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Day of 'surprise' events capped by Dhankhar's abrupt resignation

NEW DELHI, July 22: Jagdeep Dhankhar's decision to resign as Vice President on Monday night has triggered a firestorm of speculation on whether there was more to it than "to prioritise health care", as his sudden move had capped a day of events in Rajya Sabha on his watch which took the government by surprise and put it in a damage-control mode.

The usual effusive praise that is showered on an occupant of a high office on his departure was missing from the ruling alliance's side, an indication that the government was probably happy to see him go. It was the Opposition, which had signed a notice to impeach him last year for his alleged biases, that had nice words for him.

Dhankhar had informed the House on Monday that he had received a notice for a motion to remove Justice Yashwant Varma, who is embroiled in a suspected corruption case, from 63 opposition MPs. The Vice President is ex-officio chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

That the notice went against the gov-

ernment's plan to marshal a bipartisan motion for Justice Varma's removal in the Lok Sabha and not in the Upper House was made more embarrassing for the ruling alliance by the fact that it was an entirely opposition-sponsored exercise.

Senior government ministers swung into action by getting many Rajya Sabha MPs of the BJP and its allies to put their signatures on a document which some members said was for a similar notice to ensure that opposition members alone were not behind the exercise in the Upper House.

Many other signatories kept mum, while a few stated that they were not aware of the details as they signed a paper that did not carry details of the matter, drawing the conjecture that it was related to Dhankhar. A couple of senior leaders, however, insisted that it was all aimed at ensuring that National Democratic Alliance MPs were also part of the notice for Varma's removal.

Some observers noted that Dhankhar, who wore the hat of a senior lawyer be-



fore becoming West Bengal governor in 2019, had taken lead in taking on the judiciary over a host of issues, the latest one involving Varma, and might have felt left out when it appeared that the motion to remove the high court judge was to be piloted in the Lok Sabha.

Another development that suggested the government's unhappiness with Dhankhar was the absence of the Leader of House in Rajya Sabha, J P Nadda, and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju from the meeting of the Business Advisory Committee, which includes

members of different parties and decides on the House agenda, at 4.30 PM on Monday.

The meeting, which was chaired by Dhankhar, was held as an earlier meeting, which Nadda and Rijiju had attended, could not arrive at a decision on the House's final agenda.

Congress leader and Rajya Sabha MP Jairam Ramesh speculated in a post on X that something serious clearly occurred between 1 PM and 4.30 PM, which prompted Nadda and Rijiju to skip the BAC "deliberately". This naturally did not go well with Dhankhar, he claimed.

Nadda told reporters that both of them were busy in official work and had informed the Rajya Sabha Chairman's office about it.

A few BJP members were also critical of Dhankhar's decision to allow the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, to launch a sharp attack on the government over Operation Sindoor during the Zero Hour when the ruling alliance had already expressed

its willingness for a discussion on the issue.

At 9.25 PM on Monday, Dhankhar (74) announced his resignation "to prioritise health care and abide by medical advice".

Barring Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who put out a brief post, most of the leading government figures refrained from offering any comment.

Modi said on X, "Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar Ji has got many opportunities to serve our country in various capacities, including as the Vice President of India. Wishing him good health."

Opposition MP Kapil Sibal, long a bitter critic of Dhankhar, lauded him as a nationalist and patriot.

He wanted the opposition and the government to work together to enhance India's standing in the world, the senior lawyer said.

Many leaders are of the view that the ties between Dhankhar and the government might have got strained over a period of time, but there is little clarity on the reasons for these differences. (PTI)

Draft poll rolls for BTC election released

2,669,396 voters enrolled in 40 constituencies

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 22: The Draft Electoral Roll for the upcoming Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Election 2025 was officially released across the five districts of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) on Tuesday.

The publication marks a key step in the run-up to the elections for the 40 constituencies under the BTC.

According to an official statement from the Assam State Election Commission, the draft roll includes a total of 2,669,396 voters, comprising 13,29,742 male and 13,39,657 female voters.

The roll will cover 3,277 polling stations across the region.

In Kokrajhar district, the draft electoral roll was unveiled by Dis-



trict Commissioner Masanda Magdalin Pertin at the DC office conference hall in the presence of representatives from various polit-

ical parties. The district has a total of 700,610 voters across 12 BTC constituencies, including 3,50,325 male and 3,50,280 female voters.

In Tamulpur district, the draft roll was released during a coordination meeting held at the DC office conference hall.

The meeting was chaired by District Commissioner-cum-Retiring Officer for BTC Election 2025, Pankaj Chakravarty, and was attended by Assistant Returning Officers (AROs), political party representatives, and media personnel.

The Tamulpur meeting focused on ensuring transparency in the electoral process, encouraging public participation, and providing unhindered access to the draft rolls for verification and corrections.

Emphasis was laid on awareness campaigns to promote voter engagement and ensure the smooth conduct (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

Naga organisations in Manipur urge PM, HM to halt fencing of India-Myanmar border

IMPHAL, July 22: Several Naga organisations in Manipur on Tuesday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah to immediately halt the fencing of India-Myanmar border and to restore the Free Movement Regime (FMR) within 20 days.

The Naga organisations, which included the United Naga Council, All Naga Students' Association, Manipur Naga Women's Union and Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights South submitted the petition through Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla.

The Raj Bhavan in an official statement said that representatives of UNC, ANSAM, NWU, and NPMHR-S met Governor Bhalla on Tuesday.

"During the meeting, the representatives expressed concerns over



ongoing developments impacting the hill areas, particularly in relation to the Free Movement Regime and border fencing," it said, adding that the "governor acknowledged the grievances raised and said that the matter would be looked into."

Expressing strong resentment against abrogation of the Free Movement Regime (FMR) and the accelerated ongoing border fencing construction along the India-Myanmar border, the Naga civil organisations said (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

Grounded British fighter jet flies back

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 22: The British F-35B fighter jet flew back on Tuesday after completing maintenance, more than a month after it made an emergency landing at the international airport here, and remained parked since then.

The jet, which took off at 10.50 am, flew to Darwin in Australia, air- port sources said.

"A UK F-35B aircraft, which landed following an emergency diversion on June 14, departed today from Thiruvananthapuram International Airport. A UK engineering team, deployed since July 06 completed the repairs and safety checks, allowing the aircraft to resume active service," a British High Commission spokesperson said.

In a statement, the spokesperson said the UK remains very grateful for the support and collaboration of the Indian authorities and airport teams throughout the repair and recovery process.

"We look forward to continuing to strengthen our defence partnership with India," the statement said. The jet was brought out of the hangar and kept at the airport bay on Monday.

Sources said a 14-member team of engineers from the UK, who carried out repairs on the fighter jet, will depart on Wednesday aboard a special aircraft, the Globemaster.

They said the British jet was kept at the Air India hangar throughout its stay.

While the airport sources confirmed that landing charges, daily rent, and parking fees amounting to ₹ 5 - ₹ 6 lakh had been paid, there was no confirmation regarding any payment made to Air India.

The British Royal Navy F-35B Lightning fighter jet is part of the UK's most advanced stealth fleet.

Known to be one of the most advanced fighter aircraft in the world and worth over USD 110 million, the jet (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

'Aadhaar, voter, ration cards considered only for identification': EC justifies SIR in Bihar

NEW DELHI, July 22: The Election Commission of India has justified its ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar saying it adds to the purity of the election by "weeding out ineligible persons" from the electoral rolls.

The affidavit filed by the poll panel in a plea challenging June 24 order directing SIR of electoral roll pan-India starting from Bihar said despite legal concerns, Aadhaar, voter card and ration card were already being considered by the commission for the limited purpose of identity during the SIR-2025 exercise.

"The SIR exercise adds to the purity of elections by weeding out ineligible persons from the electoral roll. The entitlement to vote flows from Article 326 read with Sections 16 and 19 of the RP Act 1950 and Section 62 of the RP Act 1951 which contains certain qualifications with respect to citizenship, age, and ordinary residency. An ineligible person has no right to vote, and thus, cannot claim a violation of Articles 19 and 21 in this regard," the poll panel said in a detailed affidavit.

It referred to the July 17 order of the top court asking the ECI to consider Aadhaar, voter and ration cards for the purpose of SIR-2025.

"In addition to the legal concerns already articulated hereinabove, these documents are, in fact, already

being considered by the Commission for the limited purpose of identity, during the SIR process," it said.

The ECI continued, "A bare perusal of the enumeration form issued under the SIR Order reveals that the Aadhaar number may be voluntarily furnished by a person furnishing the enumeration form. Such information is utilised for the purpose of identification, in accordance with Section 23(4) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and Section 9 of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016."

Section 23(4) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 stipulates the "electoral registration officer may for the purpose of establishing the identity of any person require that such person may furnish the Aadhaar number given by the Unique Identification Authority of India as per the provisions of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016".

On the other hand, Section 9 of the 2016 Act says Aadhaar number is not evidence of citizenship or domicile, etc.

The poll panel said each and every existing elector, other than migrants who are temporarily absent from Bihar, are provided with their pre-filled enumeration forms at their homes, by Booth Level Officers (BLO), in person. "That each and (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

One dead, 12 injured in two separate road accidents

KAJALGAON/TEZPUR, July 22: One person was killed and 12 others were injured in two separate road accidents in Assam on Tuesday, officials said.

In a chain accident involving six vehicles in Chirang district, one person was killed and five others were injured, while seven more people sustained injuries in Sonitpur district in a head-on collision between an oil tanker and an SUV.

A senior official of the Chirang district administration told PTI that multiple vehicles collided on National Highway-27 at Kashikotra, resulting in massive road blockage that affected traffic for several hours on Tuesday.

"A car stopped seeing a big snake crossing the highway. Several other vehicles also stopped. However, a speeding gas tanker could not stop and rammed all the vehicles in front of it," she added.

The impact was so huge that a passenger tempo van flew and fell

in the nearby bushes, while one car was transformed into a mangled heap of metal, the officer said.

"One person died on the spot and five were critically injured. All have been taken to nearby hospital for treatment," she added.

Besides the gas tanker, the accident involved another truck, two hatchbacks, one sedan and one tempo.

In the other accident, seven people were injured in a head-on collision between an oil tanker and an SUV in Assam's Sonitpur district on Tuesday, officials said.

The accident took place at Depota Na-Ali in Tezpur in the morning, they said.

"The oil tanker was heading towards Tezpur from Dhekiajuli direction on NH-15. The SUV-cum-pickup van was coming from the opposite direction, carrying vegetables and fish," an official said. Seven people, including the driver of (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

India records nearly fourfold rise in annual organ transplants since 2013: Govt

NEW DELHI, July 22: The total number of organ transplants performed annually in the country has increased from 4,990 in 2013 to 18,910 in 2024 due to consistent efforts over the years, Minister of State for Health Prataprao Jadhav informed the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

In a written reply, Jadhav said the number of deceased donor organ transplants has risen from 837 in 2013 to 3,403 in 2024, while the organ donation rate (deceased donors per million population) has improved from 0.27 to 0.81 during the same period.

The number of deceased organ donors has grown from 340 in 2013 to 1,128 in 2024, he said.

"India currently ranks third globally in total organ transplants and stands first in living donor organ transplants," Jadhav stated.

To strengthen the organ trans-



plantation ecosystem, states are encouraged to identify gaps and take proactive measures. They can seek assistance from the Centre through the National Organ Transplant Programme (NOTP), he said.

Under NOTP, financial grants are provided to states based on proposals received for establishing Regional Organ and Tissue Transplant

Organisations (ROTOs) and State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisations (SOTTOs). The programme also supports infrastructure development in public sector facilities for setting up transplant or retrieval centres and tissue banks.

Funding is also extended for hiring transplant coordinators in government (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

Manuscripts presented include the 'Kirtan Ghosha', 'Adi Dasham', 'Nam Ghoxa'

'Sanchipat' manuscripts gifted to Rashtrapati Bhavan for preservation

GUWAHATI, July 22: The Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra Society on Tuesday handed over a collection of five ancient 'sanchipat' manuscripts to the Rashtrapati Bhavan library for preservation and display, officials said.

During a ceremony, Kalakshetra Secretary Sudarshan Thakur handed over the manuscripts to Rashtrapati Bhavan Secretary Dipti Umashankar, they said.

The Guwahati-based Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra Society co-ordinated with various 'Satras' (Vaishnavite monasteries) across Assam to collect the 'sanchipat' manuscripts, an official release said.

The manuscripts presented include the 'Kirtan Ghosha', composed by Mahapurush Srimanta



Sankardeva. 'Adi Dasham' - Srimanta Sankardeva's poetic translation based on the 10th skandha of the Bhagavata Purana - has also

been donated.

'Nam Ghoxa' by Mahapurush Shri Shri Madhavdeva, and 'Bhakti Ratnavali' by the Vishnupuri monks and translated into Assamese by Mahapurush Shri Shri Madhavdeva, are also part of the manuscripts donated.

Moreover, a 'sanchipat' manuscript of 'Geet Govinda', originally composed in Sanskrit by Jayadeva and translated into Assamese by poet Kabiraj Chakravarti in the royal court of Swargadeo Rudra Singha, has also been presented to Rashtrapati Bhavan library for its preservation and display.

"It is hoped that through this significant step, the rich heritage of the Assamese language will gain a new momentum," Thakur said. (PTI)

Stock markets close flat in volatile trade; Eternal jumps nearly 11 pc

MUMBAI, July 22: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed almost unchanged in a volatile trade on Tuesday as gains in quick commerce and private banking shares were offset by losses in oil & gas and IT shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 13.53 points or 0.02 per cent down at 82,186.81. During the morning trade, it climbed 337.83 points or 0.41 per cent to 82,538.17 but lost momentum later.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dipped 29.80 points or 0.12 per cent to settle at 25,060.90.

Lack of clarity over the US-India trade deal ahead of the August 1 deadline and profit booking by FIIs hit the market sentiment, experts said.

Among Sensex firms, Eternal jumped the most by 10.56 per cent in a post-result rally. Food delivery and quick commerce firm Eternal, which owns the Zomato and Blinkit brands, on Monday reported a consolidated net profit of ₹ 25 crore for the June quarter, as continuing investments in quick commerce and going-out businesses weighed on its bottom line.

Titan rose by over 1 per cent while HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank extended gains after their quarterly results.



Hindustan Unilever, Bharat Electronics, Maruti, ICICI Bank and Mahindra & Mahindra were also among the gainers.

However, Tata Motors, Adani Ports, State Bank of India and Reliance Industries were among the laggards.

"The market's attention is on quarterly earnings, which slowed lately after some traction from banking stocks. Positivity noticed on Friday and Monday tapered ahead of the critical August 1st deadline of US trade agreement."

"Upside in Q1 earnings will be the

critical point to sustain the current premium valuations. Continued profit-booking by FIIs exerts downward pressure, while steady inflows from DIIs could support for a range-bound movement with a positive bias towards Q1 results and trade deal," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE midcap gauge declined 0.62 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.17 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, realty dropped 1.01 per cent, followed by telecommunication (0.87 per cent),

auto (0.78 per cent), IT (0.53 per cent) and tech (0.53 per cent).

Consumer discretionary emerged as the only gainer.

Markets remained range-bound and ended almost flat, indicating a pause amid mixed signals. The market continues to lack clear direction amid mixed earnings announcements and muted global cues, Ajit Mishra SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

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

European markets were trading mostly lower. The US markets ended mostly higher on Monday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,681.23 crore on Monday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth ₹ 3,578.43 crore, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dropped 0.97 per cent to USD 68.54 a barrel. On Monday, the Sensex climbed 442.61 points or 0.54 per cent to settle at 82,200.34. The Nifty jumped 122.30 points or 0.49 per cent to 25,090.70. (PTI)

'PM Modi's short, focussed visit shows India invested in UK ties'

London, July 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's short but focussed visit to the UK highlights his commitment to this partnership and his willingness to keep it thriving as it is taken to the next level with a Free Trade Agreement, India's High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami said on Tuesday.

Speaking to PTI at India House in London on the eve of the PM's visit, Doraiswami said an extremely "detailed and ambitious" FTA document is in the final legal scrubbing phase to ensure it reflects the substance of what was agreed when negotiations concluded on May 6. All eyes will be on the FTA, which aims to double bilateral trade to USD 120 billion by 2030 and is expected to be formally signed off during Modi's meeting with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Thursday.

"We are working to finalise it; the objective is to have the Free Trade Agreement land," said Doraiswami.

"It is, of course, a detailed and ambitious document, which is probably our most ambitious Free Trade Agreement to date. So, there is effort that is required to make sure it's all accurate and covers everything that the two sides have actually agreed and reflects the substance of what people are expecting, as and when it lands. It will have a very important impact upon both economies and help drive growth in both countries," he said.

The envoy pointed out that the FTA, once signed and ratified by the UK Parliament, will give businesses a more predictable framework and stressed that it is not just about "tariff reductions" but also about improving the terms of trade.

"It includes customs arrangements on rules

of origin. It includes government procurement. And, of course, there is a huge and very important set of areas covered under services, which is a significant segment of both the British and the Indian economy," he shared.

Regarding the extremely truncated UK visit before the Prime Minister heads to the Maldives, Doraiswami admitted that the High Commission and the 1.8-million-strong diaspora would have liked all the "bells and whistles" of a longer tour, but reiterated that it suggests a great willingness to keep the India-UK partnership "thriving".

"The fact that he's so committed to this relationship should give our diaspora friends confidence here that the UK is such an important partner for us that the Prime Minister is willing to fly across all of this distance just to push the relationship forward, for a mere 24 hours. I think that's pretty incredible," said the envoy.

"The Prime Minister has consistently held the view that we must build ties with traditional and important partners. His willingness to travel a considerable distance for a short period of time, even when Parliament is in session... making a short but really focussed trip suggests to us that the Prime Minister places great emphasis on getting this relationship not just to maintain its current trajectory but to lift it to its next level," he said.

The Prime Minister, who will be accompanied by a business delegation, is also scheduled for an audience with King Charles III at one of the royal estates. During his visit to the UK in 2018, Modi and the then Prince of Wales jointly launched an Ayurvedic Centre of Excellence. (PTI)

Paytm posts first-ever profit of ₹ 122.5 crore in Q1 FY26

NEW DELHI, July 22: Fintech firm One97 Communications, which owns the Paytm brand, reported its first-ever consolidated net profit at ₹ 122.5 crore in the quarter ended June 2025, mainly on account of cost optimisation and an increase in payment revenue. Paytm had posted a net loss of ₹ 840 crore in the year-ago period.

"EBITDA and PAT turned profitable at ₹ 72 crore and ₹ 123 crore respectively, demonstrating AI-led operating leverage, disciplined cost structure and higher other income," Paytm said in a statement.

The company slashed marketing and promotional expenses by more than half to ₹ 99.8 crore during the reported quarter from ₹ 221.4 crore a year ago and ₹ 142.7 crore in the March 2025 quarter.

Paytm reduced employee benefits by about ₹ 300 crore or one-third to about ₹ 643 crore from ₹ 952.5 crore on a year-over-year basis.

While the company increased sales employee cost by 19 per cent on a YoY basis to ₹ 266 crore, it recorded a reduction in non-sales employee cost by 28 per cent YoY to ₹ 346 crore due to the use of artificial intelligence in various processes across its business.

Paytm's average number of sales employees increased by 23 per cent YoY basis to 38,945.

The consolidated revenue from operations in the reporting quarter increased by about 28 per cent to ₹ 1,917.5 crore from ₹ 1,501.6 crore in the June 2024 quarter mainly on account of an increase in payment processing margins.

"In the first quarter of FY'25, payment services revenue

(including other operating revenue) was up 23 per cent YoY at ₹ 1,110 crore. Net payment revenue was up 38 per cent YoY at ₹ 529 crore due to an increase in payment processing margin and device," the company said.

