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## Cabinet approves ₹ 1.07 lakh cr Employment Linked Incentive scheme

### 3.5 cr jobs to be created in two years

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** The central government on Tuesday approved an Employment Linked Incentive scheme with an outlay of ₹ 1.07 lakh crore to create 3.5 crore jobs over the next two years through social security schemes run by the retirement fund body EPFO.

The ELI scheme to support job generation, enhance employability and social security across all sectors, with special focus on the manufacturing sector, was approved by the Union Cabinet in a meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Information & Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

The scheme aims to incentivise the creation of more than 3.5 crore jobs in the country over two years, an official statement said.

The scheme will provide incentives to employees as well as employers to boost job creation.

Under the scheme, while the first-time employees will get one month's wage (up to ₹ 15,000), the employers will be given incentives



for a period of two years for generating additional employment, with extended benefits for another two years for the manufacturing sector. The ELI scheme was announced in the Union Budget 2024-25 as part of the package of five schemes to facilitate employment, skilling and other opportunities for 4.1 crore youth with a total budget outlay of ₹ 2 lakh crore.

The ELI scheme aims to incentivise the creation of more than 3.5 crore jobs in the country over a period of 2 years, it stated.

Out of these, 1.92 crore beneficiaries will be first timers, entering the workforce. The benefits of the scheme would be applicable to jobs created between August 1, 2025, and July 31, 2027.

The plan consists of two parts,

with Part A focused on first timers (employees) and Part B focused on employers.

Targeting first-time employees registered with EPFO, this Part A will offer a one-month wage up to ₹15,000 in two instalments. Employees with salaries up to ₹ 1 lakh will be eligible. The first instalment will be payable after 6 months of service, and the second instalment after 12 months of service and completion of a financial literacy programme by the employee.

"To encourage the habit of saving, a portion of the incentive will be kept in a savings instrument or deposit account for a fixed period and can be withdrawn by the employee at a later date. Part A will benefit around 1.92 crore first-time employees," the statement said.

Part B of the scheme will cover the generation of additional employment in all sectors, with a special focus on the manufacturing sector. The employers will get incentives with respect to employees with salaries up to ₹ 1 lakh.

The government will incentivise employers, up to ₹ 3,000 per month, for two years, for each additional employee with sustained employment for at least six months. For the manufacturing sector, incentives will be extended to the 3rd and 4th years as well.

Establishments, which are registered with EPFO, will be required to hire at least two additional employees (for employers with less than 50 employees) or five additional employees (for employers with 50 or more employees) on a sustained basis for at least six months.

The benefit to the employer (per additional employment per month) will be up to ₹ 1,000 for employees with a monthly wage of ₹10,000, while this will be ₹ 2,000 for employees with wages of more than ₹ 10,000 and up to ₹ 20,000.

Employees with wages up to ₹ 10,000 will get a proportional incentive. The benefit will be ₹ 3,000 per month to the employers for employees (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## CONVOY INCIDENT

### Congress behaving like 'overground Maoists': Dilip Saikia



**GUWAHATI, July 1:** BJP president Dilip Saikia on Tuesday maintained that Congress members were behaving like "overground Maoists" in the state, as he lashed out at the opposition party a day after its supporters purportedly hurled a water bottle at the chief minister's convoy.

The ruling party also staged protests across the state, including Guwahati, demanding exemplary punishment against the culprits.

A water bottle was purportedly hurled at the convoy of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma at Golaghat on Monday when the fleet of cars was passing by a protest staged by the local youth Congress wing against the alleged sale of 90 Gir cows, procured by the government, to individuals, including a minister's wife.

Black flags were waved at the chief minister by the Congress members. Police had said that four persons were detained in this connection.

Visuals showed a green

colour plastic water bottle being thrown at a car in the chief minister's convoy.

Condemning the incident, Saikia said, "Someone must have instigated those who threw the bottle. Someone must have given them the order and they followed it."

"I think an attempt to murder case should be registered against those responsible," he added, demanding the most stringent action against the culprits.

Saikia maintained that such "attacks" will not discourage the BJP or its supporters.

"Our chief minister is among the most efficient and popular ones in the country. Left liberals, pseudo-seculars and Congress are the same. They (Congress) behave like 'overground Maoists'," the state BJP president alleged.

The BJP Yuva Morcha (BJYM) organised sit-in demonstrations at the district and sub-divisional headquarters across the state against the incident. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 133 arrested for illegal cattle slaughter, selling beef

Drive aimed at stopping violation of the Assam Cattle Preservation Act: Assam Police

**GUWAHATI, July 1:** At least 133 people were apprehended on Tuesday for their role in alleged violation of the Assam Cattle Preservation Act and over one tonne of suspected beef were seized across the state, a senior police officer said.

According to Inspector General Police (Law and Order) Akhilesh Kumar Singh, a suo-motu drive was initiated across the state to check reported incidents of illegal cattle slaughter and selling of beef in restaurants unauthorisedly.

Consumption of beef is not illegal in Assam, but The Assam Cattle Preservation Act, 2021, bans slaughter and sale of beef in areas where Hindus, Jains and Sikhs are in majority and in areas which fall within a five-km radius of a temple or satra (Vaishnavite monastery).

"The main intention of the drive is to stop violation of The Assam Cattle Preservation Act. We raided hotels and restaurants, registered dozens of cases at many police stations (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## BJP-East Karbi Anglong advisers defend CEM Tuliram Ronghang, counter Congress allegations

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, July 1:** Advisers of the BJP-East Karbi Anglong District Committee (BJP-EKADC) on Tuesday held a press conference to counter allegations made by local Congress leaders, who had recently criticised Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang as an unfit leader.

The press meet, held at the office of the Hills People Cultural Forum (HPCF), saw senior BJP leaders strongly defending Ronghang's leadership and accusing the Congress of indulging in baseless criticism. One of the party advisers, Selawor Bey, questioned the intent and substance of the Congress's accusations.

"If the CEM is wrong, they should clearly point out where he has gone wrong. The Congress is always quick to



point fingers but fails to substantiate their claims," said Bey. He further stated that the Congress continued to operate with a negative mindset. "There is a vast difference between the BJP and Congress. The Congress still lives in darkness while the BJP works in daylight. Even in broad daylight, the Congress fails to see the development and peace that the BJP government has brought to the district," he said.

Bey added that while many Chief Ex-

ecutive Members had held office in Karbi Anglong in the past, few had contributed as significantly as Ronghang. "He is a capable and visionary leader who has implemented numerous developmental schemes for the district's progress," he said.

Referring to recent comments made by Jagatsing Engti, a former Executive Member of KAAC and former MLA who has now joined the Congress, Bey and fellow BJP adviser Laichan Engngel dismissed the criticisms over incomplete mini stadiums. Engti had alleged that ₹ 10-crore stadiums sanctioned for all 26 Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) constituencies remained unfinished and had become overgrown with vegetation. Engngel, however, pointed out that the stadium in Sarupathar - the very constituency represented (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Himanta claims record paddy procurement in state

**GUWAHATI, July 1:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said the state has recorded the highest-ever paddy procurement by purchasing nearly seven lakh metric tonnes of the foodgrain, more than two-fold jump as compared to the previous season.

"We are proud to announce the successful conclusion of Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2024-25 with a record paddy procurement of 6.97 lakh MT -- the highest ever!" Sarma said in a post on X.

The state had procured just 3.14 lakh MT during the 2023-24 KMS, he added.

In KMS 2022-23, the paddy procurement had stood at 5.92 lakh MT, the CM said.

"This remarkable achievement reflects our commitment to ensuring that our farmers are connected to markets and the Minimum Support Price (MSP) they rightfully deserve," Sarma said.

Last month, the chief minister said the state had set a target of procuring 5,85,500 MT of paddy during the 2024-25 KMS.

Sarma also said that Assam's agricultural products are catering to the global market due to their high quality and nutrient-rich content.

"Recently, farmers from Majuli expanded their reach to Middle East and EU markets as they exported 267 MT of Red Rice -- earning higher profits & establishing Brand Assam," he said in a separate post.

The red rice was produced originally in over 1,000 hectares of land in Majuli, the world's largest river island and located in the Brahmaputra, the CM said. (PTI)

## CEM Ronghang reviews ration card distribution plans

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, July 1:** A key review meeting on the constituency-wise launch of Ration Card distribution was held on Tuesday at the conference hall of the Arboretum Centre in Diphu.

The meeting was chaired by Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, and was attended by Member of Parliament Amarsing Tisso, Howraghat MLA Darsing Ronghang, Diphu MLA Bidya Sing Engngel, Executive Members of the Council, and departmental officials. The meeting was convened to take stock of the preparations for launching Ration Card distribution and to address ongoing public grievances related to food supply in the region.

During the discussions, CEM Ronghang instructed the Food and Civil Supplies Department to ensure timely and uninterrupted distribution of essential commodities including (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## KAAC EM visits Assam-Meghalaya border villages following tension in Tapat

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, July 1:** Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), in charge of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department, D Upping Maslai visited the border villages of Tapat and Khanduli in West Karbi Anglong on Tuesday, following an incident in which a mob allegedly entered from Meghalaya and uprooted saplings and dismantled protective wooden structures erected for plantation work in Tapat.

The incident occurred on June 25 and has since triggered tension along the inter-state border area.

In response, the KAAC EM undertook a field visit to assess the situation, meet with local residents, and appeal for calm.

During his visit, Maslai interacted with village headmen and residents of the affected areas and assured them of continued support from the KAAC.

"As people were tense, I made up my mind to visit the affected places at Tapat and Khanduli, which is the most extreme village of West

Karbi Anglong on the Assam-Meghalaya border. There was a plantation in Tapat and on June 25, a mob from Meghalaya entered and uprooted the plants. Following the incident, tension has mounted in the area," he said.

To provide immediate relief to the residents, rice was distributed among the villagers.

Additionally, torchlights were handed over to the Village Defence Party (VDP) members to assist Assam Police personnel posted at the Border Outpost (BoP) in Tapat.

Reassuring the communities of Tapat, Khanduli and Langkeri, the EM informed them that Chief Executive Member of KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang, has been closely monitoring the inter-state border issue and taking steps to address concerns through appropriate channels. Maslai was accompanied by Chairman of the Border Development Board, Augustin Hanse, and other officials during the visit.

The KAAC leadership reiterated its appeal for peace and cooperation among communities while urging authorities to maintain vigilance along the sensitive border belt.

## Talks on India-US trade pact enter sixth day in Washington

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** Hectic negotiations between India and the US will enter the sixth day on Tuesday in Washington, with the talks reaching a crucial stage and New Delhi demanding greater market access for its labour-intensive goods, an official said.

The Indian team, headed by special secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal, is in Washington for negotiations on an interim trade agreement with the US.

The stay of the Indian officials has been extended. Initially, the delegation was scheduled to stay for two days, with the talks having commenced on June 26.

These talks are also important as the suspension date of Trump's reciprocal tariffs is approaching. It will end on July 9. The two sides are looking at finalising the talks before that, the official said.

India has hardened its position on giving duty concessions to American farm products. It is seeking duty concessions

for its labour-intensive goods such as textiles, engineering, leather, gems and jewellery. "If the proposed trade talks fail, the 26 per cent tariffs will come into force again," the official added.

On April 2, the US imposed an additional 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on Indian goods but suspended it for 90 days. However, the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed by America remains in place. India is seeking full exemption from the additional 26 per cent tariff.

The US is demanding duty concessions in both the agriculture and dairy sectors. But these segments are difficult and challenging areas for India to give duty concessions to the US as Indian farmers are into sustenance farming and have small land holdings.

Therefore, these sectors are politically very sensitive. India has not opened up the dairy sector for any of its trading partners in free trade pacts the country has signed so far. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 'Very gross oversimplification, misleading to make India-US relations about China'

**NEW YORK, July 1:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said that it is a "very gross oversimplification" and "even misleading at times" to make the India-US relationship about China.

Jaishankar was responding to a question on how much of the India-US relationship is defined by its stance on China.

"I think it's a very gross oversimplification to make India-US about China. In fact, it's not just an oversimplification. I think it's even misleading at times," Jaishankar said on Monday during a conversation with Newsweek CEO Dev Prasad at the publication's headquarters at One World Trade Centre near the 9/11 Memorial in Manhattan.

He said that the India-US relationship is about "so many other things," noting the large Indian community, which contributes significantly to the US. "I think it's been a game-changer. It has got nothing to do with China," he said.

He stressed that Washington and Delhi have a very strong economic connect. "Look at our trade numbers and look at the relevance of that trade to our respective economies. Look at our technology connect," he said, adding that there is a tendency to point even the defence or security cooperation towards China, but "I ask you to look at the other coast. We work to keep the Arabian Sea safe for global shipping."

"This is (an) age of oversimplification. I urge you not to fall into that. I think the world is much more nuanced. It's much more multi-causal. We have many more interests than just one country. I would certainly like to believe that the relationship is going well because there is great merit in me," Jaishankar said. He added that there are certain realities of the landscape, and one of them is that the relationship between the US and China is not what it used to be, it has acquired a much sharper competitive edge. "Frankly, where we are concerned, we look at these two countries, and each one of them has made up its mind (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Raj Bhavan pushes for accelerated NEP 2020 implementation with focus on research, skilling, and holistic education

## Raj Bhawan reviews NEP 2020 implementation in universities

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, July 1:** In a continued effort to assess and accelerate the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in the state, the Raj Bhavan Assam on Tuesday convened a high-level review meeting at its campus under the leadership of Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya.

The meeting brought together Vice-Chancellors and senior academic officials from several universities across Assam to discuss the progress and challenges associated with the policy's execution in higher education institutions.

According to an official statement, the meeting was conducted by Dr Harbansh Dixit, Advisor to the Raj Bhavan Secretariat, and Prof. Bechan Lal, Officer on Special Duty (OSD), Raj Bhavan.

The session focused on taking stock of the status of NEP 2020 implementation in state universities, with emphasis on core components such as skilling, research and development, innovation, placement,



entrepreneurship, and the strengthening of Alumni-Academia-Industry linkages.

The policy's broader goal of ensuring the holistic development of human resources also featured prominently in the discussions.

The participants reaffirmed the importance of NEP 2020 as a transformative roadmap for the Indian education system and acknowledged the role of higher education

institutions in shaping a future-ready generation.

In keeping with Governor Acharya's advice, the meeting reiterated Raj Bhavan's commitment to supporting university initiatives that enhance student welfare, academic excellence, and inclusive education.

Special focus was placed on the responsibilities of Vice-Chancellors to ensure comprehensive, in-

stitution-wide implementation of the NEP.

The review saw active participation from representatives of Dibrugarh University, Assam Women's University, Bodoland University, and Kumar Bhaskar Varma Sanskrit and Ancient Studies University. Among the attendees were Vice-Chancellors, Registrars, Academic Registrars, IQAC Directors and Coordinators, and other senior academic officials.

This session was part of a broader series of consultative meetings initiated by Raj Bhavan to promote effective rollout of the NEP 2020 across Assam's higher education landscape.

Senior officials from the Raj Bhavan and the state Higher Education Department were also present at the meeting, reinforcing the government's focus on aligning academic institutions with the objectives laid out in the national policy. The Raj Bhavan noted that such collaborative reviews are crucial to tracking (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



## Gross GST collections rise 6.2 pc to over ₹1.84 lakh cr

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** Gross GST collections increased by 6.2 per cent to over ₹1.84 lakh crore in June but slipped below the ₹2 lakh crore mark recorded in the previous two months.

Gross GST collections stood at ₹1,73,813 crore a year ago, as per government data released on Tuesday. In May, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection was ₹2,01 lakh crore. It touched a record high of ₹2.37 lakh crore in April this year.

In June, gross revenues from domestic transactions rose 4.6 per cent to about ₹1.38 lakh crore, while GST revenue from imports grew 11.4 per cent to ₹45,690 crore. The gross Central GST revenues stood at ₹34,558 crore, State GST revenues at ₹43,268 crore and Integrated GST at about ₹93,280 lakh crore in June. Revenues from Cess were ₹13,491 crore.

Meanwhile, total refunds during



the month rose by 28.4 per cent to ₹25,491 crore.

The net GST mop-up stood at about ₹1.59 lakh crore, registering a 3.3 per cent year-on-year growth.

Looking at the numbers on a month-on-month basis, the net GST collections of June this year have shown a reduction of 8.48 per

cent, with collections from the domestic market and imports showing a fall, Karthik Mani, Partner, Indirect Tax, BDO India, said.

Coming on the 8th anniversary of the introduction of GST, it is hoped that such muted growth in collection on a year-on-year basis is just an aberration and GST col-

lections would be back to the usual growth trajectory in the coming months, he added.

While large states like Maharashtra, West Bengal, Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu have reported collection increases of 4 to 8 per cent, other states like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Gujarat reported contraction between 1 and 4 per cent.

Some states like Haryana, Bihar and Jharkhand have shown median increases of 10 per cent.

According to Vivek Jalan, Partner, Tax Connect Advisory, after two successive months of ₹2 lakh crore plus GST revenues and double-digit growth, ₹1.85 lakh crore collections in June 2025 seem a little dampening.

However, the YTD growth of 11.8 per cent in GST still gives a tax buoyancy of more than 1 per cent, which means that India is still in the 'Goldilocks situation' amid global turmoil, Jalan added. (PTI)

## TAFE, AGCO settle feud over Massey Ferguson brand outside court

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** Tractors and Farm Equipment Ltd (TAFE) and AGCO Corporation on Tuesday announced a comprehensive out-of-court settlement of all outstanding disputes, with the Indian firm agreeing to buy out the US-based firm's shareholding in it for USD 260 million (nearly ₹2,225 crore).

In separate statements, the two companies said they have settled all matters relating to the Massey Ferguson brand, commercial issues and shareholding, thus ending their corporate feud.

Under the settlement, ownership of the Massey Ferguson brand will rest with TAFE as the sole and exclusive owner for India, Nepal and Bhutan. TAFE said it will hold all rights, title and interest in "Massey Ferguson" and related trademarks and all goodwill associated therewith.

