It changed my life completely," she said.

After the success of the track, which also earned her the title of "Kaanta Laga girl", Jariwala had a cameo appearance in the 2004 hit romantic comedy "Mujhse Shaadi Karogi", starring Salman Khan, Akshay Kumar and Priyanka Chopra Jonas.

She gained further popularity through her participation in reality shows like "Nach Baliye", a dance-based show series, with Tyagi in 2012. She also featured in popular Salman Khan-hosted reality show "Bigg Boss 13" (2019), alongside winner Sidharth Shukla, who died in 2021.

In 2004, Jariwala married Harmeet Singh, one half of the musical duo Meet Brothers. Their marriage ended in 2009 after she

allegedly accused him of domestic abuse.

Jariwala and Tyagi, known for appearing in daily soaps like "Pavitra Rishta" and "Jodha Akbar", met in 2010 and dated for four years, before tying the knot in 2014. A week before her death, actor Jariwala shared a video of herself getting ready for a shoot, with the caption that read, "It's time for us to start living life. Like everything is working out in our favour."

The sudden demise of Jariwala has shocked many industry friends and colleagues, who expressed grief.

Singer Mika Singh said he is unable to fathom the news about the death of his dearest friend, Jariwala.

"I'm deeply shocked, saddened, and feeling a heavy heart... Our beloved star and my dearest friend @shefalijariwala has left us. Still can't believe it. You will always be remembered for your grace, smile, and spirit. Om Shanti," Singh wrote. "I can't get over this news...my heart is sinking. Shefali," actor Kamya Punjabi wrote.

Actor Divyanka Tripathi was shocked to learn about Shefali's demise.

"Still can't process the news about Shefali. Gone too soon. Deeply sad for her husband and the family," Tripathi said on X. Actor-comedian Kiku Sharda fondly recalled his experience of working with Jariwala, who he said was "full of life". "This is shocking!!!!!! worked with her on a couple of web shows, she was full of energy, full of life, always greeted all with a big, bright smile. Will miss you, Shefali, you were a beautiful soul. Rest in Peace. Om Shanti," Sharda said.

Actor Himanshi Khurana posted a photo with Jariwala and wrote, "Bigg Boss that place is cursed I think."

Actor Aly Goni wrote, "RIP Shefali."

Actor Karanvir Bohra said, "Just heard the terrible news of #Shefalijariwala passing away. My condolences to the family. #OmShanti."

"Heavy heart. This is unbelievable!! Gone too soon," posted Karishma Tanna. (PTI)

ANNA WINTOUR IS SEEKING A NEW VOGUE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF BUT WILL MAINTAIN EDITORIAL CONTROL



NEW YORK, June 28: Anna Wintour is stepping down as Vogue editor-in-chief but will retain editorial control over the storied magazine.

The longtime Vogue powerhouse told staff Thursday she's seeking a head of editorial content to handle more of the day-to-day operations. But she's holding on to plenty of power to keep her a force at the magazine that built her reputation in fashion.

"And it goes without saying," she joked, "that I plan to remain Vogue's tennis and theater editor in perpetuity."

Wintour will remain chief content officer for Conde Nast and global editorial director of Vogue. The news shook the fashion world and Wintour-watchers on social media amid breathless headlines that she was "stepping down" from the magazine. The new lead will report directly to Wintour in her capacity as global editorial director, Vogue said in a statement posted to its website later Thursday.

"Anybody in a creative field knows how essential it is never to stop growing in one's work. When I became the editor of Vogue, I was eager to prove to all who might listen that there was a new, exciting way to imagine an American fashion magazine," Wintour told staff.

"Now, I find that my greatest pleasure is helping the next generation of impassioned editors storm the field with their own ideas, supported by a new, exciting view of what a major media company can be," she added.

As chief content officer, Wintour will continue to oversee every Conde Nast brand globally, including Vogue, Wired, Vanity Fair, GQ, AD, Conde Nast Traveler, Glamour, Bon Appetit, Tatler, World of In-

teriors, Allure and more, with the exception of The New Yorker.

"In effect, the addition of a new editorial lead for Vogue US will allow Wintour greater time and flexibility to support the other global markets that Conde Nast serves," the Vogue statement said.

Wintour also oversees the annual Met Gala, fashion's biggest night and a major fundraiser for the fashion wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. And she'll remain involved in Vogue World, a traveling fashion and cultural event the magazine began in 2022.

Four years ago, Conde Nast changed its editorial structure, bringing together editorial teams around the world for the first time. Every market where Conde Nast operates has a head of editorial content led by a global editorial director. The new role at American Vogue is part of that reorganization. The new structure has already been rolled out at other Vogue titles around the world.

The company will not seek an editor-in-chief to replace Wintour at American Vogue, replacing that title with the new head of editorial content.

Wintour transformed Vogue during her decades at the magazine. She was named creative director in 1983, served as editor-in-chief of British Vogue from 1985 to 1987 then rejoined the American title as editor-in-chief.

She modernized the magazine by featuring celebrities on its covers and mixing high fashion with more affordable street style. She championed emerging designers, including Marc Jacobs, Alexander McQueen and John Galiano, and broadened the brand's reach by adding new titles around the world. (AP)

Nani begins shooting for 'The Paradise' from Srikanth Odela

NEW DELHI, June 28: Telugu actor Nani has started shooting for his upcoming film "The Paradise".

The movie reunites the actor with filmmaker Srikanth Odela since their 2023 film "Dasara". Odela is directing the movie from his own script.

According to a press release, Nani joined the set on Saturday, while shooting for the film commenced on June 21. The 40-day schedule is underway in Hyderabad, and key scenes featuring the lead cast will be filmed in this schedule. The makers also shared a post on Instagram on Saturday.

"Dhagad Aagaya, 26-03-26. #TheParadise," read the caption.

Anirudh Ravichander will compose the music for "The Paradise", which is produced by Sudhakar Cherukuri under his banner SLV Cinemas.

The film will release in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali, English, and Spanish languages.

Nani, also known for films such as "Jersey", "Hi Nanna", and "Shyam Singha Roy", most recently appeared in "HIT: The Third Case".