Paytm reported 27 per cent YoY increase in gross merchandise value to ₹ 5.39 lakh crore in the reported quarter.

The company said that merchant subscriptions were at an all-time high of 1.3 crore, an increase of 21 lakh YoY, on the back of high-quality devices and superior service network as of June 2025.

"To further strengthen tier-1 market position and expand in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, we are investing in expanding our sales network (sales people costs are up 19 per cent YoY)," the statement said.

During the reported quarter, Paytm said that average monthly transacting users (MTU) base reached 7.4 crore.

The company said that distribution of financial services revenue grew 100 per cent YoY to ₹ 561 crore, driven by continued expansion in merchant loans, trail revenue from Default Loss Guarantee (DLG) portfolio, and improvement in asset quality.

Paytm reported an 88 per cent decline in ESOP (employee stock ownership plan) costs to ₹ 30 crore from ₹ 169 crore in the March quarter and ₹ 247 crore a year ago. The company had made ESOP cost related adjustments in the March quarter when its CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma voluntarily surrendered his ESOPs. (PTI)

Rupee falls 7 paise to close at 86.38 against US dollar

MUMBAI, July 22: The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day down 7 paise at 86.38 against the US dollar on Tuesday, amid uncertainty over the US-India trade deal ahead of the August 1 deadline.

Forex traders said, all eyes are now on the outcome of India-US trade talks, especially as the August 1 deadline for potential tariffs on Indian exports draws near.

The weakness in the American currency and softening of crude oil prices supported the rupee at lower levels, while foreign fund outflows and a negative trend in domestic equities weighed on the local unit and restricted the upside.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 86.26 against the greenback and touched an intra-day high of 86.22 and a low of 86.41 against the greenback.

At the end of Tuesday's trading session, the local unit settled at 86.38, down 7 paise over its previous closing price. This was rupee's fifth straight session of decline since July 16 when the unit had lost 16 paise and ended at 85.92 against the dollar.

On Monday, the rupee depreciated 15 paise to close at 86.31 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on trade deal talks. However, weakness in the American currency and softening of crude oil prices may support the rupee at lower levels," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said.

Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities said the rupee depreciated for the fifth consecutive day, driven by risk-averse market sentiment and consistent dollar demand.

"Regional currencies remain range-bound as the dollar consolidates amid geopolitical uncertainties. Near-term, spot USD-INR has support at 85.95 and resistance at 86.70," he added.

Meanwhile, the US team will visit India in August for the next round of negotiations for the proposed bilateral trade agreement between the two countries, an official said on Monday.

India and the US teams concluded the fifth round of talks for the agreement last week in Washington.

These deliberations are important as both sides are looking at finalising an interim trade deal before August 1, which marks the end of the suspension period of Trump tariffs imposed on dozens of countries, including India (26 per cent).

If the discussions fail or get delayed, Indian exporters could face fresh pressure -- adding to the rupee's challenges. However, if a deal is reached, it could offer a much-needed breather. Until then, the uncertainty is likely to keep market participants cautious.

"Traders may remain cautious ahead of PMI and durable goods orders data from the US this week," Choudhary said, adding that USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 86.10 to 86.65.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.03 per cent to 97.82.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.94 per cent to USD 68.56 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 13.53 points, or 0.02 per cent, to close at 82,186.81, while the Nifty fell 29.80 points, or 0.12 per cent, to settle at 25,060.90.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 3,548.92 crore on a net basis on Tuesday, according to exchange data. (PTI)

Berger Paints prioritises sustainable growth, focuses on core segments

KOLKATA, July 22: Berger Paints India Ltd, the country's second-largest paint company, has reaffirmed its resilience amid intensifying competition and economic headwinds.

Chairman Rishma Kaur outlined a growth strategy centred on deeper customer alignment, technological transformation and innovation. The paint industry is witnessing intensified competition with new players entering the estimated Rs 1 lakh crore market alongside ongoing consolidation.

Addressing shareholders in the company's latest annual report, Rishma Kaur said, "At the heart of Berger Paints' enduring success lies a single-minded commitment: to deliver a differentiated and superior experience to our customers. This is not a one-time exercise but a continuous endeavour grounded in research, innovation, and execution."

She stressed that Berger has never chased market share through "unsustainable discounts or gimmicks," adding, "Our focus has always been on long-term value creation, building structures of confidence, systems of reliability, and a reputation grounded in integrity." (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

2,669,396 voters enrolled

of the elections. The electoral roll publication process in the remaining three districts—Baksa, Chirang, and Udalguri—also commenced on the same day, as part of the region-wide rollout.

Naga organisations in Manipur

several forms of protests, including "picketing of government offices in Naga inhabited areas have been undertaken along with protest rallies in Naga inhabited hill districts."

Serving a twenty-day ultimatum, the Naga organisations said "the government of India must revoke the notification/order related to the abrogation of the Free Movement Regime (FMR) immediately."

The government's revised border guidelines issued in December 2024 limit cross-border movement under FMR to just 10 km from the border and impose a "border pass" system. Under the earlier FMR, every member of the hill tribes, who is either a citizen of India or a citizen of Myanmar and who is resident of any area within 16 km on either side of the border, can cross over on production of a border pass with one year's validity and can stay up to two weeks per visit. (PTI)

Grounded British fighter jet

remained grounded at the international airport here since June 14 after it developed a technical snag. The aircraft, which took off from HMS Prince of Wales on June 14, was unable to return to the carrier due to adverse weather conditions.

Prioritising safety, it diverted to Thiruvananthapuram International Airport, where it landed safely.

Subsequently, the aircraft developed an engineering issue whilst on the ground, which temporarily delayed its return to the Carrier Strike Group. Engineers from HMS Prince of Wales assessed the aircraft and determined that the support of a UK-based engineering team was required.

The UK accepted India's offer to move the aircraft to the Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility. To ensure minimal disruption to regular airport operations, it was decided that the aircraft would be moved once the UK engineering teams arrived with specialist equipment.

The emergency landing by the British Royal Navy fighter jet at Thiruvananthapuram International Airport became the subject of countless memes, and even turned into a marketing opportunity for Kerala Tourism.

A poster shared by Kerala Tourism on its official 'X' handle went viral on social media. It featured a stylised image of the fighter jet parked against a dreamy Kerala backdrop -- coconut trees and lush greenery. A playful caption read: "Kerala is such an amazing place, I don't want to leave. Definitely recommend." The quote was humorously attributed to "UK F-35B." (PTI)

'Aadhaar, voter, ration cards

every existing elector has the same opportunity to provide all documents including proof of eligibility to the BLO at their place of residence. No elector is put through any hardship in comparison to the persons mentioned above. The same methodology has been utilised for all past SIRs as well. Moreover, the BLOs, BLAs (booth level agents), and volunteers are actively facilitating the obtaining of eligibility documents for all genuine electors who require assistance...." it said.

The poll panel further informed the court that as on July 18, of the 7,89,69,844 existing electors in Bihar, enumeration forms from 7,11,72,660 electors, constituting 90.12 per cent, had already been collected. "Accounting for deceased individuals, permanently shifted electors, and those enrolled in more than one place, the Form collection phase of the SIR has effectively covered 94.68 per cent of the nearly 7.9 crore-strong electorate in Bihar. The electorate who are untraceable despite multiple visits by the BLOs constitute a mere 0.01% of the total electors. As on July 18, 2025, only 5.2 percent electors remain to submit their filled EFs before the July 25 deadline," it said. (PTI)

One dead, 12 injured

the pickup van, were seriously injured and have been taken to the Tezpur Medical College and Hospital, he said. "Eye witnesses said the accident occurred when the pickup van was speeding and the driver lost control while negotiating a turn," he added. (PTI)

India records nearly fourfold

medical colleges and trauma centres, maintenance of deceased donors, organ transport, post-transplant immunosuppressant medication, and awareness, training, and capacity-building initiatives. Jadhav informed the House that people can avail the Kidney Transplantation Package under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) as part of the Ayushman Bharat programme.

In addition, financial assistance is provided under the Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN) for kidney, liver, heart, and lung transplants for patients living below the poverty line.

While health is a state subject, it is the responsibility of state governments to ensure the availability of required facilities and services for organ transplantation within their jurisdictions. Jadhav said. As per the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994 (THOTA), the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has set up a three-tier national network comprising the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO), ROTTOs, and SOTTOs.

NOTTO functions as the apex body for coordination, networking, and maintenance of the national registry for organ and tissue donation and transplantation. The NOTP, a Central Sector Scheme, aims to improve access to organ transplants through increased public awareness on deceased organ donation, streamlined organ procurement and distribution systems, public infrastructure development, and specialised manpower training, the minister added. (PTI)

Lloyds Metals to invest ₹ 40k cr more in Gadchiroli

MUMBAI, July 22: Lloyds Metals and Steel is targeting to invest over ₹ 40,000 crore to develop a steel plant and other units in Vidarbha's Gadchiroli district over the next five years, a top official said on Tuesday.

The law and order situation in the eastern Maharashtra district impacted by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) is improving, and attempts are essential to mainstream the youth, its managing director B Prabhakaran told PTI over the phone.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, who is also the guardian minister of the district, inaugurated a 90-km pipeline and a pellet plant built by the company in Gadchiroli earlier in the day.

"We have a ₹ 45,000 crore investment plan for the district, of which ₹ 5,000 crore has already been invested," Prabhakaran, who calls himself the 'managing director in residence,' he said.

When asked how it will fund the capital expenditure in Gadchiroli, Prabhakaran said it will depend on internal accruals and also raise fresh funds if need be.

He reminded that last year, it had raised over ₹ 4,000 crore from a qualified institutional placement of shares.

"At present, the company's as-

sets in the district include an iron ore mine in Surjagad, and the upcoming investments include a ₹ 15,000 crore 'beneficiation plant', having a capacity of 45 million tonnes per annum and ₹ 22,000 crore for a steel plant with a 4.5 million tonnes capacity," he added.

Prabhakaran said the company will be investing up to ₹ 5,000 crore per annum from here on, he said, adding that the overall employment generated by Lloyds will triple to 30,000 by the end of the investment cycle.

"Things are 'slowly changing' in the district, he said, adding that an already existing iron ore mine has been secured, using equipment of the kind used by the US in Afghanistan.

With a history of protests like the ones in Surjagad, Prabhakaran said the company is focusing on taking the local community, which explains investments in hospitals and schools locally.

He said nearly all the staff of the company have an equity stake in the company.

The concession for the mine was signed over 15 years ago, but operations began only after 2021, he said, blaming the Naxalite problem in the intervening time. (PTI)

Gold climbs to over ₹ 1 lakh/10 g, silver rallies ₹ 3,000 in Delhi

NEW DELHI, July 22: Gold prices climbed ₹ 1,000 to regain the ₹ 1 lakh per 10 grams level in the national capital on Tuesday due to strong buying by stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity soared four-week high of ₹ 1,00,020 per 10 grams from the previous close of ₹ 99,020 per 10 grams. Previously, gold traded at ₹ 1 lakh per 10 grams level on June 19. In the national capital, gold of 99.5 per cent purity appreciated by ₹ 1,000 to ₹ 99,550 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Tuesday. It had closed at ₹ 98,550 per 10 grams in the previous market close. In line with gold, silver prices too rallied by ₹ 3,000 to ₹ 1,14,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Tuesday. The white metal had ended at ₹ 1,11,000 per kg on Monday.

Meanwhile, spot gold slipped 0.28 per cent to trade at USD 3,387.42 per ounce in the global markets. "Gold traded in a narrow and volatile range between USD 3,395 and USD 3,383 on Comex, reflecting a lack of fresh triggers from trade deals or major global developments," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said. (PTI)



that this network spans MSRTC's fleet of over 16,000 buses, serving more than 13 crore passengers monthly across urban and rural Maharashtra.

"The newly-awarded National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) programme expands this partnership with a focus on smart and interoperable payments that will revolutionise how millions travel daily," it

said. "Spearheaded by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the initiative enables passengers to use a single smartcard across multiple transport modes, creating a truly integrated mobility ecosystem," Ebix said.

"With the NCMC rollout, we are not just introducing another payment method. We are fundamentally reimagining how citizens experience everyday travel across Maharashtra," a company spokesperson said. The project includes mandatory adoption of the NCMC smartcard for all concessional passengers and pass holders on MSRTC buses, with optional availability for regular passengers, a minimum business assurance of 70 lakh NCMC cards to be sold in the first year alone, scaling to over 2 crore cards issued statewide through a network of 3,000 dedicated retail outlets established by Ebix Technologies, among others. (PTI)

What to know about nonhormonal birth control

By: Lana Barhum

Some common types of birth control contain hormones such as estrogen and progesterone. While these types of birth control tend to be highly effective, there are various reasons a person may not be able to or want to use them.

Nonhormonal birth control options range from barrier methods to sterilization and other methods, such as natural family planning. The effectiveness of these methods also ranges depending on the method and how it is used.

This article explores 11 types of hormone-free birth control options and their effectiveness.

Barrier methods

Barrier methods of birth control prevent sperm from entering the uterus. People only use these methods during sexual intercourse, and people should use them correctly every time they have sex.

Some barrier methods can be purchased over the counter, whereas others require a prescription from a healthcare professional.

Barrier methods typically have fewer side effects compared to hormonal birth control options.

Diaphragm

The diaphragm is a small, flexible cup made of silicone. A person inserts the diaphragm into their vagina to cover the cervix.

According to Planned Parenthood, the diaphragm is 94% effective if used correctly every single time.

However, the real-life accuracy rate is around 83%, which means about 17 people out of 100 will still get pregnant using the diaphragm.

Diaphragms should be used along with spermicide. It can be applied to the diaphragm and around the edges before insertion. Spermicide comes in creams and gels. It destroys sperm and reduces the chances of pregnancy.

Doctors prescribe and fit most diaphragms. These birth control options are effective immediately. A person can use reusable devices for up to 2 years. If inserted correctly, neither partner should feel it during sex.

Diaphragms are most often prescribed and fitted by a healthcare professional. However, one-size diaphragms that fit most people are also available.

Diaphragms remain in place for 6 hours after sex, but not for more than 24 hours. If a person has sex again during the 24 hours, they should reapply spermicide and then wait another 6 hours before removing the diaphragm.

A diaphragm does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and individuals cannot use them during their period.

Cervical cap

The cervical cap is a small silicone cup that a person inserts into their vagina, fitting over the cervix. It is similar to the diaphragm but smaller. The only cervical cap available in the United States is available under the brand name, FemCap, which comes in three sizes.

According to Planned Parenthood, the failure rate for the FemCap is roughly 14% for people who have never given birth and 29% for those who have had a vaginal delivery.

The cervical cap does not contain hormones and can be inserted before sex. A person can use the same cap for up to 2 years. People should always use spermicide gel with the cervical cap to ensure its protective qualities. Much like the diaphragm, it requires a prescription, a doctor must fit it, and it is not suitable for use during periods.

As with the diaphragm, the cervical cap should be left in place for 6 hours after sex. Unlike the diaphragm, the cervical cap can stay in longer, up to 48 hours total. A person does not need to reapply spermicide again if they have sex more than once during this timeframe.

Spermicides

Spermicides are placed in the vagina before sexual intercourse to stop sperm from entering the uterus. They are available in creams, gels, and suppositories.

Spermicides have a failure rate of 21% Trusted Source with typical use, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). However, effectiveness increases when used with other methods, such as the diaphragm or cervical cap.

This method is easy to use, does not require a prescription, and is inexpensive. Some people might experience side effects, such as irritation and allergic reactions.

External condoms

The external, or male, condom is an effective way to guard against STIs.

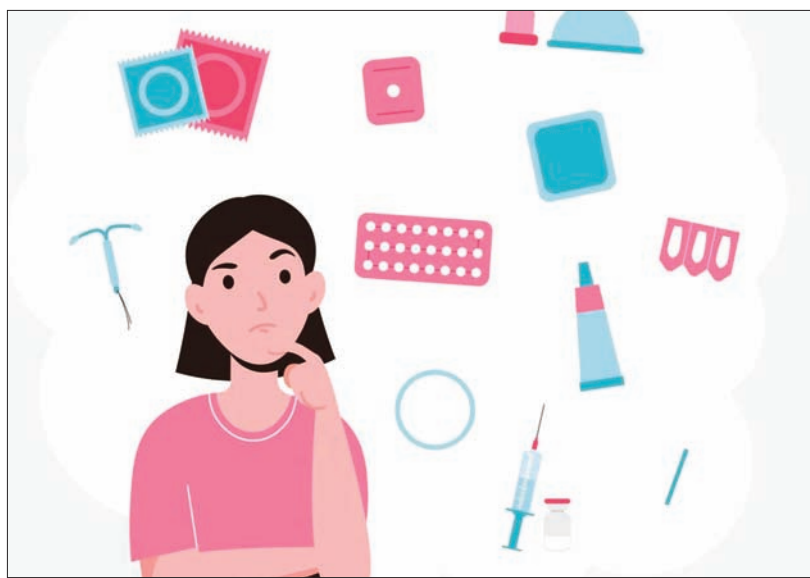
It is also effective in preventing pregnancy by keeping semen from entering the vagina.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Trusted Source, when people use male condoms correctly, they are 98% effective in preventing pregnancy.

The external condom is simple to use and safe. It is also convenient, inexpensive, easy to source, and does not require a prescription.

Condoms are not as effective as some other methods of birth control, and people need to use them every single time they have sex.

Some individuals are allergic to latex, and some people find condoms make sex less enjoyable by limiting sensation or re-



quiring more lubricant.

When people are using a lubricant with condoms, they should choose a water-soluble or silicone variety, as oil-based lubricants can break down latex condoms.

Internal condom

The internal, or female condom, is a strong, thin protective covering with a ring on each side to hold it in place. It can protect against pregnancy and STIs.

According to the WHO Trusted Source, when people use the female condom correctly, it is 95% effective in protecting against pregnancy.

The internal condom contains no hormones, is available without a prescription, and is inexpensive. They are latex-free, they can increase sexual pleasure, and they can give a person control over the use of birth control and condoms with a sexual partner.

However, the outer rings of the female condom may cause irritation, and many people feel it reduces feeling. Female condoms usually cost twice as much as male condoms.

The sponge

The sponge is made of plastic foam and contains spermicide. A person inserts it into their vagina before sexual intercourse. It has a nylon loop for easy removal afterward. It is available at most drugstores and does not require a prescription.

The sponge prevents pregnancy by covering the cervix so that sperm cannot enter. It also releases spermicide to immobilize sperm.

According to Planned Parenthood, the birth control sponge is least effective in people who have previously been pregnant.

In people who have never been pregnant, the failure rate is 9% when used

correctly each time, and 14% with regular use. For people who have been pregnant before, the failure rate is 20% with ideal use and 22% with regular use.

The sponge carries an increased risk of yeast infection and toxic shock syndrome and should not be left in the vagina for more than 30 hours total. Vaginal dryness and allergic reactions are common side effects.

Phexxi

A newer nonhormonal birth control method is a prescription vaginal gel sold under the brand name Phexxi.

Phexxi is put into the vagina up to an hour Trusted Source before having sex using a prefilled applicator. It starts working immediately and is effective for up to 1 hour. It is not effective if a person uses it after having sex.

Phexxi prevents pregnancy by lowering the pH level in the vagina. This makes it difficult for sperm to move, decreasing the chance for sperm to meet the egg.

Planned Parenthood states that with perfect use, Phexxi is 93% effective. However, it is 86% effective with typical use. A person should make sure to follow the instructions closely. Phexxi is suitable for use with some other birth control methods, such as condoms or a diaphragm.

It is important to note that this method does not protect against STDs. However, it is safe to use while nursing.