Besides, TAFE will buy back AGCO's shares in itself, which amounts to 20.7 per cent of the domestic tractor maker's equity, for a consideration of USD 260 million, making TAFE a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Amalgamations Group, a diversified industrial conglomerate, headquartered in Chennai, it added.

TAFE will also retain its shareholding in AGCO at an ownership level of 16.3 per cent and not exceed it, while participating in AGCO's future buyback programs to maintain its proportionate ownership subject to certain exceptions, it stated.

As part of the settlement, TAFE will support AGCO by voting its shares in favour of all the recommendations of AGCO's Board of Directors at shareholder meetings, subject to certain exemptions, the Chennai-based firm said.

Besides, TAFE will remain a long-term investor in AGCO, it added. While all commercial agreements between TAFE and AGCO will be mutually terminated, TAFE will honour outstanding supply orders and continue to supply parts for all markets on agreed terms, it stated. AGCO, in its statement, said, "Parties have agreed to mutual non-disparagement and TAFE

not engaging in public activism.

TAFE will no longer be entitled to nominate a representative to the AGCO Board of Directors and AGCO's Director on TAFE's Board will step down." The two companies said their agreements will become effective upon the completion by AGCO and TAFE of certain governmental and other processes in India relating to the repurchase of the shares held by AGCO in TAFE.

"As we step into a new era in TAFE's growth story, we recognise and cherish the long partnership we've had with AGCO, and continue to support AGCO as an engaged shareholder," TAFE Chairman & Managing Director Mallika Srinivasan said.

Stating that TAFE and Massey Ferguson have been synonymous in the minds of the Indian customers for over 65 years, she said, "We re-dedicate our commitment to transformation of Indian agriculture through our innovative products, solutions and service to the farming community in India." AGCO Chairman, President and CEO Eric Hansotia welcomed the reaching of an amicable resolution with TAFE on all outstanding commercial, governance and shareholding matters.

"We appreciate the TAFE relationship for its years as a commercial partner and continued support as a shareholder. AGCO's Board and management team are fully focused on our Farmer-First strategy, which we believe will improve outcomes for farmers, drive operational success for our company and deliver strong returns for shareholders," Hansotia said.

AGCO said it will file the agreements with the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

Last year in September, AGCO Corporation terminated multiple agreements with TAFE, including the Massey Ferguson brand license agreement, a distributor agreement for India, Nepal, and Bhutan.

Subsequently, a legal battle followed with TAFE taking the matter to the Madras High Court. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## 3.5 cr jobs to be created

with a wage of more than ₹20,000 (up to a salary of ₹1 lakh/month). Part B (for employers) is expected to incentivise employers for the creation of additional employment for nearly 2.60 crore persons. All payments to the first-time employees under part A of the scheme will be made through the DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) mode using the Aadhar Bridge Payment System (ABPS).

Payments to employers under Part B will be made directly into their PAN-linked Accounts. With the ELI scheme, the government intends to catalyse job creation in all sectors, particularly in the manufacturing sector, besides incentivising youth joining the workforce for the first time.

An important outcome of the scheme will also be the formalisation of the country's workforce by extending social security coverage for crores of young men and women.

CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said, "ELI is a significant step towards boosting employment and formalising India's workforce. The ELI scheme opens doors for first-time job seekers, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to India's growth story. It empowers employers to expand their workforce and gives a decisive push to India's labour-intensive sectors".

FICCI President Harsha Vardhan Agarwal said that FICCI welcomes the ELI scheme as a transformative initiative aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat. The three-pronged approach, supporting first-time employment, manufacturing job creation, and employer incentives, promises to generate over two crore jobs in two years, he stated.

This scheme embodies the principles of productivity and participation, particularly benefiting MSMEs and young workers, he opined. (PTI)

## Congress behaving like 'overground

Senior leaders of the party and BJYM karyakartas from 39 organisational districts participated in these demonstrations.

In Guwahati, state BJYM president Rakesh Das, MLA and BJP state general secretary Diplu Ranjan Sarma and participated in the protest.

The BJP youth wing members and leaders engaged in confrontation with the police and squatted on the roads when they were not allowed to proceed with their protest march.

While Congress is yet to formally respond to the allegation of its youth members hurling the bottle at the convoy, its former state president Bhupen Kumar Borah asserted that violence cannot be the language of protest.

"A democratic protest has to be non-violent and that's how we have been doing it. The language of protest has to be through one's voice and pen," he maintained. Borah added that whoever was involved in the incident, it was wrong.

Golaghat district Congress leaders have distanced themselves from the purported incident, pointing the accusing finger at "miscreants".

"We don't support violence. It could have been the doing of some miscreant. Visuals are available and police can arrest on the basis of it," a district leader had said earlier. (PTI)

## BJP-East Karbi Anglong advisers

by Engti when he was a BJP MAC and Executive Member during the previous government — was constructed under Engti's own tenure. "He may now blame the BJP government, but the facts speak otherwise," Engng said.

According to an official statement issued after the press conference, BJP leaders asserted that the district had seen substantial progress under Ronghang's leadership and accused the Congress of trying to mislead the public for political mileage.

## 133 arrested for illegal cattle

across the state and picked up scores of people," he told PTI. Singh said police have so far apprehended 133 people after raiding 112 hotels and seized more than one tonne of suspected beef meat from across the state.

"The operation is still going on, and the exact figure will be known later. The drive will continue in the coming days," he added. (PTI)

## Talks on India-US trade pact

The US wants duty concessions on certain industrial goods, automobiles, especially electric vehicles, wines, petrochemical products, dairy, and agricultural items like apples, tree nuts, and genetically modified crops.

India is seeking duty concessions for labour-intensive sectors like textiles, gems and jewellery, leather goods, garments, plastics, chemicals, shrimp, oil seeds, grapes, and bananas in the proposed trade pact.

The two countries are also looking to conclude talks for the first tranche of the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA) by fall (September-October) this year. The pact is aimed at more than doubling bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 from the current USD 191 billion.

Before the first tranche, they are trying for an interim trade pact. The US team was here from June 5 to June 11 for the talks. The negotiations will continue both virtually and physically in the days to come.

India's merchandise exports to the US rose by 21.78 per cent to USD 17.25 billion in April-May this fiscal, while imports rose by 25.8 per cent to USD 8.87 billion. (PTI)

## CEM Ronghang reviews ration

rice, dal, sugar, and salt to all Ration Card beneficiaries. He emphasised that no eligible household should be left out and called for better coordination among field-level officers to streamline the delivery process.

The CEM also underlined the importance of transparency and accountability in the implementation of welfare schemes, especially in ensuring that food grains and other essentials reach the intended beneficiaries without delay or irregularity.

The meeting marks an important step toward strengthening the public distribution system across the district and reflects the KAAC leadership's continued commitment to addressing the basic needs of its people efficiently.

## 'Very gross oversimplification

about how it views the other. Obviously, there will be an element of tactics to it. There's a larger strategic view that they have of each other," he said, adding that "we would look quite honestly to see in what way are our interests furthered in this landscape."

"I think in many ways, you can see that we have very strong convergences with the United States. At the same time, we are China's largest neighbour. We share a land boundary. We want stable relations with China," he said, adding that Beijing is a very large trade partner as well, even though it is an imbalanced trade.

"So for us, how to sort of steady the China relationship, create an equilibrium that is fair to us (and) at the same time, how do you work the convergences with the United States and get the most out of it. I mean, that's, frankly, the way we would approach it," he said. (PTI)

## Raj Bhawan reviews NEP 2020

progress, identifying implementation gaps, and building consensus among stakeholders to realise the vision of a dynamic and future-oriented higher education system in the state.

## ICAI Guwahati branch celebrates CA Day 2025

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, July 1:** The Guwahati Branch of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) marked the 77th Chartered Accountants' Day with a vibrant and engaging week-long celebration titled "7 Days - 7 Vibes", which combined technical learning, wellness activities, and entertainment to honour the profession and its community.

Chartered Accountants' Day, observed on July 1 every year, commemorates the founding of ICAI in 1949.

The day acknowledges the critical role chartered accountants play in safeguarding economic integrity and contributing to India's financial architecture.

According to an official statement issued by the branch, this year, under the leadership of Chairperson CA Raginee Goyal, the Guwahati Branch curated a series of events from June 25 to July 1 designed to engage the CA community and their families holistically. The celebrations opened with "Quiz Time", a knowledge-based challenge for CA members that tested their professional acumen in an enjoyable format. This was followed by "Unwind & Play", an indoor sports event featuring chess, carrom, and arm wrestling to promote relaxation and camaraderie among members.

A highlight of the week was the ICAI MSME Mahotsav, which served as a valuable knowledge platform, offering insights into government schemes and policies relevant to the MSME sector.

The event saw participation from policy experts and entrepreneurs, reflecting ICAI's continuing commitment to national development through professional outreach. Technical enrichment continued with a dedicated seminar on GST and the Code of Ethics, helping members stay abreast of regulatory developments and ethical benchmarks.

Adding a melodic twist to the schedule was "Auditaakshari", a themed Antakshari event that celebrated the lighter side of the profession.

Sportsmanship was on full display during a Box Cricket Tournament, offering a dynamic platform for members to engage physically and bond over teamwork. A special Movie Night screening "Well Done CA Sahab" was also hosted as a tribute to the everyday contributions and sacrifices made by chartered accountants. The culmination of the week came on July 1, the official CA Day.

The day began with flag hoisting, a tree plantation drive, and cleanliness activities under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, underscoring the profession's dedication to civic responsibility.

Health and personal wellness took center stage later in the day with a free eye screening camp, held in collaboration with the Gauhati Lions Eye Hospital.

A motivational session led by Amogh Lila Prabhu—titled "Let's Stress on Stress"—offered a soul-stirring discourse on managing stress with clarity and purpose. His spiritually grounded and humorous insights left the audience both inspired and emotionally rejuvenated.

The celebrations concluded with a family get-together and dinner, bringing together CA professionals and their families in a warm atmosphere of unity and shared pride. The official statement credited the success of the celebrations to the coordinated efforts of the branch Secretary CA Jay Prakash Gupta and the entire managing committee.

The week-long programme, the statement noted, reflected the evolving image of the chartered accountant—not only as a sharp financial professional but also as a socially engaged and emotionally balanced individual.

## Stock markets close higher on buying in Reliance, HDFC Bank

**MUMBAI, July 1:** Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher in a range-bound trade on Tuesday, helped by gains in index heavyweight Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 90.83 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at 83,697.29 with 13 of its constituents closing higher and 17 in the red. During the day, it rallied 267.83 points or 0.32 per cent to 83,874.29.

The 50-share NSE Nifty gained 24.75 points or 0.10 per cent to close at 25,541.80.

Among Sensex firms, Bharat Electronics was the lead gainer, rising by 2.51 per cent after the company announced securing orders worth ₹528 crore.

Reliance Industries advanced 1.84 per cent as analysts expressed optimism over the launch of a solar manufacturing facility.

Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank and HDFC Bank were also among the major gainers.

Axis Bank, Trent, Eternal and Tech Mahindra were among the laggards.

"Markets traded lacklustre and ended almost unchanged, taking a breather after Monday's decline. Following an initial uptick, the Nifty moved in a narrow range and eventually settled at 25,541.80. Buoyancy in global markets—especially the US—along with stable domestic cues suggests that the prevailing trend is likely to continue," Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge dipped 0.18 per

cent and midcap index dipped 0.07 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, telecommunication rose by 0.52 per cent, energy by 0.46 per cent, consumer durables by 0.43 per cent and metal by 0.30 per cent.

FMCG declined 0.68 per cent, power (0.41 per cent), utilities (0.32 per cent), IT (0.24 per cent) and BSE Focused IT (0.25 per cent).

As many as 2,025 stocks advanced while 1,985 declined and 154 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"Domestic indices traded within a narrow range, following last week's strong rally. Investors are closely monitoring developments, seeking clarity on U.S. tariffs as the 90-day pause approaches its end," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi and Shanghai's SSE Composite index settled in the positive territory while Japan's Nikkei 225 index ended lower. Markets in Hong Kong were closed. European markets were trading mostly lower.

The US markets ended higher on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.22 per cent to USD 66.56 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) off-loaded equities worth ₹831.50 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

On Monday, the Sensex dropped 452.44 points or 0.54 per cent to settle at 83,606.46. The Nifty declined 120.75 points or 0.47 per cent to 25,517.05. (PTI)

## Ather launches Rizta S with 3.7kWh battery

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, July 1:** Electric two-wheeler manufacturer Ather Energy Limited has expanded its Rizta family scooter lineup with the launch of the new Rizta S variant powered by a 3.7kWh battery pack.

According to an official statement the new variant offers an impressive IDC (Indian Driving Conditions) range of 159 km on a single charge and is priced at ₹1,37,047 (ex-showroom, Delhi). The Rizta S 3.7kWh variant is now available for test rides and bookings at Ather's retail outlets and online platform across India, with deliveries set to commence this month.

With this addition, the Rizta lineup now comprises four variants, providing greater choice to consumers looking for range, convenience, and value in the electric scooter segment.

Launched in 2024, the Rizta marked Ather's foray into the family scooter space and has since

become a key contributor to the company's growth.

According to the official statement, the Rizta now accounts for over 60% of Ather's total sales and has crossed the milestone of 1 lakh units sold within a year.

The 3.7kWh variant is aimed at consumers seeking an extended range without sacrificing affordability, quality, or comfort. Ravneet S Phokela, Chief Business Officer of Ather Energy, noted that the Rizta has struck a chord with families nationwide.

"The recent milestone of crossing 1 lakh Rizta scooters is a testament to the strong demand we are seeing. With the new variant offering 159 km on a single charge, riders can confidently plan their day, making it ideal for commuters with high daily usage," he said.

Despite the larger battery pack, the new Rizta S variant retains all the signature comfort and utility features of its predecessors. It includes a

34-litre under-seat storage compartment, expandable by 22 litres with an optional Frunk accessory, a wide seat designed for two, and a spacious floorboard for enhanced rider-pillion comfort.

Ather stated that the build quality remains consistent with its established engineering and testing benchmarks.

The scooter is also packed with smart features. It includes a 7-inch DeepView™ Display offering turn-by-turn navigation, and a host of safety and convenience tools like AutoHold™, Fall Safe, Emergency Stop Signal, Tow & Theft Alerts, Find My Scooter, and Alexa Skills integration. Like other Ather vehicles, the 3.7kWh Rizta S supports over-the-air (OTA) software updates. Charging flexibility has also been prioritised.

The Rizta S is compatible with Ather's extensive Ather Grid fast-charging network, which currently spans over 3,900 charging points nationwide.

since entering the segment, claiming the new entrant had already achieved a high single-digit market share and established a vast network of over 50,000 dealers.

However, the CCI noted that the material placed by Grasim indicated potential abuse of market power by Asian Paints. The Commission said such conduct by a dominant enterprise could restrict competition and innovation, and hinder consumer choice.

However, the regulator clarified that observations made were not a final view on the case merits and directed the DG to conduct the probe without being swayed in any manner whatsoever by the observations made herein.

In September 2022, CCI dismissed a complaint filed by JSW Paints alleging unfair business practices against Asian Paints with regard to the latter misusing its dominant position and further denying access to the market. JSW Paints had alleged that after they launched their decorative paints segment, Asian Paints began to pressure and target the dealers who had agreed to stock and display their decorative paints manufactured by the company. (PTI)



Paints is a market leader and manufactures paints for both decorative and industrial use. The competition regulator observed that OP (Asian Paints), by way of restraining its dealers from dealing with the OP's competitors like the informant (Grasim Industries Ltd) by enforcing exclusivity upon such dealers, is imposing unfair conditions upon them, which is found to be in the nature of exploitative conduct.

Further, by restraining suppliers of essential raw materials from providing goods and services to the OP's competitors like the informant, as well as by coercing landlords, C&F agents and transporters to refrain from engaging with competitors like Grasim, Asian Paints seems to be prima

facie creating barriers to new entrants in the market as well as partially foreclosing competition in the market, it said. Thus, the conduct of Asian Paints seems to be prima facie causing an appreciable adverse effect on competition in India, the regulator added.

The complainant further alleged that Asian Paints coerced dealers into returning or refusing to install Grasim's tinting machines, which the complainant claimed were technologically superior.

In its response, Asian Paints argued that the Indian decorative paints market is highly competitive with low entry barriers and presence of several regional and multinational players.

It (Asian Paints) also highlighted Grasim's rapid growth

## CCI orders probe into market abuse charges against Asian Paints

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Tuesday ordered an investigation against Asian Paints for allegedly abusing its dominant position in the market for manufacturing and sale of decorative paints.

The direction follows a complaint filed by Grasim Industries (Birla Paints Division), which accused Asian Paints of engaging in exclusionary practices aimed at stifling its entry and growth in the Indian decorative paints segment.

"The Commission is of the opinion that a prima facie case of contravention of the provisions of section 4(2)(a)(i), 4(2)(c) and 4(2)(d) of the Act by the OP (Asian Paints) is made out in the present matter," CCI said in the order.

Section 4 of the Competition Act, 2002, prohibits abuse of dominant position.

Accordingly, the fair trade regulator directed the Director General to cause an investigation to be made into the matter and submit an investigation report within a period of 90 days. Grasim, a part of the Aditya Birla Group, forayed into the decorative paints segment under the 'Birla Opus Paints' brand in February last year. Asian



*Demonstrations held in Nagaon and Dhubri; BJP leaders demand apology from Congress, accuse party of promoting political hooliganism*

## BJP stages statewide protests over alleged attack on CM's convoy

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 1:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Tuesday staged statewide protests in Assam, including major demonstrations in Nagaon and Dhubri, to condemn the alleged attack on Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's convoy during a Congress-led protest in Golaghat on June 30.

In Nagaon, a massive demonstration was organised by the district BJP unit near Shahid Bhawan, drawing participation from over 400 party workers and senior leaders.