Jaideep Ahlawat, Nimrat Kaur join action thriller series 'The Family Man 3'

NEW DELHI, June 28: Actors Jaideep Ahlawat and Nimrat Kaur are the new nemesis of Manoj Bajpayee's spy Srikant Tiwari in the upcoming third season of "The Family", streaming service Prime Video has announced.

The OTT platform on Friday shared the first glimpse of the new season of the series, which will see Bajpayee reprise his character of Tiwari, a middle-class guy and a world-class spy.

"The wait is over. New season. New mission. #TheFamilyManOnPrime, coming soon in 2025," Prime Video posted on its official social media handles along with the teaser.

Created and directed by Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK, the action thriller series will also bring back original cast members, including Priyamani, Sharib Hashmi, Ashlesha Thakur, and Vedant Sinha.

The third season is written by Suman Kumar in collaboration with Raj & DK. "With each season, we challenge ourselves to elevate the story, scale, and performances, making them even more entertaining than the last. We're grateful for our fans' patience. Season 3 will push Srikant and his team to their limits, plunging them into a world of intense danger and personal challenges that will profoundly shake their bonds, all while Srikant simultaneously grapples with a new family dynamic."

"They'll face off against formidable new nemeses, and we're thrilled to announce that Jaideep and Nimrat will be joining our cast as these exciting antagonists. The Prime Video team has been a fantastic collaborator in bringing this new season to life," Raj & DK said in a joint statement.

In the third season, Srikant will expertly confront the looming threat to national security, while balancing the demands of family life and desperately working to mend his relationship with his wife, Suchitra, played by Priyamani.

The details of the characters being played by "Paatal Lok" star Ahlawat and Kaur, known for movies "The Lunchbox" and "Airlift", have been kept under wraps. The first season of "The Family Man", which debuted on the streamer in late 2019, received glowing reviews. The second season, also starring Samantha Ruth Prabhu, premiered in 2021 and was also praised by the critics. (PTI)

Renuka Shahane on animated film 'Loop Line': Wanted to write about women who can't change their lives

NEW DELHI, 28: Most stories about women end with them taking a big or small step towards a solution but what about those who don't have the means to change their circumstances? This question inspired Renuka Shahane to explore one such life in her animated film "Loop Line".

Shahane, a known name in cinema and TV right from the Doordarshan days, said she kept thinking about many housewives stuck in an endless loop of emotional and verbal abuse.

"I had this idea in my mind that when we read women's stories, in the end, they take a big or small revolutionary step to solve their problems. But what about those who never take that step or have no way out? They are stuck in a loveless marriage where they don't get any respect for their work and the mental abuse is

normalised," the actor-filmmaker told PTI in an interview.

"Loop Line", an over eight-minute short, is about a middle-aged Mumbai housewife, who cooks, cleans and has no life outside the small flat that she shares with her emotionally abusive husband.

But her inner life is full of imagination that takes her places: be it romancing the screen hero that she is watching on TV or freely floating in a pond full of water lilies, a scene that instantly evokes the image of Claude Monet's famous painting.

There are moments of angst that also find a voice in her fantasies.

Shahane, who made her directorial debut with "Tribhanga" in 2021, said she initially wrote the story for the live-action format but she kept seeing the inner life of the character in animation.

"When I was writing this, I realised that the fantasies of the woman in this particular film, I could see only in animation. And then I realised that the combination of animation and live action doesn't seem right. So I decided to make a full animation film."

"I love animation. It is such a deep art form. And I have been fascinated with it since childhood. But I don't have any background in visual arts. So this was a big step for me," she said.

It was, in fact, a giant leap for Shahane as she made a mature story in animation, a format that is mostly associated with children's stories in India.

"There is no place or institution where we are showing mature-level animation films in India. So I knew this will be my passion project where I will invest money and I won't expect it to come back. I

was adamant that I want to do this content only in animation. My animators at Paperboard Design Studio were surprised when I approached them."

Shahane is happy that artists in India are waking up to the possibilities of the animation format beyond children's stories.

"It has not yet picked up in our country like it has in Japan or other countries... Even Disney films, though they are children's stories, are aimed at the adult audience as well. Any art form is dependent on money."

"If it's not viable it's very difficult to make anything. Animation is a labour-intensive process. It takes a lot of time. So you need economically viable animation," she said.

The film is titled "Loop Line" because Shahane could see the parallel between her character and Mumbai's local trains.

Both keep working without receiving any gratitude and are like lifelines to their family and the city.

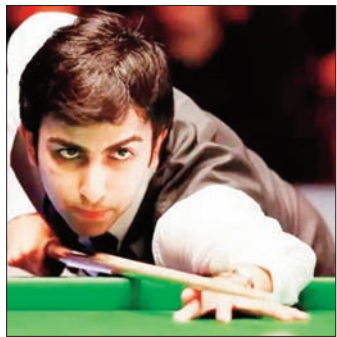
Shahane said she wants to keep exploring stories where she has complete creative control like she had in "Loop Line".

"As an artist, I am backing myself... Every artist should take that leap of faith. I am 58 years old and I have done a lot of work. During your struggle, you made compromises, but when you are comfortable, you should be committed to your art."

"Loop Line" features voices of actors Mitalee Jagtap and Anand Alkunte. The movie has been screened at film galas like 19th Tasveer South Asian Film Festival, Mumbai Short and Documentary Film Festival and New York Indian Film Festival.

It is produced by Shahane's Padachinha Production. (PTI)

India overcome Malaysia to regain team gold in Asian Snooker



COLOMBO, June 28: Multi-time world champion Pankaj Advani and Brijesh Damani dug deep as India scored a fine 3-1 win over formidable Malaysia to regain the team gold in the ACBS Asian Snooker Championship here Saturday.

For India, who last won the gold two years ago in Iran, this was their fifth gold.

Having been put through the wringer in the semifinals earlier in the morning by Hong Kong-1 (3-2), the Indians sans Aditya Mehta, who suffered a neck niggle, for both the matches, came back recharged for the final.

Damani, who made a sizzling 33 clearance that took proportions of an 80-break in the decider against Hon Man Chau in the semis, seemed to carry that momentum into the title clash.