There are some side effects associated with Phexxi, including:

- Bacterial vaginosis
- Vaginal burning, irritation, or itching
- Yeast infections
- Urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Vaginal discharge
- Allergic reaction

A person should speak with a healthcare professional for further information.

Long-term and permanent solutions

There are some long-term and permanent nonhormonal options that are safe and effective for most people.

Paragard

In the United States, this nonhormonal intrauterine device (IUD) is available under the brand name Paragard. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), less than 1 out of 100 people using Paragard get pregnant each year.

Paragard is hormone-free and prevents pregnancy for up to 10 years. It takes only a few minutes for a doctor to insert the device into the uterus. Once in place, the thin copper IUD causes an inflammatory reaction inside the uterus that prevents sperm from reaching the egg.

Paragard can be a good option for people who do not want to worry about daily or weekly birth control reminders or who do not want to use hormonal birth control. This method is completely reversible. A healthcare professional can remove Paragard at any time if a person decides they want to get pregnant or do not want to use it anymore.

Paragard does not protect against STIs.

Side effects include:

- Cramping
- Heavy periods
- Spotting between periods

Sterilization

For people who want a permanent birth control method, sterilization may be an option. The procedure involves surgery that is difficult to reverse, and it will not protect against STIs.

For females, the surgical procedure is called tubal ligation, and for males, vasectomy surgery provides permanent sterilization.

When done correctly, these methods are highly effective in preventing pregnancy.

Another method of sterilization was available in the United States under the brand name Essure. It is a uterine device that does not require surgery, is hormone-free, and is fitted in a doctor's office without general anesthesia.

The Essure device is a tiny spring-like device that a doctor inserts through the vagina to each fallopian tube. The mesh substance of Essure inflames the fallopian tubes, causing permanent scarring and blockage of the tubes over time.

According to the FDA Trusted Source, as of December 2019, Essure is no longer available for implantation in the United States. However, people who have been using the device as birth control successfully can continue to do so.

Other methods

While barrier methods and long-term birth control are popular options in the United States, some people prefer alternative hormone-free birth control.

Withdrawal method

The withdrawal method is the oldest form of birth control, but it is not the most effective. Withdrawal involves a person pulling their penis out of the vagina before ejaculation.

According to Planned Parenthood, with perfect use, the method is 96% effective. However, this is a difficult method to use perfectly. Typical use is 78% effective. This means a little over 1 in 5 people who use this method will become pregnant.

Natural family planning

Some people may wish to try natural family planning or fertility awareness methods. It involves tracking the menstrual cycle to work out when a person is ovulating. While a person is ovulating, they should use barrier methods if they wish to prevent pregnancy.

According to Planned Parenthood, there are three main methods:

- Temperature: A person takes their temperature every morning.
- Cervical mucus: A person checks their vaginal discharge every day.
- Calendar: A person records their menstrual cycle on a calendar.

A person can use one or more of these methods — a combination of all three is the most effective. Failure rates are between 12 and 24% depending on which method a person uses. Success rates are higher if a person uses a combination.

Natural Cycles, an app that is used for fertility awareness, has FDA approval.

However, it is important to note that natural family planning can be difficult, and a person may wish to consider a more effective method.

How to choose a nonhormonal birth control method

A person may wish to consider the following when choosing a nonhormonal birth control method:

- How much does it cost?
- How long does it last?
- Does it require a prescription?
- How effective is it?
- Does it protect against STIs?
- How much do efficacy rates vary between perfect and typical use?
- Are there any side effects?
- Is it easy to use long term?

Summary

Deciding on a birth control method is a personal choice.

Each person should consider how birth control fits into their lifestyle and pick a method that is effective, safe, and convenient. It is also important to consider that some methods reduce the risk of STIs, and others do not.

People seeking information about birth control methods may also consider consulting a healthcare professional for further advice. (Courtesy: MNT)

The Power of Grandma's Love

By: Vinod Chandrashekar Dixit

3rd July is celebrated as the National Gorgeous Grandma Day. The Day embraces the age of the nana and encourages all women to flaunt their granny attitudes with purpose and style. The word 'grandmother' seems so ageing. A key part of the image of grandmas is that they are old, however that is defined. But not only do many older women not feel old, many are indeed not that old at all. For these, telling other people that they are a grandma's brings a pleasurable response. Most of us have been blessed with grandmas. But, some of us are lucky enough to have spent more time with them compared to others. Grandmas are a blessing in disguise as they shower our love on us and guide us through the right path. As children grow up they always look up to someone special in their life, someone that they can trust and is always there for them. This person is someone they admire and hope to be like someday. The only real aim of grandma's life is service and sacrifice and she deserves appreciation, love and respect in our family. The busiest member of our family is our grandma and she is the most significant wheel within the family vehicle. The most evolutionary fit grandmas have the most grandchildren, to whom they pass on their longevity-promoting genes.

Grandma is important to my life, and shows us what is the most valuable in life. From what people struggle with can change our aspect in life. It can teach people that their families can struggle with similar things and they can have the best advice and knowledge to help. No other woman in our life will quite compare to our grandma. She's the ultimate friend, and she always has the best advice to offer us. Grandmas love everything and everyone. She will love almost every significant other we bring home, even if he or she is absolutely unfit for us. Grandmas have an unconditional love for their grandchildren. They have a number of possible roles in their grandchildren's lives. Grandmas have reached a point in their lives where they don't take life too seriously. Our grandma will laugh at all of our jokes and will teach us how to not sweat the small stuff. One source of the image of a grandma is a woman's own grandma. Some have strong memories and feel that they have been influenced by the nature of their own grandmother. Believe it or not, our grandmas can help us see our parents in a different light through anecdotes and stories to tell — stories that we will enjoy and even treasure.

With decades more of life experience



under their belts, the best advice can sometimes come from our grandmas, who can then set us on the right path. Grandmas have made it too far in life to give up on anything. As grandchildren, it is our duty to care for and appreciate the seniors in our family. The time we have on this earth is short, but the time we have with our grandparents is even shorter.

Why education must lead to employment for women in India

By: Tripti Somani

Despite notable progress in female literacy and higher education, women's participation in the Indian workforce remains alarmingly low. According to the Women Empowerment Principles (WEP), female literacy in India has crossed 77 per cent, and women now account for 48 per cent of higher education enrollment. Yet, the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) stood at just 41.7 per cent in 2023-24 — significantly below the global average. This stark disparity reveals a troubling disconnect between educational attainment and actual employment outcomes.

The real issue lies in what happens after women complete their education. While colleges and universities proudly highlight rising female enrollment, few track or support how many of these women transition into formal jobs, entrepreneurship, or leadership roles. This oversight undermines the productive potential of nearly half the country's population.

According to WEP data, only 20 per cent of academically strong female graduates enter the formal workforce or launch businesses. Clearly, qualifications alone are not enough — there is a pressing need for a more support-

ive ecosystem to help women take the next step in their professional journey.

One practical and impactful solution is to include a "conversion rate" — the percentage of students, particularly women, who transition from education to employment or entrepreneurship — as a critical parameter in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).

By integrating this into institutional rankings, colleges and universities would be incentivised to move beyond academics and focus on real-world outcomes. It's not enough to admit and educate women; institutions must also enable their success in the workforce.

To bridge this transition gap, educational institutions must proactively offer structured career counseling, entrepreneurship training, and mentorship programs.

Leadership development courses designed specifically for women can help build confidence, develop community-building skills, and nurture ambition — equipping them to take on impactful roles and inspire others.

Although the FLFPR has shown a slight uptick in recent years, much of this growth comes from self-employment or unpaid family work, especially in rural India. These forms of employment are often unsustainable and do not guarantee financial inde-

pendence.

In urban settings, while women hold 31 per cent of entry-level jobs, their representation drops dramatically to just 13 per cent in leadership roles. This gender imbalance not only reflects deep-rooted structural issues but also poses a significant roadblock to India's aspiration of becoming a developed nation, or Viksit Bharat.

Research shows that closing the gender gap in employment could add up to \$770 billion to India's GDP, significantly accelerating the country's progress toward becoming a \$5 trillion economy. Ensuring equal workforce participation for women is not just a matter of fairness — it is a strategic economic imperative. It's time for accountability. Educational institutions must take responsibility not just for degrees awarded, but for the real-life outcomes of their graduates.

By incorporating conversion rates into NIRF rankings, we can begin to reshape the higher education landscape into one that actively empowers women to succeed in the workforce. This is not just a policy recommendation — it is a call to action.

If institutions and authorities align their goals with this vision, "women empowerment" will move from being a slogan to a measurable reality. India's economic engine can no longer

afford to run on half its potential. The journey to inclusive growth starts where careers begin: in our colleges and universities.

Conclusion

India stands at a critical juncture where empowering women in the workforce is not just a moral imperative but a strategic economic necessity.

Despite high literacy rates and increasing female enrollment in higher education, the low Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) exposes a serious gap between education and employability. Introducing "conversion rate" as a metric in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) can hold institutions accountable for ensuring women transition from classrooms to careers.

By offering career counseling, entrepreneurship support, and leadership training, colleges can become true catalysts of change.

Sustainable economic growth, especially the vision of a \$5 trillion economy and a Viksit Bharat, depends on fully utilizing the potential of India's women. Bridging this gap could add up to \$770 billion to India's GDP. The time to act is now — when we empower women to lead, we empower India to grow stronger, faster, and more equitably. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

Francesca Albanese speaks more truth to power

By: Dr Ramzy Baroud

Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in occupied Palestine, stands as a testament to the notion of speaking truth to power. This "power" is not solely embodied by Israel or even the US, but by an international community whose collective relevance has tragically failed to stem the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

Her latest report, "From Economy of Occupation to Economy of Genocide," submitted to the UN Human Rights Council last week, marks a seismic intervention. It unflinchingly names and implicates companies that have not only allowed Israel to sustain its war and genocide against Palestinians, but also confronts those who have remained silent in the face of this unfolding horror.

Albanese's "Economy of Genocide" is far more than an academic exercise or a mere moral statement in a world whose collective conscience is being brutally tested in Gaza. The report is significant for multiple interlocking reasons. Crucially, it offers practical pathways to accountability that transcend diplomatic and legal rhetoric. It also presents a novel approach to international law, positioning it not as a delicate political balancing act, but as a potent tool to confront complicity in war crimes and expose the profound failures of the existing international mechanisms in Gaza. There is vital context that is necessary to understand the significance of this report, which is considered a searing indictment of direct corporate involvement, not only in the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza but Israel's overall settler-colonial project. In February 2020, following years of delay, the UN Human Rights Council released a database that listed 112 companies involved in business activities within illegal Israeli settlements in the Oc-

cupied Territories. The database exposed several corporate giants for helping Israel maintain its military occupation and apartheid. This was particularly earth-shattering considering the UN's consistent failure to rein in Israel or hold accountable those who sustain its war crimes in Palestine. The publication of the database was an important step that allowed civil societies to mobilize around a specific set of priorities, thus pressuring corporations and individual governments to take morally guided positions. The effectiveness of that strategy was clearly detected through the exaggerated and angry reactions of the US and Israel.

The US said it was an attempt by "the discredited" council "to fuel economic retaliation," while Israel called it a "shameful capitulation" to pressure. The Israeli war on Gaza, starting on Oct. 7, 2023, however, serves as a stark reminder of the utter failure of all existing UN mechanisms to achieve even the most modest expectations of feeding a starving population during a time of genocide. Tellingly, this was the same conclusion offered by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who, in September 2024, stated that the world had "failed the people of Gaza."

This failure continued for many more months and was highlighted by the UN's inability to even manage aid distribution in the Strip, with Israel and the US instead entrusting the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, a violent, mercenary-run apparatus that has killed and wounded thousands of Palestinians. Albanese herself, of course, had already reached a similar conclusion when, in November 2023, she confronted the international community for "epically failing" to stop the war.

Albanese's new report goes a step further, this time appealing to the whole of humanity to take a moral stance and confront those that have made the genocide possible. "Commercial endeavors

enabling and profiting from the obliteration of innocent people's lives must cease," the report declares, pointedly demanding that "corporate entities must refuse to be complicit in human rights violations and international crimes or be held to account." In the report, the categories of complicity in the genocide are divided into arms manufacturers, tech firms, building and construction companies, extractive and service industries, banks, pension funds, insurers, universities, and charities.

Their collective technological know-how, machinery and data collection has allowed Israel to kill, to date, more than 57,000 and wound 134,000 in Gaza, while also maintaining its apartheid regime in the West Bank. What Albanese's report tries to do is not merely name and shame Israel's genocide partners, but to tell us, as civil society, that we now have a comprehensive frame of reference that allows us to make responsible decisions and pressure and hold accountable these corporate giants.

"The ongoing genocide has been a profitable venture," Albanese writes, citing Israel's massive surge in military spending, estimated at 65 percent from 2023 to 2024 — reaching \$46.5 billion. Israel's seemingly infinite military budget is a strange loop of money, originally provided by the US government, then recycled back through American corporations, thus spreading the wealth between governments, politicians, corporations and numerous contractors. As bank accounts swell, more Palestinian bodies are piled up in morgues and mass graves or are scattered in the streets of Jabaliya and Khan Younis. This madness needs to stop and, since the UN is incapable of stopping it, then individual governments, civil society organizations and ordinary people must do the job, because the lives of Palestinians should be of far greater value than corporate profits and greed. (Courtesy: The Citizen)

Middle East joint statement sparks debate

Australia's Parliament resumes with pro-Palestinian protests, calls for Israel sanctions

MELBOURNE, July 22: Australia's Parliament resumed Tuesday for the first time since the centre-left Labour Party won one of the nation's largest-ever majorities in the May elections. The day was largely ceremonial, with reminders of conflict in the Middle East.

Hundreds of pro-Palestinian demonstrators gathered outside Parliament House on Tuesday, calling for the government to impose sanctions on Israel after Australia joined another 27 countries in issuing a joint statement, saying the war in Gaza "must end now."

Security guards prevented 15 demonstrators from entering the public gallery of the Senate while Attorney-General Sam Mostyn, who represents Australia's head of state King Charles III, was giving a speech to lawmakers on Tuesday afternoon, Australian Broadcasting Corp reported.

But Sen Mehreen Faruqi, deputy leader of the minor party Australian Greens, made a silent protest by holding up a sign in the chamber during Mostyn's speech that said: "Gaza is starving, words won't feed them, sanction Israel."

Australia has imposed financial and travel sanctions on individual Israelis, including government ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich. But the Australian government has not imposed wider sanctions on the state.

Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke described the joint statement as the strongest



words his government had used on the Middle East conflict.

"When you can make a statement together with so many other significant powers, then we're all hoping that there'll be something that will break this," Burke told ABC.

"What we are watching on the other side of the world is indefensible. The hostages still need to be released, but the war needs to end," Burke added. But senior opposition lawmaker Jonathon Duniam described Australia joining 27 other nations in signing the statement as "alarming."

"There is more to this issue than this letter betrays and I think it is a sad turn of events

for our government to have joined with other countries in signing this letter," Duniam said. Australia's 48th Parliament was opened with Indigenous ceremonies in Parliament House on a day that was otherwise steeped in centuries of British Westminster political tradition.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese thanked the traditional owners of the national capital, Canberra, at a Welcome to Country ceremony. He noted that such ceremonies performed by Indigenous people to welcome visitors to their traditional land at the start of a new parliament had been introduced by a Labor government in 2007.

"In the 48th Parliament, we write the next chapter. Let us do it with the same sense of grace and courage that First Nations people show us with their leadership," Albanese said.

Biggest Australian government majority since 1996

Labour won 94 seats in the 150-seat House of Representatives, where governments are formed. Labour's majority is the largest since Prime Minister John Howard's conservative coalition won 94 seats in 1996, when the lower chamber had only 148 seats.

Howard stayed in power for almost 12 years, and Albanese is the first prime minister since then to lead a party to consecutive election victories, following an extraordinary era of political instability.

The main opposition Liberal Party has elected its first woman leader, Sussan Ley, after one of the party's worst election results on record.

Her conservative coalition holds 43 seats in the House, while independent lawmakers and minor parties that are not aligned with either the government or opposition hold 13.

No party holds a majority in the 76-seat Senate. Labour holds 29 seats and the conservatives 27 seats. The Australian Greens hold 10 seats, which is the next largest bloc.

The government will likely prefer to negotiate with the conservatives or Greens to get legislation through the Senate, rather than deal with multiple minor parties and independents. (AP)

Zelenskyy renews offer to meet with Putin as officials say Russian attacks kill child in Ukraine

KYIV, July 22: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday renewed his offer to meet with Russian leader Vladimir Putin and negotiate an end to the war in Ukraine, as delegations from both governments prepared to hold a third round of direct talks.

Russian forces, meanwhile, pounded three Ukrainian cities in nighttime attacks that officials said killed a child.

Putin has spurned Zelenskyy's previous offers of a face-to-face meeting to end Europe's biggest conflict since World War II.

But the Ukrainian leader insists that lower-level delegations like

ones.

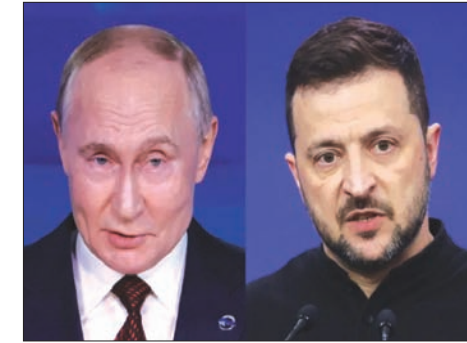
Zelenskyy said that at the next Istanbul talks, Ukraine wants to secure the release of more prisoners from Russian captivity and the return of children Ukraine says were abducted.

The Ukrainian delegation will be headed by former Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, who is now the secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine. It will include representatives of Ukrainian intelligence, the Foreign Affairs Ministry, and the president's office, Zelenskyy said.

Russian forces struck four Ukrainian cities in three regions

in overnight attacks, killing a child and wounding at least 24 other people, officials said Tuesday, a day before a planned third round of direct peace talks between delegations from Moscow and Kyiv.

From dusk on Monday evening, Russia struck the Ukrainian regions of Sumy in the northeast, Odesa in the



the ones expected for talks in Istanbul on Wednesday don't have the political heft to stop the fighting, when each side's demands on ending Russia's full-scale invasion, launched on Feb. 24, 2022, of its neighbor remain so far apart.

"Ukraine never wanted this war, and it is Russia that must end the war that it itself started," Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post.

Zelenskyy's announcement late Monday that the negotiations would take place generated little hope that they would deliver any progress on ending the war. That is despite the Trump administration's efforts to push forward peace efforts, which have stalled because Putin is reluctant to budge from his demands.

The previous two rounds were held in Istanbul, and Russian media reports said that the Turkish city likely would also host the meeting this time. The talks in May and June led to a series of exchanges of prisoners of war and the bodies of fallen soldiers, but produced no other agreements.

The war has continued unabated, meanwhile. Russia is driving hard to break through at eastern and northeastern points on the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line. It is also firing upwards of 700 drones a night at Ukrainian

south and eastern Kramatorsk.

In Kramatorsk, a glide bomb hit an apartment building, starting a fire, according to the head of the city's military administration, Oleksandr Honcharenko. A boy born in 2015 was killed, local officials said, without giving his exact age. Five other people were reported wounded.

The Sumy region came under multiple waves of attacks, the regional military administration reported. A drone hit a gas station in the town of Putyvl, wounding four people, including a 5-year-old boy, it said. A second drone strike hit the same location less than two hours later, wounding seven other people.

After dark, two powerful Russian glide bombs were dropped on Sumy city, wounding 13 people, including a 6-year-old boy. According to regional authorities, five apartment buildings, two private homes and a shopping mall were damaged in the attack. The blasts shattered windows and destroyed balconies in residential buildings, acting Mayor Artem Kobzar said.

