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Encroachers attack forest guards, police personnel with sticks, stones and bricks • CM warns of action against attackers; blames Rahul for flare-up

Eviction drive in Paikan forest turns violent, 1 killed

GOALPARA/ GUWAHATI, July 17: One alleged encroacher was killed and more than 20 others, including police personnel, were injured in a clash between evicted people and security personnel in Assam's Goalpara district on Thursday, an official said.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma held Congress leader Rahul Gandhi responsible for the incident, accusing him of encouraging encroachers and emboldening them with his words while visiting the state on Wednesday to attack police and forest personnel.

Goalpara District Commissioner (DC) Prodirp Timung alleged that encroachers attacked forest guards and police personnel with sticks, stones and bricks when they had gone to cordon off a part of the Paikan reserve forest, where an



eviction drive was carried out on Saturday.

In a retaliatory action, the police had to fire to control the situation, in which one person was killed and two others were injured, he said.

est of the Krishnai Range of the district had affected 1,080 families, and the evicted people were mostly Bengali-speaking Muslims.

"The forest department wanted to dig a channel to ensure that no attempt is made for future encroachment. The work started yesterday and went off peacefully. But when the team reached this morning to resume the work, people in the area attacked them with stones and sticks," Timung said.

A police officer added that additional forces have been deployed and some people picked up for questioning on suspicion of involvement in the violence. A forest department official asserted that work to secure the reserve forest will continue and no encroachment will be allowed. Chief Minister Himanta (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Oppn workers join BJP in East Karbi Anglong mass induction programme

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 17: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), East Karbi Anglong District Committee (EKADC), on Thursday organised a mass joining programme at Hidisajir playground under the Dhansiri Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) Constituency, where hundreds of workers from opposition parties, including the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC), Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC), and the Congress, formally joined the BJP.

According to party sources, the new members were welcomed into the BJP fold by the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, and BJP EKADC president Rolland Killing.

Addressing the gathering, CEM Tuliram Ronghang asserted that



only a party in power can usher in real development.

"It is useless supporting the APHLC or Congress as they are in opposition. They don't have a government. It is the BJP, which is in power, that will bring development and positive change," he said.

Criticising the APHLC leadership, the CEM alleged that its president, JI Kathar, was misleading people with "false narratives" regarding the Sixth Schedule and constitutional rights of tribal communities. "He is spreading lies to the people." (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'What is guarantee Rahul Gandhi won't be jailed before I am': Himanta

GUWAHATI, July 17: A day after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi asserted that Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma would be put in jail by the people for corruption, the BJP leader on Thursday said that what is the guarantee that before such happens, the leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha won't be behind bars.

Sarma maintained that it was not befitting of a national leader to make such remarks.

Gandhi, during a party workers' meet at Chaygaon near Guwahati on Wednesday, had claimed that the CM and his family will be held accountable for their corruption, and Sarma will be put in jail by the people of the state.

Hitting back at the Congress leader, Sarma said, "What is the guarantee that Rahul Gandhi will not be jailed before I am?"

"Coming to a state and saying whom he will send to jail or not is unbecoming of a national leader... It proves how important I am," the BJP leader maintained.

Sarma had asserted ahead of the Chaygaon meet that Gandhi, in a closed-door meeting with top state party leaders, had maintained that the CM would be sent to jail.

"Take it in writing: Himanta Biswa Sarma will definitely be sent to jail", these were the exact words spoken by the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Guwahati named cleanest capital city in NE: CM

Ahmedabad cleanest city under new ranking system; Indore moved to 'Super Swachh League'

GUWAHATI/ NEW DELHI July 17: Guwahati has emerged as the cleanest capital of the northeast in the 'Swachh Survekshan' rankings, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Thursday.

Sarma also said that all four AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) cities in the state – Guwahati, Silchar, Nagaon and Dibrugarh – are now garbage-free.

"In the Swachh Survekshan Awards 2024-25, Guwahati and North Lakhimpur have been awarded as the Promising Swachh

Sheher of Assam," he said in a post on X. Six cities have received ODF++ certification, while prominent cities moved up the cleanliness rankings, the CM said.

As per the 'Swachh Survekshan' rankings for 2024-25, Guwahati has been named the cleanest capital city of the northeast. Assam's capital Dispur is a locality within Guwahati.

Guwahati has moved to the middle rung in the category (3 lakh to 10 lakh population) from the bottom of the pile last year, he said.

All four AMRUT cities in the

state have secured GFC (garbage-free city) 1-star ranking. None had featured last year, Sarma said.

The cities getting ODF++ certification this year did not have the recognition in the previous rankings, he said.

Ahmedabad was named the cleanest big city, followed by Bhopal and Lucknow in the annual cleanliness survey, even as Indore, Surat, Navi Mumbai and Vijayawada were elevated to a newly formed 'Super Swachh League Cities' category for demonstrating exceptional (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Top lawyer, former AAP chief join BJP Ex-ULFA Dristi Rajkhowa wears saffron cap

GUWAHATI, July 17: From former top ULFA commander to noted lawyer to ex-state president of AAP, prominent persons from different sections of society joined the ruling BJP in Assam on Thursday.

The formal induction of these new members was held at the state party headquarters by state president Dilip Saikia, in the presence of Assam in-charge Harish Dwivedi and organisational general secretary GR Ravindra Raju, among others.

Former self-styled 'deputy

commander' of ULFA (I), Dristi Rajkhowa alias Manoj Rabha, a known explosives expert who had surrendered in 2020, was among the new members to don the saffron colours. "I had always put my land before my life. I had earlier made sacrifices for my state and I am ready for it now as well," Rabha told reporters after the joining function.

He maintained that the state is facing "serious threats from different quarters" even now and that the BJP is a party working for the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



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Chief Minister, Assam

In august presence of

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| Posts | Candidates |
|--|------------|
| Lecturer in Polytechnics | 236 |
| Technical | |
| Non-technical | 95 |
| Senior Instructor in Engineering Colleges & Polytechnics | 85 |
| Librarian in Engineering Colleges | 3 |
| Librarian in Polytechnics | 18 |
| Total | 342 |

Recruitment Update

Till 19 June 2025 ▶ **1,20,840**

On 18 July 2025 ▶ **342**

Total recruitment
1,21,182

DIPR /D/HLT/74/18-Jul-25

India plays down threat of sanctions on Russian oil supplies, says can source from alternate places

NEW DELHI, July 17: India on Thursday played down the threat of the US imposing sanctions on countries buying Russian oil, saying it is confident of meeting its needs from alternative sources.

Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said the world's third-largest oil importer should be able to deal with any problems with Russian imports by seeking supplies from other countries.

India imports more than 85 per cent of its requirement of crude oil, which is turned into fuels like petrol and diesel in refineries.

Traditionally, the Middle East was the main source, but Russia has been the mainstay supplier for nearly three years now.

After much of the West shunned Russian crude following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russia began offering steep discounts to attract alternative buyers.

Indian refiners seized the opportunity, turning Russia, once a marginal supplier, into India's largest source of crude oil, overtaking traditional suppliers from West Asia. Russia now accounts for as much as 40 per cent of India's oil imports.

Speaking at the Urja Varta annual conference of the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH), Puri said there are many new suppliers coming onto the market, such as Guyana and supplies can also be ramped up from existing producers such as Brazil and Canada.

"I don't feel any pressure in my mind. India has diversified the sources of supply," he said in reply to a question on the impact of the US threatening Russia with sanctions.

Earlier this week, US President Donald Trump had threatened that countries purchasing Russian exports could face sanctions or steep



tariffs if Moscow fails to reach a peace agreement with Ukraine within 50 days.

Puri said India is also increasing the hunt for finding new deposits of oil within the country and quickly bringing them to production.

"I'm not worried at all. If something happens, we'll deal with it," he said. "India has diversified the sources of supply and we have gone, I think, from about 27 countries that we used to buy from to about 40 countries now."

In the event of Russian supplies being hit, Indian Oil Corp chairman A S Sahney said the country could "go back to the same template (of supplies) as was used pre-Ukraine crisis when Russian supplies to India were below 2 per cent."

The Oil Minister said prior to February 2022, India was buying 0.2 per cent of overall crude oil from Russia. "Today... It has gone up considerably," he said.

Addressing a press conference, Puri said at present the market does not react to geopolitical turmoil, especially in terms of prices as much as there is good availability of oil.

Addressing a press conference, he said at present, the price of

crude oil is around USD 68.5 per barrel and it is expected to remain around the same levels in the months to come. "I think it will be somewhere around USD 65/barrel," he said.

Puri also said that there are discussions and consultations underway with industry stakeholders led by NITI Aayog to increase the percentage of ethanol blending from 20 per cent at present.

This was one of the initiatives that we have been talking about for some time called "stratigraphic wells". This is the first of the series which will be carried out. "ONGC has taken the leap to tie up with BP in terms of well design, well location, understanding geology etc," he said.

"ONGC will be putting in money, BP will provide expertise," he said, adding that the two entities are looking to work together in Andaman, Mahanadi, Saurashtra Kutch.

According to an official statement, Puri said Russia remains one of the world's top oil producers with an output exceeding 9 million barrels per day.

He also warned that a sudden removal of this supply from the global market—out of a total of approximately 97 million barrels

per day—would have created chaos, pushing prices to between USD 130-200 per barrel.

The minister said a series of transformative policy reforms were introduced over the last decade to make India's upstream sector globally competitive.

Among the major changes, he mentioned the reimagined exploration framework under the Oilfields Regulation and Development Act (ORDA), characterised by a co-designed approach, a single lease and approval mechanism, transparent operational rules, and the introduction of a 'no-sit' clause to eliminate inactive acreage.

These measures, integrated with the revised Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules and the Model Revenue Sharing Contracts aim to simplify business operations and attract private investment.

The Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy and amendments to the ORDA Act have opened nearly 1 million square kilometres of previously inaccessible "No-Go" areas to exploration, thereby unlocking significant resource potential.

"In the last five years, India has contributed 16 per cent to the global increase in oil demand and is expected to account for nearly 25 per cent of the incremental global energy demand through 2045. Our demand is not only large, it is structured, predictable, and responsible," Puri said.

India has invested over ₹ 4 lakh crore in energy infrastructure over the past decade. These investments have not only strengthened national capacity but also created tangible value at the state level. With an envisaged investment of ₹ 30-35 lakh crore over the next 10 years, the coming decade will be pivotal for energy infrastructure development across the country. (PTI)

SEBI aims to deepen equity market, flags concerns over derivatives frenzy

KOLKATA, July 17: SEBI on Thursday expressed concern over the growing dominance of ultra-short-term derivatives trading, cautioning that such trends could undermine the health of India's capital markets, while contemplating steps to extend the tenure and maturity of these products.

"Very short-term derivatives continue to dominate equity derivative volumes, especially expiry-day index options. This is an imbalance that is obviously unhealthy and may have potential for adverse consequences," said SEBI Whole-Time Member Ananth Narayan.

He was addressing the 11th Capital Markets Conclave organised by the CII.

"I would strongly endorse the view that, towards this end, we must look for ways to further deepen our cash equities markets, even as we look to improve the quality of our derivatives market by extending the tenure and maturity of the products and solutions on offer. We need constructive engagement from all stakeholders to achieve this," he said.

Citing the market regulator's research, Narayan pointed out that 91 per cent of individual traders in futures and options (F&O) incurred net losses in FY25 - collectively losing over Rs 1 lakh crore - funds that could otherwise contribute to responsible investing and capital formation.

He highlighted that the Indian derivatives market is unique, with expiry-day index option turnover often exceeding the cash market by as much as 350 times.

"Unlike longer-term derivatives, these short-term products contribute little to capital formation and may actually add to market volatility," Narayan said.

While acknowledging that exchanges, brokers, and other intermediaries have significant revenue dependence on such trading volumes, the SEBI official questioned the sustainability of this trend.

"Is all this at all sustainable?" he asked.

SEBI has already introduced regulatory measures in October 2024 and May 2025 aimed at curbing excesses in this space, which Narayan said are showing some early signs of moderation.

However, he emphasised the need for continuous engagement with stakeholders to ensure that both cap-

ital formation and market health are protected.

"We must look for ways to deepen our cash equities markets while improving the quality of derivatives through longer-tenure products," Narayan said, urging industry collaboration.

Responding to a question, he underscored the advantages of listing, particularly in the current environment where valuations are "very, very attractive".

Going public can unlock substantial value and enable companies to raise capital in a "very meaningful manner," acting as a "force multiplier" for achieving scale and growth.

SEBI is working to boost participation and innovation across asset classes by enhancing transparency in corporate bonds, InvITs, REITs, municipal bonds, and expanding commodity derivatives.

It has urged all stakeholders to support these efforts. Narayan underscored that preserving trust is the key ingredient for healthy capital markets.

"Our funds ecosystem has grown significantly, with substantial growth in both issuances and investments. Something good is underway around capital formation," he noted.

However, he warned that unchecked speculation, governance failures, technology lapses, market manipulation, or flawed market design (Type I errors) could destroy investor trust and "kill the goose that is laying golden eggs".

At the same time, he cautioned against over-regulation (Type II errors) that might stifle legitimate business or capital formation.

"We in SEBI look at both risks very closely and undertake extensive consultations to minimise both together," he assured.

Narayan urged exchanges, clearing corporations, and depositories to maintain strong operational resilience and risk management while balancing commercial interests with public trust.

He also called upon intermediaries and industry players to act as trusted advisors.

"When you see something wrong, please say something. And when you see regulatory relief, please engage with us openly on how risks of potential Type I errors will be mitigated," he said. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Eviction drive in Paikan forest

Biswa Sarma said those involved in the attack on security personnel will be booked. "If anyone attacks the police, they will have to face legal action," he told reporters on the sidelines of a programme. The chief minister said the eviction has already been completed there, and the administration will start plantation now to reclaim the forest area.

In a post on X later, he claimed that Gandhi's "irresponsible rhetoric" endangered lives and peace in the state. "Rahul Gandhi came to Assam and openly encouraged encroachers to occupy forest land," Sarma said, referring to the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha's day-long visit to the state on Wednesday.

Gandhi, accompanied by party national president Mallikarjun Kharge, had held a closed-door discussion with top state party functionaries in Guwahati and addressed a workers' meet at Chaygaon, about 40 kms from here. He had alleged that just as in Assam, land is being taken away across the country from people and given to a few industrialists.

Sarma maintained that "emboldened by his reckless words" the mob attacked the personnel, while attempting to encroach upon the Paikan Reserve Forest. As many as 21 police officers and forest guards suffered grievous injuries, he said. Left with no choice, the police had to open fire to restore order, leading to the death of one encroacher, the chief minister added.

"This is the disastrous legacy of Rahul Gandhi's one-day visit to Assam. His irresponsible rhetoric has directly endangered lives and disrupted peace in our state. The people of Assam will neither forget nor forgive this betrayal," he said. The DC said it is not clear why there was resistance now after the eviction drive had been completed peacefully just a few days back. "We have to analyse the reason. The people who were evicted and residents from other areas are among the attackers," Timung added.

Locals claimed that the mob torched the furniture of a government school in the area, but fire tenders rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control. Leaders and members of students' and youth organisations gathered near Paikan as news of the incident spread, but they were not allowed to proceed to the spot.

Security forces baton-charged the crowd to disperse them, with barricades erected about 2 km from the area where the violence had erupted. No entry beyond the barricade, except those authorised, was allowed initially, with media persons also barred from proceeding beyond the point.

The leader of a local student organisation claimed that a section of the evicted people were staying in the area under tarpaulin sheets as they had no place to move. "These people were looking for alternative living arrangements and requested the administration for some more time to shift. But the authorities were now trying to close the road that led to the area," he said. The incident was unfortunate, but one has to understand the plight of these people, he added. (PTI)

Oppn workers join BJP

He is a half-truth person," Ronghang said. During the programme, Ronghang also announced developmental measures for Tika village in West Karbi Anglong, which he had visited recently.

He committed ₹20 lakh under the Asom Darshan scheme and another ₹20 lakh from the CEM's discretionary fund for the village's development.

During that visit, he also met and felicitated Harlongbi Engti Kathar, elder brother of JI Kathar. Responding to a memorandum submitted by villagers of Hidisajir and Rongklarbong during the day's programme, Ronghang announced that key roadworks, including the Diphu-Dillai-Sarihajan (DDS) road via Hidisajir and Hemphu Ashram to ISBT, and the 5th Mile Diphu-Manja road, would be taken up for improvement.

Additionally, construction of a community hall at Hidisajir, boulder pitching on the Diphu river embankment, and a boundary wall at the Hidisajir burial ground were also assured.

The event was attended by Executive Member (EM), KAAC, Madhurija Dhekial Phukan, and MAC members Heading Rongphar, Kadom Terangpi, and Mongve Rongpi. In the evening, a special jointing programme was held at Rongkimi village, where over 100 workers and supporters from opposition parties joined the BJP.

Based on the memorandum submitted by Rongkimi villagers, the CEM assured construction of a new school building for Rongkimi LP School, streetlight installation, ring well construction, repair of the link road to Diphu Medical College, a waiting shed, and a boundary wall at the Rongkimi burial ground.

'What is guarantee Rahul Gandhi

during his closed-door meeting with the Congress Political Affairs Committee in Assam," Sarma had said in a social media post on Wednesday, hours before Gandhi's comment in the public domain. Sarma also said the Congress leader has "conveniently forgotten" that he himself is out on bail in multiple criminal cases registered across the country.

Reacting to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's claim in the same meeting that the state government has not given any jobs, the chief minister said, "Whether I have given jobs or not, people of Assam know it." "We are working for the people of Assam and the public knows it. A speech won't change anything," he added. The BJP had promised one lakh government jobs before the 2021 state elections, with the chief minister now claiming that it has already crossed the figure in its four-year tenure and more jobs will be given before its term is over next year. (PTI)

Guwahati named cleanest

performance in sanitation, an official release said. The results of the Swachh Survekshan were announced on Thursday.

According to the government, 14 crore people participated in the survey through face-to-face interactions, the Swachhata App, MyGov and social media platforms in over 4,500 cities.

Seventy-eight awards were presented this year across four categories -- Super Swachh League Cities; Top three clean cities in five population categories; Special Category: Ganga Towns, Cantonment Boards, Safai Mitra Suraksha, Mahakumbh; and State-Level Awards -- promising clean city of a state or Union Territory.

Under the new category 'Super Swachh League', Noida emerged as the topper, followed by Chandigarh, Mysore, Ujjain, Gandhinagar and Guntur in the three to ten lakh population category.

New Delhi (NDMC), Tirupati, Ambikapur and Lonavala have been part of the 50,000 to three lakh population category. These cities in their five-population categories will compete with each other as they have been part of the 'Super Swachh League Cities' and the results will be announced in the next cleanliness survey. President Droupadi Murmu gave away the awards to the winners at an event which was attended by Union Minister and Urban Affairs (HUA) Minister Manohar Lal and others. (PTI)

Ex-ULFA Dristi Rajkhowa

people. "I feel that the BJP is the best platform today to address our problems and hence I have joined it," Rabha, once a close confidant of top ULFA (I) leader Paresh Barua, added.

Among others who joined the ruling party were lawyer Manas Sarania, former Aam Aadmi Party state president Manoj Dhanowar, vice-president of Assam Gorkha Sammelan and former president of All Assam Gorkha Students' Union, Arjun Chhetri, former general secretary of Rajior Dal's youth wing Nirmal Payeng, and former AGP central committee secretary Amal Patowary.

Welcoming them, state party president Saikia said, "The Bharatiya Janata Party is a family. Its doors are open to all who are committed to serving 'Maa Bharati', and transforming this resolution into reality for making India a 'Vishwaguru'." He called for working together to safeguard the rights of indigenous people of the state, and affirmed the party's commitment to it. (PTI)

Stock markets close lower on selling in IT stocks, fresh foreign fund outflows

MUMBAI, July 17: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty settled lower on Thursday following selling in IT and banking shares and investors remaining in a wait-and-watch mode ahead of the outcome of the US-India trade talks.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 375.24 points or 0.45 per cent to settle at 82,259.24. During the day, it fell by 415.21 points or 0.50 per cent to 82,219.27.

The 50-share NSE Nifty closed lower by 100.60 points or 0.40 per cent to 25,111.45.

Fresh foreign fund outflows and subdued quarterly earnings dented investors' sentiment, experts said.

Among Sensex firms, Tech Mahindra declined nearly 3 per cent after its June quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. IT services firm Tech Mahindra reported a nearly 34 per cent year-on-year increase in consolidated net profit to ₹ 1,140.6 crore for the quarter ending June 30, 2025, on the back of growth in communications and financial services verticals.

Infosys, HCL Tech, Eternal, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services and Axis Bank were also among the laggards.

However, Tata Steel, Trent, Titan and Tata Motors were among the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,858.15 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

"Indian equity benchmarks ended marginally lower as investors exercised caution amid subdued Q1 earnings announcements, particularly in the technology and banking sectors. Market participants remained sidelined due to elevated valuations of large-cap stocks and FII outflows owing to the uncertainty regarding US-India trade deal; however, any positive developments could amplify market sentiment," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.30 per cent and midcap index went up by 0.07 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT tanked 1.47 per cent, followed by IT (1.33 per cent), teck (1.06 per cent), bankex (0.51 per cent) and utilities (0.25 per cent).

Realty jumped 1.22 per cent, metal climbed 0.62



per cent, commodities (0.42 per cent), healthcare (0.28 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.25 per cent).

"Markets largely remained in the negative zone amid uncertainty over the impending announcement of the India-US tariff outcome, as investors resorted to selling in banking, IT and oil & gas shares that led the downfall in key benchmarks. Once the deal is announced and if it suits the interests of both the countries, there will be a relief in the markets and we may see short-term spurt, else the sluggish to pessimist mood could continue.

"Also, the ongoing earnings season will have a bearing on the markets, and investors would take positions based on how the results pan out going ahead," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index and Shanghai's SSE Composite index settled in the positive territory while Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended lower.

European markets were trading higher.