According to an official statement, Assam Labour Minister Rupesh Gowala, Nagaon Sadar MLA Rupak Sharma, and district BJP president Ranjit Bordoloi were among those who led the protest.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Rupak Sharma said the Chief Minister represents the people of Assam, not just the BJP.

"If the Congress can dare to attack the Chief Minister today, it raises serious concerns about the safety of ordinary citizens if such



a party returns to power," he said.

Sharma called for protests to remain democratic and peaceful, accusing the Congress of displaying desperation through violent conduct.

Minister Rupesh Gowala echoed similar sentiments, describing the incident as "clear proof" of the Congress party's disregard for democratic values.

"This attack exposes the deep frustration within the Congress party, stemming from its repeated

political failures," Gowala remarked.

Meanwhile, in Dhubri, a parallel protest was staged at Punch More, led by Assam Cabinet Minister Ranjit Kumar Dass.

BJP workers and supporters from across the district took part in the protest, raising slogans such as "Down with Gaurav Gogoi" and "Congress's goondaism won't work," in reference to the Congress MP whom they blamed for the incident.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Dass demanded a public apology from Gaurav Gogoi, calling the alleged attack "an insult not just to the Chief Minister but to the entire democratic ethos of Assam." Dass declared that until Gogoi publicly apologises, the BJP in Dhubri would not allow him to enter the district.

Both protests concluded peacefully under tight security arrangements.

The BJP's district units in Nagaon and Dhubri termed these demonstrations as the beginning of a wider campaign demanding accountability, civility, and respect in political conduct.

The party also reiterated its commitment to upholding law and order, warning that any attack on constitutional authorities would not be tolerated.

Similar demonstrations are being planned in other districts as part of a coordinated response to what the party described as "Congress's growing culture of political hooliganism."

## Kokrajhar celebrates 43rd district day, marking journey of identity and progress

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, July 1:** The 43rd District Day of Kokrajhar was observed with solemn pride and reflection by the District Administration on Tuesday, commemorating over four decades of cultural identity, resilience, and transformation.

The celebration, held at the Conference Hall of the Office of the District Commissioner, brought together senior officials, educators, social leaders, and citizens to honour the district's enduring legacy.

In her address, district commissioner Masanda M Pertin, IAS, highlighted the district's unique historical and cultural trajectory. "Kokrajhar stands as a testament to resilience."

Despite numerous administrative, political, and demographic changes, our district has held firm to its distinct character and spirit," she said. The Commissioner also encouraged citizens to mark the day by lighting lamps outside their homes and illuminating government buildings, symbolising unity and pride in Kokrajhar's journey.

Dr Banabina Brahma, associate professor at Kokrajhar Government College, offered a historical perspective on the formation of the district.

She recalled that Kokrajhar was



officially declared a district on July 1, 1983, under the leadership of then chief minister Hiteswar Saikia.

Prior to that, it functioned as a sub-division under Goalpara district during the tenure of chief minister Bimala Prasad Chaliha.

"This day marks not just an administrative milestone, but a historic assertion of our distinct cultural and political identity," she noted.

Echoing similar sentiments, noted social worker Sarbeswar Basumatary said, "Kokrajhar becoming a district was a milestone for the region. Today, it stands tall with a unique cultural identity and a strong sense of community."

The occasion was attended by

SDO (Civil) of Gossaigaon Mridul Shivhare, additional deputy commissioners Subhram Aditya Bora, Wadiul Islam, Kabita Deka, assistant commissioners, and other district officials and staff.

As part of the observance, residents were encouraged to light traditional lamps in their homes, turning the district into a symbolic beacon of heritage and hope.

The programme concluded with a collective reaffirmation of Kokrajhar's commitment to inclusive development, cultural pride, and community-driven progress.

The event served as a reminder of Kokrajhar's remarkable journey and its role as a cornerstone of cultural unity and administrative evolution in Assam.

## Rajdhani halt at Diphu yet to be implemented despite approval

**HT Correspondent**

**KHERONI, July 1:** Despite receiving official approval from the Union Ministry of Railways, the proposed stoppage of the 12423/12424 New Delhi-Dibrugarh Town Rajdhani Express (Daily) at Diphu Railway Station in Karbi Anglong remains unimplemented, drawing criticism from local residents and public representatives.

Amarsing Tisso, Member of Parliament from the Diphu Lok Sabha constituency, had formally requested the railway ministry to introduce a halt at Diphu, citing the town's importance as a key administrative and commercial centre in the region.

The request was submitted through a letter dated July 20, 2024, addressed to Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics & Information Technology.

Responding favourably to the proposal, the Union Minister extended his support in a letter (No. 2025/CHG/13/NFR/07/Part-1) dated May 28, 2025, addressed to MP Tisso.

Subsequently, the Joint Director (Coaching) of the Railway Board, New Delhi, directed the General Manager of North Frontier Railway

(NFR), Guwahati, and other relevant divisional authorities to make the necessary arrangements for the stoppage.

However, despite the official clearance and directive from the Railway Board, no tangible action has been taken by the NFR authorities.

There has been no communication or operational step from the concerned railway divisions to initiate the sanctioned halt, leading to rising public dissatisfaction.

The inaction has been widely criticised as an administrative lapse, with several local leaders and organisations questioning the accountability of railway officials in implementing policy decisions.

Many have expressed concern that high-level assurances are failing to translate into on-ground service delivery. Residents of Diphu and adjoining areas continue to face inconvenience due to the absence of a Rajdhani halt, despite the ministerial approval.

Public representatives and citizens are now urging the Ministry of Railways to intervene urgently and ensure that the approved stoppage is implemented without further delay.

They have also called for accountability from officials responsible for the continued inaction.

## RPF of NFR rescues 27 individuals in anti-trafficking drive

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 1:** In a concerted effort to safeguard vulnerable passengers and combat human trafficking, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has achieved a significant breakthrough, rescuing 27 individuals—including 22 minors—during operations conducted between June 25 and June 29, 2025.

The information was provided in an official statement issued by NFR on Tuesday.

According to the statement, RPF teams stationed across key railway stations within the NFR zone acted swiftly and decisively in multiple rescue operations over the five-day period.

The rescued individuals included 22 minors, three men, and two women.

All were safely handed over to Child Line authorities, non-governmental organisations, parents, or local police authorities for further action and support. The rescue operations commenced on June 25 and 26, when RPF teams based in Katihar, Kishanganj, and Samsi successfully rescued five runaway minor boys during coordinated efforts.

The minors were subsequently handed over to Child Line representatives after preliminary inquiry and counselling.

Continuing the momentum, the RPF team at Kamakhya Railway Station conducted a rescue operation on June 27, during which one runaway minor boy was found and immediately placed in the care of Child Line, Kamakhya.

A major success was recorded at New Bongaigaon Railway Station on June 28, where a team from the RPF Post rescued five minor girls and one man.

The girls were placed under the safe custody



of Child Line, Bongaigaon, while the man was detained by RPF officials for further questioning and legal proceedings.

On June 29, the RPF team at New Coochbehar Railway Station located a missing man and, after verifying his identity and background, facilitated his reunion with his family members.

The NFR statement also highlighted the continuing success of the "Meri Saheli" initiative, aimed at ensuring the safety of women passengers, particularly those travelling alone.

Under this initiative, dedicated RPF lady squads remain actively deployed across trains and platforms, providing assistance, support,

and a reassuring presence to women travellers.

RPF authorities affirmed their commitment to ensuring a safe travel environment through sustained vigilance, round-the-clock patrolling, and the timely intervention of field personnel.

The force reiterated that protecting women and children remains a high priority in its passenger safety and security strategy.

The recent string of rescues underlines the RPF's crucial role in safeguarding railway passengers, preventing exploitation, and coordinating effectively with civil society organisations and local law enforcement to offer support to those in distress.

## Rupesh Gowala reviews progress of key welfare schemes

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, July 1:** Minister Rupesh Gowala chaired a high-level review meeting at the Commissioner's Office in Nagaon on Tuesday to assess the implementation and progress of various developmental schemes in the district.

Senior officials from multiple departments, including Labour, Health, Public Health Engineering, Electricity, Education, Women and Child Development, Industry, and Panchayat and Rural Development, were present at the meeting.

During the meeting, the Minister closely reviewed the status of several flagship programmes, including the Tea Garden Labour Welfare Scheme, the Jal Jeevan Mission, and the Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

He stressed the importance of timely implementation, consistent monitoring, and periodic evaluation to ensure effective service delivery and tangible benefits for the public.

Special emphasis was placed on the welfare of tea garden workers.

The Minister directed officials to ensure that workers receive their provident fund and gratuity benefits without delay.

He also highlighted the need to provide access to clean drinking water in tea garden areas under the Jal Jeevan Mission and urged officials to expedite work in this regard.

The meeting was attended by the District Commissioner, Additional District Commissioners, and representatives from tea gardens and other stakeholders.

Minister Gowala called upon all departments to work in close coordination to ensure the efficient roll-out of government schemes and to address any implementation challenges promptly.

Addressing the issue of child labour in the district, the Minister underscored the need for stricter enforcement of existing laws.

He instructed officials to carry out regular inspections and take firm action against those found employing child labour.

Ensuring children's right to education and protection from exploitation, he said, must remain a priority.

The official press note stated that the meeting marked a significant step in advancing developmental objectives in Nagaon, particularly in improving conditions for tea garden communities.

## Rubber stamp status of Darrang's primary school management committees

**HT Correspondent**

**MANGALDAI, July 1:** Allegations have emerged that primary school management committees in Darrang district have been rendered ineffective, functioning merely as rubber stamps in the implementation of government-sanctioned infrastructure projects. The information was confirmed in multiple complaints received from local education stakeholders. According to reports, the education department has allocated

various infrastructure-related works for primary schools in the district, including the construction of kitchen sheds, installation of modern water filters, and erection of concrete boundary walls. While departmental contractors or vendors have reportedly been appointed to execute these projects, the funds are being deposited into joint bank accounts operated by the head teacher or school secretary and the president of the respective school management committees.

## HCDG college celebrates 60th foundation day

**HT Correspondent**

**DEMOW, July 1:** Hem Chandra Dev Goswami (HCDG) College, Nitaipukhuri celebrated its 60th Foundation Day on Tuesday with great enthusiasm and academic fervour.

The commemorative event was marked by a series of speeches and the

formal release of a significant publication highlighting the region's overlooked contributions to India's freedom struggle. The programme was presided over by Bipin Dutta, President of the College Governing Body, while the inaugural address was delivered by Principal Dr Birinchi Kumar Bora, who

reflected on the institution's six decades of educational service and community engagement. Adding scholarly depth to the occasion, Dr Sudhir Kumar Das delivered a thought-provoking lecture that resonated with the audience and set the tone for the intellectual significance of the day's events.

## Police raid hotels in Dibrugarh over alleged beef sale

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, July 1:** Dibrugarh police on Tuesday conducted a series of raids at multiple hotels in the town following allegations of illegal beef sale. The crackdown comes amid claims that certain establishments had been selling beef openly for a prolonged period.

The raids were carried out at Shama Hotel in Kalibari, as well as Kaiyana Hotel and Afreen Hotel at Panch Ali.

The operation was led by the Additional Superintendent of Police, Dibrugarh, and was supported by a team of local police officers. Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were also deployed at the raid locations as a precautionary measure.

## Students explore Herpetofauna in Karbi Anglong Herping session

*Field programme blends scientific study with indigenous knowledge to promote biodiversity conservation*

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 1:** In a unique initiative aimed at promoting awareness and understanding of herpetofauna, leading biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak organised a 'Herping' session in Phumen Engti village of Karbi Anglong district, Assam.

Held on June 29, this marked the first such field programme of the year and was conducted with the active participation of students from various academic institutions.

According to an official statement, a total of 12 undergraduate and postgraduate students from the Zoology departments of Debraj Roy College in Golaghat, International School in Guwahati, and Arya Vidyapeeth College in Guwahati participated in the hands-on session.

The programme was designed to provide practical exposure to the study of reptiles and amphibians, while also fostering an understanding of the ecological and cultural context of biodiversity conservation in the region.

The session commenced with a classroom-style theoretical demonstration at the Aaranyak field station. Dr Jayanta Kumar Roy, a herpetologist associated with Aaranyak, introduced the students to the basics of amphibians and reptiles, including their key identifying features and behavioural traits.



This was followed by an overview of field study methods and frog call identification techniques, conducted by Sourav Gupta, also from Aaranyak.

Following the instructional session, participants embarked on a guided field exercise that began from Phumen Engti village and stretched along the Langkiri River into the community forests of the Karbi Hills, covering approximately five kilometres.

As per the official statement, the students were able to appreciate the rich natural biodiversity of the area while also observing local practices such as jhum cultivation — a traditional form of agriculture practiced by the Karbi community.

They were also introduced to sev-

eral wild edible plants, many of which are known for their medicinal properties.

The session continued into the evening with a night walk focused on amphibian and reptile observation.

Guided by local community experts Sanjib Bey and Bidyaram Tokbi, participants explored forest trails and riverine habitats near the village.

They observed and identified several species including the Red-eyed Frog (Ronga chakua beng), Indian Skipping Frog (Pani beng), Cricket Frog (Uisiringa beng), Assamese Cascade Frog (Axiomyia nijora beng), as well as various reptiles such as bent-toed geckos, garden lizards, and skinks (Monikira).

The field walk provided students

with the opportunity to recognise species both by appearance and sound, helping them understand the intricacies of herpetofaunal identification and habitat associations.

In addition to scientific exposure, the session also facilitated interaction with members of the local Karbi community who shared traditional conservation practices and ecological insights.

Through these interactions, students gained a deeper appreciation of the role indigenous knowledge plays in safeguarding biodiversity.

According to the statement, the initiative was aimed at fostering a holistic understanding of biodiversity that integrates both scientific inquiry and cultural perspectives.

Aaranyak expressed that such field-based educational activities play a vital role in building environmental consciousness among the youth while also empowering local communities through recognition of their traditional knowledge systems.

The programme is part of Aaranyak's larger commitment to biodiversity conservation, ecosystem protection, and support for indigenous communities in the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong and Manas landscapes.

These initiatives are supported by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) — KIW and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

No. SLRC-G-IV/Assam/Office Order/2025-26/01/49

### PRESS NOTE

**Special Interview opportunity for Candidates from Dima Hasao and Barak Valley Districts in view of disruption of Road and Rail communication from 24<sup>th</sup> June to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.**

It has been informed that the normal road and rail communication from Dima-Hasao and Barak Valley Districts which was disrupted from 24<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> June 2025 has been partially restored from 29<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and normal road and rail communication is fully functioning from 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

In view of the inability of the candidates for Class-IV posts to attend the interviews due to the disruption of road and rail communication, whose interviews were scheduled from 24<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025, such candidates will be provided alternate date for appearing in the interviews and document submission process. Information related to the same will be announced shortly by the Commission.

**The interviews scheduled from 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2025 till 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2025 will be conducted as per the pre-announced schedule and all candidates from Dima-Hasao and Barak Valley Districts are informed to attend the interviews as per their scheduled dates.**

Further details regarding the revised interview schedule will be communicated through the official website of ASSEB (erstwhile SEBA) i.e. [www.sebaonline.org](http://www.sebaonline.org) and daily newspapers. The concerned candidates are advised to stay updated accordingly.

Sd/-

Secretary,

State Level Recruitment Commission for Class-IV Posts

DIPR /D/HLT/50/2-Jul-25



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up. - Mark Twain

## New Manipur govt before Aug 12?

There is no let-up in ministry-making efforts on the part of BJP MLAs, who by themselves have a comfortable majority in the 60-member Manipur Assembly. Senior BJP MLAs, such as, Govindas and Biswajit are holding parleys with their supporters and other stakeholders. Speaker Satyabrata Singh is reportedly active behind the scene. BJP MLA Kh Ibomcha recently went on record saying that Manipur should have a popular ministry before long. More meetings of BJP MLAs, excepting seven who belong to the Kuki-Zo tribes, are likely. While these are informal efforts at the level of BJP leaders, serious attempts are being made by the Union ministry of home affairs (MHA) to work out a truce between the warring sides, the Meiteis of the Valley and Kuki-Zos of the Hills, before a popular ministry assumes office. Manipur was placed under President's rule on February 13 after former chief minister Biren Singh was left with no option but to resign on February 9 in the face of stiff opposition of the Kuki-Zo political outfits and their civil society organizations to his continuation in office. President's rule is always initially for six months, which period is to end on August 12. Inquiries by IPA from informed quarters suggest that MHA is keen on seeing that the trouble-torn state has a popular ministry before August 12 and thereby avoiding extension of president's rule for another six months.

Moreover, budget-related legislative steps too have to be initiated so that the state has the authority which derives from a regular budget for a full fiscal year. Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman followed the usual vote-on-account route for the initial spell of six months of President's rule. This issue has assumed urgency as requirements of additional funds have gone up substantially because of additional expenditure on the large security apparatus and large expenses that have to be incurred for arranging return to the original dwelling places of the 60,000 plus internally displaced persons. A K Mishra advisor (north-east) in MHA, is scheduled to hold soon the second round of talks with what has come to be known as the Suspension of Operations (SoO) groups to straighten out matters relating to the number and location of camps for Kuki-Zo militants coming under the purview of the SoO arrangement.

It is not an easy job for the BJP central leadership to identify a face who will be acceptable as chief minister also to the Kuki-Zo communities. The domination of the Meiteis in the administration and the resultant conspicuous under-representation in governance of the Kuki-Zo personnel has remained a sore point with them for a long time. They hold Biren Singh responsible for manoeuvring an overwhelming role in the administration of the majoritarian Meitei community. Also, the immediate past chief minister has been scathing in his attack against the Kuki-Zos about whom his position is that a large number of them are illegal immigrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh and that they have been regularly indulging in clandestine activity. A date for Modi's visit will hinge on when a ministry is sworn in before the conclusion of six months of President's rule on August 12.