Russia's Defence Ministry, meanwhile, said Tuesday that air defences downed 35 Ukrainian long-range drones over several regions overnight, including three over the Moscow region. (AP)

Australian Parliament resumes after Labor's landslide election victory

MELBOURNE, July 22: Australia's Parliament resumed Tuesday for the first time since the centre-left Labor Party won one of the nation's largest-ever majorities in the May elections.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese thanked the traditional owners of the national capital Canberra at a Welcome to Country ceremony in Parliament House. He noted that such ceremonies performed by Indigenous people to welcome visitors to their traditional land at the start of a new parliament had been introduced by a Labor government in 2007. "In the 48th Parliament, we write the next chapter. Let us do it with the same sense of grace and courage that First Nations people show us with their leadership," Albanese said.

The government has said the first legislation will be a bill to reduce student loan debt by 20 per cent. The measure to be introduced Wednesday will benefit 3 million Australians with student loan debts and cost the government 16 billion Australian dollars (\$10 billion).

The government also plans to introduce laws that would cut funding to child care providers who fail to meet quality standards and that would provide legal protections for some wage rates.

Labour won 94 seats in the 150-seat House of Representatives where governments are formed. Labour's majority is the largest since Prime Minister John Howard's conservative coalition won 94 seats in 1996, when the lower chamber had only 148 seats.

Howard stayed in power almost 12 years, and Albanese is the first prime minister since then to lead a party to consecutive election victories, following an extraordinary era of political instability.

The main opposition Liberal Party has elected its first woman leader, Sussan Ley, after one of the party's worst election results on record. (AP)

Looming over two cases threatening Musk's car company is a single question: Can he be trusted?

MIAMI, July 22: Elon Musk fought court cases on opposite coasts Monday, raising a question about the billionaire that could either speed his plan to put self-driving Teslas on US roads or throw up a major roadblock: Can this wildly successful man who tends to exaggerate really be trusted?

In Miami, a Tesla driver who has admitted he was wrong to reach for a dropped cell phone moments before a deadly accident, spoke of the danger of putting too much faith in Musk's technology — in this case his Autopilot programme.

"I trusted the technology too much," said George McGee, who ran off the road and killed a woman on stargazing with her boyfriend. "I believed that if the car saw something in front of it, it would provide a warning and apply the brakes."

In unusual coincidence, regulators arguing an Oakland, California, case tried to pin exaggerated talk about the same Tesla technology at the centre of a request to suspend the carmaker from being

last week to a Florida family of a Tesla driver. That said, Tesla was victorious in two other jury cases, both in California, that also sought to lay blame on its technology for crashes.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs in the Miami case argue that Tesla's driver-assistance feature, called Autopilot, should have warned the driver and braked when his Model S sedan blew through flashing lights, a stop sign and a T-intersection at 62 miles-an-hour in an April 2019 crash. Tesla said that drivers are warned not to rely on Autopilot, or its more advanced Full Self-Driving system. It says the fault entirely lies with the "distracted driver" just like so many other "accidents since cellphones were invented."

Driver McGee settled a separate suit brought by the family of Benavides and her severely injured boyfriend, Dillon Angulo.

McGee was clearly shaken when shown a dashcam video Monday of his car jumping a Key West, Florida, road and hitting a parked Chevrolet Tahoe which then slammed into Benavides and sent her 75 feet through the air to her death. Asked if he had seen those images before, McGee pinched his lips, shook his head, then squeaked out a response, "No."

Tesla's attorney sought to show that McGee was fully to blame, asking if he had ever contacted Tesla for additional instructions about

how Autopilot or any other safety features worked. McGee said he had not, though he was heavy user of the features. He said he had driven the same road home from work 30 or 40 times. Under questioning he also acknowledged he alone was responsible for watching the road and hitting the brakes.

But lawyers for the Benavides family had another chance to parry that line of argument and asked McGee if he would have taken his eyes off the road and reached for his phone had he been driving any car other than a Tesla on Autopilot.

McGee responded, "I don't believe so."

The case is expected to continue for two more weeks.

In the California case, the state's Department of Motor Vehicles is arguing before an administrative judge that Tesla has misled drivers by exaggerating the capabilities of its Autopilot and Full Self-Driving features. A court filing claims even those feature names are misleading because they offer just partial self-driving.

Musk has been warned by federal regulators to stop making public comments suggesting Full Self-Driving allows his cars to drive themselves because it could lead to overreliance on the system, resulting in possible crashes and deaths. He also has run into trouble with regulators for Autopilot. In 2023, the company had to recall 2.3 million vehicles for problems with the technology and is now under investigation for saying it fixed the issue though it's unclear it has, according to regulatory documents. (AP)

Trump, Philippine leader plan to talk tariffs, China at White House

WASHINGTON, July 22: President Donald Trump plans to host Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr on Tuesday at the White House, as the two countries are seeking closer security and economic ties in the face of shifting geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific region. Marcos, who met Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth on Monday, is set to become the first Southeast Asian leader to hold talks with Trump in his second term.

Marcos' three-day visit shows the importance of the alliance between the treaty partners at a time when China is increasingly assertive in the South China Sea, where Manila and Beijing have clashed over the hotly contested Scarborough Shoal.

Washington sees Beijing, the world's No 2 economy, as its biggest competitor, and consecutive presidential administrations have sought to shift US military and economic focus to the Asia-Pacific in a bid to counter China. Trump, like others before him, has



been distracted by efforts to broker peace in a range of conflicts, from Ukraine to Gaza.

Tariffs also are expected to be on the agenda. Trump has threatened to impose 20% tariffs on Filipino goods on Aug 1 unless the two sides can strike a deal.

"I intend to convey to President Trump and his Cabinet officials that the Philippines is ready to negotiate a bilateral trade deal that will ensure strong, mutually beneficial and future-oriented collaborations that only the United States and the Philippines will be able to take advantage of," Marcos said Sunday when he was departing for

Washington, according to his office.

Manila is open to offering zero tariffs on some US goods to strike a deal with Trump, finance chief Ralph Recto told local journalists.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt hinted that a trade agreement with the Philippines was in the works. "Perhaps this will be a topic of discussion," she told reporters Monday when asked about tariff negotiations.

The White House said Trump will discuss with Marcos the shared commitment to upholding a free, open, prosperous and secure Indo-Pacific. (AP)

After former President Joe Biden signed a bill passed by Congress late last year to transfer land from the federal government to the District of Columbia, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser and the team reached an agreement in April to build on the site of the old RFK Stadium. That is still pending approval by the Council of the District of Columbia.

"I think the thing that we should focus on in DC is doing our part," Bowser said. "I have worked for the better part of 10 years to get our part completed, including getting control of the land, coming to an agreement with the team and advancing a fantastic agreement to the council, so we need to do our part."

Dan Snyder, who had said multiple times as owner since 1999 that he would never change the name, did so in July 2020 after facing mounting pressure from sponsors and critics. Washington Football Team was used for two seasons before Commanders was unveiled as the permanent name in early 2022.

Josh Harris, whose group bought the team from Snyder in 2023, said earlier this year the Commanders name was here to stay.

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4 killed in flash floods in Gilgit-Baltistan

ISLAMABAD, July 22: At least four tourists were killed, two injured, and 15 reported missing after flash floods triggered by a cloudburst hit Gilgit-Baltistan region in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

The incident occurred on Monday in Diamer district, sweeping away eight tourist vehicles, Faizullah Faraq, a spokesperson for the regional government, said.

Four bodies, including that of a woman from Lodhran in Pakistan's Punjab province, have been recovered so far, while the injured and deceased were shifted to a local hospital.

The flash floods also blocked the Babusar Highway and disrupted communication and electricity in the area. Hundreds of stranded tourists were rescued, with local residents providing temporary shelter. Faraq added. (PTI)

PoK migrants using fake documents to get UK visa

LONDON, July 22: Migrants from the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) region have been using fake documents to gain an entry visa into the UK, and then many going on to file for asylum in the country, a UK media investigation has claimed.

"The Daily Telegraph" newspaper said an undercover probe revealed that migrants are paying up to 50,000 pounds for visa applications packed with false information, identifying one such consultant based in Mirpur who facilitates the process.

One application to the UK Home Office obtained by the newspaper included a job reference from a "fake hospital" in PoK.

Pakistanis top the chart of nationalities claiming asylum in the UK, followed by Afghanistan, Iran and Bangladesh. However, they are not among the top nationalities arriving in the UK illegally via small boats.



"They don't need to come on small boats because they come on visas. They are one of the biggest groups that come on visas, and don't go back," immigration lawyer Harjap Bhargal was quoted as saying.

As part of the newspaper's undercover investigation, someone posing as an applicant used a fake CV and letter attesting to employment history to be submitted in a

UK work visa application that was "ultimately successful".

The UK Home Office reacted to the revelations to say that it is investigating the claims thrown up by the investigation as it continues to revoke licences from those who abuse the Skilled Worker visa route.

"Illegal activity will not be tolerated and we will stop at nothing to ensure our immigration rules are

respected and enforced. That is why we are investigating these claims and already taking firm action to disrupt illegal activity when it is found, including suspending licences, pursuing enforcement, and strengthening safeguards to protect the integrity of the immigration system," a Home Office spokesperson said.

"Over the last year, there have been 40 per cent fewer visa applications, we have removed nearly 30,000 people with no right to be here and arrests from illegal working raids are up 51 per cent. We are also introducing new powers to immediately suspend registered advisers and organisations suspected of carrying out the most flagrant abuse of the system," the spokesperson said.

Under UK law, anyone providing fake visas overseas can be reported to Action Fraud and the intelligence is analysed by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau. (PTI)

Arunachal to get India's first fully indigenous 50-kw geothermal power plant

'Project is expected to be completed in three years'



ITANAGAR, July 22: India's first fully indigenous geothermal power plant will be developed in Arunachal Pradesh, officials said on Tuesday.

The 50-kw plant will be developed at a record low of 68 degrees Celsius, they said.

In this regard, the Centre for Earth Sciences and Himalayan Studies (CESHS) and Shiram In-

stitute for Industrial Research have inked a memorandum of understanding.

CESHS geoscience chief Rupankar Rajkhowa said the project will come up in Tawang district.

"We have already identified three places -- Mago, Thingbu and Damteng, and the research and structural mapping has been done," he said, adding that the

project will cater to a population of over 5,000.

Rajkhowa said the project is expected to be completed in three years.

Maintaining that it's a first-of-its-kind in the Himalayan region, he said the project will be completed at a cost of over Rs 10 crore, funded by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

A team of scientists from CESHS, led by its director Tana Tage, recently visited the demonstration site of an indigenously developed 20-kw geothermal power plant at SIIR.

SIIR's geothermal project manager Bhupesh Sharma said multiple trials have been conducted using a smaller 5-kw lab-scale model to better understand the operational challenges of indigenous bipolar process technology, particularly at a lower temperature of just 68 degrees Celsius.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu said, "Arunachal Pradesh & CESHS take a visionary step by signing an MoU to develop India's first fully indigenous 50kw geothermal power plant at a record low of 68 degrees C. Harnessing Earth's energy, driving innovation, and leading India's clean energy revolution from the Himalayas!"

"It will be a milestone in clean energy and geothermal research," he added.

Established in 2021 under the Department of Science and Technology, CESHS is dedicated to research in climatology, geoscience, hydrology, and renewable energy. (PTI)

APYO demands immediate action against substandard flyover work in Naharlagun



HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, July 22: The Arunachal Pradesh Youth Organisation (APYO) has demanded immediate corrective action against alleged substandard construction work being carried out on the under-construction flyovers under Package-B of National Highway 415 in Naharlagun.

The organisation has also threatened to launch a democratic movement if the authorities fail to address the issue within a stipulated time.

In an official statement issued following a press conference at the Arunachal Press Club on Tuesday afternoon, APYO president Kipa Kanam expressed serious concern over the quality of work being executed by the construction firm M/S Woodhill Shivam and supervised by the monitoring agency AECOM JV.

He alleged that materials not conforming to the prescribed guidelines of flyover construction were being used, raising fears of structural instability and potential loss of life and property.

"We are not against the development work being undertaken. However, we are deeply concerned that if the flyovers are not constructed in strict adherence to na-

tional standards, they could pose a serious threat in the future. In case of a structural collapse, who will be held responsible?" Kanam questioned.

The youth body specifically pointed out that 18 pillars in the middle of Naharlagun township have allegedly been constructed in violation of laid down specifications, raising doubts over their structural integrity.

"The presence of these 18 pillars, which appear to be poorly constructed, has led us to question the overall durability and quality of the entire Package-B stretch," the APYO statement read.

The organisation confirmed that it has submitted formal complaints regarding the matter to the Chief Minister, the Chief Engineer of Highways, and other concerned authorities.

The APYO has demanded an immediate halt to any ongoing work on these 18 pillars and their complete removal, citing public safety concerns.

The APYO has also met with the Capital Deputy Commissioner Toko Babu and submitted a detailed memorandum outlining their concerns.

Following this, the Deputy Commissioner reportedly consti-

tuted a committee to examine the allegations.

The organisation has now urged the committee to expedite its investigation and submit its findings at the earliest.

"We demand that strict action be taken against all erring officials involved in the supervision and execution of the Package-B flyover work. Those not complying with the construction norms must be suspended immediately," said Kanam.

The APYO further criticised the monitoring agency AECOM JV for allegedly failing in its responsibility to ensure proper oversight.

"While AECOM JV had undertaken the responsibility for quality control, the present state of the flyover construction is unacceptable. We insist that the 18 pillars be reconstructed using proper materials within 15 days. If this demand is not fulfilled, we will be compelled to launch a democratic agitation," the organisation stated.

The press release concluded with a call for transparency, accountability, and strict adherence to construction norms to prevent any future mishaps and to ensure public trust in large-scale infrastructure projects within the Capital region.

Er Toko Onuj appointed to Governing Council of National Power Training Institute



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, July 22: The Ministry of Power, Government of India, has appointed Er Toko Onuj, Chairman-cum-Managing Director of the Hydro Power Development Corporation of Arunachal Pradesh Ltd. (HPDCAPL), as a Member of the Governing Council of the National Power Training Institute (NPTI) for a period of three years, with effect from July 1, 2025.

According to an official statement, Er Onuj has been inducted into the apex training body under the Ministry as a representative from the power sector of Northeast India.

His appointment is expected to provide the Governing Council with valuable regional insight and technical expertise from the region.

The Governing Council of NPTI is chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Power, Government of India, and comprises representatives from State Electricity Boards or Departments and other eminent individuals from fields such as technical education, power equipment manufacturing, renewable energy, energy conservation, and rural electrification.

Members are selected on a rotational basis to provide strategic guidance and policy inputs for the institute's functioning.

NPTI, an ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certified autonomous organisation headquartered in Faridabad, Haryana, functions as the national apex body for human resource development in the power sector.

With over five decades of legacy, it has trained more than 4.7 lakh professionals and is recognised internationally for its integrated training approach across thermal, hydro, renewable energy, transmission, distribution, and regulatory domains.

The institute also offers an MBA in Power Management and operates 11 centres across India.

Its training programmes are bolstered by generation simulators to improve operational efficiency in power plants.

NPTI also conducts international training programmes under the ITEC initiative of the Ministry of External Affairs and has partnerships with over 160 countries.

The appointment of Er Toko Onuj is seen as a recognition of his leadership and contributions to the power sector in Arunachal Pradesh and the Northeast region.

The official statement added that his inclusion in the Governing Council is expected to strengthen the regional representation in national-level policy and training initiatives.

200 got new lease of life by kidney transplant under state-run scheme in 7 yrs: Arunachal CM



ITANAGAR, July 22: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Tuesday said more than 200 patients got a fresh lease of life by kidney transplants under a state-run scheme in the last seven years.

He highlighted the ongoing implementation of the Chief Minister Organ Transplant Scheme (CMOTS), reinforcing the state's commitment to saving lives through critical support.

The chief minister, in a social media post, advocated a fundamental shift in the state's healthcare approach towards prevention and wellness.

"Over the last 7 years, we've helped more than 200 patients receive a second chance at life through kidney transplants. Now, we're building on that progress. Under the new Chief Minister Organ Transplant Scheme (CMOTS), we're expanding support of ₹ 10 lakh for kidney transplants, ₹ 15 lakh for bone marrow transplants, ₹ 20 lakh for liver transplants," he said in a post on X.

However, Khandu emphasised that treatment alone is not enough to build a healthy society.

"Real progress is when people don't fall sick in the first place. We've got to change how we think about healthcare. Because a healthy society doesn't start in the operating room. It starts at home, in our communities, in how we live," he said.

The chief minister urged the health department to prioritise prevention through real investment in

awareness, education, and lifestyle change.

The state government has allocated an amount of ₹ 369 crore for the health sector in the 2025-26 fiscal.

CMOTS is currently in effect and is part of the government's broader health sector roadmap.

A key component of the scheme involves strengthening the state's capability in kidney transplants through a dedicated programme at the Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIHS) at Naharlagun, near here.

TRIHS is collaborating with the Chandigarh-based Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), India's leading centre for transplant medicine and research.

State Health and Family Welfare Minister Biyuram Wahge recently visited PGIMER, where he met Director Prof Vivek Lal and a team of specialists to discuss a phased implementation plan tailored to Arunachal's unique healthcare needs.

Wahge later shared that PGIMER has agreed to provide comprehensive technical and logistical support to Arunachal Pradesh, which will include capacity building, training, infrastructure development, and long-term institutional collaboration.

The state government is also partnering with various other organisations to increase awareness about organ donation and to scale up transplant-related services. (PTI)

Arunachal Pradesh State-Level Shooting Championship to be held on August 9-10

HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, July 22: The Arunachal Pradesh Rifle Association (APRA) has announced that the State-Level Shooting Championship 2025 will be held on August 9 and 10 at the shooting range located within the campus of Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU), Doimukh in Papum Pare district.

Apa, who is also a senior police officer in the Arunachal Pradesh Police, informed that all preparations for the two-day championship are currently in full swing.

According to an official statement, the Police Headquarters has confirmed that key logistical and technical arrangements are being finalised at the shooting venue in RGU, which has been selected for its accessibility and adequate infrastructure.

The APRA president stated that members of the association have been working rigorously to ensure the smooth organisation of the championship.

"The team members of the Arunachal Pradesh Rifle Association are actively engaged in various activities, including range preparation, coordination with technical officials, and overseeing registration logistics," he said.

As per the official statement, the registration process for participants will open on August 2 and continue until August 7.

All registered shooters from across the state have been urged to enrol within the registration window to

confirm their participation.

Shooters affiliated with recognised clubs and institutions are eligible to register and compete in the championship, which is expected to witness participation from aspiring marksmen and seasoned shooters alike.

The championship is part of APRA's continued efforts to promote the sport of shooting in Arunachal Pradesh and provide a platform for local talents to showcase and refine their skills.

"This championship is not just a competition, but an opportunity for shooters from the state to come together, learn, and prepare themselves for higher levels of competition," Apa added.

For updates or clarification related to registration or participation, interested shooters and clubs may contact any of the APRA executive members.

General Secretary Jackey Teli Camdir has been designated as one of the key contact persons for queries.

Apa appealed to all eligible shooters in the state to take part in the championship and make the most of the opportunity.

"I urge all shooters of Arunachal Pradesh to participate in the upcoming championship and help us in our mission to build a strong sporting culture in the state," he said, while also expressing confidence that the event would be a grand success with the collective efforts of participants, organisers, and supporting agencies.