Playing the first singles, he made a gritty 52 before an unlucky red in-off ended the break abruptly against Thor Chuan Leong.

Given a lifeline, Thor Chuan, winner of the Asian 6-red title three days ago, fought back in fine style, prevailing 68-58 with a run of 39, to put Malaysia ahead.

Advani, who lost a rare frame in the semis against Kwok Wai Fung, brushed aside Lim Kok Leong to make it one-frame apiece.

In the doubles, after letting Malaysia take an early 33-1 lead, Damani punished Thor Chuan's error with a brilliant frame-clinching break of 60 to put India just a win away from the title.

Advani then kept the dangerous Thor Chuan on a tight leash with his stunning safety play en route to a decisive victory.

Results: Final: India beat Malaysia 3-1 (Brijesh Damani lost to Thor Chuan Leong 58 (52) -68; Pankaj Advani beat Lim Kok Leong 66 (51) -25; Advani/Damani beat Tir Chuan/Lim Kok 76 (60) -33; 58-1).

Semis:

India beat Hong Kong (1): 3-2 (Pankaj Advani beat Hon Man Chau 88-39; Brijesh Damani lost to Kwok Wai Fung 51-81; Advani/Damani beat Wai Fung/Man Chau 60-47; Advani lost to Wai Fung 0-61; Damani beat Man Chau 59-57). Malaysia beat Pakistan-1: 3-1. (PTI)

FIH PRO LEAGUE INDIAN WOMEN'S WOEFUL RUN CONTINUES, LOSE 0-3 AGAINST CHINA

BERLIN, June 28: The Indian women's hockey team on Saturday lost 0-3 against China to slump to its seventh consecutive defeat in the European leg of the FIH Pro League here, and is starting at a possible relegation from the tournament.

After the defeat, India occupy the bottom place in the nine team standings with 10 points from 15 games.

England, who are playing Germany in back-to-back matches later on Saturday and on Sunday, are placed a rung above India with 11 points from 14 games.

If England win against Germany later on Saturday, India will remain at the bottom of the standings and will be relegated from the FIH Pro League to FIH Nations Cup.

If Germany win on Saturday, India will need to beat China on Sunday to keep their spot in the Pro League.

Chen Yang (21st minute) and Zhang Ying (26th) scored from penalty corners, while Anhui Yu (45th) found the target from a field effort for China.

India made a bright start and made some good circle penetrations in the first quarter.

Baljeet Kaur had the first real chance of the match but her shot from the top of the circle in the third minute went wide.

A minute later, India secured two-back-to-back first penalty corners but Deepika failed on both the occasions.

China got their acts together soon and earned their first penalty



corner a minute later but India defended well.

Veteran India goalkeeper Savita made some fine saves to deny the Chinese, including one in the 13th minute to keep out Guoting Hao's reverse hit.

Seconds from the first quarter, China secured their second penalty corner but failed to stop the push.

A minute into the second quarter, China earned two consecutive penalty corners but failed to make use of the chances.

China came out all guns blazing

in the second quarter and dominated the proceedings in the form of penalty corners, and in the 21st minute, Chen Yang scored from a set piece.

China continued to put pressure on the Indian defence and got their fifth penalty corner in the 26th minute and Zhang Ying made no mistake from the chance as they took a 2-0 lead at half time. The Indians created a few chances but, as has been the case so far, they lacked the finishing touch.

The Indians dominated the

third quarter with persistent attacks but failed to break the resolute Chinese defence.

China took advantage of India's lacklustre attitude in the backline, tripping their lead in the 45th minute through a field goal by Anhui Yu against the run of play.

The Indians continued to put pressure on the Chinese defence and secured a penalty stroke in the 55th minute but Deepika missed the golden chance. The missed penalty stroke summed up India's day as China came out winners. (PTI)

England's Lionesses face new challenges and 'noise' in Euro 2025 title defense

LONDON, June 28: England will look to eliminate the "noise" when it kicks off its campaign to retain the Women's European Championship crown.

The defending champions travel to Switzerland as one of the favorites at the 16-team tournament, despite recent upheaval in the squad, after winning last time and finishing runner-up to Spain in the 2023 World Cup.

Euro 2022 saw England triumph on home soil and secure the country's first senior title since the men's team won the World Cup in 1966. And, in a soccer-mad country, that success has ratcheted up the hype around the Lionesses.

"My experience is before a major tournament there's always noise," England coach Sarina Wiegman said. "So we expect noise until we go into the tournament, and it probably stays."

"The difference is that ... now, just the attention and the visibility

of the women's game has increased so much. So it sounds like that's more noise, but there's just more talk, more journalists here ... we just have to deal with it and move on and focus on football."

The 55-year-old Wiegman, who took charge of the Lionesses in September 2021, is bidding to make it a hat trick of European Championship titles, as she steered the Netherlands to the trophy in 2017.

However, a chaotic week leading up to her Euro 2025 squad announcement saw several key, experienced players pull out of selection for the tournament.

Star defender Millie Bright declared herself unavailable, saying she was not ready "100% mentally or physically," while goalkeeper Mary Earps and midfielder Fran Kirby retired from international soccer. All three were in England's title-winning team at Euro 2022.

"We can only control ourselves



and how good we can be," England captain Leah Williamson said. "That noise it's there, it is a factual thing, and of course there will be times when it will weigh heavier than others, but ultimately I think we're very much focused on the new task which has changed dramatically. "The two tournaments of the Euros are incomparable really in terms of what's out there and what's to come," she added, "so I think it will be very exciting for us and we're excited for that new

challenge as this new team."

Bright had knee surgery but Earps' surprise move came after she fell behind Chelsea's Hannah Hampton in the goalkeeper pecking order. It leaves Hampton as the only capped shot-stopper in a relatively inexperienced squad.

The group includes 13 players who lifted the trophy three years ago, but there are also seven players heading into their first major tournament.

And Wiegman is hoping to have found a winning blend of experience and youth.

"When I came in, the team was very experienced. But I do think we have enough experience in the team," Wiegman said. "There's about 16 players who have played a major tournament. Also with playing at such a high-level club, you are experienced with having media around, playing for big crowds. So I don't think that's a problem. (AP)

Olivier Giroud parting ways with MLS club LAFC after one disappointing year

LOS ANGELES, June 28: Olivier Giroud is parting ways with Los Angeles FC after one disappointing year with the Major League Soccer club.