The US markets ended higher on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.06 per cent to USD 68.49 a barrel. On Wednesday, the Sensex edged up 63.57 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 82,634.48. The Nifty ended 16.25 points or 0.06 per cent higher at 25,212.05. (PTI)

Airtel partners with Perplexity to offer ₹17,000 worth AI-powered search tool free for customers

GUWAHATI, July 17: In a landmark move towards digital empowerment, Bharti Airtel has announced a strategic partnership with Perplexity, a leading AI-powered search and answer engine, to offer a one-year free subscription of Perplexity Pro—valued at ₹17,000—to all its 360 million customers across mobile, Wi-Fi and DTH services.

Perplexity is designed to transform the way users search for information, offering real-time, conversational and deeply researched responses that go beyond the traditional listing of web links.

With its self-learning capabilities, the tool delivers easy-to-read, accurate answers that can be further refined through follow-up questions, helping users get precisely what they need.

While Perplexity is available in a basic free version, the Pro subscription significantly enhances the experience with access to advanced AI models such as GPT-4.1

and Claude, greater daily usage limits, the ability to select specific models, image generation, document uploads and analysis, as well as a unique tool called Perplexity Labs that helps users develop and refine ideas.

The ₹17,000 Pro plan will now be offered completely free for a year to all Airtel users through the Airtel Thanks app.

This marks Perplexity's first-ever partnership with an Indian telecom company.

Airtel's Vice Chairman and Managing Director Gopal Vittal described the alliance as a game-changer.

He said the Gen-AI tool will empower millions of users to access knowledge and make informed decisions, all at no extra cost.

"This first-of-its-kind Gen-AI partnership in India is focused on helping our customers navigate the emerging trends in the digital world with confidence and ease," Vittal said.

Aravind Srinivas, Co-founder

BMW launches second-generation 2 Series Gran Coupé in India at ₹46.90 lakh

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 17: BMW India has introduced the second-generation BMW 2 Series Gran Coupé in the Indian market, with prices starting at ₹46.90 lakh (ex-showroom).

The new model, which will be available only in a petrol variant, is being locally produced at the BMW Group Plant in Chennai.

Bookings are now open at BMW dealerships across the country and deliveries have commenced.

BMW Group India President and CEO Vikram Pawah said the updated 2 Series Gran Coupé is designed for those who seek a sporty and expressive character in their vehicle, while also reflecting evolving technology and design trends. The model is available in two variants—the BMW 218i M Sport priced at ₹46.90 lakh and the BMW 218i M Sport Pro priced at ₹48.90 lakh. Both prices include GST and compensation cess but exclude other applicable levies such as road tax, registration, and insurance. The new Gran Coupé carries forward the coupe-style silhouette of its predecessor but features significant updates in design and dimensions.

The vehicle measures 4,546 mm in length, 1,800 mm in width and 1,445 mm in height, with a wheelbase of 2,670 mm, making it longer and taller than the previous version. Exteriors have been refreshed with a new shark-nose front profile, frameless doors, BMW Iconic Glow Kidney Grille, Adaptive LED Headlights and redesigned tail lamps. The M Sport trim adds features like a sporty front apron, gloss black accents, and 18-inch M alloy wheels with Y-spoke styling and tubless tyres to accommodate Indian road conditions. Inside, the 2 Series gets a modernised cabin layout with a BMW Curved Widescreen Display running on the iDrive Operating System 9 with QuickSelect, offering a digital-first user experience. The car includes a head-up display, panoramic sunroof, ambient lighting with Aluminium Hexablock trim, and a Harman Kardon 12-speaker audio system with 205W output.

NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from Mohammed Jamal Uddin to Jamal Uddin by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar Hojai(Assam)

NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from Reshma Khatun to Reshma Begum by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar Hojai(Assam)

Rights of indigenous Assamese must be protected eternally: Dilip Saikia

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 17: A mass joining ceremony was held on Thursday at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan, the State Headquarters of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Assam Pradesh.

The event was held under the leadership of State BJP President and Member of Parliament Dilip Saikia, in the presence of BJP Assam in-charge Harish Dwivedi, Cabinet Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah, and the party's Organizational General Secretary GR Ravindra Raju, along with other senior party leaders.

According to an official statement, several prominent figures from various sectors of Assam's social and political landscape joined the BJP during the ceremony.

These included eminent tribal leader Manoj Rabha (Drishhti Rajkhowa), advocate Manas Sarania, former Assam Aam Aadmi Party State President and 2024 Lok



Sabha candidate from Dibrugarh Manoj Dhanowar, Vice President of Assam Gorkha Sammelan and former President of All Assam Gorkha Students' Union Arjun Chettri, former General Secretary of Rajior Dal's Youth Wing Nirmal Payeng, former AGP Central Com-

mittee Secretary Amal Patowary, former Sonitpur District Congress President Madhurya Goswami, former Nagaon District Congress President and retired Associate Professor Prashanta Saikia, and advocate Assem Samua. They were joined by numerous

other members and representatives from different political parties and organisations.

Welcoming the new members, State BJP President Dilip Saikia said, "The Bharatiya Janata Party is a family. Its doors are open to all who are dedicated to serving Maa Bharati and contributing to the goal of making India a Vishwaguru. I congratulate each of you for joining with a spirit of nationalism and selfless service."

Highlighting recent political developments, Saikia said, "Under the strong leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is moving rapidly toward development, and Assam is progressing under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Both the country and the state are undergoing transformative changes."

He also addressed what he termed a serious ideological threat, stating, "Our ancient culture and heritage were ravaged by the

Mughal invasions beginning in 712 AD. Though the Mughals are gone, their ideological successors continue to conspire against India and Assam. Every Assamese and every true Indian-origin citizen must stand united to defeat these forces."

Saikia further alleged that two former Congress district presidents who joined the BJP had stated that only under BJP rule can the identity and security of indigenous Assamese people be protected.

He claimed this was proof that the Congress had always favoured Bengali-origin migrants, a stance he said was reiterated by party leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge during recent political events.

The official statement noted that, in addition to the key leaders mentioned, more than a hundred individuals from various organisations and political parties formally joined the BJP at the induction event.

CPI(ML) fact-finding team alleges violation of HC orders in eviction drives



HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, July 17: A fact-finding team led by CPI(ML) Arrah Lok Sabha MP Sudama Prasad and Assam State Committee Secretary Bibek Das visited the recently evicted areas of Ashudubi in Goalpara district and the site of the proposed satellite township project at Barduar under the Palashbari revenue circle of Kamrup district on Wednesday.

The delegation claimed that the eviction drive carried out on July 12 violated the Gauhati High Court's directive prohibiting evictions without prior rehabilitation.

According to the team, eviction notices had been issued on June 18, and on the day of the eviction, around 60 JCB machines and hundreds of police and paramilitary personnel were deployed, creating what the team described as a "warlike situation."

The team alleged that displaced families were not provided basic amenities such as drinking water, toilets, food or temporary shelter.

Speaking to this correspondent over telephone, CPI(ML) Central Committee member Balindra Saikia stated that the area was declared part of a reserved forest under a new name to justify the eviction, even though it housed government infrastructure like a school and a water supply scheme under its previous designation—facilities that, he pointed out, cannot be legally established inside reserved forests.

The team observed that 70 families had been granted land pattas, about 100 others had received official land allotments, and land revenue had been collected by the government from residents.

Of the 1,038 bighas in the area, 800 bighas were being used for residential and agricultural purposes by around 1,100 families—mostly extremely poor households, with less than one bigha of land per family on average, according to Saikia.

The team further alleged that the eviction was part of a conspiracy to hand over the land to private business interests.

It also reported that one resident, Sheikh Monirul Islam (27), com-

mitted suicide after receiving the eviction notice, while another resident, Anaruddin Sheikh (60), died of heart failure during the eviction process.

The eviction also reportedly saw the demolition of two primary schools, eight mosques, two madrasas, three Eidgahs, three Imambaras, five Anganwadi centres, two Jal Jeevan Mission projects, and 15 licensed pharmacies.

Later, the team attended a public meeting at Barduar Tea Estate in the Palashbari constituency, chaired by Gobind Rabha, president of the Barduar Land Patta Demand Committee, to discuss the government's proposed satellite township.

There, the team expressed concern that tribal and indigenous communities residing in the area for nearly a century were being displaced for commercial development.

MP Sudama Prasad stated that the BJP-led Himanta Biswa Sarma government's attempts to dispossess local tribal communities of their land rights would be resisted and that the people have a constitutional claim over Assam's land, forest, and water.

CPI(ML)'s Bibek Das raised concerns over the proposed 55 MW dam on the Kulsri River, citing threats to local livelihoods and the environment.

The fact-finding team also alleged that Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council Chief Executive Member Tankeswar Rabha was complicit in the land takeover and had allegedly threatened Muslim residents of Ashudubi with eviction if they did not support the BJP.

MP Sudama Prasad assured residents that he would raise these issues—including what he described as inhumane evictions, denial of land rights, and unlawful land appropriation—in Parliament.

The team also comprised CPI(ML) central committee leader and former Bihar MLA Manoj Manzil. CPI(ML) state committee members Panjaj Kumar Das, Balindra Saikia, Ananta Hazarika, and trade union leader Subhash Singh.

Guwahati bags national award under Swachh Survekshan 2024



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 17: Guwahati has received national recognition under the Swachh Survekshan 2024 with the Promising Swachh Shehar Award in the 3 to 10 lakh population category, according to an official statement issued by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC).

The announcement was made by Guwahati Mayor Mrigen Sarania during a press briefing following the award ceremony held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, on Wednesday.

Guwahati secured the 44th national rank in its category.

In addition to the award, the city has also earned the ODF+ (Open Defecation Free Plus) certification and the Garbage Free City (GFC) One Star rating under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).

"These honours are a reflection of the collective commitment, hard work, and community participation of the people of Guwahati," the Mayor said.

He extended his gratitude to citizens for their active involvement and constructive feedback throughout the process.

Sarania also acknowledged the support of the Government of India and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs for recognising the progress made by Assam and Guwahati in the area of urban sanitation and cleanliness.

"This is not just an award—it is a motivation to continue our mission to build a cleaner, greener, and more inclusive Guwahati," the Mayor added.

World Youth Skill Day observed at Career Forum Office in Bakalia

HT Correspondent

BAKALIA, July 17: World Youth Skill Day was recently observed at the Career Forum Office in Bakalia, with a programme aimed at highlighting the importance of youth skill development, employability, and rural empowerment.

The event was jointly organised by My Bharat: Mera Yuva Bharat (Diphu, Karbi Anglong) and the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India, in collaboration with Career Forum, Bakalia.

Among the dignitaries present were Dr Aynul Hoque, Assistant Professor at Rukasen College, and Narayan Chauhan, Headmaster of Pub Hagalakata LP School, both of whom delivered motivational messages stressing the significance of skill training in empowering youth and enhancing livelihoods.

Mithlesh Kumar Singh, Secretary of Career Forum, delivered an address encouraging young people to embrace skill-based education as a means to achieve self-reliance and contribute meaningfully to rural development.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from local youths, women, community members, and stakeholders committed to the cause of rural progress.

DDU-GKY transforms KA youth's life: From rural Assam to a premier hospitality career

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 17: In a remarkable instance of rural empowerment through skill development, Dipom Horo, a youth from Dengon, Christian Basti in Same-lango Block of Karbi Anglong district, has successfully charted a new path for himself through the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY).

This was stated in an official release issued by the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM) on Thursday.

Belonging to a modest family background, Horo's early life was marked by limited financial means and few employment opportunities.

However, in 2023, he came to know about the DDU-GKY

scheme, a Central Government initiative that aims to equip rural youth with market-relevant skills.

In Assam, the programme is implemented by ASRLM.

Dipom enrolled in a three-month residential training in the Food & Beverage Trade under the guidance of project-implementing agency Avitus Mirza.

The programme not only trained him in core hospitality operations but also helped build his confidence, discipline, and communication skills—critical components for professional success.

Following his successful completion of the training, Dipom was recruited by Spectrum Resort, Spa & Convention, a five-star establishment in Udaipur.

He now earns a monthly salary

of ₹20,000 along with additional benefits such as free food, accommodation, and staff amenities.

He is currently supporting his family and has emerged as a role model for youth in his village and nearby areas.

"This training changed my life. I never imagined I'd be working in such a beautiful place and earning this much. I am thankful to DDU-GKY and ASRLM for giving me this opportunity," Dipom was quoted as saying in the official statement.

The release further noted that Dipom Horo's story reflects the transformative potential of the DDU-GKY scheme in providing sustainable livelihoods to rural youth and enabling socio-economic upliftment across the state.

Theatrical performance 'Mon Toy Na-Kandibi' staged in Hojai's Dahgaon



HT Correspondent

KHERONI, July 17: A cultural evening featuring the play "Mon Toy Na-Kandibi" was organised at the drama platform in 3 No Dahgaon village under the 1 No. Kaki area of Hojai district on Wednesday.

The event began with the formal inauguration of the play at 7:30 PM by Biswajit Chakraborty, Principal of the Assamese Medium High School in Lumding, who cut the ceremonial ribbon to open the performance.

Renowned social worker and community figure from Lumding, Sujit Shome, attended as the chief guest. Ahead of the performance, several local intellectuals and social workers were felicitated with traditional Assamese phulam gamocha in recognition of their contributions.

The play, "Mon Toy Na-Kandibi", written by Champak Sharma and directed by Prabin Saikia, was staged at 8 PM by local artists.

The production was organised by the Srimanta Sankardev Krishi Vikash Kendra and drew a large crowd of enthusiastic local residents who enjoyed the performance through the night.

At the conclusion of the event, Gajen Hazarika, General Secretary of the organising body, extended heartfelt gratitude to all the guests, participants, and attendees for their support in making the programme a success.

Over 4,000 snakes rescued by Sourav Barkataki

World Snake Day observed in Tezpur

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 17: The third annual observance of World Snake Day was organised at the Asomiya Club's Baliram Lahkar Hall in Tezpur on Wednesday by noted snake conservationist Sourav Barkataki and his team.

The event was presided over by former Tezpur Municipal Board chairman and president of Team Sourav Barkataki, Pushpa Deka.

Delivering the keynote address, Barkataki highlighted the team's extensive conservation efforts over the years and underscored the ecological importance of snakes.

Stressing the need for scientific treatment after snakebites, he cautioned against reliance on traditional healers and emphasized the role of snakes in maintaining environmental balance.

Social activist Krishna Kanta Bora, attending as guest of honour, spoke on the medicinal value of snake venom and its applications in human healthcare.

In a detailed presentation, Dr Ripun Chutia of Biswanath Civil Hospital informed the gathering that 462 snakebite cases, including several involving highly venomous kraits, had been successfully treated over the last two years.



He attributed the positive outcome—including zero fatalities—to increased public awareness about hospital care.

Dr Chutia also recounted the story of nurse Jyoti Chetri, who breastfed a malnourished infant after the child's mother was hospitalized due to a krait bite, describing the act as an instance of exceptional humanity.

During the programme, several individuals were felicitated for their contributions to snake rescue

and public service.

Honourees included Dr Bhabani Bhuyan, retired District Veterinary Officer Dr Teerath Singh, police officer Rahul Gogoi, and nurse Jyoti Chetri. Conservationists from various parts of Assam were presented with Team Sourav Barkataki kits as a token of appreciation.

According to official data shared at the event, Barkataki has rescued over 4,000 venomous and rare snakes over the past three decades.

More than 500 snakes were treated and later released into secure forest habitats.

His team now includes over 300 volunteers engaged in snake rescue operations and public education initiatives.

The event also aimed to counter prevalent myths and superstitions surrounding snakes while raising awareness about the threats posed by habitat loss.

World Snake Day was first commemorated in 2018 by the Reptile Society of California to promote global awareness about snake conservation through educational programmes and outreach campaigns.

Retired forest officer Ramesh Gogoi, poet and journalist Kabir Saikia, and photojournalist Barlin Kumar Saikia were present as invited guests.

Joint enforcement drive conduct in Duliajan

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, July 17: The Dibrugarh District Transport Department, in coordination with the district administration, conducted a joint enforcement drive in Duliajan on Thursday to curb transport-related violations.

The operation was led by District Transport Officer Hiraikjyoti Deka and Executive Magistrate Kaustav Moni Das.

During the drive, the team carried out checks on multiple e-rickshaws and unauthorised old motorcycle dealerships. Several illegal dealerships were sealed on the spot.

Enforcement action was also taken against motorcycles, light motor vehicles, and heavy vehicles found violating road safety norms.

NFR waives busy season charge for August

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 17: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), in alignment with the Ministry of Railways, has announced two significant policy revisions aimed at facilitating smoother and more cost-effective freight movement across the zone. The information was provided in an official statement issued by NFR on Thursday.

As a major relief for freight customers, NFR has decided to waive the Busy Season Charge (BSC) of 15% for goods transported in covered wagons during August 2025.

As per the current dynamic pricing policy, BSC is applicable throughout the year except in September.

However, based on a review by the Competent Authority, this exemption has now been extended to August as well.

All other instructions regarding the levy of BSC will remain unchanged.

In a parallel move to streamline terminal operations, the Railway Board has revised the guidelines on free time

allowed at Engine-On-Load (EOL) terminals. Under the new provision, BCNHL rakes will be allowed 8 hours of free time for both loading and unloading operations.

For other types of covered rakes, the existing 6-hour free time continues.

This amendment falls under the Rates Master Circular on Demurrage and Wharfage Waiver and will come into effect from July 17, 2025.

According to NFR, the waiver of BSC is expected to ease logistics costs during the monsoon month and promote higher freight loading, while the extended free time for BCNHL rakes will help reduce demurrage, streamline terminal operations, and improve overall efficiency.

"These measures reflect NFR's ongoing commitment to fostering a customer-friendly and efficient freight ecosystem," the statement said.

NFR has urged stakeholders to take advantage of these provisions for better logistics planning and cost optimisation.

Rural woman in Karbi Anglong turns livestock into livelihood

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 17: With the support of the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM) and her Self Help Group (SHG), Kareng Lektheipi of Maran Lekthe village under Rongmongwe Block has transformed her life and livelihood through livestock rearing. This was stated in an official release issued by ASRLM highlighting her success story.

Kareng, who once lived with an annual household income of just ₹25,000, joined the Rongchingri SHG on October 18, 2019. A loan of ₹15,000 from the SHG marked the beginning of her entrepreneurial journey in goat and backyard poultry farming.

Encouraged by initial success, she went on to avail a total of ₹45,000 in financial support from the group, besides benefiting from bank linkages and Community Investment Funds (CIF) facilitated by ASRLM.

To build sustainability and adopt scientific methods, Kareng underwent structured training under the Pashu Pathsala programme in goat rearing, poultry farming, and animal health management.

"Learning proper techniques changed everything for me," she said.

According to the release, her annual income now stands at around ₹75,000 from livestock and an additional ₹15,000 from paddy cultivation. Her enterprise also provides employment to two others in the village.

Kareng is also availing benefits from various government schemes, including Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), and MGNREGA.

She receives regular veterinary and agricultural support to further boost her efforts.

Expressing her aspirations, she said, "I want to take an individual loan, expand my business, and inspire other women to become self-reliant."

Kareng Lektheipi's journey stands as a testament to how grassroots support and structured rural livelihood programmes can enable women to break the cycle of poverty and emerge as self-sufficient entrepreneurs.

CENTRAL RAILWAY

INDICATIVE NOTIFICATION

| Employment Notice No. RRC/CR/01/2025 dated 01.08.2025 | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Opening Date and Time for online Application | 01.08.2025 at 10.00 Hrs. |
| Closing Date and Time for online Application | 31.08.2025 at 18.00 Hrs. |
| Central Railway invites ONLINE application from the eligible sports persons who are citizens of India, for filling up 21 posts of group 'C' and 38 (erstwhile Group 'D') posts against the Sports Quota under various disciplines for the year 2025-26 | |
| Level | No. of posts |
| Level 5/4 | 05 |
| Level 3/2 | 16 |
| Level 1 | 38 |
| Total | 59 |

For detailed notification please visit RRC/CR's website www.rccr.com available from 01.08.2025

Chairman RRC/CR

অসুস্থিত নথি অনাধিকৃত কৃপ সে বেল লান্ডন দে পার কার্য করনা দৈনিকী অপরাধ হে

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Patience is the companion of wisdom.
-Saint Augustine

Nimisha Priya's fate hangs in balance

Kerala nurse Nimisha Priya has lost her trust with life. There's "nothing much India can do", the Modi government told the Supreme Court of India on July 14. It is procrastination, actually which put paid to the "save Priya" campaign. Indian authorities at several levels over a period of several years failed Nimisha Priya at every step of the way, from the High Court of Kerala to the Kerala government and the Modi government. The Modi government had given up years ago and Nimisha Priya's loved ones didn't know who else to turn to. Not when the all-powerful Modi government headed by the all-powerful, a global leader with the reputation of an influencer par excellence, Prime Minister Narendra Modi couldn't cut to the chase and release Nimisha Priya from the clutches of an even other wise ruthless regime. Yemen under Houthis rule is no country for mercy petitions. For not even a \$1 million in 'diya' or 'blood money' in return. Usually, the families of victims agree to 'diya'. But Nimisha Priya doesn't fit the Yemeni system and there have been ominous dialogues trickling out of Sanaa, the Yemen capital, such as "not even one kaafir who has killed a Muslim should be let off, it does not matter how much their international heft." With the Modi government admitting to this reality, Nimisha Priya's last tether to life has been severed and July 16 will see Priya's hanging in a Sanaa prison, perhaps the first Indian to meet her end in a Yemeni jail. Yemen is a country where the Islamic law runs through every lane and alley, breathing life into the system. Unfortunately for Nimisha Priya, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's aura runs weak in Yemen.

Yemen is not UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain or even Qatar. These are countries which are active among civilized nations. Yemen is not the heavenly spot. It is at war with itself and the streak of fundamentalism that runs through Yemen is like a cancer. Palakkad-born nurse Nimisha Priya has been on death row in Yemen since 2020. And enough opportunities had been given to the Kerala government to push for her release from the Yemeni prison. The "murder" of the Yemeni national, who was Priya's Yemeni sponsor and had taken "possession" of her passport, was a desperate move to escape from her pernicious clutches as much as to escape to the freedom of her own country, "India". Unfortunately, the escape was foiled and Nimisha Priya found herself "landlocked", on death and the Yemeni law squarely and firmly against her. Petitions asking the Centre and State government to intervene found their way to a roadblock and the Kerala High Court refused to take a firm stand. For Nimisha Priya, there wasn't much left to hope for.