10 villages in Namsai get drinking water from Integrated Water Treatment Plant

'I have come from Dibrugarh with my family. This place is beautiful and well maintained,' said Manob Mahanta, a visitor from Assam



HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, July 22: An Integrated Water Treatment Plant at Medo in Arunachal Pradesh's Namsai district is providing free drinking water to 10 villages under the Chongkham block, benefiting a population of around 22,000.

Implemented by the Public Health and Engineering Department (PHED), Namsai Division, the facility is supplying water to 1,285 households across 10 habitations.

Built with an outlay of ₹32 crore, the plant has a treatment capacity of 2.70 million litres per day (MLD). It sources water from a jack well constructed in a riverbed and is powered by both solar energy and conventional supply, with generator backup during outages.

"The project was established about five years ago. Now, around 22,000 residents are receiving clean water daily," said an official of the water treatment plant.

Local residents had donated ap-

proximately 3.3 acres of land to facilitate the construction of the plant.

The facility has also emerged as a tourist destination, with visitors from Assam and neighbouring regions frequenting the site to enjoy the scenic beauty and beat the summer heat.

"The revenue generated from tourism is used for the plant's maintenance," said Haage Guro, Junior Engineer, PHED.

He added that the plant has become a popular summer retreat, attracting tourists from Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sivasagar and other parts of Assam.

"I have come from Dibrugarh with my family. This place is beautiful and well maintained," said Manob Mahanta, a visitor from Assam.

The water treatment plant stands as a rare example of a government welfare project successfully meeting its twin objectives of public service and local economic activity.

3 arrested for sexually assaulting minor in Arunachal



ITANAGAR, July 22: Three persons have been arrested for sexually assaulting a minor in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district, police said on Tuesday.

The incident happened near Manabum Nala on July 18, Changlang Superintendent of Police Kirli Padu said.

Acting swiftly on a report by a relative of the victim, a police team led by Inspector Ongsa Romrang arrested the three accused on Tuesday. The SP said cases under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and POCSO Act, 2012, have been registered at Diyun police station against the accused.

All accused are in judicial custody, he said.

The SP added that the survivor was medically examined and sent to a child care institute for counselling and protection. (PTI)

Grounded British fighter jet flies back

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 22: The British F-35B fighter jet flew back on Tuesday after completing maintenance, more than a month after it made an emergency landing at the international airport here, and remained parked since then.

The jet, which took off at 10.50 am, flew to Darwin in Australia, airport sources said.

"A UK F-35B aircraft, which landed following an emergency diversion on June 14, departed today from Thiruvananthapuram International Airport. A UK engineering team, deployed since July 06 completed the repairs and safety checks, allowing the aircraft to resume active service," a British High Commission spokesperson said.

In a statement, the spokesperson said the UK remains very grateful for the support and collaboration of the Indian authorities and airport teams throughout the repair and recovery process.

"We look forward to continuing to strengthen our defence partnership with India," the statement said.

The jet was brought out of the hangar and kept at the airport bay on Monday.

Sources said a 14-member team of engineers from the UK, who carried out repairs on the fighter jet, will depart on Wednesday aboard a special aircraft, the Globemaster.

They said the British jet was kept at the Air India hangar throughout its stay.

While the airport sources confirmed that landing charges, daily rent, and parking fees amounting to Rs 5 - Rs 6 lakh had been paid, there was no confirmation regarding any payment made to

Air India.

The British Royal Navy F-35B Lightning fighter jet is part of the UK's most advanced stealth fleet.

Known to be one of the most advanced fighter aircraft in the world and worth over USD 110 million, the jet remained grounded at the international airport here since June 14 after it developed a technical snag.

The aircraft, which took off from HMS Prince of Wales on June 14, was unable to return to the carrier due to adverse weather conditions.

Prioritising safety, it diverted to Thiruvananthapuram International Airport, where it landed safely. Subsequently, the aircraft developed an engineering issue whilst on the ground, which temporarily delayed its return to the Carrier Strike Group.

Engineers from HMS Prince of Wales assessed the aircraft and determined that the support of a UK-based engineering team was required.

The UK accepted India's offer to move the aircraft to the Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility.

To ensure minimal disruption to regular airport operations, it was decided that the aircraft would be moved once the UK engineering teams arrived with specialist equipment.

The emergency landing by the British Royal Navy fighter jet at Thiruvananthapuram International Airport became the subject of countless memes, and even turned into a marketing opportunity for Kerala Tourism.

A poster shared by Kerala Tourism on its official 'X' handle went viral on social media.



It featured a stylised image of the fighter jet parked against a dreamy Kerala backdrop -- coconut trees and lush greenery.

A playful caption read: "Kerala is such an amazing place, I don't want to leave. Definitely recommend." The quote was humorously attributed to "UK F-35B." (PTI)

Govt slams 'double standards'

LS adjourned for day as opposition protests demanding debate on SIR

NEW DELHI, July 22: The Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day on Tuesday due to protests by the opposition demanding a discussion on the ongoing voter roll revision in Bihar, even as the government accused them of practising "double standards" by asking for a debate on one hand and disrupting the House on the other.

Opposition members trooped to the Well of the Lok Sabha when the House reconvened at 2 pm after two earlier adjournments on the second day of the Monsoon session of Parliament demanding a discussion and roll back of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise initiated by the Election Commission in Bihar ahead of assembly polls scheduled for later this year.

Dilip Saikia, who was on the chair, made repeated requests to opposition MPs to go back to their places and allow the House to function.

As the protests continued, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju got up and condemned the opposition behaviour.

He said it was agreed at the Business Advisory Committee meeting on Monday that first Operation Sindoor will be taken up for discussion and the time for it had also been fixed.

"Only the rule under which discussion will take place will be decided. They come here carrying placards and violate the rules, I condemn this," Rijiju said.

"They are asking for a debate and we are ready for a debate but they are not allowing the House to function," he said, slamming the opposition.

These "double standards are wrong, on one hand they ask for debate and then create a ruckus like this," he said.

Rijiju said the government is ready but the opposition was wasting the time of Parliament.

He condemned the behaviour of the Congress and other parties.



Earlier, when the House re-convened at 12 noon, BJP member Jagdambika Pal, who was in the chair, urged the floor leaders of the opposition parties to ask their members to return to their seats and allow the House to function.

"The government is ready to discuss any issue which the Speaker allows as per the rules. I appeal to you to go back to your seats," Arjun Ram Meghwal, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, said.

Pal also urged opposition members not to show placards and instead give in writing their demands at the meetings of the Business Advisory Committee.

As ruckus continued, Pal adjourned proceedings till 2 PM.

When the House met at 11 am, opposition MPs, including Congress, were on their feet, demanding discussion on the revision of electoral rolls in Bihar and Operation Sindoor.

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan appealed to the opposition members to go back to their seats so that the House can take up questions related to farmers during the designated time of Question Hour.

Speaker Om Birla intervened and told the opposition MPs that sloganeering and showing placards lowered the dignity of the House. He later adjourned the House till 12 noon.

The House could not function on the first day of the session on Monday due to repeated adjournments following opposition protests over the demand of discussion on Operation Sindoor.

Under Operation Sindoor, armed forces attacked Pakistani terror sites and defence installations for three days beginning May 7 following the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22 in which 26 people were killed. (PTI)

Pahalgam massacre: With attackers at large, security concerns rise

Demand to fix accountability gains traction

PAHALGAM, July 22: Three months after the brutal terror attack in Pahalgam that left many tourists dead, the perpetrators are still at large, raising concerns over security lapses in the region and sparking growing calls for fixing accountability.

While the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has made two arrests in connection with the April 22 incident, those nabbed are believed to be the ones who provided logistical support, while the actual terrorists responsible for the ghastly crime have evaded security agencies.

The security vacuum has prompted Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, who will complete his five-year term next month, to take full responsibility for what he acknowledged as a "security failure".

This admission was appreciated by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who nonetheless called for accountability. "I appreciate the statement of the Lt Governor but an admission of failure must be followed by action," he had told PTI here recently.

"Heads must roll when such a grave mistake leads to the loss of precious lives. The people of Kashmir deserve to know what went wrong and who will be held accountable," the chief minister had said.

On April 22, a meticulously planned terror strike hit holiday-makers in Pahalgam meadows, killing 26 people -- 25 tourists and one local pony rider -- a huge setback for the counter-insurgency campaign of the government.

The strike was characteristic of careful planning and the terrorists' successful escape indicated a high level of training and local support.

The officials said that intelligence agencies had been alerted about the possibility of a terror attack, but the inputs were utilised at another place, some 90 kilometres away from the site where the attack took place, resulting in a key security lapse.

The NIA has been mandated to conduct the investigation and, so far, it has arrested two suspects who were suspected to have given shelter and food to the attackers.

The two men - Parvaiz Ahmad Jothar from Baskote, Pahalgam and Bashir Ahmad Jothar of Hill Park, Pahalgam - were arrested by NIA on June 22.

The NIA had said the arrested accused, who are presently on remand, have disclosed the identities of the three armed terrorists involved in the attack, and have also confirmed that they were Pakistani nationals affiliated to the proscribed The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy of Pakistan-based terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

Parvaiz and Bashir had knowingly harboured the three armed terrorists at a seasonal dhok (hut) at Hill Park before the attack, according to NIA investigations.

The two men had provided food, shelter and logistical support to the terrorists, who had, on the fateful afternoon, selectively killed the tourists on the basis of their religious identity, making it one of the most gruesome terrorist attacks ever, the agency said.

CM Abdullah's demand for accountability of top officials is symptomatic of the public pressure building up to fix responsibility for security failure.

The incident has highlighted doubts over the efficiency of the security system in Kashmir and will probably be at the centre of public debate in the months ahead.

Security officials said the terrorists, members of a TRF unit known as the "Falcon Squad," breached the Pahalgam area wearing military camouflage and equipped with military-grade firearms and modern communication equipment, including a camera-fitted helmet.

The attack was reportedly planned by Saifullah Kasuri alias Khalid, a top LeT commander and personal assistant of internationally designated terrorist Hafiz Saeed, they added. They indicated that the online trail of the attackers originated from safe houses along the border in Karachi and Muzaffarabad, which implied extensive logistical integration with the LeT network in Pakistan.

They said that targeting tourists in Pahalgam represents a possible change in the operational policy of Kashmiri terror groups, indicating that the group is ready to target not only government staff and settlers but also civilian visitors under an overall strategy to destabilise the region, discourage tourists, and polarise communities. (PTI)

'Prima facie' case of money laundering in Chanda Kochhar-Videocon case; ED order upheld

NEW DELHI, July 22: An appellate tribunal has said there was a "prima facie" case of money laundering against former ICICI Bank CEO and MD Chanda Kochhar and her husband in a corruption case involving the Videocon Group, as it upheld a 2020 ED order attaching a Mumbai flat of the couple worth crores of rupees. The tribunal, in an order issued on July 3, said it finds "substance" in the "quid pro quo" allegation made by the Enforcement Directorate against Chanda Kochhar for sanction of a loan of Rs 300 crore to Videocon International Electronics Ltd (VIEL), as post this disbursement, a sum of Rs 64 crore was transferred by the Videocon Group to NRPL, a company of her husband Deepak Kochhar.

The said loan was approved by a sanctioning committee of the ICICI Bank between June 2009 and October 2011, and Chanda Kochhar was a member of this panel, apart from being the MD and CEO of the private lending company.

The ED case, based on a CBI FIR, claimed that Chanda Kochhar hatched a "criminal conspiracy" to cheat ICICI Bank by "abusing" her official position while sanctioning this amount.

Chanda Kochhar, as per the probe agencies, got illegal gratification/undue benefit through her husband from VIL or Videocon Group promoter V N Dhoot.

The ED had in January 2020 provisionally attached Kochhar's flat no 45, located in CCI Chambers at

Churchgate in Mumbai, a property of NRPL, apart from Rs 10.5 lakh in cash, seized by the agency during searches on another company of Deepak Kochhar.

The Adjudicating Authority of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) had in November 2020 refused to confirm the ED attachment, and consequently, the federal probe agency appealed before the appellate tribunal.

"It may be true that the issue will be determined by the Trial Court but we find a prima facie case against the respondents for commission of the offence of money laundering and, therefore, the Provisional Attachment Order (of the ED) is justified," the Tribunal said. It said there was "total inter-fixing of the work of the industries floated by Deepak Kochhar and even by the Videocon Group of Industries."

The tribunal rejected Chanda Kochhar's argument that she was "not knowing the business affairs of her husband" and had pleaded ignorance in her submission. The respondent (Chanda Kochhar) was expected to conduct herself as per the rules and policy of the bank and could not have pleaded ignorance about the association and affairs of the husband, it said in an 82-page order. "...the sanction of a loan of ₹ 300 crore by ICICI Bank to the Videocon Group of Industries, where Chanda Kochhar remained part of the committee, was against the rules and policy of the bank," it said. (PTI)

Pahalgam's soul yearns for return of tourists as town grapples with April 22 aftermath

PAHALGAM, July 22: As the annual Amarnath Yatra enters its final leg, people in this tourist township of Kashmir Valley, reeling in the aftermath of the April 22 terror attack, are anxiously waiting for revival of tourism with a firm belief that the soul of Pahalgam will not be held hostage to terrorism.

The hotels that were near empty post the terror strike have now been witnessing some tourists who have been braving the odds to choose Pahalgam as their destination to spend their vacation.

"I came here in 1988 and after that I decided to come now with my family to spend our holiday. The locals here are more careful about our security and guide us properly," says Sachin Waghmare, a resident of Thane district.

He said he hoped to see other nearby destinations, but they remain closed as a precautionary measure.

"I have been able to only visit Betab valley," he said, adding that the decision to visit this place was taken after he saw pictures of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah cycling on the roads of this town.

Pahalgam MLA Altaf Kaloo has been holding daily meetings with delegations associated with the tourism industry. "Rates have been brought down to ensure more tourists come back," he said.

"The government and the people, they're still trying to come out of the big shock. People are still wondering how and why it happened. Locals are in deep

shock. How it happened..." the MLA said on the April 22 massacre.

Terrorists had attacked holiday-makers in Pahalgam meadows, killing 26 people -- 25 tourists and one local pony rider. The horrific incident left the country shocked and outraged and triggered an India-Pakistan military conflict.

The collective trauma of the people was still felt in Kaloo's voice, but he quickly regained his composure and added, "All these delegations came to us. Tourists are very comfortable. We are keeping a bird's eye on the security of our guests and ensuring no stone is left unturned to keep them safe." He said this year, after a meeting with the Lt Governor Manoj Sinha and the chief minister, locals and tourists were allowed to come to Pahalgam. "This has helped a lot."

Asif Burza, Managing Director of Ahad Hotels and Resorts, says the revival has already started and visitors have started arriving. "There has been a big push from the government, and also the chief minister leading from the front has played a major role in the revival story." There has also been a push from the Government of India with Union Tourism Minister Gajendra Shekhawat's help, and they are planning big events in the near future," Burza said.

Umesh Talashi, a minority community member staying in this area, said the April 22 attack left a scar on the heart of every peace loving citizen. (PTI)

NFR commissions Automatic Block Signalling between Aluabari and Panjipara

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 22: In a significant step towards digital modernisation, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has commissioned Automatic Block Signalling (ABS) across a 22.9-km stretch between Aluabari, Gaisal, and Panjipara on July 21.

This move is aimed at improving operational efficiency, reducing headway, and enhancing line capacity.

According to an official statement from NFR, the newly commissioned section comprises three stations—Aluabari Road, Gaisal, and Panjipara—along with three Auto Huts and 14 level crossing gates.

As part of the upgrade, seven existing engineering level crossing gates have been interlocked with automatic signals, thereby boosting safety at crossings.

With this commissioning, NFR has now completed 87.57 route kilometres of ABS coverage from Ambari Falakata to Panjipara under its ongoing signalling modernisation programme.

The total sanctioned ABS project spans 702 km from Old Malda to Guwahati.

Earlier, the Aluabari-Ambari Falakata section (66 km) had been completed.

Upcoming phases include Panjipara-Old Malda, Ambari Falakata-Jalpaiguri, and New Coochbehar-Jorai, all targeted for execution during the 2025-26 fiscal.

Other segments are under active implementation.

The first train to operate on the newly signalled section was the 22301 UP Howrah-New Jalpaiguri Vande Bharat Express, which passed Panjipara at 13:40 hrs and Gaisal at 13:53 hrs.

This was followed by the 20503 DN Rajdhani Express, which crossed Aluabari at 14:05 hrs under the new signalling system.

NFR officials stated that the automation marks a major leap toward creating a safer, more efficient, and technologically advanced railway network across the region.

Modi extends birthday wishes to Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar

MUMBAI, July 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday greeted Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and his deputy Ajit Pawar on their birthday.

"Best wishes to Maharashtra Chief Minister Shri Devendra Fadnavis ji on his birthday. He is working tirelessly for Maharashtra's progress and empowering the poor and the downtrodden. May he lead a long and healthy life in service of the people," Modi posted on X handle.

He appreciated Ajit Pawar, who heads the NCP, for "making a valuable contribution to strengthening the NDA's good governance agenda in Maharashtra".

Reacting to the PM's message, Fadnavis, who is celebrating his 55th birthday, said, "It is very encouraging to work even harder under your guidance and leadership. Will keep trying best to serve the people." Pawar, 66, echoed Fadnavis, saying, "We shall continue to work hard for the welfare of our people under your leadership." Pawar's wife and Rajya Sabha MP Sunetra Pawar and his cousin Supriya Sule also wished him on X. Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde of Shiv Sena hailed Fadnavis as a top friend of the Mahayuti, an able administrator, and a visionary leader who is well-versed in law and economics.

In a post on X, Shinde dubbed Fadnavis an epitome with various qualities. He said Fadnavis is an important leader on the state's path to development.

Shinde stated that Ajit Pawar has an extraordinary hold on economics. Pawar is an excellent administrator and a sensitive leader who has only the motto of Maharashtra's progress, Shinde posted on X.

Maharashtra Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan released a coffee table book titled 'Maharashtra Nayak' on Fadnavis at Raj Bhavan.

The book was conceived by BJP leader and state cabinet minister Girish Mahajan. (PTI)

Artists find inspiration in S H Raza to turn scrap into sculptures

MANDLA (MP), July 22: All creation begins from a dot, a "bindu", a philosophy that is reflected in artist S H Raza's most famous artworks and has now become an inspiration for sculptor Narendra Kumar Dewangan who works with scrap metal to create sculptures.

"When you put a tack to connect two metal parts it is a point only that starts the creation of something new. So in a way, all our works are inspired by Raza," Dewangan told PTI as he welded another piece of metal to his work, titled "Environment Balancer".

The metallic sculpture, made with scrap of cars, bikes, and construction material, is one of the four being made here as part of Raza Smriti, a five-day multidisciplinary art camp organised by the Raza Foundation.

Raza, who died on July 23, 2016, was born in Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh in 1922. After spending his initial years in Mandla, he moved to different parts of the state with his father, a deputy forest ranger. Dewangan, a sculptor from Chhattisgarh, has created a city of metal that has at its centre a large tree to physically balance the tilted sculpture.

"I am showing a city that is both inside and outside the earth and there is a tree at the centre of it to balance it out. The tree is a symbol of how to balance the environment and at the same time how to find a way to coexist with nature," he said. Another artist from Chhattisgarh, Jee-



tendra Sahu, has also looked to nature for inspiration. His vision has come to reality in the shape of MP's state bird Dudhraj, or Indian paradise flycatcher.

With the petrol tank of a bike as the bird's body and metal sheets for its long tail, the sculpture is a tribute to the state that is known for its natural beauty and the many forest reserves.

"I like to do realistic works more. I saw Dudhraj here and found it to be too attractive, so I felt that with this I can represent the whole state," Sahu said. To match the bird's form, Sahu has used rebars, chain sprockets, paddings, chains, and different types of gears.