The 38-year-old Giroud and LAFC announced the decision Friday on social media. He will play in his final match Sunday night at home against Vancouver.

After scoring only five goals in 37 matches for LAFC, Giroud will become a free agent after his departure. He is widely expected to join Lille, which finished fifth in the French league last season, on a free transfer.

"I want to thank all of the fans, my teammates and the staff at LAFC for making this an enjoyable stop in my career," Giroud said in a statement. "I am happy to have played a part in the success of LAFC. From winning a trophy last season to participating in the Club World Cup, this has been a great experience in LA for me and my family."

Giroud joined LAFC in July 2024 as a designated player after a long European career highlighted by prolific tenures with Arsenal and Chelsea. The top goal-scorer in the history of France's national team was expected to provide dynamic offense alongside MLS stars and fellow Frenchmen Denis Bouanga and Hugo Lloris.

Instead, Giroud clearly struggled to adapt to the MLS game and to LAFC's counter-attacking style under coach Steve Cherundolo. LAFC also failed to figure

out ways to involve Giroud in the offense consistently, unable to provide service to one of the sport's most dangerous finishers earlier in his career.

Giroud usually played as a substitute for LAFC, and he didn't score his first MLS goal until last April 19. He did find the net in big moments, scoring in the U.S. Open Cup final last season and in the Leagues Cup final.

"Olivier has been an exemplary professional during his time at LAFC," general manager John Thorntington said. "He brought humility and a winning mentality that helped elevate everyone around him. Olivier has been a tremendous ambassador for the club on and off the field. We are grateful for his contributions."

LAFC is suddenly a team in full transition after a winless three-game run at the Club World Cup earlier this month. Cherundolo already has announced he will leave the club to move back to Germany after the season, and LAFC could be down to Bouanga as its only designated player by next month.

LAFC added Dutch winger Javairó Dilrosun on loan from Club América earlier this month, but the loan is only through July 24. Dilrosun replaced Cengiz Under, whose disappointing MLS tenure ended this month.

LAFC's lengthy pursuit of Antoine Griezmann also came up fruitless earlier this month when the French star extended his contract with Atlético Madrid through 2027. (AP)

Arjun Atwal in top-10 at US Senior Open

COLORADO SPRINGS (US), June 28: Indian golfer Arjun Atwal landed two birdies late in his second round to get into the top-10 of the U.S. Senior Open here.

Atwal, the only Indian to have won on the PGA Tour, has now shot two straight even par rounds and lies tied-10th.

Atwal, who had two birdies and two bogeys in the first round, had a bogey on the 11th, his second hole, and then carded a double bogey on the 15th. He fought back with birdies on the 17th, seven and eighth and closed with a par on the ninth. Padraig Harrington and Stewart Cink endured the ups and downs together for a second straight day and found themselves tied for the lead. Harrington was now shot 67-67, while Cink has carded 68-66 to be at 6-under.

Cink made up five shots over the final nine holes of his head-to-head pairing against Harrington, and the players headed into the weekend

tied at 6-under 134, along with late-charging Mark Hensby.

Cink shot 31 on the front nine, their second nine, to match Harrington's score on the back.

Three behind was Thomas Bjorn (69), followed by Y.E. Yang (68) and Billy Andrade (69) at 2 under.

At 1-under, Darren Clarke, Steve Flesch and Miguel Angel Jimenez -- whose round included an approach on 18 from closer to the driving range than the fairway and a double hit from the rough on No. 2. Jimenez had no penalty for that.

The 52-year-old Cink, the 2009 Open champion who is playing in his first U.S. Senior Open, hit all 18 greens in regulation, making it 35 of 36 for the week.

Among those who missed the cut were 12-time senior major champion Bernhard Langer, who shot 77, and Angel Cabrera, a two-time major winner this year, who shot 75. (PTI)

Akshay Bhatia makes the cut in Rocket Classic on the line

DETROIT, June 28: Three birdies on the back nine helped Akshay Bhatia make the cut on the line at the Rocket Classic on the PGA Tour here.

The Indian-American golfer, who is seeking to make the Tour Championship for the second straight year, added 2-under 70 to his first round 4-under 68 in a low-scoring tournament, where the cut came at 6-under and 86 players made the weekend.

Bhatia dropped a shot on the eighth, but birdies on the 11th, 14th and the 15th saw him stay on for the weekend.

Jake Knapp shot an 11-under 61 on Friday to break a Rocket Classic record that stood for less than a day and became the first on Tour to break 60 and shoot a 61 or lower in the same season.

That still wasn't enough to put him in the top six entering the weekend at Detroit Golf Club.

Chris Kirk (65), Philip Knowles (64) and Andrew Putnam (66) share the second-round lead at 14 under.

Jackson Suber (65) was another shot back. Aldrich Potgieter, who had a 70 after sharing the 18-hole lead with Kevin Roy after both

shot a record-setting 62, and Mark Hubbard were another stroke behind the leader.

Knapp was in a large pack of players, including Collin Morikawa (64), Hideki Matsuyama (66) and Roy (71), three shots off the lead going into the third round.

The 31-year-old Knapp, who won the Mexico Open last year as a rookie, started the second round 130th in the 156-player field after opening with a 72.

He surged into contention with nine birdies and an eagle in a bogey-free round.

Knapp, ranked No. 99 in the world, is the only player on TOUR to shoot 61 or better in two rounds this season.

He shot a 59 — one off the tour scoring record of 58 set by Jim Furyk in 2016 — at the Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches four months ago, when he broke the tournament scoring record before cooling off and tying for sixth.

Knapp broke the 18-hole record at Detroit Golf Club that was set Thursday in the first round when Potgieter and Roy both shot a 62. (PTI)

Players under the age of 13 who are interested in regular football training at the Demow Football Coaching Centre can contact 9854471118 or 6003059461 to collect the admission forms, a release stated.