## Faith in the Himalayas



By: Vinod Chandrashekhar Dixit

The Amarnath Ji Yatra is a significant Hindu pilgrimage to the Amarnath Temple in Jammu and Kashmir. For 2025, the Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board (SASB) has announced that the Yatra will take place from July 3 to August 9, 2025. The Amarnath Ji Yatra is a test of faith, endurance, and devotion. It is more than a trek and a religious journey that tests your faith, your health, and your patience. The Amarnath Ji Yatra is considered a sacred journey, offering devotees an opportunity for spiritual growth, self-reflection, and connection with the divine. Every year 'Amarnath Ji Yatra' is marked by 'Pratham Pujan' which is said to summon the blessings of Baba Amarnath and attracts a large number of devotees from all over the world. The Amarnath Ji Yatra is a revered pilgrimage that showcases the devotion and resilience of millions of pilgrims.

Every year, thousands of pilgrims from every corner of the nation travel to the holy cave of Amarnath Ji in Jammu and Kashmir. The cave is located at over 12,700 feet above sea level and contains a naturally formed ice Shivaling said to represent Lord Shiva. The cave, located in Sind Valley, is surrounded by glaciers, snowy mountains and is covered with snow most of the year, except for a short period in the summer, when it is open to pilgrims. This cave is famous for its ice formation, with the main lingam representing Lord Shiva and two smaller ones representing Parvati and Ganesh. As per the beliefs, the Amarnath Ji Cave is where God Shiva was narrating Amar Katha to Goddess Parvati and wanted to keep it a secret. Therefore, he left all his companions behind. His riding friend - Nandi, the bull - was left at Pahalgam, the moon atop his head at Chandanwari, the snake around his neck at Lake Sheshnag, the 5 basic essentials of life that he carried at Panchtarini and even his son Lord Ganesha himself at Mahaguna top.

The 38-day annual pilgrimage is scheduled to start from the twin routes — the traditional 48-km Pahalgam route in Anantnag district and the shorter but steeper 14-km Baltal route in Ganderbal district — leading to the 3,880-metre-high Amarnath cave shrine. The decision to shorten the pilgrimage period was made before the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam that killed 26 people, mostly tourists, and is unrelated to any immediate security threat. Security arrangements for the Amarnath Ji Yatra are comprehensive and multi-layered. Despite recent incidents, including a terror attack near Pahalgam, pilgrims stood firm in their resolve to undertake the sacred journey. It is nice that security forces have carried out an extensive joint mock drill along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, as part of final preparations ahead of the annual Yatra. Over 180 companies of paramilitary forces have been deployed in the Jammu region, and CCTV surveillance has been increased at multiple points along the yatra route. Jammu police has also set up several checkpoints across the city to bolster security arrangements and carry out daily anti-sabotage checks ahead of the Amarnath Ji Yatra.

The Amarnath Ji yatra is an important part of Indian cultural heritage, showcasing the country's rich spiritual traditions and diversity. The journey offers an opportunity for personal growth, self-reflection, and spiritual rejuvenation, attracting millions of devotees each year. Best possible facilities are made available for the devotees with the efforts of the Indian Army, Central Government and State Government Police Forces along with NGOs and government provided services. To ensure a safe and successful yatra, pilgrims must ensure to adhere to security guidelines, including prescribed cut-off timings and restricted areas and stay away from isolated areas and avoid taking alternative routes suggested by drivers or local transporters. (The author is a freelance journalist and cartoonist who can be reached at dixitpatrakar@yahoo.in)

## Discord at Qingdao

# Terror, oil, and Taiwan strain China's regional diplomacy

The recently concluded Defence Ministers' meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Qingdao, China, on June 26, 2025, revealed the growing fissures in the delicate architecture of regional diplomacy under Beijing's watch. India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's decision to withhold endorsement of the draft joint statement over its omission of the Pahalgam terror attack marked a diplomatic snub with far-reaching implications. The fallout: no joint declaration was issued, an unusual and embarrassing outcome for a multilateral platform focused primarily on security cooperation.

According to the Indian Ministry of Defence, Singh also held a bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart, General Dong Jun. During this discussion, Singh stressed the need for a "structured roadmap of permanent engagement and de-escalation" to resolve the lingering tensions between the two Asian giants. However, tellingly, there was no mention of a permanent resolution to the border dispute, a conspicuous omission that underscores the current diplomatic impasse following the deadly 2020 standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Singh's address at the SCO wasn't merely procedural. He launched a thinly veiled attack on Pakistan, urging the SCO to unequivocally condemn cross-border terrorism and the sheltering of terrorists. Without naming Islamabad directly, he pointed to "countries using terrorism as an instrument of state policy," clearly referencing India's long-standing grievances against Pakistan's role in exporting terrorism, most recently manifested in the Pahalgam attack that killed several Indian security personnel. The absence of any SCO consensus on this issue highlights the deep-rooted geopolitical fault lines within the grouping.

Pakistan, a full SCO member since 2017, enjoys unwavering support from China in international forums. Their so-called "iron-clad" friendship has repeatedly frustrated India's attempts to build an anti-terrorism consensus within multilateral bodies like the SCO. Moreover, the presence of Russia, another key SCO member and India's traditional strategic partner, complicates matters further. Moscow's growing proximity to Beijing, especially after the West's sanctions over Ukraine, has made Russia less willing to align with India against Pakistan. Iran and the Central Asian republics, each with their own economic and security relationships with China, further add to the complexity.

Iran's presence at the Qingdao meeting was equally significant. Defence Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh's appearance marked his first for-



eign engagement following the recent Iran-Israel conflict. His expression of gratitude towards China was a subtle diplomatic message to the West. Iran hopes that Beijing, with its significant stake in Middle Eastern energy flows, will take a more proactive role in de-escalating regional tensions. Nasirzadeh publicly urged China to help maintain the fragile ceasefire and to adopt a more visible role in ensuring regional security.

This request comes against the backdrop of growing Western anxiety over Iran's threat to close the Strait of Hormuz—one of the world's most critical maritime choke points for oil exports. Roughly 20% of global oil passes through this narrow waterway. The US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, in a recent statement, indirectly called on Beijing to rein in Tehran's aggressive posturing. Rubio pointedly reminded China that its economic health is intimately tied to the uninterrupted flow of oil through the Hormuz Strait.

China's engagement with Iran has long been defined by energy dependence. Beijing buys nearly 90% of Iran's oil exports, making Tehran one of its top suppliers. Much of this trade continues despite US-led sanctions, facilitated by China's network of small, private "teapot refineries." These independent refineries help Beijing skirt Western scrutiny while keeping its energy lifelines open. However, despite this economic interdependence, China's security footprint in the Middle East remains limited. Its responses to regional flare-ups have so far been confined to generic calls for restraint and dialogue, a policy line that Iran now seems eager to see revised.

Amid these high-stakes diplomatic ex-

changes, President Xi Jinping's announced absence from the upcoming BRICS summit in Rio de Janeiro adds another layer of intrigue. The South China Morning Post reported that this would be Xi's first-ever absence from the BRICS summit since he became president in 2013. Officially, the reason cited is a scheduling conflict, and Premier Li Qiang is expected to represent China at the summit.

However, informed diplomatic speculation suggests that Xi's decision may also be linked to Brazil's invitation to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a state dinner after the summit. The optics of Xi attending a summit where Modi would likely be the central guest of honour may have influenced the Chinese leader's calculus. Given the ongoing border tensions and diplomatic irritants, Beijing seems eager to avoid scenarios where India's international stature appears to rise at China's perceived expense.

BRICS, since its founding in 2009, has served as a platform for emerging economies to push for a multipolar global order, challenging the dominance of US-led international institutions. Its membership has recently expanded to include Iran, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Indonesia, signalling a clear tilt towards Global South solidarity. China has been widely seen as the driving force behind this expansion, aimed at building a counterweight to Western geopolitical dominance. However, China's assertive diplomatic moves and simultaneous disputes with several BRICS members—particularly India—highlight the internal contradictions within this coalition.

Another diplomatic flashpoint complicating China's regional position is Taiwan. In a speech series titled "10 Talks on the Country," Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te unequivocally asserted that Taiwan is "of course a

country," challenging Beijing's long-standing claim that the island is an inseparable part of China. Lai's remarks drew an immediate and sharp rebuke from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, which denounced his statements as a "Taiwan independence manifesto." Beijing reiterated its position that Taiwan's future is a decision to be made by the "1.4 billion Chinese people, including compatriots in Taiwan."

This rhetorical escalation comes at a time when public sentiment in Taiwan continues to diverge from Beijing's narrative. Recent surveys show that most Taiwanese now identify themselves as Taiwanese rather than Chinese. Since 2016, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), known for its pro-independence stance, has won three successive national elections, though it returned with a minority government in 2024.

Taiwanese domestic politics now stand at a critical juncture. In less than a month, several recall polls will take place, targeting nearly a quarter of the opposition Kuomintang's (KMT) parliamentary seats. Historically, the KMT's leaders fled to Taiwan after losing the Chinese Civil War to Mao's Communists in 1949. Yet today, the KMT is perceived as more conciliatory towards Beijing compared to the DPP. The DPP, sensing an opportunity, has already launched an aggressive campaign portraying the recall vote as a referendum on resisting Beijing's influence. In a recent video, the DPP urged voters to "oppose the communists," signalling that the coming weeks could see a further hardening of positions on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

In sum, the Qingdao SCO summit unfolded under the shadow of multiple regional tensions—India's post-Pahalgam diplomatic push, Iran's call for greater Chinese involvement in Middle Eastern security, Xi Jinping's sudden withdrawal from the BRICS summit, and the volatile cross-Strait rhetoric over Taiwan's sovereignty. China finds itself simultaneously navigating contradictory roles: as a regional hegemon, a global economic powerhouse, and a diplomatic interlocutor with competing interests across its vast sphere of influence.

With the SCO leaders' summit scheduled later this year in Tianjin, all eyes will remain on how Beijing recalibrates its diplomatic approach. Will China manage to balance its growing global ambitions with the conflicting interests of its regional partners? Or will the fractures seen at Qingdao widen further, complicating Beijing's quest for regional leadership? The coming months will offer critical answers. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)

## External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's US trip: Advancing Quad's strategic vision

By: Satyabrata Borah

India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar embarked on a three-day visit to the United States on June 30, 2025, marking a significant moment in India's foreign policy engagements. The visit centers around his participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) Foreign Ministers' meeting in Washington, D.C., on July 1, hosted by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Additionally, Jaishankar will inaugurate an exhibition at the United Nations headquarters in New York titled "The Human Cost of Terrorism," a poignant initiative to highlight the global impact of terror attacks. This visit, occurring against the backdrop of complex geopolitical dynamics, holds immense importance for India and the Indo-Pacific region. The Quad meeting, in particular, is expected to address critical issues such as regional security, counterterrorism, economic cooperation, and technological advancements, while reinforcing the strategic partnership among India, the United States, Japan, and Australia. This article explores the expectations from the Quad talks, their significance, and the broader implications of Jaishankar's visit.

The Quad, comprising India, the U.S., Japan, and Australia, was first conceptualized in 2007 but gained renewed momentum in 2017 as a counterbalance to China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region. The group's primary objective is to ensure a free, open, and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations. The timing of this meeting is crucial, as the region faces multifaceted challenges, including China's aggressive maritime activities in the South China Sea, territorial disputes, and increasing militarization. The Quad has evolved from a dialogue platform to a robust framework for cooperation, encompassing joint military exercises like Malabar, intelligence

sharing, and initiatives in critical areas such as semiconductors, clean energy, and infrastructure development. For India, the Quad serves as a vital mechanism to strengthen its strategic autonomy while addressing regional security concerns.

The Foreign Ministers' meeting on July 1 is expected to build on discussions from the previous Quad summit held in Washington on January 21, 2025. The agenda will likely focus on reviewing the progress of ongoing Quad initiatives and charting new strategies to address emerging challenges. Key areas of discussion will include enhancing maritime security, countering terrorism, and fostering economic resilience through diversified supply chains. The recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam, which claimed 26 lives, has underscored the urgency of global cooperation in combating terrorism. India, which has long advocated for a zero-tolerance policy toward terrorism, is likely to emphasize this issue during the talks. The Quad nations are expected to explore ways to strengthen intelligence-sharing mechanisms and coordinate efforts to disrupt terror financing and networks, particularly in light of India's recent counterterrorism operations, such as "Operation Sindoor" in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Jaishankar's visit to New York to inaugurate the UN exhibition on the human cost of terrorism further amplifies India's commitment to raising global awareness about the devastating impact of terror attacks. Scheduled a day before Pakistan assumes the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council, the exhibition is a strategic move to highlight India's concerns about state-sponsored terrorism, particularly from Pakistan. The event will showcase the human toll of terrorism worldwide, drawing attention to the need for a unified international response. India's consistent efforts to push for the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the UN

align with this initiative, reinforcing its leadership in advocating for global counterterrorism measures.

Beyond security, the Quad meeting will likely delve into economic and technological cooperation, areas where the group has made significant strides. The Quad Investors Network and infrastructure summits have opened avenues for collaboration in critical sectors like semiconductors, critical minerals, and clean energy. For India, these initiatives are crucial for reducing dependence on China-dominated supply chains and enhancing its technological capabilities. The Quad's focus on climate change, healthcare, and humanitarian assistance also aligns with India's priorities, as it seeks to position itself as a leader in sustainable development and global health. The discussions are expected to pave the way for new agreements and partnerships, particularly in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and quantum computing, which are vital for the region's economic resilience.

The strategic significance of Jaishankar's visit extends beyond the Quad framework. His bilateral meeting with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong on the sidelines of the Quad talks is expected to further strengthen India-Australia ties, particularly in trade, defense, and education. The Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) between the two nations, which is under negotiation, could receive a boost, fostering deeper economic integration. Additionally, India's engagement with the U.S. under the new administration will be closely watched, as it seeks to navigate the evolving dynamics of U.S. foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific. The Quad remains a cornerstone of the U.S.'s strategy to counter China, and India's role as a reliable partner in this framework enhances its geopolitical influence.

The broader geopolitical context adds weight to the Quad talks. While global attention has been focused on conflicts in the



Middle East and Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific remains a critical theater for global power dynamics. China's assertive actions, including its claims in the South China Sea and its growing naval presence, pose a direct challenge to the Quad's vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. The group's ability to present a united front will be crucial in deterring aggression and ensuring regional stability. For India, the Quad provides a platform to balance its strategic interests while maintaining its policy of non-alignment. By engaging with like-minded democracies, India can address security threats without compromising its autonomy.

The Quad's evolution into a more action-oriented alliance is evident in its recent initiatives, such as the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness, which monitors illegal activities in the region's waters. The group's commitment to providing public goods, such as vaccines and disaster relief, has also strengthened its legitimacy as a force for global good. For India, participation in the Quad enhances its global standing, positioning it as a key player in shaping the rules-based international order. The upcoming Quad Leaders' Summit, to be hosted by India later in 2025, will build on the outcomes of this Foreign Ministers' meeting, making Jaishankar's visit a critical preparatory step.

Jaishankar's visit also underscores India's proactive foreign

policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. By engaging with global powers and multilateral platforms like the Quad, India is asserting its role as a responsible stakeholder in international affairs. The visit comes at a time when India is navigating domestic and regional challenges, including the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack and tensions along its borders. The Quad's support in these areas, particularly in intelligence sharing and defense cooperation, will bolster India's efforts to address these challenges effectively.

Dr. S. Jaishankar's three-day visit to the United States and the Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting represent a pivotal moment for India's foreign policy. The discussions are expected to yield concrete outcomes in areas such as counterterrorism, maritime security, and economic cooperation, reinforcing the Quad's role as a stabilizing force in the Indo-Pacific. The inauguration of the UN exhibition on terrorism highlights India's leadership in addressing global challenges, while its bilateral engagements, particularly with Australia, will deepen strategic partnerships. As the Quad continues to evolve, India's active participation ensures that its interests are safeguarded while contributing to regional and global stability. This visit not only strengthens India's ties with its Quad partners but also reinforces its position as a key player in shaping the future of the Indo-Pacific region.







# Pahalgam attack was act of economic warfare: EAM Jaishankar

**NEW YORK, July 1:** The Pahalgam terror attack was an act of economic warfare meant to destroy tourism in Kashmir, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said, asserting that India has made it clear that it will not allow nuclear blackmail to prevent it from responding to terror emanating from Pakistan.

India has had a string of terrorist attacks over the years emanating from Pakistan and in the wake of the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, there was a sentiment in the country that "enough is enough," Jaishankar said on Monday.

His remarks came during a conversation with Newsweek CEO Dev Pragad hosted at the publication's headquarters at One World Trade Centre near the 9/11 Memorial in Manhattan.

Jaishankar said that the Pahalgam attack "was an act of economic warfare. It was meant to destroy tourism in Kashmir, which was the mainstay of the economy. It was also meant to provoke religious violence because people were asked to identify their faith before they were killed."

"So we decided that we cannot let terrorists function with impunity. The idea that they are on that side of the border, and that, therefore, sort of prevents retribution. I think, that's a proposition that needs to be challenged and that is what we did," he said.

Jaishankar is on an official visit to the US and will travel to Washington DC to participate in the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Tuesday.

He commenced his visit by inaugurating an exhibition in the UN Headquarters titled "The Human Cost of Terrorism", organised by the Permanent Mission of India to the UN.

He said that the terrorists based in Pakistan carrying out attacks against India do not operate in secret and these are



terrorist organisations who have the "equivalent of their corporate headquarters in the populated towns of Pakistan." "Everybody knows what is the headquarters of organisation A and organisation B and those are the buildings, the headquarters that India destroyed" in Operation Sindoor, he said.

Operation Sindoor was launched to target terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians and for which The Resistance Front (TRF), a front for Pakistan-based terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) had claimed responsibility.

"We are very clear there will be no impunity for terrorists, that we will not deal with them any longer as proxies and spare the government which supports and finances and in many ways, motivates them. We will not allow nuclear blackmail to prevent us from responding," he said.