Speaking about the sculptors finding their expression through scrap material, Ashok Vajpeyi, poet and managing trustee of the Raza Foundation, said the objective of the camp is to intro-

duce local artists to new ways of creating art.

"They have all collected these pieces which are picked up from shops here and they have been given the freedom to imagine what they would like to do so there are different kinds of things all of them are doing," Vajpeyi said.

"And what is interesting is in a manner of speaking the function of art is gathering up what is also broken down. The things here are broken down and not useful in the conventional sense but they can still be used in creating art, so there is this excitement of imagination getting embodied in material which never had been used for that purpose and was not intended to be used for that purpose," he added.

Amit Kumar Sinha, a sculptor from Jabalpur, has followed the inspiration of J Swaminathan and Raza in his work, combining elements of both the stalwarts - bindu from Raza, bird and mountain from Swaminathan.

"Swaminathan worked a lot with Gond artists to promote their art. And even though Raza spent very little time here, as he was settled in France, his journey of art in India is internationally renowned," he said. He added that since every art starts from a dot, the five circles in his work represent five dots.

The five-day event, which started on July 19, will come to an end on Wednesday. The completed sculptures will be placed at the Raza Art Gallery in Mandla. (PTI)

Eviction drive carried out in Shillong in compliance with Meghalaya HC orders

Vendors with valid COVs can operate



SHILLONG, July 22: Shillong Municipal Board authorities on Tuesday carried out an eviction drive in the Khyndailad area here in compliance with the Meghalaya High Court's orders.

During the drive, the authorities confiscated goods and dismantled stalls of street vendors who were operating without valid certificates of vending (COV).

Acting on a state government directive that set a deadline (July 22) for all unauthorised vendors to vacate the area, the Shillong Municipal Board (SMB) officials had been verifying vending permits for the past few days.

"Only those vendors who were able to produce valid COVs were allowed to continue operating. The rest had their stalls removed and materials seized," an SMB official at the site told PTI.

The action follows directions from the Meghalaya High Court, which had pulled up the state government and municipal authorities for failing to regulate street vending, especially in congested commercial zones such as the Khyndailad area, the city centre.

As part of its continuing oversight, the high court also appointed a special officer to monitor compliance and implementation of vending regulations.

The officer has been tasked with overseeing the identification and development of designated vending zones, ensuring transparency in the issuance of certificates of vending, and submitting periodic reports on the progress of implementation to the court.

In line with the court's order and the provisions of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, the state government has identified three designated vending zones in the city.

These are located at the MUDA Complex, the parking lot opposite the SBI Main Branch at Khyndailad, and at the old Meghalaya Transport Corporation (MTC) building.

The vending zone at MUDA Complex will cater to a large section of central Shillong vendors, while the space opposite SBI is being redesigned to accommodate walk-in customers and maintain smooth traffic flow.

The old MTC building is being repurposed to create structured vending spaces with basic amenities for relocated vendors.

Officials said work is underway to operationalise these zones, with plans for phased relocation of authorised vendors in the coming weeks. (PTI)

Captain Williamson Sangma State University (CWSSU) invites applications for PG programmes

Meghalaya's first state-run university begins PG admissions

SHILLONG, July 22: Meghalaya's first state-run university, Captain Williamson Sangma State University (CWSSU), has invited applications for postgraduate programmes for the academic session 2025-26, officials said on Tuesday. Various courses are being offered in the varsity's Tura and Shillong campuses, the University's Registrar, A Ch Marak, told PTI.

In the Tura campus, postgraduate programmes are available in Anthropology, Economics, Education, Environmental Science, Garo, Geography, History, Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology.

"The Shillong campus will offer postgraduate (PG) courses in Commerce, English, Khasi and Social Work, which are also simultaneously available at the Tura campus," he said.

Established in 2011 through an Act of the state government, CWSSU operates from its permanent campus in Tura.

The campus was constructed under Special Plan Assistance with an allocation of ₹



16.96 crore and completed in December 2022. With academic blocks, hostels, and administrative facilities, the campus has an area of more than 90 acres.

The university is recognised under Section 2(f) of the UGC Act, 1956, and is empowered to award degrees independently. The University Grants Commission

(UGC) formally approved its degree-awarding status in December 2024. The institution began academic operations this year, with the Shillong campus set to open shortly.

Admissions to CWSSU's PG programmes do not require the Common University Entrance Test (CUET), making the university an attractive option for students across the state.

At least 11 colleges from across the state have been granted affiliation with the University. These colleges also admit students without CUET, unlike those under NEHU, which are bound by the CUET requirement as per NEP 2020.

According to official sources, admissions to the PG courses will remain open for at least two to three weeks, and the application procedures and course details are available on the university's website.

CWSSU's launch is seen as a significant milestone in Meghalaya's higher education sector, enhancing access and offering flexible admission pathways for students. (PTI)

MNF MLA Lalrintluanga Sailo's body brought to Aizawl from Delhi, last rites tomorrow

AIZAWL, July 22: The mortal remains of Mizo National Front (MNF) MLA Lalrintluanga Sailo, who died at a hospital in Delhi, were brought to Aizawl on Tuesday afternoon.

"The body of the two-time legislator from Dampa arrived at the Lengpui airport around 1.30 pm, and will reach his home at Luangmual neighbourhood in the western part of Aizawl in the evening," they said.

His funeral will be held on Wednesday, leaders of the Luangmual unit of Young Mizo Association (YMA) said.

Sailo, whose performance as opposition member in the assembly was praised by many, died at Max Superspecialty Hospital in Delhi around 9 pm on Monday after battling with complicated ailments, including scrub typhus and pneumonia, for nearly a month. The 65-year-old MNF leader was flown to Delhi on June 29 follow-

ing a fever.

Although he initially showed signs of improvement, his condition deteriorated a few days ago and became worse on Sunday, following which he was put on ventilator support, family sources said. Born in 1960, Sailo joined MNF and went underground when he was only 16.

He actively took part in the secessionist movement, spearheaded by the MNF led by late Laldenga, for 20 years till the underground group signed the historic Mizo peace accord with the Centre in June 1986.

He contested the assembly polls in 2018 and got elected from Dampa in Mamit district, defeating his nearest opponent, Congress nominee Lalrobiaka, by a margin of 1,657 votes.

He was re-elected from the same constituency in the last assembly polls, held in November 2023.

Sailo held many important posts in the MNF and was a member of the national core committee of the party till his last breath.

The MNF described Sailo's death as 'the collapse of one of the big pillars of the party'.

Governor VK Singh, Chief Minister Lalduhoma and state Congress president Lal Thanzara mourned his death.

"I am deeply saddened by the passing of Pu Lalrintluanga Sailo. His dedicated contributions and tireless service to the state of Mizoram and its people will be fondly remembered," the governor said in a social media post.

Lalduhoma said he was deeply shocked by the sudden demise of Sailo, whom he hailed as a diligent person, orator and good debater. The CM said he had instructed officers and staff of the Mizoram House in Delhi to do whatever is required to assist Sailo's family. (PTI)

Barak River Basin management plan in Nagaland

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 22: A consultative meeting on Barak River Basin management plan & collaboration between Indian-EU initiative and Brahmaputra Board was held at Nagaland civil secretariat in Kohima today. Laura Sustersic, director, GIZ, while giving introductory remarks, said the strategic partnership between the EU and India aims to share best practices, adapt European experiences to the Indian context, and develop sustainable solutions for managing water resources.

Sustersic added that water management is a critical area for cooperation, supporting economic development, peace, security, agriculture, fisheries, energy, and the environment. She also highlighted GIZ's role in implementing projects

to support India in water management, focusing on the Ganges Brahmaputra hydrological system and the Barak river basin.

Sustersic said Nagaland must prioritise environment-friendly sustainable development options and find ways to protect its beautiful natural environment while still pursuing development goals.

Chairman, Brahmaputra Board, Dr Ranbir Singh said water shortage is a very serious issue faced by Nagaland and highlighted the urgency of addressing the issue to ensure water security in the state. Singh said since Nagaland also falls under water basins it was important to understand the issues, challenges and problems in this part of the basin in Nagaland and the potential areas that should be developed.

Mizoram's civil society groups urge NHIDCL to repair dilapidated highway

AIZAWL, July 22: Mizoram's civil society organisations and transporters' associations wrote to the NHIDCL, urging it to immediately repair the dilapidated section of NH-6/306 to ensure uninterrupted supply of essential commodities to the state.

NH-306 is the lifeline of Mizoram, linking the state with the rest of the country via Assam's Silchar town. A portion of it is demarcated as NH-6.

The Joint Civil Society of Mizoram (JCSM), a coalition of civil society groups and commercial vehicle operators' associations, said potholes and mud patches on the Sairang-Kawnpui stretch have made the national highway nearly impassable.

It said representatives of the group visited the dilapidated sections on Saturday and discovered that nu-

merous vehicles were overturned and stranded.

"There was a complete absence of sufficient repair efforts, with only three earth excavators, one JCB excavator, and five labourers being present at the site," it said.

The letter said that hundreds of truck drivers have been stranded for several days without food, sanitation, or medical assistance, and residents of nearby villages are facing hardship in accessing daily necessities, healthcare, and banking services.

The groups urged the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) to immediately undertake repairs on at least six critical patches, to ensure that the road is passable for vehicles transporting essential items. (PTI)

Meghalaya minister asks MLAs, MPs to push for school infra upgradation



SHILLONG, July 22: With the Meghalaya government launching a massive drive to upgrade school infrastructure, Education Minister Rakkam A Sangma on Tuesday said that the state-run efforts alone are not enough and urged all 60 MLAs and two MPs to contribute to the endeavour actively.

Leading by example, Sangma claimed he had renovated 45 schools in his Rongara-Siju constituency in South Garo Hills district, using ₹ 2 lakh per school from MLA scheme funds.

"If each MLA takes care of 50 schools per year, we can make real change in infrastructure," he said, urging other public representatives, including members of district councils, to work towards meaningful development.

"Let's not play the blame game. Let us preach what we practice. Instead of pointing fingers, let's come together and build," he added.

Each legislator in Meghalaya receives an annual allocation of ₹ 2.5 crore under the MLA Local Area Development Scheme (MLA-LADS), meant for infrastructure and development work within their constituencies, officials said. "These discretionary funds can be utilised for a wide range of purposes, including school repairs, water supply, rural roads, and health infrastructure," they said.

Notably, the state government, under its Mission Education programme, has launched a large-scale initiative to repair and upgrade over 2,000 government schools within the next two years. This includes lower and upper primary, secondary, and higher secondary institutions.

"In the current year alone, an amount of ₹ 100 crore has been sanctioned for upgrading 200 government lower primary (LP) schools, with an additional 300 such institutes identified for future improvements," the officials said.

"Nearly 90 per cent of these schools have already undergone or are undergoing renovation, with around 100-200 still pending sanction," they said.

In total, 1,608 schools have been taken up under the programme, with most nearing completion, one of the officials said.

"However, there are some schools in Mawsynram, Myllem, and Khliehria areas, which are still awaiting implementation," he said.

Funding sources for the renovations include Samagra Shiksha, state government allocations, and contributions from the development funds of MLAs, MPs, and MDCs.

"Recently, ₹ 33.80 crore was sanctioned for the construction and renovation of 19 upper primary and secondary schools to improve classrooms, sanitation facilities, electrification and quarters," another official said. Sangma's appeal for shared responsibility is being viewed as a push for a collaborative approach to strengthen Meghalaya's school infrastructure and ensure a better learning environment for students across the state. (PTI)

Heavy rains likely in parts of Meghalaya, alert issued

SHILLONG, July 22: Heavy rain is likely in the three eastern districts of Meghalaya on Wednesday, the IMD said, issuing an 'orange alert'.

"Intense spells of rain, accompanied by thunderstorms, are expected in East Khasi Hills, West Jaintia Hills and East Jaintia Hills districts," it said.

The IMD said heavy rain is also likely in parts of the state on Thursday, and issued a 'yellow alert'.

An orange alert signifies the need for preparedness and heightened caution due to the possibility of disruptive weather, including landslides, flash floods, and road blockages in vulnerable areas.

"People have been advised to remain alert and avoid travel during periods of intense rainfall," officials said. (PTI)

Handloom, handicraft sector potential driver of economic growth for NE: Lalduhoma

AIZAWL, July 22: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Tuesday said the handloom and handicraft sector has the potential to be a powerful driver of economic growth for the Northeast region.

He expressed hope that Northeast could be transformed into a vibrant and globally recognised textile hub.

"Speaking at a virtual meeting of a high-level task force on handloom and handicraft, Lalduhoma said that 60 per cent of the national workforce engaged in the handloom and handicraft sector is based in the Northeastern states, reflecting the region's immense contribution and potential in the field," an official statement said.

The meeting, chaired by Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, was attended by DoNER minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union Textile minister Giriraj Singh, and chief ministers and ministers from vari-



ous handloom-rich states.

Lalduhoma said that the handloom and handicraft sector, which is deeply rooted in traditional skills and local identities, can be a powerful driver of economic growth for the Northeast.

To harness its full potential, he

proposed the creation of a clear and actionable roadmap and suggested common facility centres to promote and develop handloom and handicraft.

The Mizoram chief minister also suggested providing structured training for artisans, developing in-

terstate collaboration and networking, standardisation product quality and branding, and encouraging innovation in skill development and design.

He expressed confidence that, with coordinated efforts and appropriate investment, the Northeast could be transformed into a vibrant and globally recognised textile hub.

Lalduhoma was accompanied by state chief secretary Khilli Ram Meena, commissioner and secretary to the chief minister Vanlalndina Fanai, commerce and industry secretary Lalzirmawia Chhangte, and officials from the state planning department during the virtual meeting.

The high-level task force was set up by the DoNER ministry comprising representatives from eight states to chart a practical course for strengthening the handloom and handicraft sector across the country, according to officials. (PTI)

Tripura University to introduce biometric attendance for staffers

AGARTALA, July 22: The Tripura University is set to introduce biometric attendance for a section of officers, teaching staff, except a few professors, and contractual employees in a phased manner to ensure discipline at the institute, officials said on Tuesday.

Earlier, biometric attendance was implemented only for Group B and C staff of the central varsity.

"This is to notify that the Executive Council of Tripura University, in its 45th meeting held on June 1, 2025, has taken decision to start biometric attendance of all assistant professors, all associate professors, Group A officers, all contractual teachers, faculty, guest faculty members and other contractual staff," said Muneendra Mishra, the deputy registrar in a notification.

Group A officers include registrar, deputy registrar, assistant registrar and librarians.

The biometric attendance system will be implemented in a phased manner from July 31.

"All associate professors and statutory posts officers will be brought under the biometric attendance system from October 31, while the professors will be included later," it said.

"All concerned are requested to register their personal details, including mobile number and Aadhaar, on the portal by themselves or to contact the nodal officer, Tripura University, for onboarding," it reads.

"The biometric attendance for non-teaching staff (Group B&C) was introduced earlier, and now this will be done for teaching staff and other workforce," an official said.

"It will bring more discipline in the varsity," he said. (PTI)

ENGINEERING WORKS IN LUMDING DIVISION

Tender Notice No.: LMG/Engg/49 of 2025, Dated: 18-07-2025. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Brief Description of Item :** Repairs to leaky roof including replacement of old and damaged CGI & AC sheet roofing by precast Galvalinised Iron Profile sheet at Railway colonies under the jurisdiction of ADEN/JID/Lumding. **Tender Value:** ₹ 13,85,951.21/-; **Earnest Money:** ₹ 4,56,900/-; Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. on 13-08-2025 and opening at 15:00 hrs. on 14-08-2025. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on 13-08-2025 in the website www.ireps.gov.in

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CULTURE, LIFE AND FOOTBALL ED SHEERAN SAYS SHILLONG IS HIS FAVOURITE INDIAN CITY

SHILLONG, July 22: International pop icon Ed Sheeran said Shillong is his favourite Indian city, months after performing here as part of his global '+' = Å· x (Mathematics) Tour. "Shillong just felt very different," the Grammy-winning singer-songwriter said during a candid segment titled 'Spin the Wheel with Ed Sheeran' hosted by content creator Shabaz Says.

When asked to name his favourite place in India, Sheeran responded without hesitation: "Shillong".

On February 12, Sheeran had performed to a crowd of over 30,000 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here.

"You guys are the loudest," he had told the audience that night, but it now appears that the sentiment was more than a polite compliment.

The British artist's affection for the city did not end with the performance.

Shillong featured prominently in his music video for the chart-topping single 'Sapphire', with 27 scenes filmed in and around the hill

station.

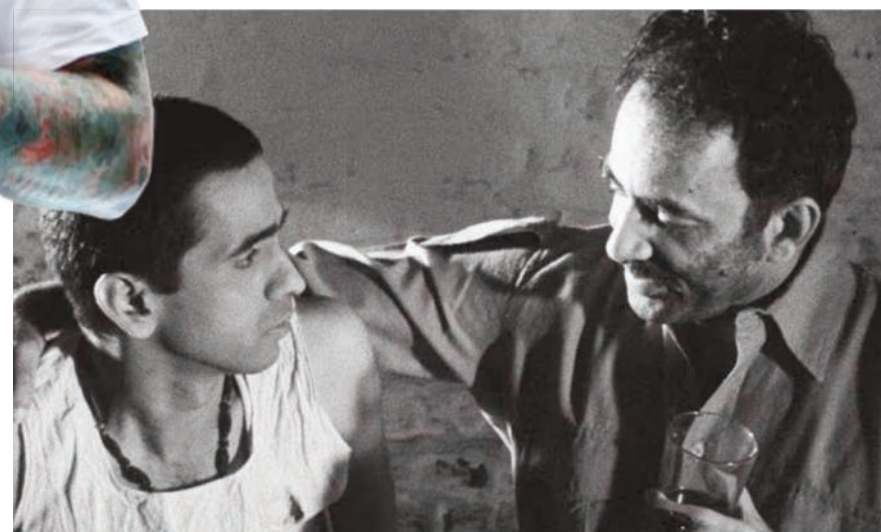
In the video, Sheeran is seen sipping local 'sha' (tea), buying fruit from roadside vendors, relaxing on a swing in Matti-lang Park, and playing football with local children.

One of the most talked-about sequences shows him riding the iconic 'Bus Smit', a symbol of the city's public transport heritage. Released earlier this year, the 'Sapphire' video has already garnered over 12 crore views on YouTube.

In the same interview, the singer spoke of India's diversity, noting how every place offered a different language, cuisine, and rhythm. "Shillong just felt very different," he reiterated. (PTI)



INDIA'S FIRST LGBTQ FILM 'BADNAAM BASTI' TO BE SCREENED AT INDIAN FILM FEST OF MELBOURNE



NEW DELHI, July 22: Indian Film Festival of Melbourne will feature the restored version of India's first LGBTQ film "Badnaam Basti" for its special Pride Celebratory Night next month.

The film released in 1971 and was directed by Prem Kapoor.

The Nitin Sethi, Amar Kakkad, and Nandita Thakur starrer follows a driver bandit named Sarnam who rescues Bansuri from assault. He later hires temple worker Shivraj, creating an interconnected relationship between the three.

The film was believed to be lost after its brief appearance in festival circuits but a 35mm print was accidentally discovered in the archives at the Arsenal Institute for Film and Video Art in Berlin by two US curators - Simran Bhalla and Michael Metzger - in 2019.

They were searching for work by a different director with the same surname and chanced upon the prints of "Badnaam Basti", according to an article in The Guardian in December 2024.

The legacy of the film, which was quite forward for its times for its

homo-erotic undertones, will be honoured by this rare showcase, followed by the Australian premiere of "We Are Faheem and Karun", a tender queer love story by acclaimed filmmaker Onir, according to a release here.