More than 1 million empty seats for Club World Cup group stage; Knockout rounds up next

NEW YORK, June 28: After a group stage played in front of more than 1 million empty seats, the Club World Cup moves on to knockout rounds that could soon resemble a Champions League clone.

Nine teams that advanced to the round of 16 are from Europe along with four from Brazil and one each from Major League Soccer, Mexico and Saudi Arabia.

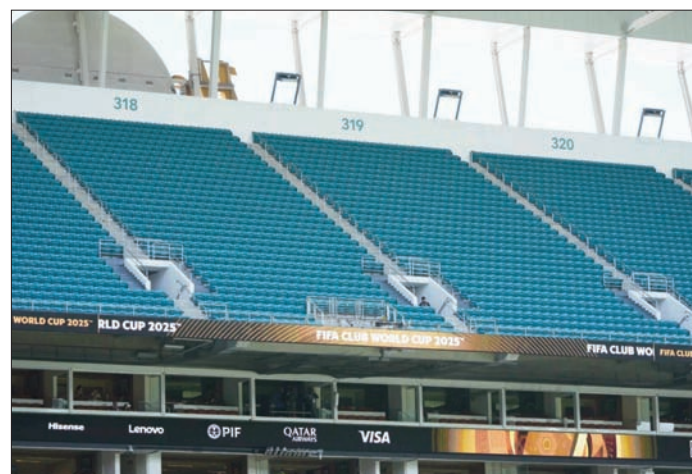
About 56.7% of publicly listed capacity was filled for the 48 group stage matches, which included crowds of 3,412 and 6,730 in Orlando, Florida; 5,282 and 8,239 in Cincinnati. FIFA did not provide specific capacities for the tournament despite repeated requests from The Associated Press.

Total announced attendance was 1.67 million from 2.95 million capacity, an average of 34,746.

Just 44.9% was filled for five matches at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, the site of next year's World Cup final, and 50% at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, where the 1994 championship game was played.

Among other 2026 sites, 81.8% of capacity was filled in Miami Gardens, Florida, 61.6% in Philadelphia, 52% in Seattle and 44.3% in Atlanta.

FIFA spokesman Bryan Swanson did not respond to a request for FIFA President Gianni Infantino to discuss the tournament and



attendance. FIFA issued a statement that said: "The appetite of the tournament speaks for itself: fans from 168 countries have already purchased tickets ... a clear sign of global anticipation and reach."

The 12 games televised with English commentary on TNT, TBS and truTV averaged 360,000 viewers through Monday, including 409,000 for seven matches on nights and weekends.

The second round opens Saturday with an all-Brazilian matchup of Palmeiras and Botafogo, followed by Chelsea-Benfica later in the day.

Sunday starts with the high-profile meeting of Inter Miami and Lionel Messi against European champion Paris Saint-Germain and is followed by Bayern

Munich-Flamengo.

Inter Milan-Fluminense and Manchester City-Al Hilal are on Monday, and Real Madrid-Juventus and Borussia Dortmund-Monterrey on Tuesday.

European teams won 16 of the 17 previous editions of an eight-team Club World Cup, the lone exception a 2012 victory by Brazil's Corinthians over Chelsea.

Manchester City is the only team that went 3-0 in the group stage.

Five of the 12 stadiums being used are sites for next year's World Cup, which will have 104 matches instead of 64 and many more games lacking prestigious teams and players.

There were five weather delays in the Club World Cup group stage and temperatures at times

rose well over 90 degrees (32 Celsius), a sign that climate change could impact next year's World Cup.

However, four of the stadiums for next year's tournament have roofs and climate control.

Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe, among soccer's top stars, didn't play a minute of the group stage, having been hospitalized and treated for acute gastroenteritis. He drew attention this week when the Paris prosecutor's office said he filed a moral harassment case against PSG, his former club.

"I don't want to be optimistic and get ahead of myself, but we need him because he's a top player, one of the best in the world. We hope he's back soon," Real Madrid coach Xabi Alonso said Thursday.

Messi, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner who turned 38 on Tuesday, has helped Miami reach the knockout phase with moments of brilliance. He hit the goal frame twice in the opening draw against Al Ahly, then scored his 68th free kick goal for club and country in the 2-1 win over Porto.

Next up is the game against PSG, Messi's team from 2021-23.

All four entrants from Brazil have advanced to the round of 16, with Botafogo beating PSG 1-0 in a matchup of current European and South American champions. Flamengo, Palmeiras and Fluminense are also through to the next stage. (AP)

Spain star Aitana Bonmati hospitalised with meningitis less than a week before Euro 2025

BARCELONA, June 28: Spain midfielder Aitana Bonmati, the two-time Ballon d'Or holder, has been hospitalized with viral meningitis less than a week before the Women's European Championship begins.

Spain coach Montse Tomé said late on Friday that her star player had felt ill and was taken to a hospital in Madrid where she tested positive for meningitis. Spain's team is set to travel to Switzerland on Sunday for the tournament. Its first game is against Portugal on Thursday in Bern. It will also face Belgium and Italy in Group B at Euro 2025.

"Aitana is a very important player for us and we will wait for her," Tomé said after Bonmati missed Friday's friendly against Japan in the Spanish capital when Spain beat the visitors 3-1.

Tomé said that Bonmati started feeling bad with a fever during practice early on Friday. "She has authorized me to say that she has viral meningitis," Tomé said. "The word is scary, but the doctor tells me that she is under control. She will remain in the hospital and we don't know for how long."

The 27-year-old Bonmati has won the top individual award for women's soccer for the past two years. The Barcelona player was key in Spain winning the 2023 Women's World Cup. (AP)

Football training camp at Demow

HT Correspondent DEMOW, June 28: Under the patronage of Demow Football Coaching Centre, a football training camp will be organized at the Raichai Rural Sports Project starting from the first week of July.

Hazlewood 5-for leads Australia to three-day win over West Indies in Barbados Test



BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS), June 28: Australia blew away the West Indies for 141 and won the first Test by 159 runs at Kensington Oval on day three.

The West Indies was set a stressful 301 target to win on a tricky pitch and folded in 33.4 overs on Friday.

The chief destroyer was seamer Josh Hazlewood with 5-43 from 12 overs.