Nimisha Priya is lodged in a prison controlled by the Iran-backed Houthis, with whom India shares no diplomatic ties. Whether India recognizes the "Houthi government" is itself in doubt and by speaking about its limitations vis a vis Nimisha Priya, the Modi government is admitting its helplessness. The government also told the Supreme Court that there was no way of knowing what was going on in Yemen.

Dark clouds hover over the future of electoral democracy in India

By: P. Sudhir

Foreigners Found on Bihar Rolls, Says EC; INDIA Questions Data' screamed the lead headline on the front page of a major national daily. It appeared to be simply unbelievable.

The timeline for the Special Intensive Revision, as laid out by the Election Commission of India (ECI) was outlined in its press release dated June 24. For the benefit of our readers, let us recall the process: "The BLOs (Booth Level Officers), in turn, must distribute the forms door-to-door, collect the filled forms, and verify them. In addition, higher officials must carry out rationalisation and rearrangement, finalise the proposed restructuring of polling stations, get the list of polling stations approved, and publish the draft Electoral Rolls by August 1, 2025, followed by the final Electoral Rolls on September 30, 2025."

If that is indeed the case, then how can the Election Commission (EC) say that foreigners have been found on the Bihar rolls? Since there can possibly be no formal statement from the ECI before September 30, it can only mean that a section of Commission officials has planted this disinformation to prejudice the ongoing judicial process before the apex court on the matter, with July 28 being the next date for hearing. Whether the leak was official or clandestine, the onus of responsibility will rest on the Commission if it does not issue a statutory disclaimer.

The question of propriety becomes even more urgent because, while the Supreme Court bench did not deliver any specific order stopping the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (the petitioners did not ask for such relief), the basic questions raised still require pointed replies from the ECI.

First question: Does the ECI have the power to decide the citizenship status of a voter? On this issue, the bench observed that it is the remit of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to determine whether an individual is a citizen. The bench stated that "...citizenship is an issue to be determined not by the Election Commission of India, but by the Ministry of Home Affairs," when the EC defended its decision to exclude Aadhaar as a valid document.

Second question: Why this timing? The bench further observed that if the EC wanted to ensure that only citizens remain on the electoral rolls, it "should have started the process much earlier." The Court essentially questioned the timing and asked whether the exercise could be delinked from the Bihar elections.

Justice Dhulia underscored the practical consequences: "Your decision, to disenfranchise the person who is already there on the electoral roll in 2025, would compel this individual to appeal against the decision and go through this entire rigmarole and thereby be denied the right to vote in the ensuing election. There is nothing wrong in your purging electoral rolls through an intensive exercise to see that non-citizens do not remain on the rolls. But if you decide only a couple of months before a proposed election..." He added a pointed, real-world caution: "If you ask for these documents immediately, even I will not be able to produce them now. Look at the practicality: look at the timeline," referring to the elaborate set of documents insisted upon by the ECI—requirements that unmistakably resemble the NRC process. And finally, the third question: What procedure will the EC adopt? The judges asked the Election Commission (EC) to clarify the process it would follow in cases where a voter is to be disenfranchised. Justice Dhulia posed a pointed query: "If a 'summary revision' under the Representation of the People Act calls for a verbal hearing before deletion of a voter from the electoral roll, can it be said that the 'intensive' revision cannot have that process?"

Under the RPA rules, in all cases of proposed voter deletions, except in confirmed death cases, a notice must be served to the voter, giving a reasonable opportunity to be heard. As part of this line of questioning, the bench also raised the admissibility of certain documents. In its order, the Supreme Court asked the EC to explain why Aadhaar, the Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC), and the ration card cannot be accepted as valid documents in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process. This potentially expands the narrow 11 document list that has already triggered widespread panic and confusion on the ground.

These are the precise questions that are haunting people. No one disputes that the ECI is empowered to do everything necessary to ensure free and fair elections on a level playing field. But the order of June 24 and the method and timeline the Commission has set are unprecedented departures from past practice. The SIR does not have a basis in the relevant statutory provisions or rules. It appears to be a backdoor introduction of the NRC exercise. The result is a real risk of disenfranchising a very large number of people, especially those who are economically or socially marginalised and digitally disempowered. With the ECI indicating that similar SIR exercises may be undertaken in other states, these questions must be settled in a rational and reasoned manner—or the future of electoral democracy itself could be at peril. (IPA Service)

SITA and its role in uplifting the economy of Assam

State Innovation and Transformation Aayog (SITA) was constituted by re-naming State Planning Board on 28th November 2016 as per Government of Assam Notification No. PDS. 45/98/213 dated 28th November, 2016. It is headed by Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam as Chairman and a full time Vice-Chairman (of Cabinet Minister rank), a full time Co-Vice Chairman (of Minister of State Rank) and a Chief Executive Officer. State Innovation and Transformation Aayog has been registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 on 12th March, 2019. The State Innovation and Transformation Aayog (SITA) in Assam is a government body focused on evaluating and monitoring government schemes, advising on co-ordination between different governance levels, and promoting innovation and transformation in the state. SITA also supports projects related to smart agriculture, renewable energy, and livelihood improvement through various initiatives and partnerships. The functions of the State Innovation and Transformation Aayog is to advise and co-ordinate the responsibilities

Knowledge Partnerships:

SITA collaborates with various institutions to leverage their expertise in areas like agriculture, technology, and research. The State Innovation & Transformation Aayog (SITA) in Assam has recently launched a pilot project for hygienic papiruri vending, aimed at promoting innovation and local entrepreneurship. SITA is also collaborating with Assam Agricultural University on a project focused on "Upscaling of livelihood: Implication through Smart Agriculture and Agri-Eco-Tourism". Additionally, SITA is involved in developing project proposals for the Veterinary & Dairy and Fishery sectors.

Dying rivers of Assam:

A study on degradation of selected rivers and riverine ecosystems in the Brahmaputra Valley for developing a community based action plan for their rejuvenation. Revival of Tea Sector in Assam—Production to Auction. Revival of Tea Sector in Assam—Revival of Toklai Tea Research Centre. SITA is in the process of taking up a Project with the aim to use optimally the water hyacinth resources in Assam.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Diganta Barooah

The project will promote South-Asian Cooperation by Establishing Strong Partnerships in PPP framework:

The proposed project which is aiming to use optimally the water hyacinth resources in Assam (estimated dry resources of 25 lakh tons per annum which is so far not harnessed), to open up sustainable livelihood for a good number of people and also to create alternate energy resource, has potentially an alignment to integrate the activities to SDGs. As India will continue to focus on nurturing partnerships at the regional and global levels where Assam wants to play a pivotal role keeping in view of 'Act East Policy' of Govt of India, there is immense and definitive possibility of flow of adoptable technology from South Asian Countries in this context. It is believed that with combined and sustained efforts, it will indeed be possible to eradicate poverty and ensure prosperous communities for a large section of people.

To achieve the objectives in a framework of shared prosperity and destiny, particularly in the state of Assam, the principles of South-Asian Cooperation of Govt of India in its bilateral and multilateral engagements comes into picture. The collaboration of Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) India through knowledge sharing partnership in this proposed journey would help to foster the southern Asian narrative on development and sustainability at multilateral fora. This South Asian Cooperation shall particularly be beneficial on sharing of the best practices, sustainable use of resources available regionally and joint development projects encountering the common challenges. Since, India has one of the largest Public-Private Partnership (PPP) programmes globally and a continued focus on PPP initiatives as well will pave a new dimensions for strengthening micro financing for these proposed activities. The states / local bodies and recognized NGOs will be at the frontline of operation. This relationship between the national government and the sub-national governments shall boost a paradigm shift

Financial Assistance :
SITA provides financial assistance for research and development projects, such as the "Development of a Smart Platform for Promotion of Renewable Energy in Assam".

Specific Examples of SITA's Work:

Smart Agriculture Project:
A project with Assam Agricultural University aims to develop a climate-smart agriculture model, focusing on resource efficiency, farmer-friendly water harvesting, and integrated farming systems.

Renewable Energy Project:
SITA supports a project to assess renewable energy resources and develop a smart digital platform for their holistic development in Assam.

Entrepreneurship Programs:
SITA has been involved in supporting women entrepreneurs through initiatives like goat and poultry farming projects.

China's mineral leverage: The new frontline of global power

By: Dipak Kurmi

In the deepening shadow of a fractured global order, where trade no longer guarantees peace and economic interdependence has transformed into a tool of coercion, China's latest move to weaponise rare earth elements signals a critical escalation in the ongoing geopolitical contest. The decision by Beijing in April to impose export restrictions on seven rare earth elements and associated magnets—samarium, gadolinium, terbium, dysprosium, lutetium, scandium, and yttrium—has triggered a wave of concern across industrialised nations. These materials are not merely commodities; they are the lifeblood of modern technological advancement, powering everything from electric vehicles and wind turbines to precision-guided missiles and advanced aircraft.

The new regulatory framework now demands that companies seeking to export these strategic materials from China must first obtain special licences. This bureaucratic wall, described by analysts as a "Great Wall of red tape," has effectively paralysed the private sector, delaying exports and disrupting production lines across multiple countries. According to Chinese customs data, the export volume of rare earth magnets plummeted by an alarming 52.85% in May—the steepest decline since January 2012. This sudden contraction underlines the vulnerability of global supply chains, especially in the West, where dependence on Chinese rare earth exports remains overwhelmingly high.

This development is not a spontaneous measure. It forms part of a calculated long-term strategy by the Chinese state to reclaim control over trade in strategic resources. In the aftermath of Donald Trump's return to the White House in the 2024 US elections and the re-imposition of tariffs on Chinese goods,

Beijing responded by extending restrictions to other key raw materials, including tungsten, graphite, magnesium, and aluminium alloys. These materials are integral to the electronics and renewable energy industries. This came in the wake of earlier retaliatory measures imposed during the Biden administration, when China announced controls on the export of gallium and germanium—crucial inputs in semiconductor and electronics manufacturing—right before US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's visit to Beijing in July 2023.

By December 2024, Beijing escalated the confrontation further, implementing a complete ban on exports of gallium and germanium, thereby cutting off vital components to countries trying to restrict China's access to advanced chip-making technology. With China controlling nearly 98% of the global production capacity for gallium and 60% for germanium at that time, the impact was both immediate and profound. The message was unmistakable: if the West could isolate China from the global technological ecosystem, Beijing had the power to paralyse key sectors of their economies.

Behind this aggressive strategic posturing lies a fundamental ideological divergence in the way China and the West perceive economic interdependence. For decades, the prevailing liberal economic order held that free trade and open markets would promote peace, cooperation, and shared prosperity. The theory suggested that nations bound by commerce would avoid conflict due to mutual economic interest. However, President Xi Jinping has openly rejected this logic, seeing participation in global supply chains as a matter of national security rather than mutual benefit.

In 2020, in the wake of growing anti-China sentiment following the COVID-19 pandemic, Xi articulated a new vision. Rather

than retreating from the global stage, China would entrench itself deeper into international production networks—not to foster goodwill, but to create leverage. This new doctrine crystallised in the Export Control Law, passed in December 2020. The law authorises the state to restrict exports of strategic technologies and materials to specific foreign entities and allows for punitive action against nations deemed to threaten China's "national security" or, notably, its "interests."

The deliberate inclusion of the term "interests" in this law sig-

In 2020, in the wake of growing anti-China sentiment following the COVID-19 pandemic, Xi articulated a new vision. Rather than retreating from the global stage

nals a vast expansion in the scope of what the Chinese state can target. It enables Beijing to exercise a fluid and often unpredictable export control regime that serves both economic and geopolitical objectives. This legal infrastructure was followed by the creation of the China Rare Earth Group in 2021—a massive state-owned conglomerate born from the merger of Aluminium Corporation of China, China Minmetals Corporation and Ganzhou Rare Earth Group. This consolidation signalled Beijing's intent to centralise control over rare earth mining, processing, and trade, reducing the influence of private entities and further insulating the sector from external pressure.

These strategic manoeuvres form part of what experts have termed a "silent war." While lacking the spectacle of open conflict, the stakes are no less consequential. Economic secu-

for harnessing these water hyacinth resources in different value added products with potentially export propositions.

Intervention in Veterinary, Dairy and Fishery sectors :

These sectors require special intervention to create livelihood options in the light of emerging technologies, exploring possible applications and collaborating with external experts in the field. Assam is basically an agrarian economy endowed with abundant natural resources. Assam Agricultural University at the behest of SITA prepared two project proposals on both the Veterinary & Dairy and Fishery sectors. The project proposals have been shared with concerned departments of Assam Government for finalisation of work plan and road map. SITA is also organising a Brainstorming Session on Livestock, Dairy and Fishery sectors in association with Assam Agricultural University involving state government departments concerned. Banking sector, academicians/researchers from universities, NGOs working in the field and from among progressive farmers will participate in the session.

Knowledge Partners of SITA:

In taking forward our innovative ideas in development agenda SITA is in knowledge partnership with Assam Agricultural University, Gauhati University, Tezpur University, Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, North Eastern Space Application Centre (NESAC) and several other premier and research institutions.

SITA's Projects For Rural Communities:

The State Innovation and Transformation Aayog (SITA) is making significant strides in empowering Assam's rural communities through sustainable, innovative projects. SITA currently has 20 projects dedicated to improving the livelihoods of Assam's rural populations, mainly through long-term, transformative solutions. SITA Vice Chairman Narayan Borkataky shared his insights into the organization's mission and the impact of these initiatives. "We have undertaken 20 projects, with 13 completed and seven ongoing. We plan to launch more projects as we move forward," Narayan Borkataky said, highlighting SITA's focus on leveraging Assam's natural resources to drive development and innovation. SITA's mission is to develop solutions that make a long-lasting impact on the rural communities of Assam as stated by Narayan Borkataky. A core focus of SITA is its agro-based projects, which aim to harness the region's rich natural resources. These projects will boost local economies and foster innovation, ensuring long-term benefits for rural communities. SITA believe in using the region's resources to their fullest potential, ensuring that the local population benefits from sustainable development practices. One of SITA's flagship projects is the medicinal plant conservation and cultivation initiative. This project aims to preserve endangered plant species and promote the cultivation of rare medicinal herbs. SITA is planting medicinal plants and setting up of herbal gardens in various parts of Assam. The project has been progressing well, particularly at Rangia College, where botany professors and senior students are actively involved in cultivating rare plants. The local community has played a crucial

role in supporting the project. Additionally, SITA has focused heavily on empowering rural women through income-generating projects. One of the most impactful initiatives in this regard is scientific goat farming, a project that supports rural women by providing them with goats and training in modern farming techniques. SITA is collaborating with Assam Agricultural University to ensure women receive high-productivity goats and the veterinary care necessary for their health and well-being. The initiative, currently operational in Guwahati and Nalbari, provides rural women with four certified goats each, chosen for their high productivity. The women involved in the goat farming program are doing remarkably well. They are receiving full support from the veterinary department, and SITA has seen firsthand how this initiative has improved their quality of life as stated by Narayan Borkataky emphasizing the project's success. For many, the project has proven life-changing. Women no longer has to ask for money from their husband. They manage their income and contribute to the family's finances. This success story underscores the project's broader impact, providing women with financial independence and self-reliance. In addition to goat farming, SITA supports rural women through poultry farming. The Samridhi Poultry initiative focuses on providing women with 40 hens each, which they rear and manage as part of a sustainable livelihood model. The project's first phase has already been launched in the Dimoria block of Kamrup District, with assistance from the Assam Agricultural University and local veterinary professionals. The poultry farming initiative is a success. Many women earn income from selling eggs and gain confidence in managing their businesses. This project has empowered rural women to become entrepreneurs. They are contributing to their households in meaningful ways while developing essential business skills as stated by the SITA Vice Chairman. The impact of SITA's initiatives on women is far-reaching. Both the goat and poultry farming programs have provided much-needed opportunities for economic independence and personal growth to rural women. These programs have encouraged women to take charge of their financial futures. They are not just making a living. They are building a foundation for sustainable development within their communities as mentioned by Narayan Borkataky. Looking to the future, SITA remains committed to expanding its reach and continuing its work in rural development. SITA will continue to explore new opportunities for innovation that enhance the lives of rural people. SITA is committed to ensuring these projects benefit as many people as possible as stated by Narayan Borkataky. Through its dedication to sustainable, agro-based initiatives, SITA is transforming rural communities in Assam. The organization's work is helping to build stronger, more resilient communities where women are key players in driving economic growth and development. With a clear focus on innovation and empowerment, SITA is paving the way for a more prosperous future for Assam's rural population.

ity has become indistinguishable from national security, as states across the world scramble to insulate themselves from supply chain disruptions that can cripple their critical infrastructure and defence capabilities. India, for instance, has already felt the tremors of this new era of mineral nationalism. Indian electric vehicle manufacturers have expressed alarm over delays in receiving rare-earth magnets from China, warning that production timelines are at risk.

Recognising the urgent need for self-reliance, India has launched a multi-pronged strategy to counterbalance China's dominance. The National Critical Mineral Mission, introduced earlier this year, aims to establish a comprehensive framework to secure access to key minerals. A Centre of Excellence on Critical Minerals is also in the pipeline to ensure that India's strategic priorities remain updated with evolving technological requirements. But domestic efforts alone are insufficient in a world where mineral resources are unevenly distributed and heavily concentrated.

International collaboration has, therefore, become central to India's response. At the BRICS Summit in Brazil this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi underlined the importance of diversifying and securing global supply chains. He called for international cooperation to ensure that no country should wield critical resources as instruments of coercion—a thinly veiled rebuke directed at China. India has also thrown its weight behind multilateral initiatives such as the Quad Critical Minerals Initiative, which aims to enhance coordination among member nations on mineral recovery, reprocessing, and investment.

Similarly, India supported the Critical Minerals Action Plan proposed at the G7 Summit in Canada in June 2025. Under the plan, member nations—including Japan, Germany, South

Korea, Italy, Canada, and the UK—have pledged over \$50 million to the "Resilient and Inclusive Supply Chain Enhancement" initiative. These efforts underscore a collective recognition that the future of technological development, defence preparedness, and clean energy transition hinges on access to a finite list of resources—resources that are increasingly being treated as tools of statecraft.

China's assertiveness in this domain is not just about minerals. It is about reordering the rules of international trade and reshaping the geopolitical chessboard. It signals a shift away from the free-market orthodoxy that defined globalisation for the last three decades. In its place is an emerging world order where control over tangible assets—land, minerals, energy, infrastructure—trumps access to intangible capital like ideas, patents, or software.

The implications are manifold. For countries like India, the path forward demands not just investment in domestic mining and refining capacity but also a comprehensive re-evaluation of trade policies, environmental clearances, and technological innovation. It also calls for the development of strategic reserves, just as countries have done with oil in the past, to buffer against external shocks.

This geopolitical mineral war is still in its early stages. But one thing is clear: in a world increasingly defined by rivalry and resource competition, the old assumption that economic entanglement would prevent conflict has collapsed. China's grip on rare earths and critical minerals may be redrawing the map of global power, one shipment at a time. The rest of the world must respond—not just to protect their economies, but to defend the very principle of open, fair, and rules-based international order. (the writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Jaishankar's Singapore visit

An opportunity to take stock of India-Singapore ties

By: Rahul Mishra and Priscie L. Patnayak

As India and Singapore commemorate 60 years of their diplomatic relationship and 10 years of strategic partnership, Dr. S. Jaishankar, India's external affairs minister, paid a visit to the Lion City. Jaishankar's short but timely visit should be seen in continuation with Singaporean President Tharman Shanmugaratnam's five-day visit to India in mid-January 2025.

During Tharman's visit, the two countries worked toward developing an action plan this year, as suggested by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his last visit to Singapore in September 2024, when India and Singapore elevated their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Jaishankar's visit not only provided an opportunity to follow up on the action plan developed earlier but also to deliberate upon new avenues of cooperation between the two nations, considering the challenges posed by U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff policies and the heightened tensions between the United States and China over semiconductors and critical minerals. Both India and Singapore are facing Trump's tariffs, but their situation is considered much better than peers such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, and South Korea.

The significance of the visit also lies in the fact that it will allow Singapore to find ways in which India can still work with ASEAN on the free trade agreement (FTA) front. According to the reports, India, unhappy with the sluggish pace of the review of the India-ASEAN FTA and a consistent negative balance of trade, is considering terminating the trade deal, which came into force in 2010.

Singapore, as India's topmost trading partner in the ASEAN region and a hub for Indian services sector trade in the region, would want India to stick to the FTA. However, Singapore will

also seek to explore avenues of enhancing bilateral trade and investment cooperation should India decide to walk out of the free trade agreement.

Beyond a robust trade in goods, India and Singapore are working together in new areas such as semiconductors, digital cooperation, healthcare education, skill development, petrochemicals, sustainability, and maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) in the aerospace sector. Singapore's investment in India is a win-win scenario for both.

While India is striving toward becoming a "Vikshit Bharat" by 2047, its current infrastructural gap, high operational costs, land acquisition, and lack of skilled labor remain the hurdles that a developed country like Singapore can help it cross.

Similarly, despite having all the above-mentioned resources, Singapore has a high cost of labor and services. As a result, investors in Singapore are looking abroad to invest. While China heavily dominates the Southeast Asian economy and there is high competition among ASEAN countries, given India's close ties with Singapore and cost-effective labor and service, New Delhi presents a viable option to Singapore.

India desires to become a semiconductor hub. However, it currently faces a shortage of resources and professionals across the various verticals of the industry. The India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) had plans to send some of its workforce to Singapore for semiconductor training. The signing of a MoU between the Skill Development & Technical Education Department, Odisha, and the ITE Education Services (ITEES), Singapore, during the Singapore president's visit, has enabled the two countries to train a large portion of the Indian workforce in the country itself.

Similarly, Singapore dominates the MRO sector, while India aspires to become a global



hub for MRO. India's MRO market is currently valued at \$1.7 billion, projected to grow to \$4 billion by 2031. While the Indian government has introduced reforms for simplified tax structures and is collaborating with companies like Airbus and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, high operational costs, infrastructure gaps, skill shortages, and regulatory bottlenecks present challenges to India's vision. Therefore, collaborating with Singapore will help New Delhi fulfill its aspiration.