This year, IFFM will screen nearly 75 films that reflect themes of inclusivity spanning gender, race, sexuality, disability, and women's representation.

Speaking about the festival's commitment to representation, IFFM Director Mitu Bhowmik Lange said, "At IFFM, we believe cinema has the power to connect and create conversations. It is our responsibility to reflect on the world we live in, with all its beautiful diversity. This Pride Night is not just about celebrating queer identity but also reclaiming the space that has long been denied to LGBTQIA+ narratives in Indian cinema. Through films like Badnaam Basti and We Are Faheem and Karun, we honour the past and embrace a future of inclusive storytelling."

The 16th edition of the festival is scheduled to be held from August 14 to 24. The LGBTQ+ Pride Night is scheduled for August 22. (PTI)

Anurag Kashyap's 'Bandar' to premiere at Toronto International Film Festival



NEW DELHI, July 22: Anurag Kashyap's "Bandar" (Monkey In a Cage), starring Bobby Deol in the lead role, will premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in the special presentations category.

The film is official selection for the 50th edition of the festival set which is going to take place from September 4 to September 14.

Deol unveiled a poster for the film on Instagram with the caption, "The story that should not have been told... but is the official selection at the 50th Toronto International Film Festival 2025. Our film inspired from true events is premiering at #tiff50 #Bandar #MonkeyinaCage."

The film, which is inspired by real-life events, also stars Sanya Malhotra in a key role. The 56-year-old actor most recently appeared in the Telugu film "Daaku Maharaj" and had a cameo in "Housefull 5". His upcoming films include "Hari Hara Veera Mallu: Part 1", "Alpha" and "Jana Nayagan".

Kashyap, known for "Gangs of Wasseypur", "Black Friday" and Dev D", was previously invited for TIFF in 2020 as an ambassador.

Other Indian films screening at the festival are Neeraj Ghaywan's "Homebound" and "Sholay", which celebrates 50 years of its release on August 15. (PTI)

'The Chola Tigers' by Amish to release on August 29

NEW DELHI, July 22: Bestselling author Amish's upcoming book "The Chola Tigers", the second installment in his Indic Chronicles, will hit the stands on August 29, announced publishing house Harper Collins India on Tuesday.

The historical fiction, which builds on the world introduced in the author's 2020 bestseller "Legend of Suheldev", is touted to be a "thrilling historical saga of defiance, honour and redemption it celebrates the indomitable spirit of India".

The book's cover was released by Tamil superstar Rajinikanth.

"The Chola Tigers" is an exhilarating story in which Emperor Rajendra Chola, the mightiest man of his era, orders a daring surgical strike on Ghazni in response to Sultan Mahmud's attack on the Somnath temple.

"This work of historical fiction is linked to my 2020 release 'Legend of Suheldev'. It is about a mission ordered by one of the greatest Tamilians ever, Emperor Rajendra Chola," Amish, author of 'Shiva Trilogy' and 'Ram Chandra Series', said in a statement.

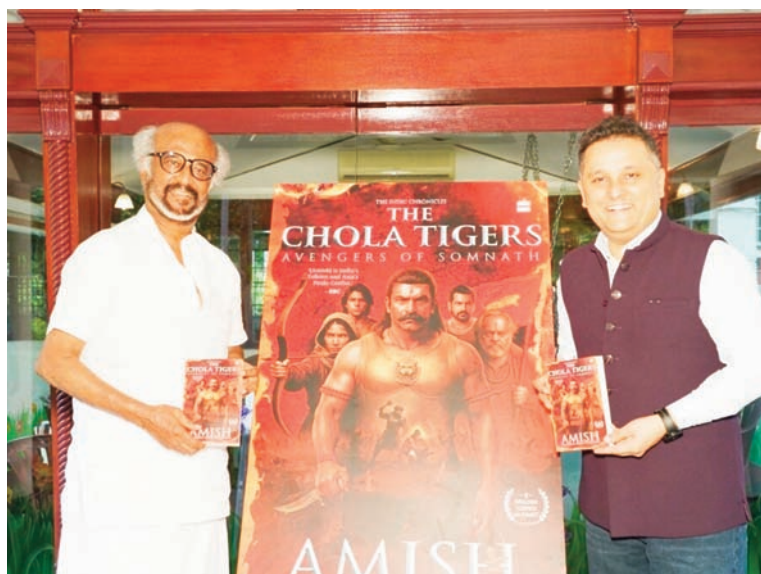
The plot unfolds around Mahmud of Ghazni's devastating attack on the revered Somnath temple, sparking response from the era's most powerful monarch, emperor Rajendra Chola as "he summons a squad of defiant assassins to embark on a perilous quest and bring the fearsome enemy to his knees".

According to the publisher, "The Chola Tigers" explores the profound question: "How far would you go to defend dharma and your country's honour?"

"The new novel is vintage Amish -- a sweeping historical saga that is pacy, dramatic, simmering with political intrigue and personal vendetta, and heart-rendering in its scenes of sacrifice and retribution. At its heart it masterfully explores the depths of human courage and re-

silience, and the indomitable spirit of a nation that refuses to be broken," said Poulomi Chatterjee, executive Publisher at HarperCollins India.

Amish's previous books have sold more than 8 million copies and have been translated into 21 languages. (PTI)



Rakesh Roshan undergoes preventive procedure for carotid arteries blockage

NEW DELHI, July 22: Filmmaker Rakesh Roshan on Tuesday posted that he was in the hospital to get preventative procedures done after he found out that both of his carotid arteries to the brain were "above 75 per cent blocked".

The 75-year-old actor-filmmaker, who shared the health update with a photograph from the hospital, said he is now back home and fully recovered.

"This week has been truly eye opening, during a routine full body health check up the Dr conducting the sonography for the heart suggested I also do one for the neck. By chance we found out that although asymptomatic, both my carotid arteries to the brain were above 75 per cent blocked," Roshan said on Instagram.

The director revealed that if ignored the condition could be extremely dangerous. "I immediately admitted myself into the hospital and got the preventative procedures done. I am back home now fully recovered and hope to get back to my workouts very soon. I hope this inspires others to stay on top of their health especially where the heart and brain is concerned," the director added.

Roshan, who is the father of Bollywood superstar Hrithik Roshan, said above the age of 45, everyone should get regular scans such as a heart CT and a carotid brain artery sonography which are "often ignored completely".

"I think it's important to remember that prevention is always better than cure. I wish a healthy and aware year to you all," Roshan said.

The filmmaker is known for hit films like "Karan Arjun", "Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai", and "Koi... Mil Gaya" and its sequels. He will be co-producing the upcoming film "Krrish 4" which is to be directed by Hrithik. (PTI)

Jafar Panahi honoured as Asian Filmmaker of the Year by Busan International Film Festival

NEW DELHI, July 22: Renowned Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi, known for world cinema classics like "The White Balloon", "Offside", "The Circle" and "3 Faces", has been named the 'Asian Filmmaker of the Year' by the Busan International Film Festival.

The award is presented to an Asian film figure or organization that has made the most significant contribution to the development of the Asian film industry and culture.

Panahi is a revered figure in the international cinema community but in Iran he has consistently faced restric-

tions for his art.

He was imprisoned three years ago and went on a hunger strike. Despite obstacles, Panahi has continued to make films be it "This Is Not a Film", which he made in his living room while under house arrest or "Taxi", which was set in a car. "As a towering figure in Iranian cinema, the director has explored the existence and freedom of individuals living amid censorship and political repression. Capturing the political and social contradictions of Iranian society from a counter-cultural perspective, he has continued to create films in secret, courageously submit-

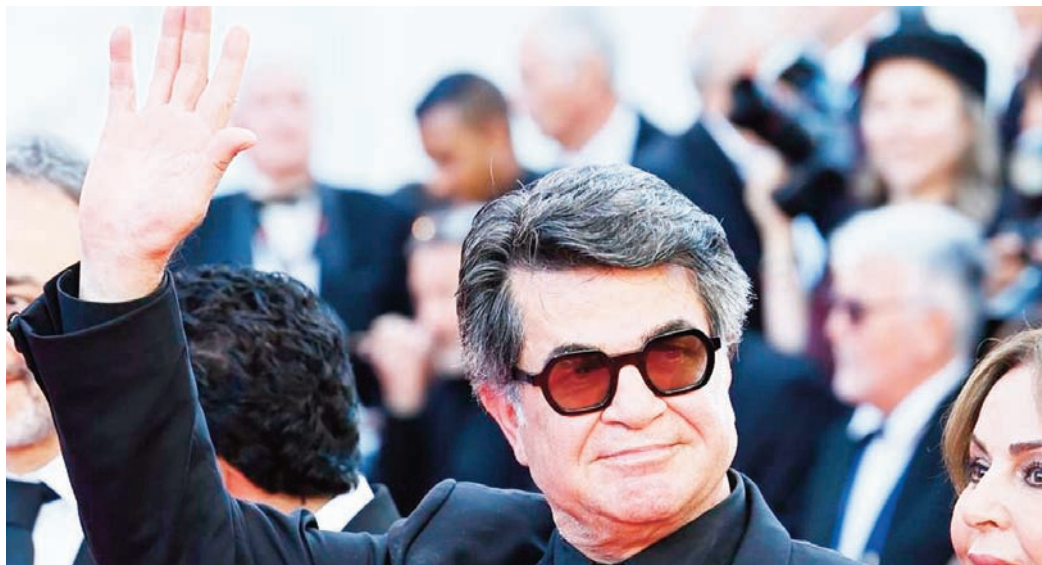
ting them to international film festivals despite repeated arrests, custody, detention, travel bans, and a stated-imposed filmmaking ban," BIFF said in their release.

"At a time when making films in my country becomes more difficult every day, this recognition reminds me that cinema can still connect us beyond borders, languages, and limitations. I not only accept this award in my own name, but also on behalf of all those who, in silence, in exile, or under pressure, continue to create," Panahi said in his statement to the festival.

The filmmaker's "It Was Just an Accident" won the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival in May this year. Panahi won Venice festival's Golden Lion for "The Circle" in 2002 and the Golden Bear at the Berlin film festival for "Taxi" in 2015.

The filmmaker's accomplishments also include Locarno's Golden Leopard for "The Mirror" in 1997 and Cannes' screenplay prize for "3 Faces" in 2018.

Panahi will be receiving the award at the festival's opening ceremony, scheduled on September 17. The festival will run till September 26. (PTI)



DURAND CUP KICKS OFF AMID UNCERTAINTY IN INDIAN FOOTBALL

KOLKATA, July 22: The 134th edition of Durand Cup kicks off here Wednesday with East Bengal facing South United FC amid a cloud of uncertainty surrounding the upcoming top-tier domestic football season. The pre-season action will begin against the backdrop of a stalemate between the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) over the renewal of the Master Rights Agreement (MRA), which governs the operations and commercial structure of the top-tier Indian Super League. The MRA expires on December 8, and with no breakthrough yet, the very future of India's top-tier league remains in limbo ahead of its scheduled September start.

In the midst of this impasse, the Durand Cup has retained its significance as the traditional curtain-raiser for Indian football.

The competition continues to draw a full roster of 24 teams despite only six ISL clubs confirming participation this year.

The spotlight on Wednesday will



Love to play against India in first game of T20 WC next year: Italy captain Joe Burns



DUBAI, July 22: Having led Italy to their maiden World Cup qualification, the European team's Australia-born captain Joe Burns wants to "jump in at the deep end" during the T20 showcase next year by taking on defending champions India in the opening match itself.

Italy made the cut for the event in India and Sri Lanka next year with a solid showing in the European Qualifiers that concluded earlier this month. The draws for the World Cup are still some time away from being finalised.

"You come to your first World Cup and you want the big stage. I'd love to be playing India in the first game in India," Burns told ICC Digital.

"I'd love to be playing Australia, England or all the top teams, that's the experience that you're after. You want to test yourself, you want to really jump in at the deep end," he added.

Burns said qualifying for the tournament was still a "surreal" feeling for him.

"A lot of planning and preparation went into it (qualifying). So it's satisfying from that aspect from the cricket side as well," he said.

He said the entire process was emotional for him and for the rest of the team.

"We did one week training camp in Rome, one week in the UK, and I said to them the first day in Rome, 'I don't care if we're playing Luxembourg in the first Sub-Regional

game or India in a World Cup Final. I just want us to be the most prepared team in world cricket'...."

A former Australia player with four Test centuries to his credit, Burns made it to the Italian squad due to his mother's heritage. It helped him pull through a personally challenging phase which included dealing with the death of his brother Dominic.

"For me, it was an opportunity to unite family and cricket, and I think for our group, everyone has a really similar story to that."

"We did a great culture piece in Rome (in the build-up to the Qualifier), about who we are, where we come from, understanding each other's families and sacrifices made....," he said.

Former Canada international John Davidson is the head coach of the team, with ex-Scotland international Dougie Brown and Ireland star Kevin O'Brien as his assistants.

"I've seen a group of players who have grown and developed into a really close-knit group," O'Brien said.

"That can be difficult with players coming from different parts of the world but the common joining force with this squad is the Italian heritage."

"I've seen the guys improve, and that is not only with their cricket skills, it's all the other things that you need to be successful in International cricket, like attitude, fitness, awareness, cricket smarts, and work ethic," he added. (PTI)

DUBAI, July 22: India's Deepti Sharma made a big jump of 10 places to 23rd among batters on the back of her strong showing in the ongoing ODI series against England while compatriot Smriti Mandhana maintained her top spot in the latest ICC rankings released on Tuesday.

England and India players made significant gains in the latest ICC Women's ODI Player Rankings following strong performances in the first two matches.

Deepti was one of the biggest movers in the batting rankings after her unbeaten 62 in the first ODI, which earned her the player of the match award and guided India to a successful chase of 259. She followed it up with another unbeaten 30 in the second ODI.

Sophia Dunkley's 83 off 92 balls in the first ODI played a key role in taking England to a strong total and earned her a jump of 24 places to No.52. Alice Davidson-



Richards, who contributed with a solid 53, rose 40 spots to No.118.

Mandhana, meanwhile, remained steady at the top of the rankings, registering scores of 28 and 42 in the first two matches while maintaining her rating of 727.

India captain Harmanpreet

be firmly on East Bengal, who have been among the busiest clubs in the transfer market.

Determined to turn around their fortunes after a forgettable 2024-25 campaign, where they finished ninth in the ISL, made an early Super Cup exit, and bowed out of the AFC Challenge League in the quarterfinals, the Kolkata giants have rung in major changes under Spanish coach Oscar Bruzon.

Key signings include Brazilian midfielder Miguel Figueira, Argentine defender Kevin Sibille, and Palestinian international Mohammed Rashid.

They join full-back Jay Gupta, who completed a multi-year move from FC Goa after a successful stint with the Gaurs.

Bruzon has released foreign stars Hijazi Maher, Mahdi Talal, and Messi Bouli in a bid to freshen up his squad and end the club's long trophy drought.

East Bengal's fans will hope the new recruits can help reclaim the Durand Cup, which they last won 21 years back in 2004.

With 16 titles, they remain the second-most successful club in the competition's storied history behind arch-rivals Mohun Bagan, who clinched their record 17th crown in 2023 by defeating East Bengal 1-0 in a nail-biting final.

Reigning ISL champions Mohun Bagan have made headlines with the signing of Abhishek Singh Tekchand from Punjab FC for a reported fee close to Rs 2 crore, as they look to shore up their wing-back options following Ashique Kuruniyan's departure.

Jamshedpur FC, meanwhile, have bolstered their defence by roping in Jestin George, whose breakout season with Gokulam Kerala included a historic Durand Cup win in 2019.

Defending champions, NorthEast United FC are drawn in Group E and will be boosted by the signing of Spanish winger Jairo Samperio, an Europa League winner.

They have also acquired the services of Lalbiakdika Vanlalvunga, Lalrinzuala Lalbiknia and Chema Ndoez for the upcoming season. (PTI)

MANDHANA MAINTAINS TOP SPOT

Deepti jumps 10 places to 23rd in ODI batting ranking

Her rating jumped from 747 to 776, further extending her lead over the Australian duo of Ashleigh Gardner (724) and Megan Schutt (696), who round out the top three. Deepti remained on the fourth spot.

Finger spinners have dominated the series so far, with England's Charlie Dean and India's Sneha Rana picking up three wickets each.

Dean broke into the top 10, climbing two places to No.9 with a career-best rating of 625, while Rana jumped 12 spots to No.21, also reaching a personal best rating of 515.

Dean also made progress in the all-rounder rankings, moving up to joint 14th alongside Australia's Ellyse Perry.

Ecclestone's quick unbeaten 23 off 19 balls in the first ODI, combined with her four wickets in the series, helped her climb three spots to 18th in the all-rounders list. (PTI)

Four days to departure, wrestlers yet to get appointment for visas ahead of U17 World C'ship

NEW DELHI, July 22: The Indian cadet wrestling teams risk missing the prestigious U17 World Championship in Athens, beginning on July 28, as the 47-member contingent is scheduled to depart on Saturday but the Greece embassy is yet to respond to their visa appointment request.

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) had sought appointment on July 10 but 12 days have passed and it is yet to hear a positive response from the embassy.

When nothing moved even six days after their request, WFI wrote to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on July 16, seeking intervention.

The 47-member Indian contingent has 30 wrestlers, who made the national team after coming through selection trials conducted

by WFI on July 7 and 8 in Delhi and Lucknow respectively.

"The Federation had to seek intervention of the MEA and the Home Ministry after its numerous requests did not receive a positive response from the Greece embassy," WFI President Sanjay Singh told PTI.

"The tickets have been booked and the players are ready. The exposure for young athletes is paramount for their growth. They must not miss the World Championship. It's Tuesday today, let's hope we get a response now," he added.

"In the past we have got visas from the Greece embassy in a matter of four days but this time there is an inexplicable delay."

Recently our wrestler Harshita got a Schengen visa by the Hungary embassy in one day, I don't know

why Greece embassy is delaying it this time," said another WFI official.

The Indian squad has several Asian Championship gold medalists in the squad, including Rachna Parmar (43kg), Moni (57kg), Ashvini Vaishno (65kg), and Manisha (69kg) and they will be strong medal contenders in Athens.

Even the world governing body United World Wrestling (UWW) President Nenad Lalovic has shot a missive to the Hellenic Olympic Committee, requesting urgent intervention in the matter.

"Unfortunately, some of the qualified and registered teams — including the Iranian and Indian delegations — have encountered difficulties and delays in obtaining their Schengen visas," Lalovic wrote on Sunday.

"Despite having followed the application procedures correctly, these teams have not yet received their visas. I would therefore be most grateful for your support in facilitating this process with the relevant authorities, to ensure that all participating athletes and officials are able to obtain their visas in time," the letter read.

A note on the Greece embassy website reads: "Kindly be informed that due to the current situation the processing time of the visa applications is 15 working days, as per instructions of the Greek Embassy in New Delhi, and may be extended."

Explaining the visa procedure further, the website mentions that it may take more than 15 days to process the visa applications. (PTI)

Prannoy saves five match points to progress, Lakshya Sen exits China Open

CHANGZHOU, July 22: Indian shuttler HS Prannoy saved five match points and clawed his way back from a game down to beat Japan's Koki Watanabe in the opening round of the China Open Super 1000 badminton tournament here on Tuesday.

The world No. 35 Prannoy pulled off a stunning 8-21, 21-16, 23-21 win against the 18th-ranked Watanabe.

It was a tough day for Lakshya Sen, whose poor run continued as he squandered a one-game advantage to suffer a 21-14, 22-24, 11-21 loss to China's fifth seed Li Shi Feng. "This point in my career, every win matters. I'm happy to be back on tour, small breaks happened here and there. The level of playing has gone really high and winning each round is getting tough day by day," Prannoy said after the win.