The West Indies collapsed to 86-8 inside 27 overs but the Australians didn't mop up the last resistance until the day's last over in an extra 75 minutes.

Despite the inevitable, all-rounder Justin Greaves, 38 not out, and No. 10 batter Shamar Joseph, a career-best 44 with four sixes, went for broke in a team-best ninth-wicket stand of 55 runs.

Australia started the day in some bother at 92-4 in its second innings, but half-centuries from Travis Head, Beau Webster and Alex Carey hoisted them to an impressive 310 all out and a 300-run lead.

"We wanted to get 200 but felt lot more comfortable (with 300)," captain Pat Cummins said.

"We're lucky to have Josh, he presents a good seam and hits good areas. He bowled beautifully."

West Indies' attempt at its eighth highest successful run chase and highest in eight years was in trouble from the outset.

Mitchell Starc claimed opening batter Kraigg Brathwaite in the first over, caught at backward square by a diving Sam Konstas.

"We lost our most experienced batsman in the first over and never got a foot back in the game," West Indies captain Roston Chase said.

"The result was heartbreaking. We did well to get a (10-run first-innings) lead but couldn't put a batting innings together."

Starc also should have bagged Keacy Carty on 1 but Cameron Green spilled the catch at gully. That was the 10th dropped catch in the match and Australia's third.

Hazlewood changed ends and suddenly had success by dismissing John Campbell, scooping

badly and gloving to wicketkeeper Carey, and Brandon King, caught above the 1.98-meter Green's head, in successive balls.

When Chase gave Konstas another catch at short leg, West Indies was 49-4 in 13 overs.

Carty used his one life to reach 20 when he tried defending Hazlewood and lost his off stump.

Shai Hope, the leading West Indies run-scorer in the first innings, faced 21 balls for 2 until his off stump was hit by a low shooter from Cummins. Alzarri Joseph was then slow coming from the non-striker's end and run out by a throw from substitute fielder Marcus Labuschagne.

Jomel Warrican's edge behind gave Hazlewood his 13th test five-for and second in the Caribbean, 10 years after the first.

Greaves and Shamar Joseph frustrated Australia with lusty strokes but Nathan Lyon ended the joyride in his second over of the innings.

On day one, 14 wickets fell, and on day two 10 wickets. Before Fri-

day's play, Lyon said, "Every run is gold." But Australia enjoyed a gold rush from Head, who made 61, Webster 63, and Carey 65.

Australia, starting on 92-4 and a lead of 82, amassed a bonus 310 total.

After taking cover late Thursday, Head came out firing in the morning but should have gone on 21 and it be 107-5. Greaves spilled the catch at second slip off the bowling of Alzarri Joseph. It was West Indies' seventh dropped catch in the match.

Head shook it off and drove Alzarri Joseph, Jayden Seales, Warrican and Greaves to the ropes. From 13 off 37 balls overnight, Head reached his 50 in 77 balls. The match had only two half-centuries at that stage, and Head had both.

"We batted exceptionally well to set 300," Head said.

"Last night I was desperate to get through to stumps. (I was) a bit slow in the second innings but that was what was needed. Tough conditions, glad to be among runs."

He and Webster rattled off the only century partnership of the game, too. Head was the only wicket to fall in the morning, to a low nip-backer by Shamar Joseph. Head had eight boundaries in his 61 off 95 balls.

Straight after lunch, Webster got his third half-century in his fifth test from 100 deliveries. He was also out to Shamar Joseph, edging behind, which was picked up on review. He also had eight boundaries.

Carey wasted no time, bashing Seales for six back over the sightscreen, and charging at Greaves to lob a six on the roof over long-off. He reached 50 in 40 balls and helped the tail produce 63 runs for the last four wickets.

Starc, Lyon, and Hazlewood hit seven boundaries between them.

Shamar Joseph got 5-87 and a nine-wicket haul in his eighth Test.

The second of three Tests starts next Thursday in St. George's, Grenada. (AP)

India clubbed alongside Pakistan in Pool B in Junior Men's Hockey World Cup

LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND), June 28: Hosts India were on Saturday clubbed alongside arch-rivals Pakistan, Chile and Switzerland in Pool B of the expanded FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup to be co-hosted by Chennai and Madurai from November 28 till December 10 this year.

The draw ceremony for the tournament was held at the FIH headquarters here, and this edition will feature 24 teams for the very first time.

Pool A consists of Germany, South Africa, Canada and Ireland while Pool C will feature Argentina, New Zealand, Japan and China.

Spain, Belgium, Egypt and Namibia are in Pool D, while Netherlands, Malaysia, England and Austria are in Pool E.

Pool F will feature France, Australia, Korea and Bangladesh.

International Hockey Federation president Tayyab Ikram participated in the draw ceremony along with Hockey India secretary general Bhola Nath Singh, and Hockey India Director General RK Srivastava.

"It is a great pleasure for me to be here ahead of a milestone moment as we start the journey towards the first ever 24-team FIH Junior Hockey World Cup!"

"It is a part of the FIH strategy to empower and engage the youth from all nations, including the emerging nations, and this event will be the first step towards doing that," FIH chief Ikram said in a statement.

"This World Cup also brings with it the opportunity to enhance our hockey infrastructure, and in the city of Madurai, introduce a new state-of-art hockey stadium."

HI secretary general Bhola Nath added: "Today marks a landmark moment for the world of hockey as we witness the pool draw for the inaugural FIH Junior Men's Hockey World Cup, featuring 24 nations."

Germany are the current junior Men's World Champions, having defeated France 2-1 in the final of the 2023 edition, to win a record-extending seventh title. (PTI)

Jayasuriya takes 5 wickets as Sri Lanka beat Bangladesh by an innings and 78 runs in 2nd test



COLOMBO, June 28: Left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya took his 12th five-wicket haul in test cricket to lead Sri Lanka to a dominating win over Bangladesh by an innings and 78 runs in the second cricket test and a 1-0 victory in the two-match series.

The fourth day started with Bangladesh struggling on 115 for six needing 97 more runs to make Sri Lanka bat again. But the rest of the match lasted less than 30 minutes as Jayasuriya polished off the tail by taking three of the last four wickets at the Singhalese Sports Club.