Jaishankar added that "we've also heard this for too long" that both India and Pakistan are nuclear countries and "therefore the other guy will come and do horrible things, but you mustn't do anything because it gets the world worried."

"Now we are not going to fall for that. If he is going to come and do things, we are

going to go there and also hit the people who did this. So no yielding to nuclear blackmail, no impunity to terrorists, no more free pass that they are proxies. And we will do what we have to do to defend our people," Jaishankar said amid applause from the audience.

Referring to the exhibition at the UN highlighting the devastating toll of terrorist attacks across the globe, including those perpetrated by Pakistan-based terror entities, Jaishankar said India believes that "terrorism is actually a threat to everyone, that no country should use it as an instrument to further its policies because, at the end of the day, it comes back to bite everyone."

He stressed that the message to the world has to be that there should be zero tolerance for terrorism, that there should be no circumstances, no excuse, no justification under which a country would allow, support, finance or sponsor terrorist acts.

He said India has been dealing with terrorism emanating from Pakistan for several decades but it actually started from the time of the country's independence in 1947 when within a few months, terrorists were sent into Kashmir and were described as proxies and tribal invaders.

"And then soon enough, the

Pakistani Army followed. So we have battled terrorism, really intensive, for the last four decades and we've had some horrific cases," he said, as he referred to the 2001 Parliament and 2008 Mumbai terror attacks.

During a Q&A session that followed the conversation, Jaishankar was asked about President Donald Trump's claim that he used trade to stop the recent conflict between India and Pakistan and whether that has affected trade negotiations between Delhi and Washington.

"No, I don't think so. I think the trade people are doing what the trade people should be doing, which is negotiate with numbers and lines and products and do their trade-offs. I think they are very professional and very, very focused about it," Jaishankar said.

He said that there is a national consensus in India that "our dealings with Pakistan are bilateral."

"And in this particular case, I can tell you that I was in the room when Vice President (JD) Vance spoke to Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi on the night of May 9, saying that the Pakistanis would launch a very massive assault on India if we did not accept certain things."

"And the Prime Minister was impervious to what the Pakistanis were threatening to do. On the contrary, he indicated that there would be a response from us. This was the night before and the Pakistanis did attack us massively that night, we responded very quickly thereafter," Jaishankar said.

"And the next morning, Mr (Secretary of State Marco) Rubio called me up and said the Pakistanis were ready to talk. So I can only tell you from my personal experience what happened. The rest I leave to you," he said. (PTI)

## Yunus urges Bangladeshis to resist re-emergence of autocracy

**DHAKA, July 1:** Bangladesh's interim government chief Muhammad Yunus on Tuesday urged his countrymen to resist the re-emergence of autocracy as he launched a month-long programme to mark last year's mass protests that ousted longtime prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

"We will observe this (July Uprising) every year so that we do not have to wait 16 years for another uprising again. We will do this every year so that we can destroy it immediately if there is any sign of dictatorship," he said. Yunus said the celebration was not just a matter of emotion or expression of outrage but rather a manifestation of vigilance so the autocracy or dictatorship could be gouged "before it even shows its first leaf."

He said throughout July and August, the celebration would revive every day of the last year for which the young students, commoners, rickshaw pullers, and workers were martyred and injured. "We will do this every year so that dictatorship cannot raise its head again in any way," Yunus said.

The movement started in July last year under a platform called Students against Discrimination (SAD), demanding reforms in a controversial quota system for government jobs, but turned violent, resulting in the ouster of the government on August 5, 2024, when Hasina left the country for India on a military aircraft.

Yunus flew from Paris three days later to take charge as the interim government's Chief Adviser as the SAD nominee. He subsequently disbanded Awami League and its students' front, saying the ban would remain enforced until their leaders were tried.

Most leaders of the Awami League and ministers of the past regime, including several officials, were arrested or were on the run at home and abroad as the government initiated their trial for brutal actions to tame the uprising, leaving several hundred people, including students, dead. Hasina and her regime leaders are being prosecuted in Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT-BD), formed in 2010 for trying hardened collaborators of Pakistani troops during the 1971 Liberation War on charges like crimes against humanity.

According to a UN rights office report, some 1,400 were killed between July 15 and August 15, 2024, as retaliatory violence continued even after the fall of the past regime. (PTI)

## War of words over big bill intensifies between Musk, Trump

**WASHINGTON, July 1:** The war of words between billionaire Elon Musk and President Donald Trump over the big bill of tax breaks and spending cuts is heating up again, with Musk claiming he may form a new political party and Trump blasting the Tesla CEO over electric vehicle subsidies.

The most prominent divide in the relationship between Musk and Trump is the president's big bill. Musk ramped up his criticism of the bill just three days ago, arguing the legislation that Republican senators are scrambling to pass would kill jobs and bog down burgeoning industries.

Musk, who is also CEO of SpaceX, posted on X on Saturday that the bill would be "political suicide for the Republican Party".

With the Senate working its way through a tense overnight session that dragged into Tuesday, Musk suggested he will work to get members of Congress who vote for the bill out of their seats next year.

"Every member of Congress who campaigned on reducing government spending and then immediately voted for the biggest debt increase in history should hang their head in shame," he wrote on X. "And they will lose their primary next year if it is the last thing I do on this Earth."

The post was viewed 26 million times on the social media platform.

A few hours later, Musk followed up with a post claiming he will create a new political party if the bill passes.

"If this insane spending bill passes, the America Party will be formed the next day," he wrote. "Our country needs an alternative to the Democrat-Republican uniparty so that the people actually have a VOICE."

Musk's post about the America Party was viewed 32 million times on X.

For his part, Trump focused some of his criticisms of Musk on EV mandates and sub-



sidies. In a post on Truth Social early Tuesday morning, Trump said Musk has known that he's against an EV mandate and that people should not be forced to own electric vehicles.

"Elon may get more subsidy than any human being in history, by far, and without subsidies, Elon would probably have to close up shop and head back home to South Africa," Trump wrote. The President went on to say that there could be some cost savings for the nation. "No more Rocket launches, Satellites, or Electric Car Production, and our Country would save a FOR-TUNE. Perhaps we should have DOGE take a good, hard, look at this? BIG MONEY TO BE SAVED!!!" Trump posted.

Several hours later, while standing on the White House lawn before heading to Florida, Trump continued to discuss what he believes is Musk's displeasure with potentially losing EV subsidies. "He's very upset. You know, he can lose a lot more than that, I'll tell you right now," Trump said. "Elon can lose a lot more than that."

The President also cautioned Musk on the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, which the billionaire used to lead.

"DOGE could be the monster that turns around and eats Elon," Trump said. (AP)

## Pakistan, India exchange lists of prisoners in each other's custody

**ISLAMABAD, July 1:** Pakistan and India on Tuesday exchanged the lists of prisoners in each other's custody, with Islamabad submitting names of 246 Indian or believed-to-be-Indian detainees, including 53 civilians and 193 fishermen.

The Agreement on Consular Access, 2008 requires both sides to share the lists of prisoners in each other's custody on January 1 and July 1, every year, according to a statement by the Foreign Office.

Pakistan handed over a list of 246 Indian or believed-to-be-Indian prisoners (53 civilian prisoners and 193 fishermen) to a rep-

resentative of the Indian High Commission, Islamabad, the Foreign Office said.

"Today, Pakistan and India exchanged, through diplomatic channels, the lists of prisoners in each other's custody," the FO said.

Simultaneously, India shared a list of 463 Pakistani or believed-to-be-Pakistani prisoners (382 civilian prisoners and 81 fishermen) to a diplomat from the High Commission for Pakistan, New Delhi.

Pakistan has called for the immediate release and repatriation of all those Pakistani prisoners and fishermen who have completed their

respective sentences and whose national status stands confirmed.

"A request for special consular access has also been made for all believed-to-be-Pakistani prisoners, including the physically- and mentally-challenged prisoners for expeditious confirmation of their national status," the FO said.

"The Indian side has also been urged to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of all Pakistani prisoners in Indian custody," the FO said.

Pakistan will continue its endeavours to ensure the early return of all Pakistani prisoners in Indian jails, it added. (PTI)

### GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

### OFFICE OF THE ADDL. CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (R&B), HILLS, ASSAM, DIPHU.

NO.ACEH/E(G)/10/2025-26/ 06

Dated Diphu, the 01<sup>st</sup> July, 2025.

### ADVERTISEMENT

In pursuance of KAAC, Diphu's Letter vide No. KAAC/Esstt-563/P(B)/Prior Approval/PWD/2023-24/29, Dated 05/06/2025 and KAAC/Esstt-254(Pt-I)/PWD/P(B)/2011-12/79, Dated 24/06/2025, application in prescribed Standard Forms with all testimonials and KAAC Cash Receipt of Rs.10/- for Reserved Categories and Rs.20/- for General Category candidates are invited from intending eligible candidates who are Citizen of India as defined in the Article 5 & 8 of the Constitution of India for filling up of the following vacant sanctioned **Grade-III & Grade-IV** Posts under Public Works Department of Karbi Anglong & West Karbi Anglong Districts and application will be received during the Office hours on or before **25<sup>th</sup> July, 2025 up to 05:00 PM** in the office of the undersigned. The date of written test /viva —voce/ interview will be announced in due course of time.

| Sl. No. | Name of post lying vacant   | Grade of Posts | No. of posts lying vacant | Scale of Pay                  |
|---------|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1       | L.D. Assistant (Jr. Asstt.) | Grade-III      | 11 (Eleven) nos.          | PB-II (14,000-70,000) GP+6200 |
| 2       | Section Assistant (S.A.)    | Grade-III      | 4 (Four) nos.             | PB-II (14,000-60,500) GP+5600 |
| 3       | Peon                        | Grade-IV       | 3 (three) nos.            | PB-I (12,000-52,000) GP+3900  |
| 4       | Chowkidar                   | Grade-IV       | 4 (Four) nos.             | PB-I (12,000-52,000) GP+3900  |
| 5       | Roller Handyman             | Grade-IV       | 2 (Two) nos.              | PB-1 (12,000-52,000) GP+3900  |

### Syllabus for Written Test, Computer Test and Viva-Voce

| Sl.No. | Name of Post                                | Subject               | Marks    |           |
|--------|---|-----------------------|----------|-----------|
| 1      | Lower Division Assistant (Junior Assistant) | General Mathematics   | 25 Marks | 150 Marks |
|        |   | General English       | 25 Marks |           |
|        |   | General knowledge     | 50 Marks |           |
|        |   | Computer Test         | 25 Marks |           |
|        |   | Viva-voce             | 25 Marks |           |
| 2      | Section Assistant (S.A.)                    | General English       | 25 Marks | 150 Marks |
|        |   | General knowledge     | 50 Marks |           |
|        |   | Post related question | 25 Marks |           |
|        |   | Computer Test         | 25 Marks |           |
|        |   | Viva-voce             | 25 Marks |           |
| 3      | Peon,                                       | Viva-voce             | 25 Marks | 25 Marks  |
| 4      | Chowkidar                                   | Viva-voce             | 25 Marks | 25 Marks  |
| 5      | Roller Handyman                             | Viva-voce             | 25 Marks | 25 Marks  |

### General Term & Conditions:-

- For the post of L.D. Assistant (Junior Assistant) minimum Qualification is Bachelor Degree in Arts / Science / Commerce from a Govt. recognized Board / Universities with Computer Diploma of at least 12 (Twelve) Months with a typing speed of 50 words per minute (Having good knowledge of MS Words, Excel etc.)
- For the post of Section Assistant (S.A.) minimum Qualification is H.S. Passed with Computer Diploma of 12 (Twelve) Months with a typing speed of 50 words per minute (Having good knowledge of MS Words, Excel etc.)
- For the post of Peon, Chowkidar and Roller Handyman minimum Qualification is 8<sup>th</sup> Passed.
- The Selected candidates will be entitled with New Pension Scheme (NPS) 2005 or as per direction of Govt.
- Age limit is minimum 18 (Eighteen) years and maximum 38 (Thirty Eight) years for General Candidates as on 01/01/2025. The age relaxation for Reserved Category candidates will be as per the existing Govt. Rule.
- Self attested copy of all testimonials including Birth Certificates, Caste Certificates, Current Employment Exchange Registration Number etc from local Employment Exchange and 2 (two) copies of recent passport size photograph has to be submitted along with Standard Form duly filled in.
- The Envelope containing the application should be superscripted as "APPLICATION FOR THE POST OF L.D. ASSISTANT (JUNIOR ASSISTANT) / SECTION ASSISTANT / PEON/ CHOWKIDAR/ROLLER HANDYMAN" which ever applicable and self addressed envelope with postal Stamp of Rs.5 /- has to be enclosed along with the application.
- Application may be submitted by self or by post. The Department will not receive any application after the last date of receipt of application. Postal delay will not be entertained by the Department under any circumstances.
- All application in the Standard Form must be filled properly and completely and submit with all requisite documents. Incomplete and late received application will be rejected without assigning any reason thereof.
- The last day of submission of application form is 25/07/2025 upto 5:00 P.M.
- No TA/DA will be provided by the Department.
- Candidates canvassing directly or indirectly will be liable for disqualification.
- Reservation of the posts will be as per prescribed Govt. Rules.
- The Competent Authority reserves all rights to enhance or reduce the posts and also to cancel /postpone the interview at any time without assigning any reason thereof and without any intimation to the candidates.

Sd/-

Addl. Chief Engineer, PWD(R&B)  
Hills, Assam, Diphu.

Cum  
Member Secretary, Interview Board  
And Selection Committee.

Dated Diphu, 01<sup>st</sup> July, 2025.

Memo No. ACEH/E(G)/10/2025-26/06-A



## Tawang DLMC reviews development projects and welfare schemes in two-day meeting

*Deputy Commissioner calls for timely execution, quality control and grassroots outreach*



**HT Correspondent**

**TAWANG, July 1:** A two-day District Level Monitoring Committee (DLMC) meeting was held on June 30 and July 1, 2025, at the Conference Hall of the Deputy Commissioner's Office in Tawang to assess the progress of various ongoing developmental projects and welfare schemes in the district.

The meeting, according to an official statement, aimed at strengthening inter-departmental coordination and addressing implementation challenges to ensure timely delivery of public services.

The meeting was chaired by Deputy Commissioner of Tawang, Namgyal Angmo, IAS, and witnessed the presence of Zila Parishad Chairperson (ZPC)

Leki Gombu, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Lungla, Tashi Dhondup, ADC Jang Sub-Division, Hakraso Kri, and Heads of Departments (HoDs) from various executing agencies. In her opening remarks, DC Angmo emphasized the importance of expediting ongoing work within the region's limited working season, while maintaining strict adherence to quality standards.

She urged departments to set achievable deadlines and work in tandem to overcome logistical and administrative hurdles.

"The working season in Tawang is short due to climatic constraints. Hence, timely and efficient execution of projects is crucial. Departments must function in coordination to ensure

every project sees completion within its scheduled timeline without compromising on quality," the Deputy Commissioner stated.

ZPC Leki Gombu, while acknowledging the developmental efforts across the district, stressed the need to improve access to financial support and welfare entitlements at the grassroots.

He called for a special meeting with all banks operating in the district to ensure timely disbursement of loans to eligible beneficiaries and urged the district administration to play a proactive role in streamlining access to government schemes.

During the two-day session, representatives from various departments presented status reports and PowerPoint

presentations on centrally-sponsored schemes, state-funded projects, and flagship initiatives of both the Prime Minister and chief minister.

Departments also highlighted key achievements, bottlenecks in implementation, and suggestions for improvement.

The review covered a wide array of sectors including infrastructure, health, education, rural development, agriculture, drinking water and sanitation, and social welfare.

Specific attention was paid to progress under schemes such as the Jal Jeevan Mission, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), MGNREGA, and state-sponsored welfare initiatives.

The forum served as a vital platform for discussion, where departments shared best practices, raised operational concerns, and sought support from other stakeholders in resolving persistent issues.

Matters concerning fund allocation, labour availability, contractor mobilisation, and public outreach were deliberated upon with a focus on result-oriented planning.

Concluding the meeting, the DLMC reaffirmed its commitment to transparency, timely execution, and people-centric governance.

It stressed that all welfare measures and developmental works must directly benefit citizens, particularly those in remote and underserved areas.

The official statement from the district administration noted that such review meetings would be held at regular intervals to monitor progress, address gaps, and ensure optimum utilisation of resources in Tawang district.

## Arunachal Rural Livelihood Mission signs MoU with Pahle India Foundation for skill development collaboration



**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, July 1:** In a major push to strengthen rural development and employment-oriented capacity building in Arunachal Pradesh, the Arunachal State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ArSRLM) under the Department of Rural Development has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Pahle India Foundation (PIF), a New Delhi-based public policy think tank.

The MoU, signed for a period of three years, outlines a strategic collaboration aimed at promoting sustainable rural livelihoods, building institutional capacity, and implementing evidence-based policy interventions across the state.

According to an official statement, the partnership will focus on identifying skill gaps, conducting comprehensive skill-mapping, and developing knowledge-driven solutions for rural communities.

The collaboration will also involve training modules tailored for Self Help Group (SHG) cadres, Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs), and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen

Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) Training Centres.

The aim is to create grassroots-level implementation support systems through strengthened training and outreach mechanisms.

As part of the agreement, the two organisations will jointly conduct assessments to understand existing livelihood capacities and gaps, with the goal of creating scalable and replicable livelihood models.

In addition, the collaboration will produce knowledge-based outputs, including technical reports, policy briefs, and academic research that will inform government programmes and policies.

The partnership will further include exposure visits and learning exchanges to enhance field-level implementation across districts in the state.

Pahle India Foundation will provide pro bono technical support to the mission, while ArSRLM will facilitate the operational aspects of the partnership, including providing office space, logistical support, and infrastructure for the foundation's team in Arunachal Pradesh.

Commenting on the MoU, Sangeeta Yirang, APSC (AG), Chief Executive Officer-cum-State Mission Director of ArSRLM, said the collaboration marks an important step in strengthening rural resilience and economic empowerment.