While the Indian government has been working to strengthen ties with Southeast Asian countries, many Indian states – to fulfil their individual goals – are also trying to reach out to Southeast Asian countries. Tharman's visit to Odisha followed the visit of Odisha's chief minister to Singapore.

Notably, Singapore is the official partner in Odisha's flagship biennial investors summit Utkarsh Odisha (Make in Odisha Conclave-2025).

Like Odisha, other Indian states are also trying to lure investments from Southeast Asian countries by reaching out to them, reflecting the success of Indian paradigm. For instance, in early 2025, Assam's IT and Science and Technology Minister Keshab Mahanta visited Thailand to promote the Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit and invited Thai businesses and investors.

Additionally, Singapore is already developing a satellite city around Guwahati – the capital of Assam.

Last year, in January 2025, during the Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet, Singapore laid out its plan to invest \$5 billion in infrastructure, technology, sustainability and data centers. Furthermore, Singapore and Tamil Nadu are establishing a green corridor from Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu to Singapore.

Despite all the opportunities and initiatives, as Tarun Das – an Indian industrialist who was recently conferred honorary citizenship by Singapore – pointed out, there remains a "communication gap between India and Singapore with two very different systems and processes." Due to the arduous land and registration process, high tax on construction, and complex paperwork, among other factors, mid-size Singaporean companies are still uncomfortable setting up businesses in India. Das suggested that India can offer "townships" to Singapore, similar to the ones offered to Japan and South Korea. These townships are industrial zones providing a streamlined environment for companies to initiate and expand their operations in India, reducing administrative hurdles.

The India-Singapore partnership offers promising potential, particularly in the context of challenges and vulnerabilities thrown open in the regional context. Jaishankar's visit will help address some of these while opening a pathway for further consultations. (Courtesy:thediplomat)

India's solar ambition needs financial vision – ISA must move from commitments to execution



By: Arvind Mayaram

As the world confronts the realities of climate change and energy insecurity, solar energy presents itself not merely as a technological solution but as a transformative geopolitical and developmental strategy. The International Solar Alliance is uniquely positioned to catalyse this transformation. But to succeed, it must go beyond declarations. It must now design and implement financial architectures capable of supporting its ambitions.

The potential of solar energy is undeniable. It is modular, scalable, and increasingly cost-effective. Yet, for the nations most abundant in sunlight, finance remains a key constraint. The International Energy Agency estimates that clean energy investments in emerging economies must rise from \$770 billion in 2022 to over \$2.2 trillion annually by 2030. A significant portion of this must be allocated to solar energy. However, the fiscal realities of many countries—either still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, burdened by debt, or struggling to cope with pressing social needs—limit the ability of governments to invest at scale.

India's experience illustrates this well. Despite policy successes in solar deployment, the government's ability to directly invest in grid infrastructure or generation assets is capped by fiscal deficit targets and debt ceilings. Even green bonds, while helpful, are bound by ring-fenced rules and are limited in scale. Public financing, therefore, can only act as a catalytic lever—it cannot be the backbone.

Turning to the private sector, we find both potential and limitations. Many solar developers operate on highly leveraged balance sheets, and with rising global interest rates, the space for fresh

capital is narrowing. Moreover, risks such as currency volatility, regulatory uncertainty, and weak transmission infrastructure dampen investor appetite, especially in frontier markets. Private capital is crucial but requires structured entry points, credible exit mechanisms, and active risk mitigation to be effective.

Making solar power viable. One promising solution lies in Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs). These allow mature infrastructure assets—such as operational solar plants or transmission lines—to be monetised and sold to institutional investors, freeing up capital for developers to reinvest in new projects. India has already demonstrated the utility of InvITs in sectors such as roads and power transmission. Extending this to the solar power arena could unlock significant value. The ISA should take the lead in crafting a common InvIT framework tailored for solar infrastructure. A pooled anchor investment fund, supported by multilateral finance institutions, could reduce risks and attract scale investors across member countries.

Equally vital is grid infrastructure—the invisible scaffolding that makes solar power viable. The sun may shine everywhere, but power must travel, be stored, and be balanced in real-time. India's Green Energy Corridor and the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme offer early models. Yet, many ISA member states lack integrated plans for transmission, storage, and cross-border trading.

And then there is global capital. Today's capital markets are flush with liquidity, seeking long-duration, climate-aligned assets. But this window may not last. As rates rise and climate risks mount, capital will flow only to those who present credible regulatory frameworks, transparent asset registries, and scalable instru-

ments. The ISA should champion a Global Solar Asset Registry for standardised project information. It must also establish a Solar Credit Guarantee mechanism to mitigate political and currency risks. And it must establish a blended finance facility to crowd in private investment using concessional capital.

New strategies are key. The rise of India's solar power capacity—from under 3 GW in 2014 to 100 GW today—demonstrates what the right mix of policy, institutional coherence, and financial innovation can achieve. However, to transition to 500 GW by 2030, new strategies are essential, including rooftop and distribution company (DISCOM)-level solar investments, urban InvITs, and the integration of solar energy into agriculture through active implementation of schemes such as the PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Uthaan Mahabhiyan). These experiences must be adapted and scaled across ISA countries. ISA's evolving strategy must rest on three core principles. First is to scale with purpose. Solar expansion must reduce energy poverty and build domestic value chains. The second is to finance with innovation. ISA must mobilise capital markets and create new instruments, such as InvITs. The third is to lead with solidarity. Emerging economies must shape the agenda with shared standards and cooperative execution.

The sun unites us—geographically, climatically, symbolically. However, to truly harness its power, we must act together, think boldly, and manage our finances wisely. The International Solar Alliance must now transform from a coalition of commitments into a platform of execution. It is time to light not only the grids but also the lives of those still waiting for their first connection. (Courtesy: the print)

India's defence strategy reset amid China-Pak operational front

By: Rahul Rawat

The recent India-Pakistan crisis, which unfolded between 7 and 10 May 2025, in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terrorist attack, marked an inflexion point in India's defence strategy. Amid New Delhi's confrontation with Pakistan, the China factor was evident in both diplomatic signalling and battlefield capabilities aimed at pressuring India. Since the Galwan crisis in 2020, China's assertiveness along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has already stretched India's military manpower and capabilities on two different geographical tangents. With the Pahalgam terror attack, Pakistan is also testing the limits of India's strategic patience, attempting to entangle India in a long, protracted triangular geopolitical conflict. China described 'Operation Sindoor' as 'regrettable' and that it 'will safeguard its [Pakistan's] sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.' These developments create additional pressures for policymakers in New Delhi, especially considering the structural factor of geography to manage the China-Pakistan 'threshold alliance' challenge.

The Threshold Alliance and Litmus Test for Military Capabilities

The China-Pakistan relationship has evolved over the decades and matured into a fully comprehensive strategic partnership. China's support for Pakistan's military build-up has significantly intensified the strategic challenge for New Delhi. The Op Sindoor–Op Banyan–Um Marsoos episode has effectively operationalised the China-India-Pakistan triadic rivalry in real-time. In this regard, how Pakistan and India integrated and employed their military capabilities during the 7-10 May 2025 crisis has established a critical benchmark for both the utility of force and the assessment of the future of the triadic relationship. In a first-of-its-kind episode, the character of warfare transitioned to a more escalatory, stand-off warfare in action. It reflects a departure from conventional warfighting methods between India and Pakistan. The two countries have amassed technology-based capabilities. China-Pakistan military exercises, centred on shared learning, interoperability in hardware, procedures, and joint planning, constitute a foundational pillar of their wartime military cooperation. The Chinese-origin capabilities—including JF-17 and J10C, PL-15E beyond-visual-range (BVR) air-to-air missiles, the FM-90 SRSAM, LY-80 (HQ16A) MRSAM and HQ-9/P LRSAM air defence systems and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)—were used by the Pakistan military against India. The element of the 'kill-chain' process on 7 May 2025, facilitated by integrating ground and space-based sensor data with frontline fighter jets, resulted in a serious operational challenge for India. The utilisation of electromagnetic battlespace by the Pakistan military has emerged as a serious development, which is further accelerated by Chinese support in capabilities and training. Owing to such tech integration, Pakistan has also reportedly claimed to have shot down Indian fighter jets. The Chinese Beidou satellite navigation system also extended its aid through its real-time Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, supporting precise detection and targeting against India. The Op Sindoor–Op Banyan–Um Marsoos episode has effectively operationalised the China-India-Pakistan triadic rivalry in real-time.

Conversely, India used Brahmos and French-origin SCALP-EG cruise missiles along with HAMMER glide bombs for stand-



off aerial strikes. From 8-10 May, India's integrated air and missile defence system effectively denied Pakistan any opportunity to impose costs through its offensive actions. The multi-layered system comprises long-range (S-400), medium-range (Barak-8), short-range modern and legacy systems (Igla-M, Igla-S, L-70). It also comprises the Indian Air Force's Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) and the Indian Army's Akashteer system. The 'whole of operations' approach also reflected the synergy and cooperation among the three services of the Indian military.

The Indian military established the norm of victory by destroying multiple high-value targets deep inside Pakistan through Suppression of Enemy Air Defences (SEAD)-based operations. This resulted in demands for a ceasefire from Pakistani counterparts. Wars in the technological era, especially in a nuclear environment, will likely remain short, swift, and driven by a need to establish a decisive victory. As an inference, the traditional elements such as mass and quantitative strength of conventional capabilities may not likely factor into creating a decisive advantage over an adversary. The qualitative parameters, such as technology, doctrinal orientation, and strategic guidance, will dictate modern warfare. This emerging proposition from the Operation Sindoor episode holds lessons for the broader contours of India's defence strategy.

Lessons for India's Defence Strategy

Historically, India-Pakistan relations have remained crisis-prone and may witness another such episode with varying escalation and costs for both parties. The China-India-Pakistan triadic rivalry will only worsen with China and Pakistan tilting the balance as per their favourable terms, with associated costs for New Delhi. Operation Sindoor—a conventional military-based norm of Indian response against Pakistan and its sponsored terror groups—highlights the imperative for New Delhi to enhance its military preparedness and future planning. For this, India must focus on three broad contours: strategic planning, amassing preferential capabilities, and doctrinal innovation.

To bring structural effects, it is important to pursue a 'system of systems' approach to defence planning and readiness. This can be achieved by getting both the big picture and the emerging trends with fine details right. As a next step, the fast-tracking of jointness and integration reforms supported by policy measures to synchronise defence acquisition and long-term planning is imperative. This will help enhance organisational efficiency, operational planning, and strategic guidance for defence preparedness. The trade-off be-

tween time and qualitative factors of capabilities will also remain a metric for readiness in the long term.

In terms of capabilities, the strategic domains of warfare have evolved significantly, with aerospace being a prominent one. It is especially evident in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. Aerospace superiority is essential both for imposing strategic costs on adversaries and for denying them the ability to do the same. The integration of rockets, missiles, drones, and their doctrinal integration with supporting domains—information, cyber, Artificial Intelligence, and electronic warfare—is the new norm in warfare. The fungibility of qualitative factors such as technological advancement and their integration into doctrinal thinking and conduct will result in combat effectiveness. Thus, it establishes the metric of success in reforms and subsequently victory in battlespace and beyond.

India must recalibrate its doctrinal options to employ the use of force, especially for stand-off warfare kind of innovative scenarios vis-à-vis Pakistan. In the doctrinal aspect, the Indian military and its broader doctrine have remained land warfare-centric for decades. As a result, doctrinally, institutionally, and resource-wise, the balance has remained tilted in favour of the Indian Army vis-à-vis the other two services—the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy. On the other hand, Pakistan has adopted an asymmetric doctrinal approach marked by a range of options—primarily a mix of sub-conventional and nuclear strategy—to limit India's conventional superiority. As a contingency to India's military action, it has substantial land warfare capabilities and holds tactical nuclear weapons to restrict or deny any decisive advantages to the adversary. Pakistan's technological military prowess is being both supplemented and supplanted by Chinese military capabilities and the multi-domain-based operational art of warfare. India must recalibrate its doctrinal options to employ the use of force, especially for stand-off warfare kind of innovative scenarios vis-à-vis Pakistan. This highlights the need to upscale a "new start within the Cold Start doctrine" to keep conflicts short and swift in the context of the future doctrinal innovation agenda.

In conclusion, New Delhi must reexamine, recalibrate, and determine its strategic objectives and question the extent of military power. How does it aim to manage the China-supported Pakistan challenge in the next episode of the crisis? These questions should become the line of inquiry and the anchor for wielding power with purpose amid the shifting geopolitical landscape. This immediate victory should not become a fuel for complacency in the face of a long-term challenge. (Courtesy: ORF)

Fire at shopping centre in eastern Iraq kills more than 60 people

BAGHDAD, July 17: A fire engulfed a newly opened shopping centre in eastern Iraq, killing more than 60 people, including children, Iraqi officials said Thursday.

Civil defence teams rescued more than 45 people who became trapped when the fire broke out late Wednesday in the city of Kut in Wasit province, the Interior Ministry said in a statement. Others are still missing, according to the state-run Iraqi News Agency.

Photographs and videos on local media showed the Corniche Hypermarket Mall, a five-storey shopping centre that had opened only a week earlier, fully engulfed in flames. While the cause of the fire is still under investigation, officials and residents alleged that lack of fire safety measures in the building contributed to the scale of the tragedy. Iraq's Ministry of Interior said in a statement that 61 people died in the shopping centre fire, most of them from suffocation. Among the dead



were 14 charred bodies that remain unidentified, it said.

Provincial Gov. Mohammed al-Miyahi declared three days of mourning. He said legal cases were filed against the building owner and shopping centre owner, but did not specify what the charges were. We assure the families of the innocent victims that we will not be lenient with those who were directly or indirectly responsible for this incident, al-Mayyeh said.

In a phone interview with

The Associated Press, al-Miyahi called the fire a heart-breaking tragedy for the people of Wasit and alleged that the building owner had not implemented the necessary fire safety measures when he converted it into a shopping centre.

He said that no government official has resigned or been dismissed as a result of the fire, and that they are currently awaiting the results of the investigation. The results of the preliminary investiga-

tion will be released within 48 hours, he said. The building owner could not immediately be reached for comment.

Poor building standards have often contributed to tragic fires in Iraq. In July 2021, a blaze at a hospital in the Iraqi city of Nasiriyah that killed between 60 to 92 people was determined to have been fuelled by highly flammable, low-cost type of sandwich panel cladding that is illegal in Iraq. In 2023, more than 100 people died in a fire at a wedding hall in the predominantly Christian area of Hamdaniya in Nineveh province after the ceiling panels above a pyrotechnic machine burst into flames. Abdul Redha Thahab, 60, a resident of Kut, said the fire was deeply painful for the community.

My friend and neighbour's family, who lived right next to my house a family of six, the husband, his wife, their two daughters, and two young children all perished in the fire, he said. (AP)

Syrian forces withdraw from Sweida after ceasefire goes into effect

DAMASCUS (Syria), July 17: Syrian forces largely withdrew from the southern province of Sweida on Thursday following days of clashes with militias linked to the Druze minority.

While the truce between Druze armed groups and government forces appeared to be largely holding, state media reported that Druze militants had launched revenge attacks on communities of Sunni Bedouins, leading to a wave of displacement. Bedouin clans had fought alongside government forces against the Druze groups. Druze leaders and Syrian government officials reached a ceasefire deal mediated by the United States, Turkey

and Arab countries. Under the ceasefire agreement reached Wednesday, Druze factions and clerics have been appointed to maintain internal security in Sweida, Syria's interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa said in an address broadcast early Thursday. The fighting had threatened to unravel Syria's postwar political transition and brought further military intervention by neighboring Israel, which on Wednesday struck the Syrian Defense Ministry headquarters, in central Damascus. Israel said it was acting to protect the Druze religious minority.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed Thursday to keep south-

ern Syria demilitarized and to protect the Druze community, which has a sizeable population in Israel. This will also be the continuation of our policy, said Netanyahu, who said the ceasefire was reached because of Israel's intense strikes on government forces during the clashes. We will not allow military forces to descend south of Damascus, we will not allow the Druze to be harmed in Jebel Druze.

Convoys of government forces started withdrawing overnight as Syrian state media said the withdrawal was in line with the ceasefire agreement and the military operation against the Druze factions had ended. (AP)

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The date of viva-voce/interview will be announced later on through local newspaper and there will be no separate communication to the candidates in this regard.

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| Sl. No. | Name of Post | No. of Post lying vacant | Grade of Post | Scale of Pay (Fixed Pay) |
| 1. | Driver-HMV (Contractual) | 8 (Eight) Nos. | Grade -IV | Rs. 9,277/- (per month) |
| 2. | Driver-LMV (Contractual) | 10 (Ten) Nos. | Grade -IV | Rs. 9,277/- (per month) |
| Total Post | | 18(Eighteen) Nos. | | |

General Terms & Conditions:

- The minimum Age limit for the post of Driver is 18(Eighteen) years and the maximum is 38 (Thirty Eight) years for General Candidates as on 01/07/2025.The age retention for Reserve Categories (ST/SC/OBC) candidates will be as per the existing Govt. rule.
- Self Attested copy of all testimonials including Birth Certificate, Caste Certificate, current Driving License and 2 (Two) Copies of recent passport size photograph has to be submitted along with Standard form duly filled in application.
- Application may be submitted by addressing to the "Office of the Executive Engineer (M), KAAC, Transport Deptt. Diphu" either self or through postal. The department will not receive any application beyond the specified date. Postal delay will not be entertained by the Department under any circumstance.
- All applications in the Standard Form must be filled properly and the completed application shall have to be submitted with all requisite documents, incomplete and late received application will be rejected without assigning any reason thereof.
- No TA/DA will be provided by the Department.
- Candidates canvassing directly or indirectly will be liable for disqualification.
- The competent authority reserves the rights to reject or accept any or all without assigning any reason thereof and without any intimation to the candidate.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer (M)
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
Diphu.

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR OF SERICULTURE, DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG

No. Addl. DSDE.213/2013-2014/56-(A),

Dated Diphu the 10/07/2025.

ADVERTISEMENT

In pursuance of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu approval vide letter No. KAAC/Ecstt-550/P(B)/Serl/2023-24/30, dtd.22/05/2025, KAAC/Ecstt-550/P(B)/Serl/2023-24/41, dtd. 18/06/2025 and KAAC/Serl-410/Esst/2025-26/11, Dtd. 08/07/2025 applications in prescribed Standard Forms with all testimonials and KAAC Cash Receipt of Rs. 10/- in case of ST/SC and Rs.20/- for General Category are invited from intending eligible candidates who are citizen of India as defined in the Article 5 & 8 of Constitution of India for filling up of the following vacant sanctioned Grade-III & Grade-IV posts under Sericulture Department, Karbi Anglong & West Karbi Anglong districts and application will be received during the Office hours on or before 31st July,2025 upto 05:00 PM in the office of the undersigned. The date of written test/Viva-voce/Interview will be announced in due course of time.

| Sl. No. | Name of post lying vacant | Grade of Posts | No. of Posts lying vacant | Scale of Pay |
|---------|----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Sub-Inspector of Statistic | Grade-III | 3 Nos. | PB-2 (14000-70000) GP+8700 |
| 2 | Junior Assistant | Grade-III | 2 Nos. | PB-2 (14000-70000) GP+6200 |
| 3 | Sericulture Demonstrator | Grade-III | 25 Nos. | PB-2 (14000-70000) GP+6200 |
| 4 | Chowkidar | Grade-IV | 3 Nos. | PB-1 (12000-52000) GP+3900 |

Syllabus for Written Test, Computer Test and Viva-Voce

| Sl. No. | Name of Post | Subject | Marks | Total |
|---------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------|-----------|
| 1 | Sub-Inspector of Statistic | General English | 25 Marks | 150 Marks |
| | | General Knowledge | 50 Marks | |
| | | Post related question | 25 Marks | |
| | | Computer Test | 25 Marks | |
| | | Viva-Voce | 25 Marks | |
| 2 | Junior Assistant | General Mathematics | 25 Marks | 150 Marks |
| | | General English | 25 Marks | |
| | | General Knowledge | 50 Marks | |
| | | Computer Test | 25 Marks | |
| | | Viva-Voce | 25 Marks | |
| 3 | Sericulture Demonstrator | Viva-Voce | 50 Marks | 50 Marks |
| 4 | Chowkidar | Viva-Voce | 30 Marks | 30 Marks |

Terms & Conditions:

- The Candidates must be a permanent resident of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council areas comprising of Karbi Anglong & West Karbi Anglong district.
- For the Post of Sub-Inspector of Statistic minimum qualification is Bachelor Degree in Economic/ Statistics/Mathematics from a Govt. recognized Board/Universities.
- For the Post of Junior Assistant minimum qualification is Bachelor Degree in Arts/Science/Commerce from a Govt. recognized Board/Universities with Computer Diploma of at least 12 (Twelve) months with a typing speed of 50 words per minutes (having good knowledge of MS Words, Excel etc).
- For the Post of Sericulture Demonstrator minimum qualification is HSSLC (Science) passed with 01 (One) year Certificate Training Course from Sericulture Training institute, Titabor, Jorhat.
- For the post of Chowkidar minimum qualification is 8th Passed.
- The Selected Candidates will be entitled with New Pension Scheme (NPS) 2005 or as per direction of Govt.
- Age limit is minimum 18 (Eighteen) years and maximum 38 (Thirty Eight) Years for General Candidates as on 01-01-2025. The age relaxation for Reserved Category Candidates will be as per the existing Govt. Rule
- Self attested copy of all testimonials including Birth Certificate, Caste Certificate, Current Employment Exchange Registration Number etc, from local Employment Exchange and 2 (two) copies of recent Passport size photograph has to be submitted along with Standard Form duly filled in.
- The Envelope containing the application should be superscripted as "APPLICATION FOR THE POST OF SUB-INSPECTOR OF STATISTIC/JUNIOR ASSISTANT/SERICULTURE DEMONSTRATOR/CHOWKIDAR" which ever applicable and self addressed envelope with postal stamp of Rs.5/- has to be enclosed along with the application.
- Application may be submitted by self or by post. The Department will not receive any application after the last date of receipt of application. Postal delay will not be entertained by the Department under any circumstances.
- All application in the Standard Form must be filled properly and completely and submit with all requisite documents. Incomplete and late received application will be rejected without assigning any reason thereof.
- The last day of submission of application from is on 25/07/2025 upto 5:00 PM.
- No TA/DA will be provided by the Department.
- Candidates canvassing directly or indirectly will be liable for disqualification.
- Reservation of the posts will be as per prescribed Govt. Rules
- The competent authority reserves all the rights to enhance or reduce the posts and also cancel/postpone the interview at any time without assigning any reason thereof and intimation to the Candidates.