Bangladesh was all out for 133 in its second innings having made 247 in the first. Sri Lanka scored 458 in its first innings dominated by a brilliant century from opener Pathum Nissanka and backed up by half-centuries from Dinesh Chandimal (93) and Kusal Mendis (84).

Litton Das (14) edged Jayasuriya to wicketkeeper Kusal Mendis with one run added to the overnight score Saturday. Jayasuriya lured Nayeem Hasan (5) for a drive and he was stumped by Kusal Mendis. Jayasuriya caught Tajul Islam (6) off his own bowling while off spin bowler Tharindu Rathnayake ended the game trapping Ebadot Hossain (6) lbw.

Jayasuriya finished the innings with 5-56. Captain Dhananjaya de Silva and Rathnayake took two wickets each.

The first test in Galle ended in a draw.

"Bowlers and batters did well in the first innings here," said de Silva. "Bowlers had their plans and executed well. That's a good morale booster for us, losing the toss and putting the opposition under pressure."

De Silva had high praise for Nissanka, who was named player of the match and series.

"He's been performing in all three formats for a long time and I think he will continue to do that," de Silva said of Nissanka.

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said after the match that he would step down as test captain to allow consistency in leadership in different formats of the game. Recently he had been replaced as one-day international captain.

Shanto said his side's batting "wasn't up to the mark."

"We had opportunities but we couldn't make those things happen," he said. "The wicket is a little slower but the way we got out was not good enough. We always took easy options and made mistakes while batting." (AP)

Diksha and Vani in top 10 at Amundi German Masters

HAMBURG (GERMANY), June 28: Diksha Dagar and Vani Kapoor had a contrasting day two at the Amundi German Masters to be placed tied eighth as three out of the nine Indians made the cut at the Green Eagle Golf Course.

Diksha played an even par round to slip from the top five while Vani played 3-under 70 to move into the top 10.

The only other Indian to make the cut was Avani Prashanth who played a round of 1-over 74 to end the day at tied 43. She made two birdies, one bogey and one double bogey.

Tvesa Malik (74-76) missed the cut by one shot as the cut fell at 3-over, while other Indians missing out were Sneha Singh (78-75), Amandeep Drall (78-75), Hitaashree Bakshi (79-81) and Vidhatri Urs (93-87) while Neha Tripathi retired after the first round.

Helen Briem of Germany and Elinor Sudow of Sweden were in shared lead the field. Briem had a round of 1-under 70 and a combined score of eight under par with rounds of 68-70, as did Elinor Sudow who also played a second round of 3-under 70 to stay in tied lead.

Shannon Tan played a round of 4-under 69 to move into third place and has a 36-hole score of seven under par.

Briem and Tan are the two highest ranked players on the Order of Merit taking part in the tournament.

Diksha began her second round on the front nine and picked up a shot on the second hole and then dropped the third before closing the front nine with a birdie.

On the back nine she had a bogey on the 12th and a birdie on the 13th. However, she dropped a shot on the 16th to close the day with an even par round. She continues to have a combined score of four under par.

Vani started on the front nine and had six quiet holes before she made birdie on the seventh and then closed the front nine with a bogey.

On the back nine Vani picked up shots on the 12th, 15th and 18th holes to finish the day at a combined four under par. (PTI)

India clubbed alongside Pakistan in Pool B in Junior Men's Hockey World Cup

LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND), June 28: Hosts India were on Saturday clubbed alongside arch-rivals Pakistan, Chile and Switzerland in Pool B of the expanded FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup to be co-hosted by Chennai and Madurai from November 28 till December 10 this year. The draw ceremony for the tournament was held at the FIH headquarters here, and this edition will feature 24 teams for the very first time.

Pool A consists of Germany, South Africa, Canada and Ireland while Pool C will feature Argentina, New Zealand, Japan and China.

Spain, Belgium, Egypt and Namibia are in Pool D, while Netherlands, Malaysia, England and Austria are in Pool E.

Pool F will feature France, Australia, Korea and Bangladesh. International Hockey Federation president Tayyab Ikram participated in the draw ceremony along with Hockey India secretary general Bhola Nath Singh, and Hockey India Director General RK Srivastava.

"It is a great pleasure for me to be here ahead of a milestone moment as we start the journey towards the first ever 24-team FIH Junior Hockey World Cup!" "It is a part of the FIH strategy to empower and engage the youth from all nations, including the emerging nations, and this event will be the first step towards doing that," FIH chief Ikram said in a statement.

"This World Cup also brings with it the opportunity to enhance our hockey infrastructure, and in the city of Madurai, introduce a new state-of-art hockey stadium." HI secretary general Bhola Nath added: "Today marks a landmark moment for the world of hockey as we witness the pool draw for the inaugural FIH Junior Men's Hockey World Cup, featuring 24 nations." Germany are the current junior Men's World Champions, having defeated France 2-1 in the final of the 2023 edition, to win a record-extending seventh title. (PTI)

Rahi, Mehuli and Niraj finish on top at national shooting trials

DEHRADUN, June 28: Olympian Rahi Sarnobat, mixed team rifle Asian champion Mehuli Ghosh, and Navy's Niraj Kumar came out on top in their respective finals of the national selection shooting trials 3 and 4 here on Saturday.

In the women's 25m pistol T4 final, 2018 Asian Games gold medalist Sarnobat produced a clinical performance to outclass the field. She scored 40 hits in the final, finishing six points clear of Maharashtra's Abhinaya Ashok Patil, who scored 34.

Haryana's Vibhuti Bhatia rounded off the podium with a score of 27.

Earlier in qualification, it was a close duel between Rahi and Olympian Rhythm Sangwan, both registering scores of 582.

Rhythm with 18 inner 10 hits grabbed the top spot in qualification with two more 10s than Rahi. Anjali Choudhary and Vibhuti Bhatia also shot identical scores of

579-17x, with the former clinching third place based on the count of inner hits.

The finals lineup also included Ishneet Aulakh (578-16x), Heena Sidhu (577-10x), Abhinaya Ashok Patil (576-21x), and Chinkhi Yadav (576-14x).