She noted that the tie-up with PIF will help bridge institutional and capacity gaps and offer new pathways for sustainable livelihood creation.

Ravi Pokharna, Executive Director of Pahle India Foundation, said the organisation is excited to support the state in applying policy research to real-world rural development challenges.

He stated that Arunachal Pradesh presents a unique opportunity to develop inclusive, community-led growth models that can be documented and scaled.

The agreement represents a forward-looking partnership that combines on-ground action with knowledge generation, aiming to enhance the quality and reach of rural development initiatives in one of India's most remote and ecologically diverse states.

## Hawkers protest illegal eviction, demand emergency PTVC meet

**SHILLONG, July 1:** Members of the Meghalaya and Greater Shillong Progressive Hawkers and Street Vendors Association (MGSPHSA) staged a protest today in front of the secretariat against the alleged illegal eviction drive at Khyndailad and demanded an emergency meeting of the provisional town vending committee (PTVC) to rectify the flaws.

The protesting hawkers, supported by Thma U Rangli Juki, alleged that the eviction drive was unilateral and illegal, as it targeted vendors who had certificates of vending.

Angela Rangad, speaking on behalf of the hawkers, stated that the PTVC chairperson, who is also the CEO of the Shillong Municipal Board (SMB), authorized the eviction drive without following due process.

Rangad emphasized that the hawkers had gone to court demanding implementation of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 and were working with the PTVC to implement the law.

However, the SMB's actions were contrary to the law and would create more complications.

The hawkers demanded an emergency meet-



ing of the PTVC to address the issues and warned that if the law is not implemented properly, it will be more dangerous and bring further complications. They also criticized the deputy

Chief minister, who is in charge of urban affairs, for not taking their concerns seriously.

"We have demanded that he summon the files so that he understands where the process is at the moment and understands why yesterday's action was illegal. We are also demanding that there should be an emergency PTVC meeting," Rangad said.

Rangad also alleged that the SMB's action was a show to mislead the Meghalaya High Court, which is set to hear a petition on July 3.

"I am telling you it is very obvious why they are doing this. They want to create a spectacle, they know the media will cover it, and they will use this as a response to the petition in court. I am certain the court will not be misled because this is all a show just to claim that they have taken some action. But the actions are illegal as per the law. I am sure the court will not condone this," she said.

The hawkers have threatened to intensify their protest if their demands are not met. "If PTVC doesn't straighten out these issues, we will have to continue to protest because we will not allow for an illegal implementation of the law. You cannot misinterpret the law. That is our stand," Rangad further stated. (NNN)

## ELCCA rejects 'German Road', warns of unrest over land encroachment

**IMPHAL, July 1:** The Eastern Liangmai Chiefs/Chairmen Association (ELCCA) issued a "firm and resolute" statement in regards to the "wish list" of the Kuki community and the proposed construction of the so-called "German Road" or "Tiger Road," intended to connect Kangpokpi to Churachandpur through "Naga ancestral territories".

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the ELCCA said, "Let it be known that there is no such road in the past, present, or future recognized as the German, Tiger or Lion Road in our ancestral land". These names are fabricated and hold no legitimacy in "our history, tradition or land records", said the ELCCA.

Any move to impose such fictitious infrastructure projects within "Naga territory" will be regarded as an act of aggression and a blatant provocation, it cautioned.

"Any forceful or deceitful at-

tempt to intrude into our ancestral domain under the guise of development will be met with unrelenting resistance. Let there be no illusion that such actions risk triggering widespread unrest and violence that could lead to other communal conflicts in the region", the Liangmai body also said.

Those who choose to ignore this warning will bear full responsibility for the consequences, it warned.

The ELCCA then called upon the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to act with wisdom and urgency.

Supporting or permitting this Kuki's "wish list" would constitute a reckless endorsement of territorial encroachment and would severely endanger fragile inter-community relations in the region, it further said.

The Government of India must ensure that no infrastructure project under any name or pretext violates

the territorial sanctity of Naga lands, it added.

The statement of the ELCCA then said, "In the interest of lasting peace and security, we also demand the immediate dismantling of all Suspension of Operation (SoO) camps of Kuki militant groups located in close proximity to Naga-inhabited areas".

These camps pose a serious threat to peace and remain a constant source of intimidation and insecurity for our people. Their continued presence will not be tolerated, the ELCCA stated.

The ELCCA then said the Eastern Liangmai people are a peace-loving community, "but we will not remain passive in the face of deceit, provocation, or occupation". The ELCCA added that "we are the rightful guardians of our land, and we will defend it by all means necessary". (NNN)

## Police seize suspected heroin in targeted NDPS raid at Naharlagun; one arrested

**HT Correspondent**

**NAHARLAGUN, July 1:** In a significant breakthrough in the ongoing crackdown on narcotics, a police team in Naharlagun arrested a 23-year-old man and seized suspected heroin during a targeted operation conducted at Damsite on Monday afternoon.

The operation, launched based on specific intelligence inputs, led to the recovery of a substan-

tial quantity of suspected narcotic substances.

According to an official statement issued by the Arunachal Pradesh Police, the raid was carried out by a team led by Inspector Krishnendu Dev, with support from Sub-Inspector Nirri Rama, Constables Sanu T Raaj and Likha Akin, and Lady Head Constable Nime Taba. The operation was conducted under the close supervision of SDPO Naharlagun, Rishi Longdo, APPS.



The team moved swiftly to the location following credible information regarding possession and possible distribution of contraband. During the raid, the police apprehended a suspect identified as Techhi Lala, a resident of Rakap

Village in Papumpare District. A personal search was carried out in compliance with Section 50 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in the presence of Executive Magistrate Khoda Bath.

The search yielded a used syringe, an empty vial, and a half-used plastic vial containing suspected heroin.

Further inspection of the suspect's vehicle, a two-wheeler bearing registration number AR 01J/2244, led to the recovery of 15 additional plastic vials hidden beneath the seat.

These vials, containing suspected heroin, collectively weighed approximately 18.8 grams including the plastic containers.

Following the seizure, a case was formally registered at the Naharlagun Police Station under Sections 21(b), 27, and 29 of the NDPS Act, vide Case No. NLG/PS/C/No. 85/25.

The accused has been taken into custody, and further legal proceedings are underway.

Commenting on the arrest, Superintendent of Police Dr. Nyelam Nega, APPS, reaffirmed the department's unwavering commitment to eradicating drug trafficking and substance abuse in the region. He called upon citizens to remain alert and extend cooperation to law enforcement authorities in their efforts to build a drug-free society.

The police have urged the public to continue sharing information that can aid in identifying and cracking down on drug-related activities, assuring that confidentiality and prompt action will be maintained in all such cases.

## New species of flowering plant found in Arunachal, named after Nyishi tribe

**ITANAGAR, July 1:** Forest officials in Arunachal Pradesh have discovered a new species of flowering plant, *Begonia nyishiorum*, in the high-altitude forests of East Kameng district.

The species was documented during a challenging expedition by the Seppa Forest Division.

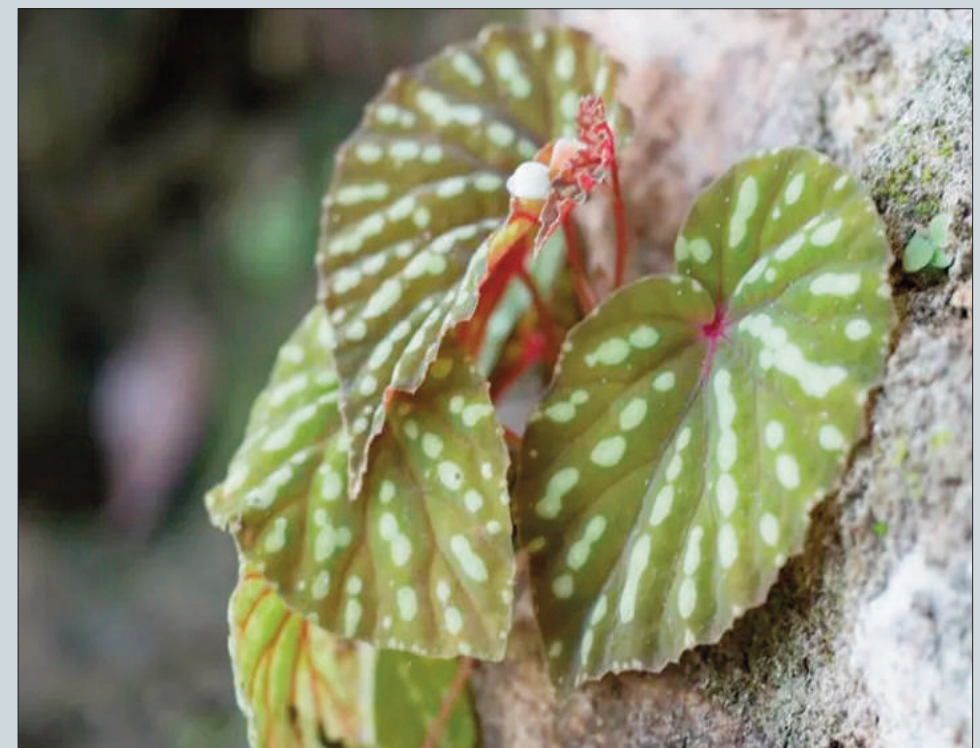
Its discovery was recently published in the prestigious international journal *Novon: A Journal for Botanical Nomenclature*, on June 23.

Named in honour of the Nyishi tribe, the largest in the northeastern state, the plant stands out for its unique crimson-fringed petioles, an identifying feature not seen in any other Asian *Begonia*, sources at the state forest department said.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu lauded the Seppa Forest Division for the discovery, calling it a proud moment for Arunachal Pradesh and a reaffirmation of the state's rich ecological legacy and global relevance in biodiversity.

"Congratulations to the Forest Division, Seppa, on the discovery of *Begonia nyishiorum*! A proud moment for Arunachal Pradesh as a new species of flowering plant, *Begonia nyishiorum*, has been discovered in the dense, high-altitude forests of East Kameng. Published in the prestigious journal *Novon*, this find reinforces Arunachal's rich ecological heritage and global significance in biodiversity," Khandu said in a social media post on Monday.

He also expressed his appreciation for DFO Abhinav Kumar and his team, along with the Nyishi community, whose traditional role as forest custodians played an important role in the discovery.



"With its unique crimson-fringed petioles, *Begonia nyishiorum* is not just a botanical marvel, it is a symbol of how much more remains to be discovered in the Eastern Himalayas," the chief minister added.

The plant now joins the expanding list of rare

flora endemic to the Eastern Himalayan region, further highlighting the area's immense biodiversity. This discovery also underscores the pressing need for continued conservation and scientific research in one of India's most ecologically rich regions. (PTI)



# Citizens should register themselves as voters only in constituencies they are ordinary residents:CEC

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar on Tuesday asserted that eligible citizens should register themselves as voters only in constituencies of which they are ordinary residents and not the place where they own a house.

His remarks come as the poll machinery in Bihar undertakes a special intensive review (SIR) of the voters list of the state, which is going to the polls later this year. One of the key objectives of the drive is to identify "many persons" who have, knowingly or unknowingly, managed to retain multiple voter cards of different constituencies.

Addressing a group of booth-level officers here, the CEC said, "As per the Representation of the People Act, you are entitled to vote only in the assembly constituency where you are an ordinary resident. For example, if you ordinarily reside in Delhi but own a house in Patna, your vote should be regis-



tered in Delhi, not in Patna."

Many persons are ordinary residents of one place and have got their voter card from that location while retaining their earlier card from before migration, which, officials pointed out, is a criminal offence.

The opposition parties have claimed that the exercise could deprive genuine voters of their right and benefit the ruling dispensation

in Bihar. The electoral rolls were prepared afresh through various intensive revisions, either across the country or in parts, nine times in the 52-year period from 1952 to 2004 -- once nearly every six years on average.

But this time the exercise is taking place after 22 years.

The Election Commission will carry out an intensive review of

electoral rolls this year in six states, beginning with Bihar, to weed out foreign illegal migrants by checking their place of birth.

Bihar is going to the polls later this year, while assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal are scheduled in 2026.

The move, which would be later expanded to other states, assumes significance in the wake of a crackdown in various states on illegal foreign migrants, including from Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The Election Commission officials said although the poll authority has addressed the issue of duplicate voter card numbers -- same card numbers erroneously issued to two different persons -- the issue of many persons enrolling in different places by giving different unmatching details to procure more than one electoral photo identity card can only be resolved through SIR. (PTI)

# Digital India completing 10 years Unfulfilled promises, digital exclusion of marginalised: Cong

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** With the Modi government hailing Digital India as a people's movement that democratised technology in 10 years, the Congress on Tuesday claimed the fine print of its "lofty claims" is marred by unfulfilled promises, digital exclusion of the marginalised, hurting privacy and weakening transparency.

Digital India is a flagship programme of the government launched on July 1, 2015, by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi with the vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.

Questioning the government's claims of the success of the initiative that completed 10 years, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge cited data like villages and schools that are yet to get broadband connectivity, the rising debt of state-owned telecom companies MTNL and BSNL and a surge in cyber crimes.

At the same time, the opposition party sought to take credit for laying the foundation of several path-breaking initiatives like Aadhaar and UPI during its rule.

"The fine print of Modi Govt's lofty claims of 'Digital India' is marred by unfulfilled promises and false claims," Kharge said in a post on X.

As of 26th June 2025, under the BharatNet project, a total of 6.55 lakh villages were supposed to be targeted for broadband connectivity, but out of these, 4.53 lakh villages, i.e. 65 per cent of them are yet to be covered, he claimed.

"The project's deadline has been revised at least 8 times in 11 years. A meagre 0.73% (766) Gram Panchayats currently have active Wi-Fi services. When the private players are opting for 5G, BSNL has not yet completed its target of deploying 1 lakh 4G towers. One-third towers left to be installed," the Congress chief said.

Even after receiving three revival packages worth over ₹ 3 lakh crore -- ₹ 69,000 crore in 2019, ₹ 1.64 lakh crore in 2022, and ₹ 89,047 crore in 2023 -- it still lags behind private players, Kharge said.

He pointed out that BSNL's debt rose by 291.7 per cent, from ₹ 5,948 crore in March 2014 to ₹ 23,297 crore in March 2024.

"MTNL's debt increased by 136.2%, from ₹ 14,210 crore to ₹



33,568 crore over the same period," he said.

Kharge also flagged the issue of "digital exclusion of the marginalised".

He said 75.3 per cent of people aged 15 and above in the country do not know how to use a computer.

"This includes 81.9% in rural areas and 60.4% in urban areas, highlighting a significant digital skills gap. (NSS survey, 2020-21)," he said.

Nearly 7 crore registered workers were excluded from MNREGA by imposing the condition of Aadhaar-based payment, he said.

Kharge further claimed that 54 per cent of government schools do not have an internet connection, 79 per cent have no desktop computer, 85 per cent lack a projector and 79 per cent do not have a smart classroom.

He also alleged that it has hurt privacy and weakened transparency.

"None less than PM Modi himself, reportedly told Ministers & Secretaries that India saw over 10 crore cyberattacks since the Pahalgam terror attack. Cybersecurity incidents rose by about 76.25% from 2020 to 2024. These cases increased from 11.58 lakh in 2020 to over 20.41 lakh in 2024," Kharge claimed, citing CERT-In data.

Between 2022 and 2024, digital arrest scams and related cybercrimes in India nearly tripled, and the money lost rose 21 times, he said, citing replies to questions in the Rajya Sabha.

The Act brought by the Congress party is being weakened by bringing a flawed Data Protection

Law, he alleged.

"We were told that demonetisation will reduce cash transactions, but cash in circulation has risen, even in the last year," Kharge said.

"Narendra Modi ji, we need to place on record that it was under the then PM Dr Manmohan Singh, that we created the Direct Benefits through AADHAAR & UPI architecture, which has made India a leader in Digital transactions.

"National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) which runs UPI transactions, was established by the UPA government in 2009 itself," he said.

First Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme - PaHaL for LPG subsidy to 9.55 crore beneficiaries was launched by Congress-UPA in June 2013, Kharge pointed out.

"So, instead of glossing over National achievements, and trying to seek credit for #10YearsOfDigitalIndia, perhaps you should reflect on the multiple failures and frauds inflicted by your government," the Congress president said.

His remarks came after Prime Minister Modi asserted on Tuesday that the Digital India initiative, launched a decade ago, bridged the digital divide between haves and have-nots, and democratised opportunity, stressing that it has become a people's movement.

In a post on LinkedIn, he said that while decades were spent doubting the ability of Indians to use technology, his government changed this approach and trusted the ability of citizens to use technology. Modi asserted that his government used technology to eliminate the gap between the haves and have-nots, he added. (PTI)

## Cabinet nod for ₹ one lakh crore scheme to spur private investments in R&D

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved the Research Development and Innovation Scheme with a corpus of Rs one lakh crore to spur private sector investment in research.

The scheme, approved by the Cabinet at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aims to encourage the private sector to scale up research, development and innovation in sunrise domains and in other sectors relevant for economic security, strategic purpose, and self-reliance.

The scheme aims to provide long-term financing or refinancing with long tenors at low or nil interest rates to spur private sector investment in research, development and innovation, I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters.

He said the scheme has been designed to overcome the constraints and challenges in funding of the private sector and seeks to provide growth and risk capital to sunrise and strategic sectors to facilitate innovation, promote adoption of technology and enhance competitiveness.

The initiative will also finance transformative projects at higher technology readiness levels, support acquisition of technologies which are critical or of high strategic importance, and facilitate setting up of a deep-tech fund of funds.

Vaishnaw said the governing board of Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), chaired by the prime minister, will provide overarching strategic direction to the RDI scheme.

The Executive Council of ANRF will approve the scheme's guidelines, and recommend second level fund managers and scope and type of projects in sunrise sectors.