NB: Date of issue of Admit Card will be notified in the Notice Board in the Office of the undersigned.

Sd/-
i/c Additional Director of Sericulture,
Karbi Anglong, Diphu.

Memo No.Addl.DSDE.213/2013-2014/56-(A).

Dated Diphu the 10/07/2025.

BJP celebrates 9 years of Pema Khandu-led government in Arunachal Pradesh

BJP hails 'golden period' of governance under Pema Khandu as party marks 9 years in power in Arunachal Pradesh

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, July 17: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Arunachal Pradesh unit, on Thursday celebrated the completion of nine years of the Pema Khandu-led government in the state at a commemorative programme held at the party's State Headquarters in Itanagar.

Party leaders, MLAs, senior office bearers, and newly appointed chairpersons and vice-chairpersons attended the event, which highlighted the achievements of the government over the past nine years.

According to an official statement, the programme was graced by several prominent leaders, including BJP State Chief Spokesperson and MLA Mutchu Mithi, Chairman of IT & E-Governance Nyamar Karbak, State Vice President Ashok Sangchou, General Secretary Miss Junty Singphoo, and MLA and Advisor to Chief Minister Alo Libang.

Several former MLAs and state office bearers were also present.

Delivering the welcome address, Ashok Sangchou, who also served as the convener of the event, set the tone for the programme by highlighting the party's unity and commitment to governance.



In his address, Nyamar Karbak offered a personal and political narrative of chief minister Pema Khandu's journey, recalling his unopposed election from the Mukto Assembly Constituency in 2011 following the demise of his father.

Describing him as a "visionary leader, devoted son, caring father, and a committed husband," Karbak praised Khandu's leadership as transformative and inspiring

for his colleagues.

Highlighting the government's achievements, chief spokesperson Mutchu Mithi described the leadership of chief minister Pema Khandu and deputy chief minister Chowna Mein as "historic," adding that their combined efforts had brought "unprecedented growth and progress" to the state.

"This golden period of governance has earned the unwavering trust of the people of Arunachal

Pradesh," he said.

Mithi also lauded the Central Government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stating that Arunachal Pradesh had evolved from being viewed merely as a strategic frontier state to a "land of peace and development" under the BJP regime.

He cited the sanctioning of the Arunachal Frontier Highway as a landmark step in boosting connectivity and securing the state's international borders.

The statement further noted that the state's annual budget had grown from ₹9,000 crore in 2014 to ₹39,000 crore in 2025, reflecting the scale of economic and infrastructure development achieved during the BJP's tenure.

Mithi expressed pride in the tireless efforts of the Chief Minister and the sustained support of BJP karyakartas across the state.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Pangku Wangsu, State Secretary and Co-Convener of the event.

The celebration ended on a note of renewed commitment to continue the momentum of progress and public welfare under the leadership of chief minister Pema Khandu and deputy chief minister Chowna Mein, with the support of the BJP and the people of Arunachal Pradesh.

AACWA raises concerns over frontier highway tendering process

HT Correspondent

NAHARLAGUN, July 17: The All Arunachal Contractor's Welfare Association (AACWA), the apex body representing the contractor fraternity of Arunachal Pradesh, has raised strong objections over the tendering process adopted for road construction under the Frontier Highway project, alleging that it severely restricts the participation of local contractors.

In an official statement issued on Thursday, the AACWA welcomed the large-scale development in the state's road infrastructure, particularly under the Frontier Highway initiative, but questioned the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) over what it termed a "questionable" tendering procedure.

The association alleged that the tendering process has been pre-designed in a way that excludes local registered contractors from Arunachal Pradesh and the North-east region by setting the estimated cost of individual packages at such high values that no local contractor can qualify on their own.

Despite repeated representations from the AACWA requesting that the highway works be split into smaller packages to enable greater participation of local contractors, the appeals have reportedly gone unheeded.

The AACWA further pointed out that many central infrastructure projects under MoRTH and the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) are eventually executed by local contractors as sub-contractors, even though they are not allowed to participate as primary bidders.

"This defeats the very spirit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's slogan 'Vocal for Local,'" the association stated.

It added that participation of local firms in tenders for central flagship schemes has become increasingly difficult as these programmes are largely controlled by central departments and public sector undertakings from outside the region.

Calling the situation "deeply concerning," the AACWA urged the Arunachal Pradesh government to intervene and take up the matter with MoRTH.

The association demanded that the current tenders be scrapped and the work packages restructured into smaller components, thereby creating a level playing field for local contractors.

In addition to the tendering concerns, the AACWA also highlighted the financial difficulties being faced by contractors due to delayed payments.

It urged the state government to immediately release pending funds for ongoing works sanctioned under various heads, including the Budget Estimates (BE), Revised Estimates (RE), State Annual Status of Critical Infrastructure (SASCI), Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF), MGNREGA, and other centrally sponsored schemes.

"The delay in fund disbursement is causing severe financial stress to contractors and is hampering timely completion of development projects," the AACWA stated.

The association reiterated its commitment to contribute to the state's infrastructure development but appealed for a fair and enabling environment where local expertise is not sidelined.

AOA convenes key meetings, approves reforms and plans for sports advancement



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, July 17: The Arunachal Olympic Association (AOA) on Thursday convened its 14th Executive Committee Meeting followed by a Special General Body Meeting at the Dorjee Khandu Convention Centre here, taking several important decisions aimed at strengthening the sports ecosystem in the state.

According to an official statement, the Special General Body Meeting ratified decisions taken by the Executive Committee, including a unanimous resolution to revive the Arunachal State Games as an annual event.

A fixed calendar date for the event is to be decided shortly.

The house also confirmed Arunachal Pradesh's participation

in the 4th North East Games, proposed to be held in Agartala, Tripura, from October 26 to November 2 this year.

A four-member committee was constituted to examine and submit an action plan focusing on Olympic Games-qualified sports disciplines affiliated with AOA.

In a major structural decision, the AOA de-affiliated 22 state sports associations citing consistent underperformance despite repeated notifications.

An ad-hoc committee will be constituted for the Arunachal Athletics Association to ensure continuity and reform.

Amendments to the AOA's Memorandum and Rules & Regulations, as submitted by a three-

member expert committee, were also unanimously approved.

The expenditure statements related to the 38th National Games, the 3rd North East Games, and the 4th Arunachal State Games were approved by the house after being tabled by the AOA Treasurer.

The meeting underscored the importance of synergy between the state government and sports bodies in realising the goals of the Olympic Mission launched by Chief Minister Pema Khandu.

"The AOA is committed to promoting sports development in Arunachal Pradesh and identifying talented athletes to represent the state at national and international levels," AOA General Secretary Bamang Tago stated.

Arunachal urges central government to increase flights to state



ITANAGAR, July 17: The Arunachal Pradesh government has urged the Centre to fulfil its assurance regarding the expansion of air connectivity in the state.

Civil Aviation Minister Balo Raja has made the request ahead of the upcoming inauguration of the new terminal building of Donyi Polo Airport here.

In a letter to Union Civil Aviation Minister Rammoan Naidu Kinjarapu recently, Raja reminded him of the commitment made during a meeting held in New Delhi on March and May this year.

"You had kindly assured us of introducing new flight services to additional southern cities, and

also of commencing daily services between Itanagar and Delhi in parallel with the inauguration of the airport's new terminal building," Raja pointed out in his letter, a copy of which was made available to the media on Thursday.

He said that buoyed by the positive assurance, the state government had shared the development with the public through the local media, raising expectations among the citizens.

Raja noted that the new terminal building at the Donyi Polo Airport (Hollongi) is nearing completion and is expected to be inaugurated in the first week of August next. He urged the civil aviation ministry to act on the ear-

lier commitments in the larger public interest.

"The people of this easternmost state of India had long dreamt of robust air connectivity, and it finally began to materialise with the inauguration of Donyi Polo Airport by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 19, 2022," he disclosed.

He also informed the union minister that Arunachal Pradesh is set to host the 3rd North-East Aviation Summit at Itanagar on September 5 this year, as was also discussed during their earlier meeting.

Raja sought continued cooperation and guidance from the Ministry in strengthening the aviation sector in the state. (PTI)

Arunachal town wins 'Swachh Survekshan' award

ITANAGAR, July 17: Jairampur town in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district has been declared a 'Promising Swachh Shehar' in the government's annual cleanliness survey, an official said on Thursday.

The 'Swachh Survekshan' awards were presented by Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal during a ceremony in New Delhi in the presence of President Droupadi Murmu and other dignitaries.

State Urban Affairs Minister Balo Raja and Urban Affairs Commissioner Vivek Pandey received the award on behalf of the state, an official release said here.

The recognition is a testament to the relentless work of Jairampur's urban local body, sanitation workers, and the active participation of residents, it said.

It also marks a proud moment for the state's urban development efforts under the Swachh Bharat Mission - Urban (SBM-U), the release said.

Ahmedabad was named the cleanest big city, followed by Bhopal and Lucknow in the survey, even as Indore, Surat, Navi Mumbai and Vijayawada were elevated to a newly formed 'Super Swachh League Cities' category for demonstrating exceptional performance in sanitation.

Following the awards ceremony, a meeting of urban development ministers was held in the national capital where Raja urged the Centre to revise funding policies for hilly and northeastern states.

He recommended lowering the population eligibility criteria to 5,000 for small towns and district headquarters, citing the exclusion of many deserving areas under current per capita-based models like SBM-U and AMRUT, it said. (PTI)

Woman arrested with heroin



ITANAGAR, July 17: A 26-year-old woman was on Thursday arrested at Hapoli in Arunachal Pradesh's Lower Subansiri district for alleged involvement in drug peddling, police said.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team raided a rented house near Pai Gate and recovered contraband substances weighing 61 gram, suspected to be heroin, from her possession, they said.

The accused woman was jailed for three months last year after being caught with 10 gram of heroin. She was out on bail at the time of her arrest, a police officer said.

Further investigation is underway. (PTI)

Arunachal's hydro firm earns carbon credits for power project

ITANAGAR, July 17: The Hydro Power Development Corporation of Arunachal Pradesh Limited (HPDCAPL) has achieved a major breakthrough in India's green energy sector with the successful verification and issuance of carbon credits for its 3 MW small hydro power project at Zemithang in Tawang district, officials said on Thursday.

The Universal Carbon Registry (UCR), in coordination with project partner Creduce Technologies Pvt Ltd., confirmed the carbon credit validation for the financial year 2022-23, an official statement informed here on Thursday.

The development marks HPDCAPL as a pioneer from the Northeast in the voluntary carbon credit market, it said.

As of mid-2023, the project has earned 16,326 tonnes of carbon credits, with a target to reach 97,783 tonnes by 2028.

The project, featuring two 1.5 MW pelton turbine generators, is the only commissioned venture under HPDCAPL and is crucial to the corporation's financial and operational sustainability.

HPDCAPL's carbon credit journey began with a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed on December 13, 2021, with Ahmed-

abad-based Creduce Technologies, one of India's largest renewable energy and carbon credit advisory firms.

This agreement marked the state's formal entry into carbon monetisation, making HPDCAPL the first entity in Arunachal to tap into the carbon economy, it added.

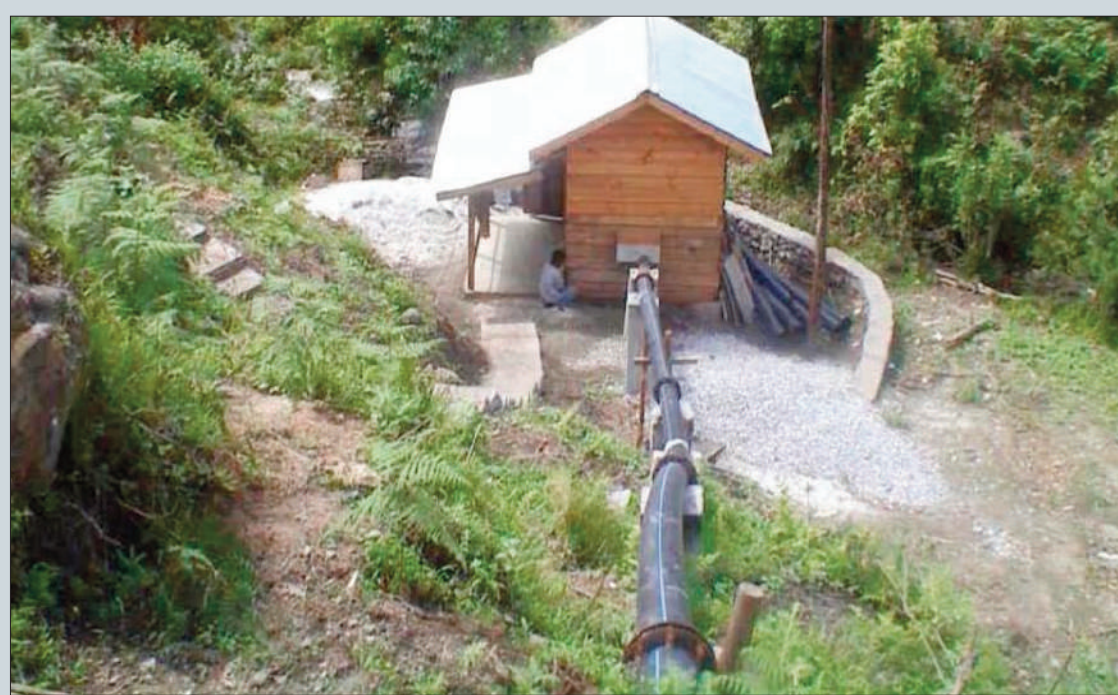
The initiative directly supports India's national commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2070, it said.

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu had earlier lauded the corporation's efforts in a social media post.

"Contributing to the vision of Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi Ji of achieving zero carbon emission by 2070, Hydro Power Development Corporation of Arunachal Pradesh Ltd successfully capitalised its project, Sumbachu SHP & gained 6500+ Carbon Credits. Congratulations team for this feat".

Further strengthening its role in climate action, HPDCAPL had organised a sensitisation programme on carbon neutrality on March 25.

Under the leadership of CMD Toko Onuj, HPDCAPL is now emerging as a leader in carbon credit trading and green energy innovation in the region. (PTI)



Mamata accuses Centre of targeting Bengalis



KOLKATA, July 17: Escalating her attack on the Centre, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday accused the BJP-led Union government of systematically targeting Bengali-speaking citizens by branding them as “Bangladeshi” or “Rohingya” and conspiring to strike off lakhs of names from Bengal’s voters’ list.

A day after taking on the Centre from a Trinamool Congress platform here, Banerjee escalated her offensive from a government event for the first time, alleging that a “notification” had been issued threatening deportation for merely speaking Bengali.

“They have issued a notification saying to deport anyone who speaks Bengali. Why? Don’t they know Bengali is the second-most spoken language in Asia and fifth in the world?” the Chief Minister asked while inaugurating state projects, including low-cost housing schemes, at the event at Newtown. Her remarks follow a similar outburst from the TMC stage a day earlier, when Banerjee had launched a scathing attack on the Centre for allegedly weaponising linguistic identity to further its political goals.

Without naming any agency or citing the notification’s source, the TMC supremo challenged the BJP to back up its “wild claims” about the presence of 17 lakh Rohingyas in the country. “Where are these Rohingyas? Give us the addresses. Rohingya is a tribe from Myanmar. Since when did they start speaking Bengali? Those who say these things don’t even know what they are talking about,” Banerjee said.

She added that “skilled Bengali workers” are being targeted in BJP-ruled states like Maharashtra, Assam and Odisha. “People who speak in Bengali are being labelled as Bangladeshis or Rohingyas. Why? Because of their accent? Those who came here in 1971, before or during the war, are Indian citizens. Many were born before Partition. Are they not Indians? There are different dialects in Bengali, which is a characteristic of the language. But that does not mean they are Bangladeshi,” she asserted. Banerjee recalled the 1971 agreement between former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Bangladesh’s founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, which, she said, granted Indian citizenship to refugees from the 1971 Liberation War.

Reiterating that India has offered shelter to certain individuals for “geopolitical” reasons, Banerjee, in a veiled reference to former Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina, currently in India, remarked, “Our country has kept some people as guests. Haven’t I supported that? Because there are political reasons. India has its own reasons. So why are you branding someone as Bangladeshi just for speaking Bengali?”

Warning the BJP of political consequences, Banerjee slammed the alleged attempts to strike off 17 lakh names from Bengal’s voters’ list, terming it a calculated attempt to deprive genuine citizens of their democratic rights. “Who are you to say they won’t vote? Any Indian citizen has the right to vote. It doesn’t matter what caste or religion they belong to,” she said. She also highlighted that around 1.5 crore migrant workers from other parts of the country are currently working in West Bengal. “I am happy about that. They are part of Bengal’s mosaic - celebrating Durga Puja, Eid, Chhat, Guru Nanak’s Birthday, and Christmas together. We never brand anyone here. But the workers we send are skilled, and still they face atrocities elsewhere,” Banerjee said. Slamming the BJP’s governance model, Banerjee said, “If your mind is a desert, you can’t run a state. You need to breathe freely under the open sky. Politicians run the government. If they are not politically sound, they can never be good administrators. (PTI)

Nitish announces 125 units of free power to all households ahead of Bihar assembly polls

PATNA, July 17: In a major populist move ahead of the upcoming assembly polls, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday announced free power up to 125 units to all domestic consumers in the state.

Kumar came up with the announcement on social media, stating that the benefit will reach 1.67 crore households. He also said the free power benefit will be effective from August 1.

“This means that no charges will be levied for 125 units in the bills for July itself,” said Kumar, who also claimed “we have already been providing cheap electricity to all consumers”.

Notably, the longest-serving CM of the state has for long been a votary of “one nation, one tariff”, claiming that under the present circumstances, Bihar was getting electricity from the grid at a high rate.

Kumar’s latest move comes in the backdrop of the promise of “200 units of free electricity” by his rival and former deputy Tejashwi Yadav, whose RJD helms the opposition INDIA bloc in the state.

In his social media post, the JD(U) supremo also made a strong pitch for promoting solar power in Bihar, stating that an estimated 10,000 MW will be produced in the state through the alternative source of energy in the next three years.

He spoke of ‘Kutir Jyoti Yojana’, a fully state-funded scheme, which entails the installation of solar panels at public places as well as the rooftops of poor people’s houses with their consent.

Later, addressing a press conference, Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary said the relief to power consumers is a part of the ‘Mukhyamantri Upphokta Sahayata Yojana’ scheme.

“The state government will be providing a 100 per cent subsidy

to all consumers for 125 units of power. So far, the government has been bearing an annual expenditure of about ₹ 16,000 crore towards power subsidy. The new scheme would raise the subsidy amount to more than ₹ 19,000 crore,” said the senior BJP leader, who also holds the finance portfolio in the state cabinet. The number of power consumers in the state is 1.82 crore lakh, he said.

“Among these households, an estimated 1.67 crore are known to consume less than 125 units. They will enjoy a golden time (swamin kaal) as a result of the Chief Minister’s announcement,” Choudhary said.

He also said that the state intends to achieve the target of “10,000 MW of solar power in the next three years”, making use of the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Yojana run by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

“Under the scheme, the Centre is giving a 50 per cent grant. The Bihar government will also extend an incentive to those who get a one KW solar unit installed on their rooftops. Such people will get free power for the next 25 years”, added the deputy CM. Asked about the NDA government’s earlier stand of “no freebies”, the BJP leader said, “We are not using the word free (muft). It is a 100 per cent subsidy”. He also scoffed at Tejashwi Yadav’s claim that the Nitish Kumar government was a “copycat” and all schemes rolled out in the recent past were based on promises made by the INDIA bloc.

“Do not ask me to comment on the brat (bachwa)”, said Choudhary, adding “elections have not been even announced. What do we do if the opposition is in a tearing hurry to come up with a manifesto? The government is doing its job, as it has always done”. (PTI)

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, SILVICULTURE DIVISION, HILLS, DIPHU.

RE-TENDER NOTICE

Sealed Tender/ Quotation affixing Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Challan receipt/ Court fee amounting Rs. 10/- (Rupees ten) only are invited from registered Govt. contractors for the following works vide Administrative Approval letter No. KAAC/F/AAP/Pt-1/2018-25/4860, Dated 23 May/2025 will be received by the office of the undersigned up to 3:00 P.M. on 31st July/2025 and will be opened in the same day. If the office remain closed due to any reason on that day, the tender will be received and opened on the next day up to 3:00 P.M. (I.S.T). The tenderer of their authorized agents/representatives may be present at the time of opening tender.

| Sl. No. | Name of Schemes/Works | Tender Amount (Rs. in lakhs) | Time for Completion | Remarks |
|---------|--|--|---------------------------------|---------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | Construction of New Assam Type Division Office at 7 th K.M. Sub centre, Diphu, Lunding Road. | Rs. 20,00,000/- | 6 months | |
| 2 | Construction of Ring Well at Theso Ajur Nursery centre. | Rs. 3,00,000/- | 3 months | |
| 3 | Construction of Forest Road, earth filling cambering, drain making of forest road leading to Dhansiri nursery centre with 2 nos, culvert fitting 1.5 K.M. length. | Rs. 7,00,000/- | 2 months | |
| 4 | Annual repairing of Division staff quarters, boundary wall. (i) Forester Qtr No. IV (ii) Forest Guard Qtr No. VII (iii) Grade-IV Qtr No. I (iv) Brick wall boundary repairing D.F.O. Building Campus and Division Office Campus at damaged site. | Rs. 2,00,000/- Rs. 2,00,000/- Rs. 2,00,000/- Rs. 3,50,000/- | 45 days -do- -do- -do- | |

The following documents required to be submitted along with tender papers.