In the women's 10m air rifle, Mehuli shot 253.6 to win the T4 final, after she finished second in the qualification, just 0.2 behind Olympian Ramita Jindal (633.5).

Meghana M Sajjanar of Railways finished in second place with 253.1 while Sonam Uttam Maskar held her nerve in the eliminations and ended third with 231.4, narrowly edging out Ramita (210) by 0.1 at the 20-shot mark.

The qualification chart included Ramita, followed by Mehuli, Meghana (631.9), and Sonam (631.6). Tilottama Sen (631.4), Kashika Pradhan (631.1), T3 winner Narmada Nithin (630.5), and Rajshree Anilkumar (630.1) completed T4 final starting list.

Navy marksman Niraj delivered a clinical finish in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) T3 final, scoring 463.9 to claim top honours in a star-studded line up. He was steady throughout the 45-shot final to outgun Army's Babu Singh Panwar, who had topped the qualification with an impressive 591-32x but settled for the second place in the final with 457.3.

Two-time Olympian Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar settled for the third place with a score of 447.0.

The T3 qualifiers saw a fierce competition, with Paris Olympic bronze medalist Swapnil Kusale (590-42x) and Niraj (590-35x) close behind Babu Singh. Nikhil Tanwar (589-39x), Surya Pratap Singh Banshtu (589-27x), Rudranksh Patil (587-30x), and Pratham Bhadana (587-30x) completed the top eight.

The same set of shooters will return to the firing line on Sunday for the T4 qualification and final round of men's 3P event. (PTI)

Lower-order batters are putting in the work at nets: Prasadh Krishna

BIRMINGHAM, June 28: India's lower-order batters have left a lot to be desired with their failures in the first Test against England and seamer Prasadh Krishna says they are "putting in the work" at nets to come out better prepared for the second game here. India's lower order caved in without a fight in both innings which proved decisive in the final outcome.

The visitors lost their last seven wickets for 41 runs in the first innings to be bowled out for 471, and in the second essay, Mohammed Siraj, Jasprit Bumrah and Prasadh - all fell for ducks -- as India lost their last six wickets for 32 runs.

"As the lower-order batsmen, we definitely are working on... If you look at our net sessions, we are putting in the work. "I think it is about putting your mind in there as well, making sure you trust yourself, trust the skill that you have and be there at the crease for a little longer. And then the numbers and the runs are going to show, and we are working towards it," Prasadh said during a press conference. (PTI)

I take complete responsibility, says Prasadh after leaking over 200 runs at Leeds

BIRMINGHAM, June 28: Beleaguered India seamer Prasadh Krishna has taken "complete responsibility" for his failure to hit the right lengths during a forgettable outing in the first Test against England, but said he was at all times trying to be parsimonious with his bowling.

Prasadh has been slammed by few former players after he leaked more than 200 runs in the series-opener at Leeds, which India lost by five wickets.

"If I look at the first innings, I was a little too short than where I wanted to be, 6-8 is ideal. Second innings it got slightly better, because again, the wicket was slightly slower. I had to pitch a few slightly behind 8, and go slightly fuller, when I am trying to get a wicket."

"I definitely did not bowl the lengths that I wanted to. It took me some time to get used to the slope on that side. No reasons, but I should be able to do it as a professional. I take complete responsibility about it, and maybe, do it better next time," Prasadh said at a press conference.

In the first innings, Prasadh gave away 128 runs in 20 overs at an economy of 6.40, one of the worst figures by an Indian bowler bowling a minimum of 20 overs in an innings. However, he got the wickets of Ollie Pope, Harry Brook, and Jamie Smith.

In the second innings, Prasadh gave India hope with the wickets of Zak Crawley and Pope in quick succession but his

economy rate was again above six (6.10), conceding 92 runs in 15 overs.

"Every time I come out to bowl, I was definitely looking to bowl a maiden. I am not really trying to give away boundaries or anything. The outfield was fast. The lengths, lines that I bowled was not perfect, to be honest, at most times. And they took me on. Some of them were edges."

"Some of them, I tried bowling bouncers. But I ended up giving runs. But definitely, every time I come out to bowl, I was looking to keep the economy rate down and build the pressure up," Prasadh said.

Wind was another big factor at Headingley, and it was often extremely blustery and cold, making life difficult for the players in the middle.

"You are trying to run in hard. The wind sometimes is on and off. So, it is very important to understand what the pace of the run-up is."

"And I did have a chat with a couple of other guys as well, asking them what they did to be at the right pace, when they are running in to bowl. So, that is about it."

The occasional rain and the drizzle also didn't help.

"Every time the ball goes on the ground, it became wet. And when the ball becomes wet, it is going to get softer. The shine is not going to be around. So, I think that did play a part."



"If there are clouds, there is going to be swing. If there is sun, there is not going to be swing. So, that is what we are looking to do. make sure we bowl the right areas. The gripping, I wouldn't say it was a problem."

"It just got softer. And the moment it got softer, the seam got softer, the amount of purchase you get from the pitch differs."

The 29-year-old seamer said the Indian dressing room remains very positive despite losing a match they could have won. "Yeah, the dressing room is still nice and happy and very, very motivated. Like I said, we came here knowing what this opportunity meant for all of us."

"And even in the game today, we might have looked quiet at some stages. But I

think we still had a plan. We wanted to do something and we went about doing it. We got two wickets in a cluster twice, and that still kept the motivation."

He said India did not give up till the very end.

"You know, as a bowling unit, we still ended up taking the new ball when they needed about 20 runs, with the same hope that something's going to happen."

"So, we were still there believing. We made sure till the last run is scored, we will be out there and making sure they work hard for it."

While he was criticised for his expensive figures by some former players, Prasadh received backing from head coach Gautam Gambhir.

"The culture we have created is we are learning off each other... no matter who is there, who is around, and Boom is around, he has been talking to us even before coming here. At least for me, I've been part of this team for few years now, so conversations are still going on," Prasadh said.

He added, "One thing you cannot get is experience, that you have to do it yourself and I think all of us are excited if you look at the team."

"It's my responsibility to get better and that's what I am trying, that's what I am working on, and I just want to make sure I put in the right kind of work, come back here, and put up better numbers." (PTI)