An Empowered Group of Secretaries led by the Cabinet Secretary, will be responsible for approving scheme changes, sectors and types of projects as well as second-level fund managers besides reviewing the performance of the Scheme. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) will serve as the nodal department for implementation of the RDI scheme. (PTI)

## President Murmu inaugurates AYUSH University in Gorakhpur, endorses traditional healthcare and yoga

**GORAKHPUR (UP), July 1:** President Droupadi Murmu, who inaugurated the Mahayogi Guru Gorakhnath AYUSH University in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday, stressed the role of traditional Indian healthcare systems and lifestyle in the nation's progress.

She said that if the public remain healthy, the dream of making India developed by 2047 can be realised.

"Today, India's voice is being heard across the world. But to sustain that momentum, every citizen must contribute. We say health is wealth. If we remain healthy, our dream of making India a Viksit Bharat and a Vishwaguru can be realised by 2047," Murmu said, adding that the AYUSH University will be a key medium in that journey.

Endorsing the traditional healthcare systems, the President said that people must adopt the Ayurvedic and nature-based lifestyle alongside the modern medicine. "It is important to follow our age-old traditions to maintain health, even after taking con-



ventional medicine," she said.

Lauding the high-quality infrastructure at the newly inaugurated university built at a cost of Rs 268 crore in Pipri, Bhathat in Gorakhpur district, Murmu said that around 100 AYUSH colleges would benefit through affiliation with it.

She said the university will undertake education and research to align AYUSH practices with international standards and scientific credibility. "Special emphasis will be given on research to build trust and global acceptance of AYUSH systems," she said, thanking Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for his vision of

the first such university in the state. Acknowledging Prime Minister Narendra Modi's role in promoting yoga and endorsing its implementation in modern life, the President said, "To empower ourselves physically and mentally, we must practice yoga. If done regularly, yoga can reduce the need for eight hours of sleep to just three hours. Yoga may not be essential for those doing hard physical work, but it is a necessity for office-goers who do not perform physical activities."

Murmu expressed confidence that Mahayogi Guru Gorakhnath AYUSH University will become a confluence

of tradition and modernity, and play a decisive role in enhancing the scientific credibility and global popularity of Indian traditional medicine systems.

"Such institutions will help AYUSH systems gain international acceptance and strengthen India's soft power in the world," she added.

Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Minister of State for AYUSH and Food Safety (Independent Charge) Dayashankar Mishra Dayal, local MP Ravi Kishan Shukla, and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Adityanath called the occasion the beginning of a "new era in health and culture" in the state. In an X post earlier in the day, Adityanath said, "A new era of health and culture is beginning in Gorakhpur. In the sacred land of Mahayogi Guru Shri Gorakhnath ji, the inauguration of Uttar Pradesh's first AYUSH University in the august presence of President Droupadi Murmu marks the beginning of a new age in healthcare services." (PTI)

## 'Maulana' Tejashwi Yadav playing communal politics sensing defeat in upcoming Bihar polls: BJP

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** The BJP on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav over his remarks on the Waqf Act, calling him a "Maulana" and accusing him of polarising the society in Bihar on communal lines sensing opposition Mahagathabandhan's "imminent" defeat in the assembly polls due later this year.

Doubling down on Yadav's assertion that the opposition grand alliance in Bihar will consign the Waqf Act to the dustbin if voted to power, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia alleged that they want to gain the power to bring Sharia law for the empowerment of one particular community only, unlike the NDA which works for the progress of all sections of society.

"These 'namazwadi' do not want Babasaheb Ambedkar's Constitution. They do not respect the Constitution. They only want Sharia law... They want only one particular religion's empowerment," he told a press conference at the BJP headquarters here.

Accusing Yadav of indulging in "communal politics" with an eye on Muslim votes, Bhatia said, "Those talking about consigning Babasaheb's Constitution and law passed by Parliament to the dustbin, people of Bihar will ensure that their communal politics is consigned into the dustbin."

Yadav on Sunday claimed that the ruling NDA in Bihar was "on its way out," and the new government in the state led by the opposition alliance will "consign to the dustbin" the Waqf Act brought by the Narendra Modi government at the Centre.

The RJD leader was addressing a 'Save Waqf, Save Constitution' rally at Gandhi Maidan in Patna.

While lambasting Yadav for his comments, Bhatia also questioned the RJD leader's understanding of the Constitution and the judicial process.

"Tejashwi Yadav, the opposition leader and former Bihar deputy chief minister who failed in class ninth, was saying yesterday that he will throw the Waqf (Amendment) Act to the dustbin."

"I ask Tejashwi Yadav, a 'namazwadi', Maluna and messiah of those who do appeasement, have you ever read the Constitution? Have you ever fulfilled the basic spirit of the Constitution?" he said, asking, can any state government trash a law passed by Parliament.

Bhatia said the law passed by the Parliament is sub-judice in the Supreme Court and accused Yadav of disrespecting the apex court by making such remarks about the law.

He also accused the RJD leader of showing "anarchic tendency" and said the NDA will not let the "anti-Constitution, anti-democracy, anti-Ambedkar" opposition alliance succeed in pushing its "poisonous" agenda. "What do 'jungalwaad', jungle raj look like? Jungle raj looks exactly like Tejashwi Yadav and Lalu Prasad," Bhatia said.

"Under the first rule of jungle raj, the Constitution and law are torn apart. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Constitution is shredded. And, (that) is exactly what Tejashwi Yadav is doing while being in the opposition," he charged.

Bhatia said that people have seen jungle raj in Bihar during RJD rule in the state and rejected it, and would continue to do so as they want development in the state, not Sharia law. (PTI)

## Didn't discuss leadership change with MLAs, MPs in Karnataka: Surjewala

**BENGALURU, July 1:** AICC general secretary and party's Karnataka in-charge Ran-deep Singh Surjewala on Tuesday ruled out gathering any opinion on leadership change, remarks that came in the wake of internal bickering in the Congress' state unit over the matter.

Surjewala said that he has been meeting the MLAs and MPs to understand the work done by them in their respective constituencies.

"Some of you asked me are you taking opinion on leadership change. The answer I had given yesterday also and I am answering again today-- the answer is clearly 'no' in one word," Surjewala said in a press conference.

Flanked by Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who is also the Karnataka State Congress president, Surjewala said he had a meeting with the party MLAs, MPs, MLCs and party candidates who contested the assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

He also said that in the next seven to eight

days he would meet all the MLAs.

Explaining the reason, the Congress general secretary said, "We are meeting the MLAs and MPs. We are trying to understand from our MLAs what work they have done in the past two years in their respective constituencies. It's important to review their performance."

"If I'm an MLA, I'm obliged to ensure that my accountability to the people and the election promises of the Congress party are fulfilled in my constituency. So, I am asking my MLAs to give their report cards," he added.

The MLAs will also be asked about the status of the Block Congress Committee, Assembly Congress Committee and the number of party meetings they held from time to time, the Congress leader said. "We are also asking them (MLAs) what, if any, difficulty or aspiration he or she has. Every MLA has some aspirations or some more work to be done in the constituency," he explained. (PTI)

## Fadnavis announces SIT to probe coaching class sexual harassment case

**MUMBAI, July 1:** Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday announced a special investigation team (SIT), headed by a senior woman officer, to probe the alleged sexual harassment of a minor girl at a coaching class in Beed.

NCP legislator Chetan Tupte raised the issue through a point of information in the state assembly.

Tupte said two people had been arrested and remanded to a three-day police custody. He said the person protecting the accused needs to be unmasked. "Who is protecting the accused?" he asked.

Responding to Tupte's demand, Fadnavis stated that those trying to shield the accused will not be spared.

"The SIT will probe the case in a time-bound manner, and

the guilty will be punished," the chief minister said, adding that a woman officer will head the prob team.

Two male teachers of a coaching centre were booked by Shivajinagar police in Beed for allegedly molesting and sexually harassing a 17-year-old female student between July 30, 2024 and May 25, 2025.

As per the teen's complaint, the two teachers used to call her to the office of the coaching centre, force her to strip, and indulge in obscene acts with her.

The issue took a political turn, with former Maharashtra minister and NCP MLA Dhananjay Munde on Monday alleging that one of the two persons arrested in the case was linked to NCP (SP) MLA Sandip Kshirsagar. (PTI)

NO.MMB/MARKET TENDER-3/2025-26/131

Dated Mushalpur, the 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2025

### TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender affixing court fee stamp of Rs 8.25 (Rupees eight and twenty five paise) only are invited from intending individuals, co-operative societies, companies etc. for lease settlement of the following Markets under Mushalpur Municipal Board for a period of 12 (Twelve) months only for the year 2025-26 w.e.f. 01-07-2025 to 30-06-2026. The details are as follows:-

| SL. NO. | NAME OF MARKET            | SCHEDULE RATE 2025-2026  | EARNEST MONEY TO BE DEPOSITED                                      |
|---------|---------------------------|--|--|
| 2       | MUSHALPUR DAILY MARKET    | Rs. 28,097.00 (Rupees twenty eight thousand ninety seven only)       | 2% FOR GENERAL CATEGORY AND 1% FOR SC/ST CATEGORY OF SCHEDULE RATE |
| 3       | BATHOUPHURI WEEKLY MARKET | Rs. 21,060.00 (Rupees twenty one thousand sixty only)                | 2% FOR GENERAL CATEGORY AND 1% FOR SC/ST CATEGORY OF SCHEDULE RATE |
| 4       | BATHOUPHURI DAILY MARKET  | Rs. 24,840.00 (Rupees twenty four thousand eight hundred forty only) | 2% FOR GENERAL CATEGORY AND 1% FOR SC/ST CATEGORY OF SCHEDULE RATE |

Bidders should enclose Rs: 2000/- (Rupees Two Thousand only) money payment receipt as non-refundable tender form fee along with tender form and terms and conditions.

The detailed information in this regard may be collected from office of the Mushalpur Municipal Board during office hours between 18-06-2025 to 07-07-2025.

Sd/-  
Chairperson,  
Mushalpur Municipal Board,  
Mushalpur

Sd/-  
Executive Officer,  
Mushalpur Municipal Board  
Mushalpur

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/1308

No.BDB/Tender/46/2023-24/5411

Date 30/06/2025

### SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tender affixing a non-refundable Court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight & twenty five paise) only with a validity period of 180 days which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the printed of F-2 form are invited from the registered contractors of Class-I (A, B & C), Class-II & Class III category of Assam PWD (Roads & Building) and BTC according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the works under the Award of 6<sup>th</sup> ASFC-2<sup>nd</sup> Inst. For the year 2023-24 during 2025-26 BTR Kokrajhar as stated below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00PM on 23/7/25 and will be opened on the next date (as on 24/7/25) & place at 2.30 PM.

| SL. No. | Name of activity.                               | Estd. Value (in Lakhs) | Tender Value | EMD/Bid Security (in Rs)        | Cost of Tender paper (in Rs.) | Time of completion of Work |
|---------|---|------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1       | Const. of HPC at Suklat Veterinary Sub - Centre | 5.00L                  | 5,00,000/-   | (for 1% ST/SC) 2% (for General) | 150                           | 3 month                    |

Pre-bid Date & Time : 02/07/2025

Last Date & Time of Bid submission : 23/07/2025

Date & Time of Bid Opening : 24/07/2025

Detail N.I.T. may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender papers will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agents from 2/7/25 to 24/7/25 up to 1.30 PM. In the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of demand draft/bankers cheque from any Nationalized Bank, duly pledged in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC Kokrajhar payable at Kokrajhar.

Sd/-  
Block Development Officer,  
Block Dev. Block, Bhergaon

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/1304



## Manhunt launched after deadly ambush by banned outfit; four, including elderly woman, killed Search ops underway to arrest gunmen in Churachandpur ambush: Police



**IMPHAL, July 1:** The Manipur Police on Tuesday said security forces have launched search operations to arrest the gunmen who killed four people in an ambush in Churachandpur district a day ago. An FIR has been registered in

connection with the killing of the four people, and security has been tightened to prevent any escalation of violence, a police statement said.

"Operations have been launched by security forces to arrest the cul-

prits involved in the incident. An FIR has been registered in connection with the case at Churachandpur PS for further investigation," the police said.

At least four people, including a 72-year-old woman, were shot

dead in the ambush by gunmen in Churachandpur district on Monday.

The United Kuki National Army (UKNA), a banned militant outfit, claimed responsibility for the attack, which killed three members of another armed Kuki organisation that signed a peace agreement with the government in 2008.

"Security measures have been taken up to prevent any escalation of violence," the police statement said.

The ambush took place near Mongjang village, about five km from Churachandpur town, around 2 pm on Monday, when three of the victims were travelling in a car.

The three men died on the spot inside the car, while the elderly woman, who was passing the area, was hit by a stray bullet. She succumbed to her injuries on the way to the Churachandpur district hospital.

The car has been brought to the Churachandpur Police Station, an officer added. (PTI)

## Nagaland launches Phase 2 of school safety compliance course

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, July 1:** The Nagaland government, in partnership with the Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority (NSDMA), school education department and NagaEd, has officially launched Phase 2 of the Nagaland Disaster Management School Safety Policy (NDMSSP) Compliance Course, an official release said on Tuesday.

The course is a mandatory digital training programme aimed at equipping teachers across government and private schools with critical disaster preparedness and school safety skills.

The NSDMASSP Compliance Course was first launched on December 1, 2023, by chief minister Neiphiu Rio.

During Phase 1, the initiative witnessed 7,567 teacher registrations, with 3,193 educators already certified, highlighting the strong initial uptake and enthusiasm for the programme. As the programme advanced into Phase 2, the focus is on ensuring completion by all teachers and expanding the reach to new participants.

The Compliance Course is a comprehensive, self-paced digital



training programme that ensures teachers can gain crucial safety skills without disrupting their regular teaching duties.

Through interactive videos, quizzes, and real-life case studies, the course fosters a culture of preparedness and resilience in the state's educational institutions.

"Ensuring school safety is not just a mandate, it is a moral responsibility. Our collective effort in digitising safety training ensures that no teacher, child, and school

are left behind, regardless of location," said Johnny Ruangmei, joint CEO, NSDMA.

Co-founder of NagaEd Kevisato Sanyü said this initiative reaffirmed Nagaland's commitment to school safety and showcases the power of digital learning to reach every educator, even in the most remote areas.

NagaEd is an education company that develops innovative digital solutions to enhance teaching and learning experiences.

## Nagaland to have rainfall till Jul 8: NSDMA

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, July 1:** The Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority (NSDMA) said the state will experience rainfall in all the districts from July 1 till July 8.

In its weather updates on Tuesday, the NSDMA said the showers may be accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning in all the districts. Heavy rain is also predicted for majority of the districts starting from July 2 till July 6. Kiphire and Tuensang are likely to receive very heavy rainfall on July 2 and July 3.

The NSDMA stressed that it is vital to take necessary measures, including avoiding lightning strikes and high winds, during this period.

It also said road transport, communication and connectivity may also be affected in the coming days. Due to the risk of high precipitation in the hill sector, Nagaland's lowland and foothill districts, including Dimapur, Nuland, Chumoukedima, Bhandari, Baghty, Tizit, and Tuli may be vulnerable to inundation, waterlogging and flash floods. The NSDMA asked the public to exercise caution to avoid any eventualities during this period.

It also directed all the district disaster management authorities and other line departments to remain on high alert to safeguard lives and property during the monsoon season.

## Nagaland minister calls for continued central funding for cooperatives

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, July 1:** Nagaland PHE and cooperation minister N Jacob Zhimomi on Monday urged the Centre to continue funding National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)-sponsored projects like Integrated Cooperative Development Project, which is very popular among the farming community in the Northeast.

Attending the one-day national conference of cooperation ministers of all states/UTs held under the chairmanship of Union home and cooperation minister Amit Shah at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, Zhimomi said unlike other parts of the country, the cooperatives in Northeast are managerially and financially weak and rely on government support, especially on NCDC funding for taking up various business activities. Zhimomi lauded the cooperation ministry's key initiatives like the national cooperative database in streamlining the database and categorising cooperative societies across various parameters.

This, he said, has resulted in aiding the state government's attempt to cancel and weed out the non-functioning cooperatives.

Pointing out that one key challenge in computerisation of primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) is the inability of the officials and secretaries to effectively understand and adopt the digitisation process, he suggested for deploying data entry operators at each PACS for a minimum period of three years, which will



provide sufficient time for the PACS to build internal capacity and eventually employ operators at their own cost.

Zhimomi also raised some of the issues being faced by PACS in expansion of activities under initiatives such as Jan Aushadhi Kendra, Com-

mon Service Centres and Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhi Kendra.

Later in the day, Zhimomi planted some saplings at the Nagaland guest house in New Delhi as part of 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign.

## Tripura marks third successful kidney transplant: CM

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, July 1:** On the eve of National Doctors' Day, Tripura Chief Minister and Health Minister Manik Saha announced the successful completion of the state's third kidney transplant, marking another milestone in the state's advancing healthcare sector.

The transplant was carried out by a team of doctors at Agartala Government Medical College (AGMC) and GB Pant Hospital, in collaboration with experts from Shija Hospitals and Research Institute, Manipur. Expressing his pride, Saha said, "As we prepare to celebrate Doctors' Day tomorrow, I'm delighted to share that our doctors have successfully performed the state's third kidney transplant. Both the donor and recipient are currently stable."

Saha hailed the accomplishment as a testament to the medical team's skill and relentless commitment, adding that it reflects the growing capabilities of Tripura's healthcare system. Tripura entered the field of organ transplantation less than a year ago, performing its first kidney transplant at AGMC & GB Pant Hospital in July 2024.

## Licenses of 15 pharmacies cancelled in Nuland dist

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, July 1:** The State Drugs Control Administration (SDCA) cancelled the licenses of 15 pharmacies under Nuland district in Nagaland for not complying with regulatory requirements.

In an effort to regulate pharmacies in the state as per the Drugs and Cosmetic Act, 1940 and Rules 1945A, a joint team of the Nuland district administration, police and Dimapur chief medical officer's office, led by assistant drugs controller Martemjen Longkumer and drugs control officer Boto Sema, carried out an inspection of pharmacies in the

district on Tuesday.