- 2% Earnest Money in case of General and 1% in case of ST/SC over the value of work in the form of call deposit from any recognized bank in favour of DFO, Silviculture Division, Hills, Diphu.
- Up to Date GST documents/clearance certificate from. Competent authority.
- Up to Date Income Tax clearance from competent authority.
- Up to Date Professional Tax Clearance from the authority of KAAC, Diphu.
- Up to Date Trading License If Non-Tribal.
- Up to Date Registration certificate from contractor of PWD or others Department.
- Work Experience/ Financial capacity from Department Authority concerned.
- Xerox copy of PAN Card/Addhar Card.
- Xerox copy of front page of Bank pass Book where Account No. Bank Name, IFSC Code No. and address are recorded.
- The Tenderer must furnished financial soundness certificate equivalent to offered amount issued by any Nationalized Bank in India.

TERMS AND CONDITION:

- Rate of bid should be quoted clearly and distinctly both in figure and works against each Scheme/Group of work of flat percentage basis above/below as per APWD Scheme rate 2013-14.
- No construction materials will be supplied by the department.
- Successful bidder will have to sign a deed of agreement under APWD form-2.
- The undersigned has right to accept or reject any or all tenders without reasons thereof.
- Earnest Money will be returned to successful tendered after completion of works and in respect of un-successful tender Earnest Money will be returned after allotment of works.
- Tender paper will be provided on payment of Rs. 200/- (Rupees two hundred) only.
- The Department will not bound to accept the highest tender rate and reserved right to reject all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
- Tender should be submitted in separate form and envelope where in the name of works and group No. written clearly.
- For any intervention like clearing of jungle, protection of lake etc. will have to be done after prior discussion and permission from in-charge of concerning Range jurisdiction.

N.B.:- No Tender will be accepted failing to furnish the above documents.

Sd/-
Divisional Forest officer,
Silviculture Division, Hills, Diphu,

Memo No. B/SLH/Tender/7(2)/2025-26/197-213

Dated 15/07/2025.

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL DEPARTMENT OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, (S.E.) WORKS, KAAC SECRETARIAT DIPHU-782460

No. KAAC/S.E.-W-970/2025-26/ 204(A)

Dtd. 25/06/2025

SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender affixing non refundable KAAC court fee stamp (receipt) Rs. 10.00 (Rupees Ten) only eventually to be drawn up in form are hereby invited from KAAC registered contractor/reputed firms of works department and will be received by the undersigned up to 4 P.M. on 18/07/2025 and will be opened on the same date, place and the hours in presence of the tenderer or their authorized agent if any. If the day of the opening of tender happens to be a holiday/non-working days, the tender will be opened in the next day. The undersigned has the right to accept, reject any tender without any assigning reason thereof and will not be bound to accept the lowest tender quoted rate

| Sl. No. | Name of Work | Tender Amount (Rs.) | A/A Amount (Rs.) | Earnest Money | Time allowed for completion |
|---------|---|---------------------|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Installation of Fire Prevention and Safety Measures at Multi Purpose Sports Complex (Sarsing Teron Langlounge Habe) | Rs. 84,56,600.00 | Rs.84,56,600.00 | ST/SC/OBC=1% General=2% | 60 days |

Terms & Condition

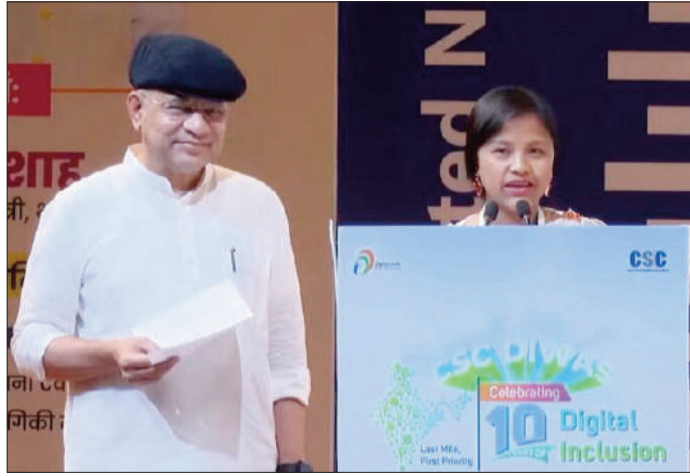
N.B

- The rate to be quoted as % (Percent) above/below/as per schedule rate for building/sanitary works for all division under CPWD-2020-21.
- Earnest money should be deposited in favour of the undersigned in the form of call deposit bank draft & should be attached with the tender without which no tender will be accepted.
- The Contractor shall repair/re-Construction if the works executed failed due inferior quality of works, The KAAC Authority will take legal action if the contractor refuse to repair re-construction the works.
- The work must be carried on as directed by the E.E (W), KAAC Diphu Authority.
- The following up to date documents should be enclosed with the tender.
 - Professional Tax Clearance Certificate.
 - Sale Tax Clearance Certificate/GST
 - Council Registration.
 - Call Deposit
 - Council receipt
 - Caste Certificate
 - Pan Card/Aadhaar Card
 - Account number
 - Payment will be made subject to availabilities of fund
 - The undersigned is not bound to accept the lowest quoted rate.

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer, (Works)
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
DIPHU

Ministry announces new initiatives under the next phase of Digital India Vaishnaw lauds Meghalaya village-level entrepreneur for leading grassroots digital empowerment

SHILLONG, July 17: Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw lauded Rose Angelina M Kharsyntiew, a village-level entrepreneur (VLE) from Meghalaya, for her role in driving digital empowerment at the grassroots level, an official statement said.
Rose's efforts were hailed by the Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology during an event marking 10 years of 'Digital India' in Delhi on Thursday.
"Amidst the scenic hills and remote villages of Eastern West Khasi Hills in Meghalaya, woman VLE Rose Angelina M Kharsyntiew has scripted a digital revolution," the minister said.
"Through her centre in Mairang area, she is not only delivering services but also setting an example of transformation, empowerment, and community service," he added.
The event was attended by Vaishnaw and Union Minister of State Jitin Prasad.



It highlighted the contributions of common services centres (CSCs) and their pivotal role in bridging the digital divide across India.
From starting out as a job-seeker in 2015, Rose grew into a job-provider and a respected community leader. Operating from Mairang under the name 'Rose CSC', she delivers crucial digital services including government schemes, banking, insurance, telemedicine, and education, the statement said.
She also launched the 'Stree Swabhiman initiative' - a sanitary pad manufacturing unit that pro-

motes women's health and creates rural employment. Her efforts stand as a testament to how digital inclusion can transform rural lives, it said.
Over the past decade, the number of CSCs has increased from 83,000 to more than 5.5 lakh across India. According to the IT Ministry, the CSCs have now reached nearly 90 per cent of the country's villages.
More than 74,000 of these centres are operated by women VLEs such as Rose, who are playing a key role in digital service delivery, it added. The ministry also announced new initiatives under the next phase of Digital India. These include free Artificial Intelligence (AI) training for 10 lakh individuals.
Expanded services for VLEs are also part of the plan to deepen digital inclusion. Changemakers like Rose Angelina are expected to lead this next phase from the grassroots, it added. (PTI)

Nearly 3,000 Myanmar refugees return to their villages from Mizoram

AIZAWL, July 17: Nearly 3,000 refugees from Myanmar, who recently crossed the international border and took shelter in India, have returned to their villages in the neighbouring country, a senior police officer said on Thursday.
"More than 4,500 refugees from the neighbouring country had entered Mizoram and taken shelter in the border villages of Zokhawthar, Saikhumpai, and Vaiphai in Champhai district, following an armed conflict between Chin rebel groups — the Chin National Defence Force (CNDP) and Chinland Defence Force (CDF-Hualgoram) — backed by the Chin National Army (CNA)," officials said.
The refugees belonged to nearby border villages in Myanmar's Chin state.
A senior police officer told PTI that a total of 2,923 Myanmar refugees who had taken shelter at Zokhawthar village, and 39 others at Vaphai, have returned to their country as of Wednesday.
He noted that the return of the refugees began on July 7 and gained momentum on July 12, following a ceasefire agreement between the warring Chin factions.
The situation along the Indo-Myanmar border is calm now, the officer said, expressing hope that a few more refugees may return in the coming days.
Mizoram shares a 510 km-long porous border with Myanmar.
The CNDP and CDF, the two pro-democratic forces fighting against the Myanmar military junta, had engaged in fighting in early July for control of areas, forcing more than 3,000 refugees to flee to Zokhawthar.
Subsequently, retaliatory attacks by the CNA, the largest Chin rebel group, on a CNDP camp at Rihli village in Chin state, triggered an additional influx of more than 700 refugees to Saikhumpai and Vaiphai.
Mizoram has already given shelter to more than 32,000 Myanmar refugees, who had fled their country following a military coup in February 2021.
The state government is planning to collect biometric and demographic details of Myanmar refugees in July-end for identification purposes.
The Myanmar refugees are mostly from the Chin community, who share ethnic ties with the Mizos. (PTI)

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Top Army officers brief Manipur Gov on prevailing situation in state

IMPHAL, July 17: Top Army officers led by General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C), Eastern Command, Lieutenant General Ram Chander Tiwari on Thursday briefed Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on the prevailing security situation in the state, a Raj Bhanu statement said.
During the meeting at Raj Bhanu, the team of Army officers, which also included GOC Spenar Corps, Lt Gen Abhijit S Pendharkar, and IGAR South, Maj Gen Ravroop Singh, also briefed Bhalla on the overall security scenario across the Northeast.
During the meeting, the GOC-in-C further briefed the governor on the preparedness and arrangements for the upcoming 134th edition of the Durand Cup 2025, which will be held in Imphal from July 30 to August 12. (PTI)

Militant arrested in Manipur, arms recovered in separate operation

IMPHAL, July 17: Security forces arrested a juvenile cadre of a banned outfit from Manipur's Thoubal district and recovered seven firearms in a separate operation in Jiribam, police said on Thursday.
The cadre of the proscribed Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) was apprehended from Khongjom Papal area on Wednesday for allegedly being involved in extortion activities and recruitment of members in the outfit, a senior officer said.
The arrested cadre of the militant organisation was active in Thoubal and Bishnupur districts, he said.
He has been treated in accordance with the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act, the police said.

"The militant outfit PLA had carried out several attacks on central security forces in the past.
In another operation, security forces recovered seven firearms, including an SLR with magazine, ammunition, two bullet-proof jackets and other items from a place between Leingangpokpi village in Jiribam and Tatbung in Tamenglong district on Wednesday," the officer said.
The police said security forces are conducting search operations and area domination exercises in the fringe and vulnerable areas across districts.
More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. (PTI)

Task Force set up to resolve complaints over smart meters in Tripura

AGARTALA, July 17: The Tripura State Electricity Corporation Ltd (TSECL) has constituted a four-member task force for speedy disposal of complaints on smart meters, a minister said. The development comes in the wake of statewide protests by the opposition CPI (M) and the Congress over the installation of smart meters.
"Discontent is seen among a section of people over the installation of smart meters. Following my instruction, the TSECL has constituted a four-member task force to solve the issues related to smart meters," Tripura Power Minister Ratan Lal Nath said in a video post on Wednesday night.



If any consumer has any issue, he or she can lodge a complaint through two WhatsApp groups floated by the state power utility, he said.
The task force was asked to act promptly once it receives any complaint in the matter, the minister said.
Claiming that the smart meters are a 'reliable and trusted measuring machine', the minister also mentioned that action has been taken against a meter reader and meter reading agency for alleged average billing of a consumer in Khowai district's Lalcheera.
Nath said a probe carried out by the TSECL found that the consumer had forged an understanding with the meter reader to ensure average energy bills, spanning over three years.
"Once a smart meter was installed in his house last month, the meter showed a bill amounting to over ₹ 82,000, raising alarm among the consumers. The TSECL has already suspended the meter reader for adopting unethical means, and a show cause notice was served to the meter agency for the breach of trust leading to revenue loss," the minister said.
He made it clear that neither the government nor the TSECL has any intention to trouble the consumers.
Recently, the TSECL has announced plans to install 6 lakh smart meters across the state, to which the CPI(M) and Congress have strongly objected.
Leader of opposition in the assembly, Jitendra Chaudhury, on Tuesday strongly opposed the move to install smart meters, alleging that energy bills have increased substantially after the introduction of the new machines.
The Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) also staged a protest in front of TSECL headquarters, demanding a rollback of the tariff hike and the smart meter plan. (PTI)

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Miss Universe Nagaland Kelülü Dawhuo set for Miss Universe India contest

KOHIMA, July 17: Reigning Miss Universe Nagaland 2025, Kelülü Dawhuo, is all set to represent the state at the national finals of Miss Universe India 2025, to be held at the National Stadium in Indore in Madhya Pradesh.



Speaking to reporters on Wednesday ahead of her departure, Kelülü highlighted the resilience of Naga women, stating, "Even after facing hardships, we have the strength to rise again and continue with life."
Kelülü, who is from the Chakhesang Naga tribe, will be donning a traditional costume titled 'Goddess of Folk Song', inspired by a legendary personality from her community.
She emphasised her commitment to showcasing the strength, diversity, and cultural richness of Nagaland on the national platform.

A BA second-year student, Kelülü acknowledged the challenge of balancing academics with pageantry. However, with family support and guidance from mentors, she said she is confident in managing both responsibilities effectively.
Following in the footsteps of Ruofuozhano Whiso, who brought home the fourth runner-up crown last year, Kelülü admitted the pressure but remained determined.
"I am not here to outshine anyone but to shine in my own light and bring laurels to our state," she said.
She encouraged women to follow their dreams and announced her continued advocacy for girl child education, which she plans to pursue more actively post-competition. (PTI)

Tripura BJP holds meeting to chalk out district council poll strategy



AGARTALA, July 17: In preparation for the upcoming Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday convened a Chintan Baithak to discuss developmental strategies for the Janajati communities and to formulate a roadmap for the polls scheduled next year.
The meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Manik Saha, was attended by BJP State President Rajib Bhatnagar, Tribal Welfare Minister Bikas Debbarma, former MP Rebatu Tripura, tribal MLAs, MDCs, and other key tribal leaders of the party.
Speaking to the media after the meeting, Saha described the Chintan Baithak as a vital step towards strengthening the party and aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for tribal development.
"We follow the guidance of the central leadership. This Chintan Baithak was organised to reflect on PM Modi's initiatives for the Janajati communities and evaluate what the state government has achieved so far. With the TTAADC elections approaching, it is important to frame our message and outreach strategy effectively," said Saha.
He added that the BJP regularly holds such sessions with tribal leaders to improve coordination and effectiveness on the ground.
"The objective is to decide how we move forward, what directions to take, and how to reinforce our organisation. BJP is the world's largest political party and is committed to inclusive development, especially for the backward communities, as envisioned by Prime Minister Modi," he added.

Villagers ask minister to include area near Kupli Dam in Meghalaya's tourism map

JOWAI (MEGHALAYA), July 17: People residing near the Kupli Dam area in West Jaintia Hills have urged Meghalaya Tourism Minister Paul Lyngdoh to include their village in the state's official tourism map, citing vast untapped potential for job creation and eco-tourism development.
The appeal was made during the minister's visit to the Kupli Orchid Resort at Priang village earlier this week, as part of his inspection of state-run tourism infrastructure.
Lyngdoh was accompanied by local MLA Nujorki Sungho, Tourism Director Brenda L Pakyntein, and other departmental officials.
During the visit, Lyngdoh also took a boat ride on Wah Kupli to assess the tourism potential of the area and interacted with local residents.
A delegation of the Synjuk Ki Waheh Shnong looski Saphai circle submitted a memorandum urging the government to declare 13 villages under the Chutwaku Saphai corridor as dedicated tourism zones. They also called for the mapping and inclusion of these villages under the Tourism department's jurisdiction to enable residents to access government schemes, training programmes, and financial assistance.
The memorandum further proposed a dedicated initiative for the cleaning and rejuvenation of the Kupli River to promote eco-tourism.
It also recommended the development of sustainable water sports and other eco-friendly tourism activities along the river.
The villagers highlighted that the Kupli Dam reservoir, with its calm waters and scenic surroundings, holds immense potential to host various water sports activities such as kayaking, canoeing, paddle boating, and angling tournaments. (PTI)

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FSSAI shuts down popular Meghalaya bakery for using newspapers to wrap bread, cakes

SHILLONG, July 17: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has shut down the popular bakery RB Store here for allegedly using newspapers to wrap its items like bread and cakes, in violation of norms, officials said here on Wednesday.
The RB Store outlet is in Police Bazaar area in the state capital. The family-owned bakery has been functioning since 1950.
In a sweeping crackdown to ensure public food safety, four other eateries were also ordered to close, including Arun Hotel, Maa Kali Hotel, and two fast food outlets.
Officials said the action was taken following inspections that revealed gross violations of hygiene and food safety regulations.
"These establishments were found to be compromising public health by flouting basic standards. Using newspaper for baking is strictly prohibited as it contains harmful chemicals that can seep into food," an FSSAI official said. The FSSAI has intensified its drive across the state in recent months, clamping down on shops and eateries found violating safety norms.
Several outlets have faced fines, warnings, or closures as part of the regulatory body's efforts to ensure food safety and public health. Under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, violators can face penalties ranging from fines of up to ₹ 5 lakh to imprisonment in cases involving unsafe or adulterated food. (PTI)

NOTIFICATION

DoHUA EcF No. 393727 / 165 - In exercise of the powers conferred by the Sub-Section (2) and (3) of Section 10 of the Assam Town and Country Planning Act, 1959 (as amended) read with Rule 6 of the Assam Town & Country Planning (Publication of Master Plan and Zoning Regulation) Rules, 1962, the Governor of Assam is pleased to publish the following notice regarding the publication of the Final Master Plan for Hojai.

- Notice for publication of the Final Master Plan for Hojai**
- It is notified that the Final Master Plan for Hojai is prepared by the Directorate of Town & Country Planning, Government of Assam and adopted by the State Government under sub section (2) and (3) of Section 10 of the Assam Town & Country Planning Act, 1959 (as amended) read with Section 6 of the Assam Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Rule, 1962 for the area described in the schedule below, is hereby published.
 - The Final Master Plan for Hojai with all relevant papers and maps may be inspected free of cost during the office hours at the office of Director, Town & Country Planning, Dispur, Guwahati-6, the Deputy Director, Town & Country Planning, Dist Office -Nagaon, the Circle Office , Hojai & Lanka Revenue, office of the Chairman, Hojai Municipal Board, Hojai. Copies of the Final Master Plan for Hojai are available at the office of the Deputy Director, Town & Country Planning, Dist Office - Nagaon for sale on payment.

SCHEDULE

A. Situation and area:

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| District | : Hojai |
| Subdivision | : Hojai. |
| State | : Assam. |
| Master Plan Area | : 75.66 Sq. Km. |
| Municipal Board Area | : 4.66 Sq.Km. |

Apart from the Hojai Municipal Board Area, Hojai Master Plan area covers 28 (Twenty eight) nos. of nearby villages. The villages included in the Final Master Plan for Hojai with Mouza/ Revenue Circle etc. are as follows: -

| Sl. No. | Villages | Revenue Circle | Mouza | Panchayat | C. D. Block |
|---------|---------------------|----------------|-----------|---------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Amtoia | Hojai | Hojai | Milik Basti | Dhal Pukhuri |
| 2 | Milik Basti | Hojai | Hojai | Milik Basti | Dhal Pukhuri |
| 3 | Hira Basti | Hojai | Hojai | Dimarupar | Jugjiaan |
| 4 | Bhokhao Basti | Hojai | Hojai | Dimarupar | Jugjiaan |
| 5 | Dakshin Bidyannagr | Hojai | Hojai | Singbasti | Dhal Pukhuri |
| 6 | Dangki Gaon | Hojai | Hojai | Gopal Nagar | Jugjiaan |
| 7 | Dhanubar Basti | Hojai | Hojai | Pub Dhaniram Pathar | Jugjiaan |
| 8 | Dimarupar | Hojai | Hojai | Dimarupar | Jugjiaan |
| 9 | Fakira Basti | Hojai | Hojai | Pub-Dhaniram Pathar | Jugjiaan |
| 10 | Golaghativa Basti | Hojai | Hojai | Golaghativa Basti | Jugjiaan |
| 11 | Islam Pur | Hojai | Hojai | Islam Nagar | Jugjiaan |
| 12 | Teli Basti | Hojai | Hojai | Pub-Dhaniram Pathar | Jugjiaan |
| 13 | Pub Nandalalpur | Hojai | Hojai | Dimarupar | Jugjiaan |
| 14 | Pachim Nandalalpur | Hojai | Hojai | Dimarupar | Jugjiaan |
| 15 | Pub Nadapur | Hojai | Hojai | Nandapur | Dhal pukhuri |
| 16 | Pachim Nandapur | Hojai | Hojai | Nandapur | Dhal pukhuri |
| 17 | Rampur | Hojai | Hojai | Milik Basti | Dhal Pukhuri |
| 18 | Pub Dhaniram Pathar | Hojai | Hojai | Pub-Dhaniram Pathar | Jugjiaan |
| 19 | Sankar dev Nagar | Lanka | Lanka | Bhalukmari | Dhal Pukhuri |
| 20 | Jurapukhuri | Lanka | Lanka | Bhalukmari | Dhal Pukhuri |
| 21 | Borbaha | Lanka | Kaki | Kendura Buragaon | Udali |
| 22 | Kapohbari | Lanka | Kapahbari | Kapasbari | Binnakandi |
| 23 | Raja Pukhuri | Hojai | Hojai | Bor pukhuri | Jugjiaan |
| 24 | Utar Bidyannagar | Hojai | Hojai | Radha Nagar | Jugjiaan |
| 25 | Gopal Nagar | Hojai | Hojai | Gopal Nagar | Jugjiaan |
| 26 | Silguri | Hojai | Jogjiaan | Radha Nagar | Jugjiaan |
| 27 | Barpukhuri | Hojai | Hojai | Barpukhuri | Jugjiaan |
| 28 | Pamgaon | Hojai | Lanka | Bhalukmari | Dhal-pukhuri |