"The average age has become 22-23 in the men's singles all of a sudden. Lot of fresh faces and you don't really know what their game is. So, it's tough to be a veteran out there," he added.

In the opening game of his match, Prannoy, a former top-10 player and bronze medalist at the 2023 World Championships, was never in the contest as Watanabe closed it out with ease. But he bounced back in the second game, forcing a decider with sharper court coverage and better control.

Prannoy trailed 2-11 in the final game before picking up five points in a row to narrow the gap. Still, he found himself staring at defeat at 15-20, with Watanabe holding five match points.

But the Indian showed nerves of steel, saving five match points before taking a slender 21-20 lead and eventually sealing a memorable win. (PTI)

Erigaisi, Gujrathi to headline Chennai Grand Masters

CHENNAI, July 22: Grandmasters Arjun Erigaisi, Vidit Gujrathi and Anish Giri will headline the third edition of Chennai Grand Masters, starting here on August 6.

India's most prestigious classical chess tournament will feature 20 players from across the Masters and Challengers categories.

The latest edition will have a Rs one crore prize pool as competitors chase FIDE Circuit points, which are vital for qualifying for next year's Candidates Tournament.

Organised by MGD1 and sponsored by Quantbox, the tournament will be split into two categories: Masters and Challengers.

Besides Erigaisi, Gujrathi and Giri, the Masters field will comprise Jorden Van Foreest, Liang Awonder, Vincent Keymer, Ray Robson, Vladimir Fedoseev, and Pranav V, who steps up after winning the Challengers in 2024.

"Playing such a high-stakes tournament at home is always special. As the top-rated player here, I know the expectations are high, but the field this year is extremely competitive, and every game will demand my absolute best," Erigaisi said. (PTI)

We are not going to take a backward step and let opposition be confrontational: Stokes

MANCHESTER, July 22: England captain Ben Stokes on Tuesday asserted that his team will respond in kind to any aggression from Indian players in the fourth Test starting here from Wednesday, indicating no cessation to the verbal volleys in an intensely fought series.

England lead the five-match series 2-1, but players such as India skipper Shubman Gill, Mohammed Siraj, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Stokes and Harry Brook were not averse to having some animated conversations with the opposition players.

"I don't think it's one of those things where we're going to necessarily just go out and start at (sledding). I don't think either team's really looked to do that. I think there's always going to be a moment in a Test series where something does heat up. It's a massive series and there's a lot of pres-

sure on both teams to perform," Stokes said on the eve of the match at Old Trafford.

It might have been an organic reaction to a particular situation, but Stokes hinted clearly that aggression from the rival camp will not be taken lightly.

"As I said, it's not something that we're going to purposely go out and look to start because then that will take our focus off what we actually need to do out in the middle. But by no means, we're not going to take a backward step and let any opposition try to be confrontational towards us."

"And not try to give a bit back. I think that goes for most teams, to be honest anyway. So, it's not like we're the only team who does that. But the series has been great to play. It has been great to watch. All five days, all three Tests so far. Quality of cricket has been outstanding," he added.

The proceedings heated up during the third day of the third Test at the Lord's when Crawley and Duckett successfully employed some delaying tactics, inviting angry reactions from Siraj and Gill.

Gill had pointed his fingers at Duckett, which resulted in a similar reaction from the England opener. Stokes vindicated the whole episode.

"Obviously, that night (at the Lord's) when Zak and Ben had to go out just started it off. We had the advantage of bowling last in the Test match to win."

"We just threw everything that we possibly could at India, not only with our skills, but also with their energy in the field as well," he said.

Stokes admitted that the aggression from the Indian players added some adrenalin into his side.

"Harry Brooks said, Brendan McCullum said, you guys have

been too nice. Do you agree? Yeah, I think potentially. I guess it was a really nice moment, I think, as a team when you speak about something like that and everyone buys into that (replying to aggressive tactics by the opposition)," said the premier all-rounder.

While India are in a must-win situation, England are in the driver's seat having taken the series lead at Lord's, and they will be keen to claim the rubber at a venue where the Indian team hasn't played a Test since 2014.

"Good win for us at Lord's. Nice break. Hope we continue the momentum and put in the same effort and energy," Stokes said.

An injury-plagued India could be forced to depart from its preferred template in the penultimate Test, hoping to end a winless record at the storied Old Trafford and draw level in what has been a compelling series so far. (PTI)



Injury-hit India set to move away from tried-and-tested formula against resilient England

MANCHESTER, July 22: An injury-plagued India could be forced to depart from its preferred template when it takes on a reinvigorated England in the fourth Test starting here on Wednesday, hoping to end a winless record at the storied Old Trafford and draw level in what has been a compelling series so far.

Following the first Test in Leeds, India had found a settled line-up by fielding three all-rounders in the playing eleven including Nitish Reddy, who has now been ruled of the series due to a knee injury.

With Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar being the two spin bowling all-rounders, India had the cushion of batting till number eight but that may not be the case in Manchester, where the visitors are yet to win in nine attempts including four losses and five draws. England are leading 2-1 going into the penultimate game of the rubber.

Shardul Thakur, who played the series-opener, would be the direct replacement for Reddy in the playing eleven but he doesn't provide the same batting quality. If selected, he would have to up his game with the ball too as Reddy had produced

timely wickets in the third Test at Lord's. Considering the options available, India could also go back to the combination they played at Leeds where they had only one spinner in Jadeja and there were specialist batters till number six with both Karun Nair and Sai Sudharsan in the playing eleven.

Also in the mix are uncapped pacer Anshul Kamboj and Prasidh Krishna. Either of them can come in for Akash Deep if he is not able to recover fully from his groin injury.

Like Akash Deep, Kamboj can generate plenty of seam movement and he also looked in good shape in the first outdoor training session ahead of the high-stakes contest. He was also a part of India A's shadow tour of England.

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and workhorse Mohammed Siraj are two certain starters in the playing eleven.

Lord's was the first time in the series that Indian batters faltered and the Shubman Gill-led line-up would be looking to course correct with all to play for.

Despite low returns in the third Test, Gill has aggregated more than 600 runs in the series and from the team's point of



view, he would need to return to his heavy scoring ways.

Jofra Archer got the better of Yashasvi Jaiswal twice in his successful return to Test cricket and the young Indian left-hander would be better prepared to deal with the extra pace of the England fast bowler.

Gill has been the team's leading run getter but someone who has looked most

assured in the middle across six innings is K L Rahul, having provided a batting masterclass in English conditions at the top of the order.

Considering the training session 48 hours before the game, Rishabh Pant appears to have fully recovered from his finger injury and would be performing his dual duties as usual.

If Nair gets another opportunity, he

would be desperate to convert his starts into a big score. With fourth 50-plus scores on the trot, Ravindra Jadeja has been rock solid in the middle order but is expected to do more with the ball.

Compared to other venues in the country, India don't play that regularly here with their last outing at Old Trafford coming in 2014. The last hundred from an Indian at this ground came from the bat of Sachin Tendulkar way back in 1990.

While India are in a must-win situation, England are in the driver's seat having taken the series lead at Lord's.

Like they usually do, Ben Stokes picked his playing eleven before the game and the only change for Wednesday is Liam Dawson coming in for the injured Shoaib Bashir. The left-arm spinner last played for England in July 2017.

It has been raining regularly in Manchester for the past week or so and there is forecast for light showers for the majority of the five days.

Considering the damp weather, there would be moisture to exploit for the fast bowlers on day one.

Temper flaring on both sides has added to the excitement of the series and Old Trafford promises to be another cracker.

"Every game we've played so far has gone into the last hour of the game, which you do not see very often. I've had a lot of people come up to me saying 'it's been an amazing series, thank you'."

"Everybody said that the Lord's game was one of the best games that they've watched, so it's been an amazing series and I'm looking forward to the rest of it," said Harry Brook.

Squads:

India: Shubman Gill (captain), Rishabh Pant (vc & wk), Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Sai Sudharsan, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Karun Nair, Ravindra Jadeja, Dhruv Jurel (WK), Washington Sundar, Shardul Thakur, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Akash Deep, Kuldeep Yadav, Anshul Kamboj.

England XI: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope (vc), Joe Root, Harry Brook, Ben Stokes (c), Jamie Smith (wk), Liam Dawson, Chris Woakes, Brydon Carse, Jofra Archer.(PTT)

Shastri backs Washington as India's next long-term all-rounder



MANCHESTER, July 22: Former head coach Ravi Shastri believes Washington Sundar has all the attributes to become India's next "genuine" Test all-rounder, as he is lethal with the ball in home conditions and is also a naturally gifted batter.

The 25-year-old off-spinner, who made a memorable Test debut at the Gabba in 2021, has since had limited red-ball opportunities. In 11 Tests, Washington has amassed 545 runs and taken 30 wickets.

"I always loved Washington. When I saw him on day one, I said he's the man. And he can be a genuine all-rounder for many, many years for India," Shastri said on 'The ICC Review'.

Shastri feels Washington's red-ball appearances should have been more, especially given his proven ability on turning tracks at home.

"He again is just 25 years of age. I think he should have played a lot more Test cricket. Can be lethal in India on tracks where the ball is turning, as New Zealand found out when they played against India. He out-bowled some of the senior spinners. He bowled that well and he can bat."

Washington was the joint highest wicket-taker in the 2024 home Test series against New Zealand, finishing with 16 wickets in four innings.

Shastri, who oversaw Washington's Test debut, also heaped praise on his batting ability, suggesting the Tamil Nadu player was good enough to be promoted up the order.

"He's a naturally talented batsman. He's no number 8. He can go at 6 very soon in the batting lineup."

In the ongoing England series, Washington has made key contributions with both bat and ball. At Lord's, his 4/22 in the second innings, including the prized scalps of Joe Root, Ben Stokes and Jamie Smith, had swung the match in India's favour.

Shastri added that Washington's technical attributes make him an asset even in overseas conditions.

"And once he gains confidence, I think he'll get better and better because even overseas he's got the drift, he's got the pace, he's got the strength in his fingers and the fitness. You know, do both long spells and do the controlling job when needed." (PTT)

BCCI will be covered in National Sports Governance Bill: Sports Ministry source

NEW DELHI, July 22: The BCCI will come under the purview of the National Sports Governance Bill that is set to be introduced in Parliament on Wednesday and will be required to take recognition from the proposed National Sports Board even though it is not reliant on government funding.

This was revealed by a top Sports Ministry source on Tuesday.

"Like all National Sports federations (NSFs), the BCCI will have to comply with the law of the land once this Bill becomes an Act. They don't take ministry funding but an Act of Parliament applies to them," the source said.

"They will remain an autonomous body like all other NSFs but their disputes, if any, will also come to the proposed National Sports Tribunal which will become the dispute resolution body for sports matter ranging from elections to selection," the source added.

"However, this Bill does not mean government control on any NSF. Government will be a facilitator in ensuring good governance, not an enforcer."

The BCCI has become a part of the Olympic movement after cricket was included in the 2028 Los Angeles Games where it will be played in the T20 format.

The long-awaited Sports Governance Bill seeks to institutionalise a strong framework for timely elections, administrative accountability, athlete welfare and reduction in litigation through a slew of measures.

The National Sports Board (NSB), appointed entirely by the central government, will have sweeping powers to grant and even suspend recognition of federations based on complaints or "its own motion" for violations ranging from

electoral irregularities to financial misappropriation.

The Bill makes some concessions on the thorny issue of age cap of administrators by allowing those in the bracket of 70 to 75 to contest elections if the concerned international bodies do not object. In electoral matters, the Bill will accept the "supremacy" of the Olympic Charter and the statutes of the International Federations.

The proposed NSB will comprise a chairperson, and its members will be appointed by the central government from "amongst persons of ability, integrity and standing."

The appointments would be done based on the recommendations of a search-cum-selection committee, according to the Bill that has been finalised after extensive consultations with stake-holders and public inputs.

The selection committee would be made up of the Cabinet Secretary or Secretary Sports as chairperson, the Director General of the Sports Authority of India, two sports administrators who have each served as the President or Secretary General or Treasurer of a National Sports Body and one eminent sports person who is a Dronacharya, or Khel Ratna or Arjuna awardee.

"This is an athlete-centric Bill which will ensure stable administration, fair selection, safe sports and grievance redressal, NSF audits, proper accounting and better fund management," the ministry source asserted.

"The National Sports Tribunal will ensure that there is no career damage to athletes due to delayed court cases. Even now 350 different court cases are in progress where the ministry is a party, this needs to end," he added.

As was mentioned in the draft released last year, the Board will have the power to grant recognition to NSFs and even constitute ad-hoc panels to run individual sports in case an NSF is suspended.

It would also be mandated to "collaborate" with the International Sports Bodies for welfare of athletes in India and to issue guidelines to NSFs for ensuring compliance with international standards.

All these duties have so far been the domain of the IOA, which acted as the nodal body for NSF-related matters.



The Board has been empowered to de-recognise a national body that fails to hold elections for its Executive Committee or has committed "gross irregularities in the election procedures."

In addition, failure to publish annual audited accounts or "misused, misapplied or misappropriated public funds" would also invite suspension from the NSB but it would be required to consult the concerned global body before proceeding.

The Board was vehemently opposed by the IOA at the consultation stage and was described as government interference that might invite sanctions from the Interna-

tional Olympic Committee (IOC).

However, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has asserted that the IOC has been duly consulted while drafting the document. A harmonious relationship with the IOC would be crucial to India's bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games.

"Everyone is on board now. This bill explicitly aligns with the Olympic charter and the even the IOC feels that good work has been done in framing it," the source said.

The proposed National Sports Tribunal seeks to provide "independent, speedy, effective and cost-efficient disposal of sports-related disputes."

"A ruling by the Tribunal can only be challenged in the Supreme Court," the ministry source said.

It will comprise a chairperson and two other members. The head would be a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court or the Chief Justice of a High Court.

The appointments would once again be in the hands of the central government based on recommendations of a committee that will be headed by the Chief Justice of India or a Supreme Court judge recommended by the CJI.

The central government will have the power to remove its members in case of violations, including financial irregularities and actions prejudicial to "public interest".

Karun Nair to return to Karnataka from Vidarbha for upcoming domestic season

Bengaluru, Jul 22. (PTI) India batter Karun Nair will return to Karnataka after a hiatus of three years for the upcoming domestic season after Vidarbha Cricket Association granted him the No Objection Certificate (NOC). (PTI)

Delhi Premier League to start on August 2, women's competition from August 17

NEW DELHI, July 22: The second edition of the Delhi Premier League will begin with the men's competition on August 2 while the women's season will kick-start on August 17.

The men's final is scheduled for August 31 with a reserve day set aside on September 1.

The men's tournament has been split into two groups of four teams each.

Group A includes Outer Delhi Warriors, Central Delhi Kings, New Delhi Tigers, and North Delhi Strikers. While Group B comprises West Delhi Lions, East Delhi Riders, South Delhi Superstarz, and Purani Dilli 6.

Each side will play double round robin (two matches -- Home and Away) with three teams from their own group. This will be followed by single round robin with four teams from the other group making it a total of 10 games.

The top four teams will advance to the playoffs. The top two teams will face off in Qualifier 1, with the winner earning a direct spot in the final.

Meanwhile, the third and fourth-placed teams will compete in the Eliminator, where the loser would be knocked out. The winner of the Eliminator will then take on the loser of Qualifier 1 in Qualifier 2.

The winner of that match will book the remaining spot in the final, setting up a showdown with the winner of Qualifier 1.

The women's competition, on the other hand, will run between August 17 to August 24 and will have four teams and a total of six matches will be played in a round-robin format.

The top two teams from the league stage will qualify for the finals. (PTI)

Kamboj belongs to same variety of pacers as Zaheer Khan and Bumrah: Ashwin



NEW DELHI, July 22: Former India off-spinner R Ashwin believes that the uncapped Anshul Kamboj belongs to the rare breed of fast bowlers like Zaheer Khan and Jasprit Bumrah who are not only skillful but have an understanding of plans that goes beyond just trying to "express themselves and enjoy the game".

Kamboj was drafted into the Indian squad for the fourth Test against England in Manchester after injuries to all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy, and the pace duo of Akash Deep, and Arshdeep Singh last week.

"The appreciable thing about Anshul is that he understands the plan. I have seen so many fast bowlers if you ask them about the plan, they just say they want to express themselves and enjoy the game," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel 'Ash Ki Baat'.

"But Anshul understands plans and

also knows how to execute in the middle. It's not a trait many fast bowlers possess. Zaheer Khan was one of them. He was amazing."

"In recent times, Jassi (Bumrah) is one player who understands the plans and executes them to perfection. Anshul belongs to that variety. I'm not comparing skills because skills are a very different thing," he added.

The 24-year-old impressed in the lead-up to the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy, performing consistently for India A against the England Lions. Across four innings at Northampton and Canterbury, he picked up five wickets, showcasing late movement and bounce.

"He has a very good tappa (right length). I have seen that in the IPL. His wrist position is very good, and he delivers a very upright seam. He never leaves his tappa," he said.

"With Bumrah and Siraj there, if you are bringing in Anshul Kamboj into the playing XI, I'm telling you, it's a serious bowling."

Ashwin feels Kamboj, who has been in "cracking form" will serve as the perfect foil to Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj in the fourth Test.

"If you are going to bring Anshul Kamboj into the XI, I am telling you this is a serious bowling attack." He highlighted Kamboj's domestic exploits, which included a 10-wicket haul in an innings against Kerala last year in a Ranji Trophy match at Lahl.

"People will say that Anshul will play his first Test. He hasn't played in England, but he was there in the A tour. He has been in cracking form in first-class cricket. He is averaging around 13. He took 10 wickets in an innings," he said.

Ashwin added that Kamboj has the ability to bowl long spells, which will help in England.

"Anshul has a habit of bowling long spells. You need that in England. He will be a good foil for Bumrah and Siraj. Prasidh is an option, but I would go for Anshul. We were impressed with him. His wrist is really good," he said.

However, Ashwin said that the Indian team management will have to calm Kamboj's nerve should he make his debut.

"One thing the management will have to look after is calm Anshul's nerve," he said.

India are currently trailing 1-2 in the five-match series with the fourth Test slated to begin in Manchester on Wednesday. (PTT)

Either you give everything or rest properly: Irfan Pathan tells Bumrah on eve of must-win Test

MANCHESTER, July 22: Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan's message to pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is unequivocal: Either give everything for the team or rest properly instead of selective participation for workload management.

On the eve of the must-win fourth Test against England at Old Trafford, Pathan expressed his admiration for Bumrah's incredible skills with the ball but also urged him to put in the "extra effort" when the situation demanded.

"I absolutely adore Jasprit Bumrah, I absolutely love his skills. He is outstanding. However, I believe that when you play for India, you have to give it your all."

"When you talk about a five-over

spell, when Root comes, you are not bowling the sixth over. You have to give it all. Either you give everything or you rest properly," Pathan said on his Youtube channel.

"When it comes to a nation or a team, when you are playing for a team, you play for them. Team always comes first," the former India left-arm seamer added.

As part of a pre-determined plan, Bumrah was supposed to play in three of the five Tests on the tour but with India trailing 2-1 with two more matches to play, calls for his inclusion at Old Trafford have only grown since the team's heartbreaking loss at Lord's.

Pathan made it clear that he was in no way questioning Bumrah's commitment to the team.

"Not questioning that he hasn't put in efforts. He has bowled over. There is no doubt about it. However, when it comes to going the extra mile for the team, you have to do that."

"Bumrah will remain at the top for a long time if he continues to win games regularly for India. You have to put in that extra effort when the team needs you. Ben Stokes did that, and Jofra did it after four years," Pathan said.

Bumrah featured in the first and the third Tests of the series, and enjoyed immense success with the ball in both outings at Leeds and Lord's. (PTT)

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