B. Description of Boundaries:

| | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|
| NORTH | : Nam Doboka Pathar |
| SOUTH | : Daria Basti and Nandapur Tongia |
| EAST | : Padumpukhuri and kandura |
| WEST | : Uttar Matikhola |

Sd/-
Commissioner & Secretary to the Government of Assam
Department of Housing & Urban Affairs
DIPR /D/HLT/73/18-Jul-25

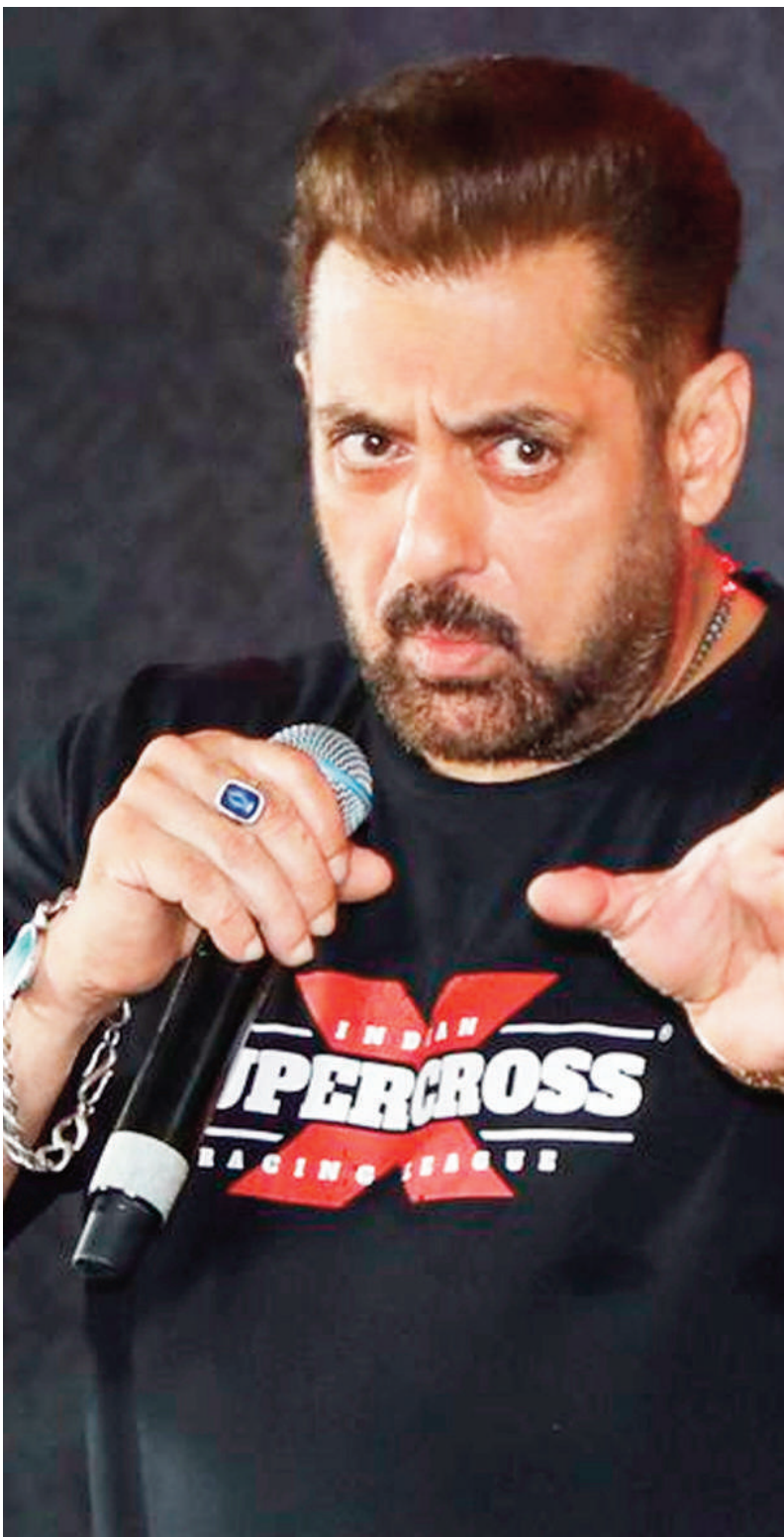
CONSTRUCTION OF 30 BEDDED RPF BARRACK

E-TENDER NOTICE NO. TSK/Engg/41 of 2025; dated: 15-07-2025. E-tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work. **Item No.1; Brief Description of item:** Tinsukia Division:- Construction of 30 bedded RPF barrack at Simaluguri Station. Tender Value: ₹1,98,00,573/-; Earnest Money: ₹2,49,000/-; E-tenders will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 08-08-2025 and opened at 16:00 hrs. on 08-08-2025. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 08-08-2025 in website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (Work)/Tinsukia
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a smile"

PROVISION OF DEPOT SUPPLY OF BALLAST

E-Tender Notice No.: GMW-11-2025-MLG Dated: 12-07-2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works:
Name of work: Provision for Depot supply of Ballast in Harisinga/Tilbitha for N.F. Railway under Dy.CE/Track/Maligaon. **Tender Value:** ₹15,61,08,000/-; **Earnest Money:** ₹9,30,500/-; **Tender document Can be received upto: 15:00 hrs. of 12-08-2025 & opening at 15:15 hrs. of 12-08-2025.** The complete information with the tender documents of above e-tender will be available in the website www.ireps.gov.in
General Manager (Works), Maligaon
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers With A Smile"



It's physically demanding: Salman Khan on 'Battle of Galwan'

MUMBAI, July 17: Superstar Salman Khan is pouring his heart and soul into his upcoming war drama "Battle of Galwan" as he said it is one of the most physically demanding films he's ever taken on in his career.

The much-anticipated film is based on the 2020 Galwan Valley conflict between India and China and is helmed by Apoorva Lakhia of "Shootout at Lokhandwala" fame.

"It is physically demanding. Every year, every month, every day it gets more and more difficult. I've to give more time now (for training). Earlier, I would do it (train) in one or two weeks, now I'm running, kicking, punching, and all that stuff. This film demands that."

"For instance, in 'Sikandar' the action was different, the character was different. But this is physically difficult. Besides, shooting in Ladakh, in high altitude and in cold water (is another challenge)," Khan told PTI in an interview.

The actor said he was excited to do the film, which he announced earlier this month.

"When I was signing the film, I thought it's amazing but it's a very very difficult film to do. I've 20 days

(of work) in Ladakh and then seven to eight days (of shoot) in cold water. We will be shooting this month," the 59-year-old actor added.

Reports in the media suggest that "Battle of Galwan" may not have the traditional release on Eid, a date often associated with Khan's films, but instead arrive in theatres in January or June next year.

When asked, Khan said, "Yes, January."

The actor also confirmed a sequel to his 2015 movie "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" is in the works.

"I liked that movie (first of the film). It will kind of have the same theme and emotional beat. But it will be a different film," Khan said about the film, which completes 10 years on Thursday.

The actor, a cycling and biking enthusiast, was speaking on the sidelines of a press event for the season two of Indian Supercross Racing League (ISRL). He is the brand ambassador of ISRL.

"I've always been a rider, from cycles to motorbikes, I've loved them all. Though I don't get to ride as often now," the actor said but cautioned fans against racing on the roads. (PTI)

Netflix's espionage thriller series 'Saare Jahan Se Accha' to premiere August 13



MUMBAI, July 17: Streaming service Netflix on Thursday announced that its latest original series "Saare Jahan Se Accha", a fictional espionage thriller headlined by actor Pratik Gandhi, will premiere on the platform on August 13.

Set against the politically charged backdrop of the 1970s, the show follows a covert intelligence operation to avert a looming nuclear threat.

Created by Gaurav Shukla and produced by Bombay Fables, "Saare Jahan Se Accha" stars Gandhi as meticulous and resilient intelligence officer Vishnu Shankar caught between duty, danger, and moral dilemmas.

The cast also features Sunny Hinduja, Suhail Nayyar, Kritika Kamra, Tillotama Shome, Rajat Kapoor and Anup Soni in pivotal roles.

"With 'Saare Jahan Se Accha', we've built a world that's urgent, intense, intimidating, and full of quiet tension. Playing intelligence

officer Vishnu Shankar, someone who walks the tightrope between duty and morality, was one of the most challenging roles I've taken on," Gandhi said in a statement.

Directed by Sumit Purohit, the series explores the high-stakes world of intelligence where the slightest delay in relaying critical information could alter the nation's fate.

"Entrusted with a perilous mission to sabotage a looming nuclear threat, Vishnu must navigate a treacherous landscape to ensure India remains one step ahead of its adversaries," read the official logline.

The show is written by Bhavesh Mandalia, Gaurav Shukla, Meghna Srivastava, Abhijeet Khuman, Shivam Shankar, Kunal Kushwah and Ishraq Shah.

Mandalia also serves as the creative producer alongside executive producers Shukla, Sejal Shah and Aditya Nimbalkar. (PTI)

Neeraj Ghaywan's 'Homebound' to be screened at Toronto Int'l Film Festival

NEW DELHI, July 17: Filmmaker Neeraj Ghaywan's "Homebound" is set to be screened at the 2025 Toronto International Film Festival.

The film, starring Ishaan Khatter, Jahnvi Kapoor and Vishal Jethwa, is part of the Gala Presentations line-up for the movie gala's 50th edition, which will be held from September 4 to 14.

Produced by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions, "Homebound" had its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in May under the Un Certain Regard section.

Johar shared the news of the film heading to Toronto on his official Instagram page. "#Homebound has been officially selected for the Toronto International Film Festival 2025 (@tiff_net) in the Gala Presentations category. Extremely thrilled and elated to be part of this prestigious festival - another time for us at Dharma!!!" he wrote.

The other films in the Gala Presentations category include Chloe Zhao's "Hamnet", Derek Cianfrance's "Roofman", Rebecca Zlotowski's "A Private Life" and Nicholas Hytner's "The Choral". "Homebound", which is executive produced by Hollywood legend Martin Scorsese, revolves around two childhood friends played by Khatter and Jethwa.

The official synopsis of the film reads: "Two childhood friends from a small North Indian village chase a police job that promises them the dignity they've long been denied. But as they inch closer to their dream, mounting desperation threatens the bond that holds them together."

The movie is inspired by the New York Times 2020 essay "Taking Amrit Home" by journalist Basharat Peer. Scorsese had boarded the project as an executive producer in April. At the time, the filmmaker, known for classic films such as "Taxi Driver", "Raging Bull", "Goodfellas" and "The Departed", had said that he loved Ghaywan's 2015 movie "Masaan", which was also screened at Cannes under the Un Certain Regard category.

"When Melita Toscan du Plantier sent me the project of his second film, I was curious. I loved the story, the culture and was willing to help. Neeraj has made a beautifully crafted film that's a significant contribution to Indian cinema. I am glad the movie is an official selection at Un Certain Regard in Cannes this year," the 82-year-old director said.

Johar has produced the movie along with Adar Poonawalla, Apoorva Mehta and Somen Mishra. (PTI)



Disney Pixar's 'Hoppers' to release in Indian theatre on March 2026

NEW DELHI, July 17: "Hoppers", an upcoming animated film from Disney Pixar, will be released in Indian theatres on March 6, 2026, the Hollywood studio has announced.

Written and directed by Daniel Chong, the movie features a voice cast that includes Piper Curda, Bobby Moynihan, and Hollywood star Jon Ham.

"Hoppers" tells the story of Mabel (Curda), a determined 19-year-old college student who uses cutting-edge technology to "hop" her consciousness into the body of a lifelike robotic beaver in order to protect a threatened forest glade from destruction, a press release

said. Mabel's journey from university life into the lush wilderness, where she navigates forest politics, befriends a flamboyant bear named King George, voiced by Moynihan, and tries to stop the plans of the ambitious and sly Mayor Jerry, voiced by Hamm.

What starts as a covert mission becomes a surprising tale of belonging, identity, and environmental connection, read the official logline.

Chong is best known for his work on Cartoon Network's "We Bare Bears" and "We Bare Bears: The Movie".

"Hoppers" is produced by Nicole Paradis Grindle. (PTI)

Filmmaker Kabir Khan marks 10 years of 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan': 'It didn't just entertain, it healed'

NEW DELHI, July 17: Filmmaker Kabir Khan on Thursday celebrated the 10th anniversary of his popular Salman Khan-starrer "Bajrangi Bhaijaan", saying the movie continues to make people laugh and cry even today.

The film, which also featured Kareena Kapoor Khan and Harshaali Malhotra, was released to universal acclaim on July 17, 2015.

"Happy Bajrangi Day It's hard to believe it's been 10 years since Bajrangi Bhaijaan first found its way into people's hearts," Khan posted on his Instagram page.

"Over the last decade I have been totally overwhelmed by the love this film keeps accumulating all over the world. We set out to tell a story of love and hope in a world that sometimes forgets these emotions. To this day I meet people who tell me how this film makes them laugh and cry every time they see it. And that to me, is the real reward - knowing that Bajrangi didn't just entertain, it healed," he added.

At its heart, the film was about a mute Pakistani girl lost in India and the Indian man who goes to great lengths to reunite her with her family.

Salman essayed the role of Pawan, a

Lord Hanuman devotee, Kareena starred as Rasika, his love interest, and Malhotra as Munni, the Pakistani who gets lost in India.

When it was released in theatres, "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" became a huge box office hit with critics praising the movie for its combination of emotional storytelling, strong performances, and its message of humanity transcending borders.

Malhotra, who was seven at the time of the movie's release, also marked the film's 10th anniversary.

"10 years ago... A film was released that was far more than a story. It was a feeling. A message of love, humanity, and faith that moved millions across the world. "I was just a 6-year-old girl when 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan' entered my life. I didn't speak a word in the film... but I never imagined how much my silence would be heard, how deeply it would be felt," she wrote alongside a still from the movie on Instagram.

The actor said she connected with the character and could feel what Munni was going through.

"Munni was innocent, quiet, but carried the entire soul of the film. She trusted. She loved. She felt. And you all loved her

back with a kind of warmth I still don't have words for."

"Behind the scenes, I was a child, curious, playful, but also extremely sensitive. The violent scenes made me anxious. I'd cover my ears, hide behind chairs, sometimes cry because I didn't understand what was happening," she added.

Malhotra also said the set of "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" became her "safe space".

"Salman sir made me feel protected, like the warmest uncle ever. Kabir sir turned every scene into a story I could feel, not just act. From the spot dadas to the makeup didis, everyone treated me like I was their own."

"We shot across snowy mountains and dusty roads, laughed behind takes, shared laddoos, and sometimes, even cried together," she added.

Malhotra said whenever people see her, they call her Munni.

"I still receive messages from all over the world, telling me how deeply she touched their hearts. A decade later, that love hasn't faded," she added.

"Bajrangi Bhaijaan" also featured Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Sharat Saxena, Meher Vij and Om Puri in pivotal roles. (PTI)



Messi's multi-goal streak ends in Inter Miami's 3-0 loss to FC Cincinnati



CINCINNATI, July 17: Lionel Messi's MLS-record streak of scoring multiple goals in five straight matches ended on Wednesday night in Inter Miami's 3-0 loss to FC Cincinnati.

Cincinnati got a first-half goal from Gerardo Valenzuela and two

second-half strikes from Evander to remain one point behind the Philadelphia Union in the Eastern Conference standings. Philadelphia beat CF Montreal 2-1 on Wednesday night.

The loss ended a five-match winning streak for Inter Miami

(11-4-5) which is fifth in the Eastern Conference standings.

Messi is the first player in MLS history to have a multi-goal streak of more than four matches. He was tied for the league lead with 16 goals in 17 MLS matches.

Messi has only played in three matches against Cincinnati since coming to MLS, but the team has made things difficult for the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner.

Cincinnati had four shots on target in the first 16 minutes to none for Inter Miami, and took a

1-0 lead when Valenzuela angled a shot from the left side of the box for his fifth goal of the season.

Messi's first shot came in the final minute of first-half stoppage time and landed comfortably in the arms of keeper Roman Celentano.

Evander's 14th goal of the season, and 50th in MLS, put Cincinnati ahead 2-0 less than five minutes into the second half.

Cincinnati (14-3-6) also had a two-goal lead on Saturday against Columbus but lost 4-2 to the Crew.

Cincinnati held on this time by neutralizing Inter Miami's attack, led by Messi.

Evander sealed the victory when he made it 3-0 with a goal off a rebound when Luca Orelano's shot caromed off the keeper.

Messi had a chance in the 78th minute, but his close-range shot was saved by a diving Celentano.

The 38-year-old Messi has played 90-plus minutes in eight straight games, including four Club World Cup matches. At one point in the second half, he had covered the least amount of distance of any player.

Cincinnati played without second-leading scorer Kevin Denkey due to a leg injury.

Cincinnati visits Real Salt Lake and Inter Miami is at the New York Red Bulls on Saturday night. (AP)

Freestyle Chess: Pragg and Erigaisi make cut; Carlsen out of title contention



LAS VEGAS, July 17: Grandmaster R Pragganandhaa took down world number one Magnus Carlsen en route the top-bracket quarterfinals along with Uzbekistani Nodirbek Abdusattorov and Javokhir Sandarov, along with Aronian, finishing on four points.

Pragganandhaa continued the recent trend of Indian players outsmarting Carlsen and sent the Norwegian's campaign haywire on Wednesday. Carlsen has in recent weeks also been beaten by reigning world champion D Gukesh, who is not competing here.

The 19-year-old Pragganandhaa was in his elements as he effectively deployed his pieces right from the word go and even though Carlsen got some chances, Pragganandhaa crashed through with some imaginative manoeuvres.

The loss against Pragganandhaa had such a cascading effect on Carlsen that he lost another game against Wesley So in the next round and was shockingly eliminated from the top bracket by Levon Aronian of United States 2-0 in the final tiebreaker for the fourth spot that ensued.

The 16-player event was divided into two groups of eight each and the top four from each pool advanced to the quarterfinals after playing once with each of the other participant.

The rules have been framed in such a way that those who do not make the top bracket in the first set of qualifiers can no longer win the event and Carlsen can at best finish third if he wins the remaining matches.

Erigaisi was the other Indian from the second group who made it to the quarterfinals. It was a fine come-from-behind performance by

Erigaisi, who faced some initial struggles.

Pragganandhaa tied for the first spot on 4.5 points out of a possible seven in his group with Uzbekistani Nodirbek Abdusattorov and Javokhir Sandarov, along with Aronian, finishing on four points.

Carlsen ended fifth ahead of Vincent Keymer of Germany, Wesley So and lone woman participant Bibisara Assaubayeva of Kazakhstan.

In the second group christened black, Hikaru Nakamura topped the standings with an astonishing 6/7 with his American country-man Hans Niemann finishing second on 4.5 points.

Erigaisi finished tied third on four points with another local star Fabiano Caruana.

Another American trio of Leinier Dominguez Perez, Sevan Samuel and Robson Ray finished 5-7 in the second group with Indian Vidit Gujrathi ending on the last spot.

In the Quarterfinals now, Pragganandhaa will meet Fabiano Caruana of United States while Erigaisi will have to tackle Abdusattorov.

Results qualifiers group white: 1-3: R Pragganandhaa (Ind); Abdusattorov, Nodirbek (Uzb) Javokhir Sandarov (Uzb) 4.5 each; 4-5: Levon Aronian (USA) Magnus Carlsen (Nor) 4 each; 6-7: Vincent Keymer (Ger), Wesley So (USA) 3 each; 8. Bibisara Assaubayeva (Kaz, 0.5).

Group black: 1. Hikaru Nakamura (USA, 6); 2. Hans Moke Niemann (USA, 4.5); 3-4. Arjun Erigaisi (Ind), Fabiano Caruana (USA) 4 each; 5. Leinier Dominguez Perez (USA, 3) 6-7: Sevan Samuel (USA), Robron Ray (USA) 2.5 each; 8. Vidit Gujrathi (Ind, 1.5). (PTI)

Have Asiad 2026 selection plan in place by August 29: Sports Secretary to NSFs

NEW DELHI, July 17: Sports secretary Hari Ranjan Rao on Thursday urged National Sports Federations (NSFs) to finalise their selection mechanism for next year's Asian Games by August 29 to ensure a greater focus on preparations for the showpiece in Japan.

Rao was addressing NSFs in the one-day 'Khelo Bharat Conclave' in the national capital where an action plan to take Indian sports forward is being discussed by various stakeholders, including sports minister Manu-sukh Mandaviya, representatives

of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and corporate houses, and prominent former athletes.

"Let's have a selection plan for the Asian Games by August 29, which is also the National Sports Day (and the birth anniversary of hockey icon Dhyan Chand). If we do that, we will have one entire year to prepare ourselves," Rao, who is also the Director General of the Sports Authority of India (SAI), told the gathering.

The Asian Games is scheduled to be held from September 19 to October 4 next year in Aichi-Nagoya. India would be aiming to

better their best performance of 106 medals, including 28 gold, that was achieved in the previous edition in Hangzhou, China.

Rao's suggestion to the NSFs comes months after the Sports Ministry laid down strict guidelines on selection processes for quadrennial showpieces and the world and continental championships.

The ministry has asked NSFs to publicise the selection criteria for showpieces such as the Olympics, Paralympics, Asian Games, Para Asian Games and Commonwealth Games at least two years

in advance.

However, as is clear from Rao's statement, the plan is still a work in progress for next year's showpiece.

The directives also make it mandatory for NSFs to upload selection policies on their respective websites and amend them only if there is a three-month window before a competition. It has also been made compulsory to videograph selection trials.

Standardisation of the selection criteria has been a long-standing demand in sports like shooting where renowned pistol coach Jas-

pal Rana has stated that policies which are not codified in advance negatively impact athletes.

Rao, who was formerly an additional secretary to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), also called on the NSFs to digitise their Annual Calendar of Training and Competition (ACTC) and upload them on the National Sports Repository System in the next couple of months.

"I request cooperation from everyone, let's go online by October 1. Let's get rid of this offline ACTC documentation," he said. (PTI)

We are taking one game at a time as World Cup is still some time away: Deepti Sharma

SOUTHAMPTON, July 17: Deepti Sharma feels that Indian team is on the right track as far as preparations for the upcoming Women's ODI World Cup are concerned but wants to focus on the ongoing England series as the marquee event is still two months away. Deepti scored a composed 62 not out in India's successful chase of 259 in the opening WODI against England on Wednesday. This is India's penultimate 50-over series with one left at home against Australia starting September 14. The Women's ODI World Cup starts on September 30 with India taking on Sri Lanka.

"Just in terms of preparation for the World Cup, I think as a team, we did some really good things in

Sri Lanka and here also. World Cup is a little too far away).

"We are not thinking about that but definitely we are going one match at a time. That's what we are thinking at the moment," Deepti said at the post-match press conference after guiding team to four-wicket victory over England. She feels that her calmness did help in achieving the target with ease and her stand of 90 with Jemimah Rodrigues was a game-changing one.

"I knew that I can be calm and composed. It (partnership with Rodrigues) was a turning point for us. We had focused that we have to focus on partnership when I was batting with Jemie (Rodrigues' nickname). (PTI)

NEW DELHI, July 17: Former India captain and goalkeeping stalwart P R Sreejesh believes the just-concluded FIH Pro League was a good wake-up call for the men's national hockey team ahead of next year's Asian Games and the World Cup.

India struggled in the European leg of the Pro League and finished eighth out of nine teams to avoid relegation by a whisker.

But Sreejesh, who was part of India's bronze medal winning sides in Tokyo and Paris Olympics, felt that players didn't perform too badly but unfortunately results didn't favour the team.

"I think the players performed really well, we created lot of op-

portunities. We gave very good fight on the field but sometimes it happens the result went against us," Sreejesh said on the sidelines of the launch of Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon on Wednesday night.

"The preparation was perfect but unfortunately the result was not perfect for us but the coaches have enough time to prepare the team for the Asia Cup and definitely next year the Asian Games and World Cup is there.

"I think this Pro League gave us a very good wake-up call to prepare and to be on our toes to prepare for World Cup and Asian Games," he added.

The Asian Games will be hosted by Aichi-Nagoya in Japan from September 19 to Oc-

tober 4, while the World Cup will be jointly organised by the Netherlands and Belgium from August 15 to 30.

Post retirement after Paris Games, Sreejesh is now the coach of Indian men's junior hockey team and he is enjoying his current journey.

"Same routine, when you wake up early in the morning it's about preparing the players, ensure they are doing their best and rest of the day prepare for the next session, analysing the players.

"The only thing is that I am stressing my mind more now, earlier I used to stress my physical part but now it's about my mental part. But I am enjoying," he said.

India is set to host the FIH

Pro League was a good wake-up call ahead of next year's Asian Games and WC: Sreejesh

12-year-old Yu Zidi of China takes stunning times to the world swimming championships

SINGAPORE, July 17: Yu Zidi of China is only 12 years old and will race at the world swimming championships later this month in Singapore.

That's amazing. But her age is only part of the picture.

Not only is she very young, but her times in three events this year are among the best in the world. And here's the kicker. Those times would have been very close to medals in last year's Paris Olympics.

Again, she's 12. That's a sixth-or-seventh-grade student depending on the school system. Not yet a teenager.

"I think it's a great story. I don't know where it will lead," Greg Meehan, the national team director for the American squad in Singapore, told The Associated Press.

As promising young swimmers do, Yu is clocking personal bests almost each time she competes.

Her PBs are more than just confidence boosters, they put her in sight of records, medals and stardom.

Yu has qualified in the 200- and 400-meter individual medleys, and the 200 butterfly. She could win a medal in all three.

Her time of 2 minutes, 10.63 seconds in the 200 IM at the Chinese championships in May was the fastest ever by a 12-year-old swimmer — male or female — according to World Aquatics, the global governing body of the sport.

That was only the start. Her time of 2:06.83 in the 200 butterfly in the same meet would have placed her fourth in last year's Paris Olympics. It was the fifth-fastest time in the world this year and would have been good enough for gold in the 2024 world.

Again, Yu is 12 years old. To cap off the national championships she swam 4:35.53 in the

400 IM, the fifth-fastest time of the year in that event. That also would have been good for fourth place last year at the Olympics, just 0.6 behind bronze medalist Emma Weyant of the United States.

The 400 IM is dominated by 18-year-old Canadian Summer McIntosh, who holds the world record of 4:23.65 and the 200 IM mark of 2:05.70. She's a generational talent, the winner of three gold medals in Paris.

By comparison, Yu at 12 is swimming roughly 15 seconds faster in the 400 IM than McIntosh did at 12, and about 12 seconds faster in the 200 IM. In a 50-meter pool, 12 to 15 seconds would be a half-lap of the pool, depending on the event.

Yu is not the first young swimmer to excel, but it's how she's doing it — the stunning times and the promise of more to come.

Of course there are no guarantees of success, and young swim-



mers can burn out.

Yu said she began swimming at 6 in a water amusement park.

"The summer was too hot, and my dad took me to the water park," she told China's official Xinhua News Agency. "I enjoyed the coolness of the water and spent a lot of time in different small pools for kids. One day, a

coach approached me and asked if I wanted to swim faster."

The rest is history, as they say, as she explained her event preference.

"Since I am not competitive in the sprint events, I have to choose the 400-meter individual medley and the 200-meter butterfly as my favorites," Yu told Xinhua. "My

age is currently an advantage and I hope to grow and develop more strength in the future."

Yu trains at the Hebei Taihua Jinye Swimming Club in Hengshui City, south of Beijing in Hebei Province.

Alzain Tareq of Bahrain swam in the 2015 worlds at only 10. She finished last in her event. World Aquatics now has stricter age rules than a decade ago. Swimmers must be at least 14 unless their times meet qualification standards. In effect, this means there is no age limit.

If Yu were to win Olympic gold in three years in Los Angeles, she would be 15. But that wouldn't make her the youngest swimmer to take gold.

Kyoko Iwasaki of Japan was 14 years and 6 days old when she won gold in the 200 breaststroke at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. Swimmers tend to peak early, particularly females.

The specialty publication and

website SwimSwam lists seven swimmers — all women — who won Olympic gold before they turned 15. Three, including Iwasaki, did it in individual events, and four got gold in relays.

American superstar Katie Ledecky was 15 years and 139 days when she won the 800 freestyle at the 2012 London Olympics — the first of her nine gold medals over four Olympics.

She's still swimming and is the overwhelming favorite to win the 1,500 meters in Singapore. Ledecky has the top 23 times in history in the event, and also No. 25.

For another jolting perspective, consider this. Ledecky's first gold came several months before Yu was born — Oct. 6, 2012.

"I have no idea what it's like to compete abroad," Yu told Xinhua. "I really want to experience the world-class competition." The world is watching. (AP)

Lakshya Sen, Satwik-Chirag exit Japan Open

TOKYO, July 17: Indian shuttlers continued to falter at the Japan Open with Lakshya Sen and the star men's doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty bowing out in the second round of the Super 750 badminton tournament here on Thursday. World No. 18 Lakshya's inconsistent run resulted in a 19-21, 11-21 loss to Japan's Kodai Naraoka in the men's singles that lasted close to an hour.

The 23-year-old, who had looked promising in the opener with a commanding 21-11, 21-18 win over China's Wang Zheng Xing, failed to carry the momentum forward.

In the men's doubles, Satwik and Chirag were handed a 22-24, 14-21 defeat by the fifth-seeded Chinese combine of Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang in a battle between former world No. 1 pairs.

With this win, Paris Olympics silver medallists Wei Keng and Wang Chang extended their head-to-head lead over the Indians to 7-2.

After a slow start, the Indian pair did well to take 18-14 lead but couldn't hold on to the momentum as their Chinese counterparts sealed a thrilling first game. The world number five Chinese duo continue in the same vein in the second game as Satwik and Chirag struggled with their smashes and defence to concede their fourth defeat in the trot to Wei Ken and Chang. (PTT)

Deepti, whose slog over batting has always come in for a lot of flak, was brilliant in planning the chase

1st WODI: Deepti powers India to four-wicket victory over England

SOUTHAMPTON, July 17: Deepti Sharma showed enormous composure with an unbeaten half century that powered India to a comfortable four-wicket victory in the opening women's ODI against England here.

The dress rehearsals for India's 50-over World Cup started in earnest as a target of 259 was chased with 10 balls to spare, courtesy Deepti's unbeaten 62 off 64 balls with three boundaries and a six.

Her 90-run fifth wicket stand in 14.2 overs with Jemimah Rodrigues (48 off 54 balls) proved to be the match-winning one.

All-rounder Amanjot Kaur (20 off 14 balls) provided the finishing touches with some meaty blows as the target was achieved with minimum fuss despite India being reduced to 124 for 4 after the fall of skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's (17) wicket.

Deepti and Rodrigues took over and farmed the strike well as they kept the scoreboard ticking and



also hit the occasional boundaries whenever loose deliveries were provided.

Deepti, whose slog over batting has always come in for a lot of flak, was brilliant in planning the chase.

The shot of the match certainly was her one-handed six off Lauren Bell over deep mid-wicket. She effortlessly picked a length ball from

outside the off-stump and dispatched it over deep mid-wicket with her bottom hand coming off the handle.

Indian captain Harmanpreet was very happy with Deepti's performance and also praised Rodrigues, who missed out on a half-century by two runs.

"Happy with the way we bowled. Really happy with how

we batted, especially Deepti. Her innings was key. We thought we gave away extra 20-30 runs, it was a good wicket to bat on. Fielding is something we are working on, we missed two chances today. We will try to do better. Jemi is calm on the field and credit goes to Deepti for the way she batted."

Earlier, young seamer Kranti Goud impressed with two wickets upfront before Sophia Dunkley's unbeaten 92-ball 83 lifted England to a respectable 258 for six here on Wednesday.

Besides Goud (2/55 in 9 overs), off-spinner Sneha Rana (2/31 in 10 overs) too picked up two wickets during a fine display after England opted to bat.

Alice Davidson Richards contributed 53 in 73 balls during a 106-run partnership for the fifth wicket with Dunkley, which formed the nucleus of the England innings after they lost four wickets for 97 runs.

Dunkley struck nine fours during her stay in the middle. (PTT)

Russell to retire from international cricket after 2nd T20 against Australia

KINGSTON, July 17: Flamboyant T20 freelancer Andre Russell will draw the curtains on a start-stop 15-year international career for the West Indies after the second T20 against Australia here on July 22. Russell's most significant achievement is being a member of two T20 World Cup winning West Indies teams in 2012 and 2016 respectively. Since 2019, Russell has featured exclusively in the T20 format. He has represented the West Indies in 84 T20Is, 56 ODIs and one solitary Test. The 37-year-old Jamaican, a cornerstone of West Indies' T20 success, had been named in the squad for the five match series against Australia but will play his final two international matches on July 20 and 22 at his beloved home ground -- the Sabina Park.

Russell, who was part of the title-winning squads in 2012 and 2016, announced his decision just seven months ahead of the 2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.

"Words cannot explain what it meant. To represent the West Indies has been one of the proudest achievements in my life," Russell said in a statement posted by Cricket West Indies.

"When I was a kid, I did not expect to get to this level, but the more you start to play and get to love the sport, you realize what you can



achieve. This inspired me to become better because I wanted to leave a mark in the maroon colours and become an inspiration to others," he added. "I love playing for the West Indies and I love playing at home in front of my family and friends where I get to showcase my talent and produce more high-quality performances. I want to finish my international career on a high while being a role model for the next generation of cricketers coming out of the Caribbean," he said.

The swashbuckling all-rounder has snapped 61 wickets and scored 1078 runs in 84 T20I outings. He retires a month after former West Indies captain Nicholas Pooran announced his shock retirement from international cricket before turning 30. (PTT)

Former India keeper Saha in contention to become Bengal U-23 coach

NEW DELHI, July 17: Six months into retirement from competitive cricket, one of India's finest wicketkeepers Wriddhiman Saha is all set to enter the coaching arena with Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) showing interest in hiring him as the head coach of U-23 state team.

Saha, 40, retired from first-class cricket in January this year at the end of Bengal's league stage campaign in the Ranji Trophy.

It is understood that former Bengal skipper Laxmi Ratan Shukla will continue as the head coach of the senior team while former off-spinner Saurashis Lahiri will coach the U-19 team.

"The CAB brass will be zeroing in on all the candidates for various teams by next week. Obviously, Wriddhi has been sounded out and a final decision will be taken next week. Apart from Sourav Ganguly and Pankaj Roy, he is the biggest name from Bengal with 40 Tests," a senior CAB source told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

"His experience of playing top level cricket for so long will only help the Gen-Next of Bengal cricket. Wriddhi already runs a chain of coaching centres and he has been a very hands on coach for juniors. He is passionate about coaching. Hopefully, he will be ready," the source said.

While there is not much precedence in Bengal cricket about players being drafted into the coaching system immediately after retirement but Saha's case is slightly different considering his stature in state cricket.

The Bengal U-23 side till last season was being coached by former India opener Pranab Roy, son of legendary late Pankaj Roy.

Many people in Bengal circuit believe that Saha is cut out to become a good coach. His experience with U-23 squad



could prove to be handy if he joins any IPL team in future or as a specialist coach at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

Delhi Ranji team's head coach job is expected to be a two-way battle between former India players Sarandeep Singh and Vijay Dahiya, both of whom have applied for the post.

The Delhi & Districts Cricket Association (DDCA) is conducting interviews for support staffs, selectors for various age group (U-16, U-19, U-23) along with senior teams.

Sarandeep is the current Delhi head coach while Dahiya has handled the state team on a couple occasions in the past. The former India stumper is an assistant coach with Lucknow Super Giants and has also coached the Uttar Pradesh Ranji team.

"There are three candidates in the running. Sarandeep, who is our current head coach and Dahiya, who has extensive coaching experience have both appeared for interviews. The third strong candidate is former Delhi keeper Rajiv Vinayak," a senior DDCA official privy to developments said. (PTT)

Show cause notice for 15 officials for inadequate arrangements

CHANDIGARH, July 17: Expressing displeasure over lack of proper accommodation, food supplies, and sports equipment for players at the Khelo India centre at Tau Devi Lal Stadium, Haryana Sports Minister Gaurav Gautam on Thursday issued show-cause notices to 15 officials.

The minister paid a surprise visit to the centre and met athletes from various disciplines including boxing, badminton, and athletics. He inspected the hostel accommodation, visited the mess to check food arrangements, and reviewed the gym facilities.

He interacted with players and listened to their concerns, following which he issued notices to 15 people including coaches, staff, and the district sports officer Panchkula.

The players informed the minister that although the government's sports policy is very good, the officials are failing to implement it properly, resulting in hardships for them.

The minister then called the officials on the spot and warned them to improve the arrangements within 15 days, failing which strict action would be taken.

Gautam emphasised that athletes must receive nutritious food and proper sports resources for improved performance. The minister said that coaches who perform well will be encouraged, while negligent ones will face action. (PTT)

Gill's aggression triggered England's beast mode at Lord's: Moeen Ali

NEW DELHI, July 17: Former England all-rounder Moeen Ali sees shades of Virat Kohli in Shubman Gill's aggressive on-field demeanour, but feels the India batter's approach during the Lord's Test may have triggered a stronger response from the hosts.

Gill has been quite aggressive during the series, and his conduct at Edgbaston mirrored Kohli's famous century celebration at the same venue in 2018.

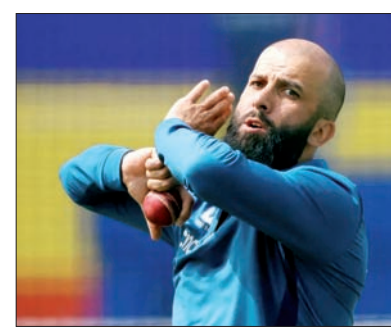
"My take is, it's fine. I think he's just trying to be competitive in front of a fight and very similar to Virat, I think it's fine," Moeen, currently featuring for the Guyana Amazon Warriors in the Global Super League (GSL), said during an interaction on Wednesday.

"But then, obviously the other team, what you've done is, I think you've actually brought out the best of England and the fight and that beast England can be."

"And I think it's a different side of England. They've shown all the players that it's great for the series to win. I don't know why it's getting criticised."

Former India players Sanjay Manjrekar and Mohammad Kaif have suggested that Gill's approach, particularly his verbal duels with Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett at Lord's, may have backfired.

Gill has been in sublime form with the



bat this series, scoring a century at Headingley and following it up with a record-breaking ton and a double hundred in the second Test in Birmingham, which India won by 336 runs.

However, he made just 16 and 6 at Lord's, where India went down by 22 runs despite a late fightback led by Ravindra Jadeja and the lower order.

Moeen, who shared the Chennai Super Kings dressing room with Jadeja in the IPL, praised his batting but noted the lack of returns with the ball.

"He just knows what he's doing. I think he's done it for many years. I think he's been amazing with the bat this series, obviously," he said.

"I think with the ball, he hasn't quite got the wickets, but he does what he does. He's very tight. He can bowl, but he's not outstanding. He's been batting

well for a few years now, I think.

"Especially even last time they came to Shubman, he batted brilliantly, and I think now he's at the peak of his batting. Bowling wise, I think he just doesn't have the wickets. With the tally, I think he's bowled well, he just doesn't have the wickets."

There has been a growing chatter around Kuldeep Yadav's inclusion in the XI, and Moeen echoed the sentiment, but acknowledged the difficulty in making room for the quality spinner.

"I would like to see Kuldeep in the team, but I don't know who for. Washington's bowled well, Jadeja batted well. So it makes it difficult to bring Kuldeep Yadav in the side."

"I would like to see Kuldeep in, but I don't think they can fit him in."

India were bowled out for 170 while chasing 193 in the third Test, losing the match to hand England a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

Reflecting on the game, Moeen said England were fortunate to post a lead in the third innings, as batting in the fourth innings was far more challenging.

"I think, at Lord's it can happen. Because there's always something for the ball, even though the period where it looked easy for batting, there's always a few periods where... it makes it a little bit difficult. (PTT)

Time running out for Karun Nair, could be the sole change at Manchester

BECKENHAM, July 17: Cricket has given Karun Nair a 'second chance' but he doesn't seem to have made the most of it on the tour of England and could end up being the sole name on the chopping block when India's playing XI for the fourth Test is finalised.

Back in the playing eleven after eight years, the 33-year-old has got starts in majority of his six innings but he has not been able to convert them into something substantial. He has looked good in the middle, especially while driving the ball but the rising ball from length has bothered him.

In the second innings at Lord's, he misjudged the line and length of an incoming Brydon Carse delivery to offer no shot, finding himself trapped in front.

Batting at number three, India expect solidity from Nair, who gate-crashed into the national team after piling up a mountain of runs on the domestic circuit.

With India trailing 1-2 in the five-

match series and the next game still a week away, the management needs to take a call -- stick to Nair or invest in the much younger Sai Sudharsan who got the rough end of the stick having been left out of the playing eleven after his debut game.

The elegant left-hander did not do much wrong to be excluded, and it was done to accommodate an extra batting option at number eight.

Almost a month later, Nair making way for the 23-year-old Sudharsan at Old Trafford could be the only change in the eleven as India look to level the series in the game starting July 23.

Former India wicket-keeper Deep Dasgupta, who is commenting on the series, says it may be time to bring back Sudharsan, who is more likely to return to England in four years' time than Nair.

"You are still in it very much in the series so because even this Test match at

Lord's was extremely close. It could have gone either way," he told PTI.

"But what I would be looking at is at number three. Would Karun Nair still continue or you want to invest in a young player like Sai Sudharsan who looked comfortable in the last innings that he played in that first Test match? He is young and investment for the future."

"Karun I think has got his chances. It's not about chances. More than that, I think how he's looked. He's looked comfortable in patches but a few questions are still unanswered. And that's what kind of makes me think otherwise."

Dasgupta expects stability from a number three batter. When Sudharsan played in Leeds, Nair had batted at number six.

"Technically, he plays from the crease, especially on pitches where it's doing a little bit, that gets a little difficult. So it's not the fact that he hasn't scored big runs. He hasn't scored a 50 or something. (PTT)

IOC and International Federations consulted in drafting of National Sports Bill: Mandaviya



NEW DELHI, July 17: Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday said that the National Sports Governance Bill, which will be tabled in the Parliament during next week's monsoon session, has been drafted with inputs from not just the stakeholders here but also international bodies like the IOC and FIFA.

Addressing the one-day 'Khelo Bharat Conclave', featuring representatives from the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), National Sports Federations (NSFs), the corporate world and athletes, the minister reiterated his commitment to have the bill passed for which he has even held discussions with former sports minister and Congress leader Ajay Maken.

The monsoon session of the Parliament will start on July 21.

"I did a series of consultations with NSFs, athletes, coaches, also got 600 inputs from the public when the draft was put online for suggestions. I also had a three-hour meeting with sports lawyers to understand their perspective," Mandaviya stated in his address.

"The IOC (International Olympic Committee) was consulted as well along with international sports federations. FIFA had a query and I sent an officer to their headquarters to discuss things with them. The National Sports Bill is now ready and will be in parliament during monsoon session," he added but did not go into the specifics.

The bill seeks to make the country's sports administrators more accountable with the provision of a regulatory board which would have the power to grant

recognition and decide funding to NSFs based on their adherence to provisions related to good governance.

The board will also be responsible for ensuring compliance with the highest governance, financial, and ethical standards.

In addition, the bill proposes the establishment of Ethics Commissions and Dispute Resolution Commissions to ensure transparency in governance.

It has been opposed by the IOA, which feels that a regulatory board would undermine its standing as the nodal body for all NSFs.

"I spoke to Ajay Maken (senior Congress leader) too. He made a good effort to have this bill passed," said Mandaviya, referring to Maken's aggressive push for cleaner sports governance during his eventful tenure that lasted a little over one year.

Governance reforms, which focus around timely elections, have been a thorny issue with prominent NSFs like the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) being accused of dragging their feet on polls that have been long due.

The minister avoided taking names but urged the administrators to rise above their personal interests.

"Main nahi hum (We, not I), that should be the way forward. We have to introspect whether it's enough to just grab the chair. We have to let go of ego. Give the seat to someone better if you see one," he said.

"Reforms is a step by step process," he asserted. (PTT)