As per the order issued by the State Drugs Control Administration, the licenses of the 15 pharmacies were cancelled during the joint enforcement drive for non-compliance with the show cause notices issued to them for violating Rule 65(2) of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules 1945 and Section 42 of the Pharmacy Act 1948.

Nagaland health and family welfare minister P Paiwang Konyak earlier directed the State Drug Control Administration to immediately shut down all pharmacies found operating without registration, licence or operated

by unqualified pharmacists.

In April, in a major three-day crackdown on pharmacies operating without licensed personnel, the licenses of 54 pharmacies in Mokochung town were cancelled by the authorities.

Drugs licenses of 24 retail pharmacies in Dimapur and Chumoukedima districts were cancelled in February due to non-compliance with Rule 65 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945.

The move followed repeated notices and extended deadlines to the pharmacies for employing registered pharmacists, which were not complied.

## Three militants arrested in Manipur

**IMPHAL, July 1:** Security forces arrested three militants of various proscribed outfits in Manipur for allegedly being involved in extortion activities in Imphal East and Thoubal districts, police said on Tuesday. One active cadre of the banned United National Liberation Front (P) was apprehended from the Khurai Kongpal area in Imphal East district on Monday, a senior officer said.

"The militant was accused of illegally settling issues through kangaroo courts in matters related to land disputes, crimes against women, and recovery of loan money in valley areas," he said.

An active cadre of the proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party (PWG) was also arrested from the Leirongthel Pitra area in Thoubal district on Sunday, the officer said.

The militant was allegedly involved in extortion activities, kidnapping and recruiting new cadres for the outfit, he said.

One active cadre of the outlawed Prepak (Pro) was apprehended from the Charangpat Mamang Leikai area in Thoubal district on Monday. He was also accused of being involved in extortion, threatening people and kidnapping in Thoubal.

Security forces have been conducting search operations in Manipur since ethnic violence broke out two years ago.

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

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

## Man sentenced for 25 years for sexually assaulting girl

**SHILLONG, July 1:** A court in Meghalaya's Shillong has sentenced a man to 25 years of rigorous imprisonment for sexually assaulting a girl five years ago, an official said on Tuesday.

Special POC SO Judge MK Lyngdoh on Monday pronounced Teiboklang Wahlang guilty of sexually assaulting the minor in 2020 and sentenced him to 25 years of rigorous imprisonment, they said.

The hearing of the case was last held on June 25.

The court also imposed a fine of ₹ 50,000 under Section 6 of the POC SO Act. In case of default in payment, he will have to serve an additional six months in prison, according to East Khasi Hills District SP Vivek Syiem.

According to the police, the convict had assaulted the girl in 2020 and was arrested and charged with sexual assault and criminal intimidation. He was booked under various sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and section 506 of the IPC. (PTI)

## Banned Meth tablets seized in Mizoram, Myanmar national held

**AIZAWL, July 1:** A Myanmar national has been arrested after banned Methamphetamine tablets worth over ₹ 6.67 crore were seized from his possession in east Mizoram's Champhai district, Assam Rifles said in a statement on Tuesday.

Acting on a tip-off, the paramilitary force, in collaboration with the Mizoram Police, set up a check post at Zokhawthar village in the district on June 29, and the team, while conducting a thorough search of a suspected individual, recovered 20,200 Methamphetamine tablets weighing 2.22 kg, it said. The seized tablets from the peddler are valued at over ₹ 6.67 crore, it said.

Methamphetamine tablets are a highly addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system, and these are banned in India.

The accused is a Myanmar national and the recovered Meth tablets were handed over to Mizoram Police at Zokhawthar for further investigation and legal proceedings, the statement added. (PTI)

## Man kills girlfriend by slitting her throat, held in Meghalaya

**MAIRANG (MEGHALAYA), July 1:** A 25-year-old man was arrested for allegedly killing his girlfriend by slitting her throat in front of her father in Meghalaya's Eastern West Khasi Hills district, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place on Monday evening when the woman, along with his father, went to a market in Mairang Pyndengmiong village to sell their farm produce, a senior officer said.

The deceased was identified as Phymailin Kharsyntiew, a resident of Mawkhap village.

According to the police officer, eyewitnesses said the accused approached them and got engaged in an argument with the woman.

"All of a sudden, the man slit the throat of her girlfriend. The woman was immediately taken to Mairang Civil Hospital, where doctors declared her dead," the officer said.

Locals managed to apprehend the accused as he tried to flee the spot, and he was subsequently handed over to the police.

The police have registered a case, and the investigation is underway, the officer said.

"The motive behind the murder seems to be a personal dispute, but all angles are being looked into," he said.

The woman's father said the man vented his anger by killing his daughter, as she did not want to continue the relationship.

The incident has triggered outrage in the district as locals demanded justice for the woman. (PTI)

**KAILASHAHAR (TRIPURA), July 1:** The Tripura government has asked all government school teachers across the state to share their locations after reaching their respective schools, an official said on Tuesday.

Around 25,000 teachers, who are engaged in 4,912 schools in the northeastern state, have been asked to share their locations from June, the official said.

The government had earlier introduced e-attendance for the teachers. Since June, the state government has asked them to share their locations along with the e-attendance, the official explained.

"E-attendance with shared location has been introduced in all the government schools. Earlier only the e-attendance system was implemented in schools. But one more feature - share location of teachers has been inserted from June," Unakoti district's education officer, Prasant Killikdar told PTI.

According to him, a teacher will have to click the "share location" option on the digital device only after entering school premises. Otherwise, it will not work.



"Once the process is done, the headmaster or headmistress will upload the presence of teachers of a particular school on the school management system, a digital platform. After doing this, the entire e-attendance with the location of teachers all over the state will

be accessible from the chief minister to the secretary and director on a real-time basis," Killikdar, who is the joint director of the department said.

Terming the introduction of e-attendance along with sharing location a good develop-

ment to ensure the presence of teachers in their respective schools, he said the system for recording the departure time of the teachers has not been implemented yet.

For the students, the class teachers are uploading the attendance during school days, he said.

Killikdar said the department has already constituted two inter-district committees for each district for conducting surprise visits to the schools.

"The teams conduct surprise visits to schools on a regular interval and submit their reports to the district education officers for forwarding them to the Director for taking necessary steps to ensure quality education," he said.

All these initiatives have been taken to ensure transparency in teachers' attendance in schools for better results, he said.

Due to the constant efforts, the performance of the state government's Vidyajyoti (CBSE) schools not only in Unakoti district but also across the state has improved this year compared to 2024, he added. (PTI)





## I'm not a horror film aficionado: Kajol on latest movie 'Maa'

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** (PTI) Actor Kajol says she isn't a fan of horror films and will be watching "Maa", her own entry in the genre, solely for professional reasons. "Maa", directed by Vishal Furia, is the first horror project of Kajol's career of over 30 years. The movie shares the same universe with the 2023 movie "Shaitaan", which featured her actor-husband Ajay Devgn.

"I don't watch horror films. I have watched a lot of big films. I'm not a horror film aficionado at all. 'I haven't watched 'Maa' yet. Only in parts with lots of green screens behind me so that I don't get scared, and no background music, or anything like that. (But) I really have to watch it, for professional reasons," the 50-year-old actor told PTI in an interview here.

As an actor, Kajol had initially assumed working on a horror film would be no different from any other genre.

"It was a very interesting experience, actually, it was not something that I had done before. I always assumed working on the horror genre was the same as working in any other film, and I was completely wrong.

"Horror has a pitch when you are acting, and the pitch is completely different from regular movies. It's not a rom-com, it's not a love story, or it's not a drama. Vishal and I used to have long conversations where we were like, 'no, this is not the pitch. You have to keep it at this pitch.' And that was really emotionally draining... to keep it at that pitch constantly," she added.

"Maa" features Kajol as Ambika, a woman leading a happy life with her husband, and daughter Shweta.

When the mother-daughter

pair travel to Chandrapur in West Bengal to sell the ancestral bungalow, they confront the eerie traditions and tightly held secrets of the village and are drawn into a chilling web of fear, superstition, and something even darker, according to the official plot-line.

Kajol said the movie was initially conceptualised as a tight thriller but during the development process, the makers realised the need to add a horror element to it.

"We didn't start out to do a horror film... but by the time the script came out, we realised that the characters and situations had become so big, that we needed a bigger platform to do justice to them, and to climax for them.

"As it was, the audience would not have been satisfied if we had come out with a very simplistic ending... it just didn't leave you that satisfied. So, that's why we had to attach the horror tag to give it that kind of staging," she said. Kajol said her character of Ambika deals with the "basic notion of the parent", which is to protect her child. "...and she wants to do everything that she can to protect her child from physical harm," she said.

At the end, the film turned out to be a learning experience for the actor.

"From doing action, to working with VFX, all of it, and even the dramatic scenes... I love the music of the film, so it all came together really nicely," she said.

Although Kajol has done a significant number of projects on OTT, including legal drama series "The Trial: Pyaar Kaanoon Dhokha" and suspense thriller "Do Patti", the actor said nothing beats the charm of watching movies in theatres.

"Cinemas still have magic, somewhere down the line... You just don't have that same vibe or feel when you're watching a movie at home. It's something that only a cinema theatre can give you," she said.

"Maa" also stars Indraneil Sengupta, Kherin Sharma and Ronit Roy. Presented by Jio Studios and Devgn Films, the film is produced by Jyoti Deshpande and co-produced by Kumar Mangat Pathak. (PTI)

## AKSHAY KUMAR-STARRER 'HOUSEFULL 5' EARNs OVER ₹ 300 CRORE AT BOX OFFICE



**NEW DELHI, July 1:** "Housefull 5", starring Akshay Kumar, Nana Patekar and Jacqueline Fernandez among others, has crossed ₹ 300 crore with its worldwide box office collection. Produced under Sajid Nadiadwala's production banner Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, the film has been directed by Tarun Mansukhani of "Dostana" fame. It released in theatres worldwide on June 6 in two parts "Housefull 5A" and "Housefull 5B".

While both versions have the same beginnings, the last 20 minutes of climax differ.

The total domestic box office collection of the film has crossed ₹ 200 crore with worldwide gross box office collection reaching over ₹ 300 crore, according to a press note.

"Housefull 5" is the fifth installment of the "Housefull" franchise, which began in 2010. Following, the films released in 2012, 2016, and 2019 respectively.

The film also stars Nargis Fakhri, Soundarya Sharma, Jackie Shroff, Riteish Deshmukh, Fardeen Khan, Sanjay Dutt and Punjabi actor Sonam Bajwa, who made her Bollywood debut with it. (PTI)

## Prime Video announces fourth and final season of 'Four More Shots Please!'

**MUMBAI, July 1:** Streaming service Prime Video on Tuesday announced the fourth and final of its International Emmy-nominated series "Four More Shots Please!".

The quartet of actors Sayani Gupta, Kirti Kulhari, Bani J and Maanvi Gargroo are returning for the fourth chapter, which will premiere soon on Prime Video, a press release said.

Created by Rangita Pritish Nandy and Ishita Pritish Nandy, the fourth season promises a "joyful celebration of identity, independence and unbreakable friendship".

"This time, Damini, Anjana, Siddhi and Umang are going to discover that they can be their own number one because joy is not a privilege, it's a way of life," Prime

According to the makers, the finale will also introduce new cast members and feature the show's signature "girls trips," adding fresh chemistry and chaos to the mix. The show also features Lisa Ray, Prateik Smita Patil, Rajeev Siddhartha, Ankur Rathee and Milind Soman.

Written by Devika Bhagat with dialogues by Ishita Moitra, the final season is directed by Arunima Sharma and Neha Parti Matiyani.

"Four More Shots Please!" is produced by Pritish Nandy Communications. (PTI)



Video said in a statement.

## Jury returns to deliberate for a second day at Sean 'Diddy' Combs sex trafficking trial

**NEW YORK, July 1:** A jury returns to deliberate for a second day Tuesday at the sex trafficking trial of music mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs.

On Monday, jurors deliberated over five hours without reaching a verdict after receiving instructions on the law from the trial judge, Arun Subramanian.

They are deciding whether prosecutors have proven racketeering conspiracy and sex trafficking charges during a trial that began in early May.

Prosecutors say Combs for two decades used his fame, fortune and a roster of employees and associates

to help him coerce and force two different girlfriends to repeatedly perform sexually with male sex workers for days at a time while he watched and sometimes filmed the drug-fueled events.

Defense lawyers say prosecutors are unjustly basing federal crimes on what Combs did in the bedroom with his girlfriends as they participated in the swinger lifestyle and on acts of domestic violence involving their client.

Combs, 55, could face 15 years in prison to life behind bars if he is convicted of all charges.

After pleading not guilty, Combs chose not to testify as his lawyers

built their arguments for acquittal mostly through lengthy cross examinations of dozens of witnesses called by prosecutors, including some of Combs' former employees who took the witness stand reluctantly only after being granted immunity.

When jurors first left the room to begin deliberating on Monday, Combs sat for a while slumped in his chair at the defense table before standing and turning toward three rows of spectators packed with his family and friends.

Those supporters held hands and lowered their heads in prayer, as did Combs, who was several feet from

them in the well of the courtroom. After they finished, they together applauded, and so did Combs, still clapping as he turned back toward the front of the room.

Combs also showed off two books he's reading: "The Power of Positive Thinking" by Norman Vincent Peale and "The Happiness Advantage" by Shawn Achor.

Barely an hour into deliberations, the jury foreperson sent a note to the judge, complaining that there was one juror "who we are concerned cannot follow your Honour's instructions. May I please speak with your Honour or may you please interview him?" (AP)

## It was meant to happen: Shanaya Kapoor on taking 3 years to make her acting debut in Bollywood

**MUMBAI, July 1:** Newcomer Shanaya Kapoor is excited to make her acting debut with "Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan", a moment that was delayed by three years but she doesn't mind the wait.

Shanaya, daughter of actor Sanjay Kapoor and Maheep Kapoor, was earlier set to debut with producer Karan Johar's "Bedhadak", a project that was announced in March 2022 but it was later shelved. She is now marking the start of her acting career with "Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan", a musical romance in which she is paired opposite Vikrant Massey.

"It's a surreal feeling, and it's overwhelming when you see yourself on YouTube for now. I'm seeing myself and I'm putting my music videos on and I'm constantly seeing how it's looking, what the audience has been saying, and it's an overwhelming feeling.

"It's all come together, and I'm happy with how the journey has been. If it's taken time, if it has had its ups and downs... I think it was all meant to hap-

pen for me to be here today," Shanaya told PTI in an interview.

The 25-year-old is aware of the baggage and scrutiny that comes with being a star kid and said she takes everything in her stride.

"I was fully aware of what I was getting myself into and what I was choosing to do as a profession. There are preconceived notions, there is criticism, a sense of pressure but I take it positively.

"I look at it as feedback. There are certain things that you can keep aside when it comes to the way I dress, or look, or how my body is; those are things I can filter out," she added.

What she is looking forward to is the audience response to her performance in the movie.

"I owe it to the audience to know what they have to say, what their opinion is, or what they think of me, my work, the little bit that I have put out there, like endorsements. I'm looking for feedback so I can keep working on it. I take the criti-

cism in a very constructive way."

Shanaya essays the role of Saba, a visually impaired girl, in the movie, which is directed by Santosh Singh and written by Mansi Bagla and Niranjan Iyengar.

"I'm grateful I got to play a complex and beautiful character like Saba and to be part of an amazing film with Vikrant," she said.

As part of the preparation for the role, Shanaya revealed that she visited a blind school, an experience that turned out to be quite enriching for her.

"There were certain things that you feel, like you value yourself, you're grateful for what you have. Sometimes we wake up and we're constantly chasing the next thing, the next project or the next meeting.

"I'm constantly wanting the next thing, especially with my career and work. I don't sit back, and I don't realise what I have, which is that I'm with my parents and brother. I'm healthy, I'm getting the opportunity to do this, so you

feel overwhelmed," she said.

As "Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan" gears up for its release on July 11, Shanaya said the anticipation is similar to waiting for exam results.

"I'm waiting for that, and I'm hoping, praying, and having my fingers crossed that the audience accepts me. I've to earn their respect through my hard work, my honest choices, no matter where you come from, whatever the opportunities are, they have to accept you as an actor, they have to believe that you're this character," she added.

Post "Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan", the actor has an exciting lineup of films -- survival thriller "Tu Yaa Main" with Adarsh Gourav, "Vrushabha" with Malayalam superstar Mohanlal, and "Student of the Year" web series.

"Aankhon ki Gustaakhiyan" is presented by Zee Studios and Mini Films and produced by Mansi Bagla and Varun Bagla. (PTI)



# TABLE-TOPPERS INDIA READY TO TRY 'A FEW THINGS' IN CLASH AGAINST IRAQ

**CHIANG MAI (THAILAND), July 1:** The Indian football team will be open to experimentation when it clashes with a comparatively easy rival Iraq in a Group B clash of the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers, here on Wednesday.

Winger Soumya Guguloth, who suffered a nasal bone fracture during the match against Timor-Leste, has been ruled out of the contest.

India currently sit atop the table with six points and a goal difference of +17 after wins against Mongolia (13-0) and Timor-Leste (4-0).

Thailand are in second place, also with six points but with a goal difference of +11.

Iraq have already played three games and are on four points. They must defeat India to have any chance of staying alive on the road to Australia.

While it has turned into a race between India and Thailand to increase their goal difference before they meet on the final day (July 5), Blue Tigresses coach Crispin Chettri affirmed that earning three points are the bigger priority, and the focus is only on the game against Iraq for now.

"Thailand is the last match, but for now, our full focus is on Iraq. We shouldn't worry about how many goals Thailand or we have scored, or will score. The priority is to approach the Iraq match with a positive mindset and go for the win," said Chettri.

After defeating Timor-Leste on Sunday, Chettri and his coaching staff stayed at the stadium to watch Iraq suffer a 0-7 drubbing at the hands of the hosts.

It has been a rollercoaster ride



for the 173rd-ranked West Asians, who were held goalless by Timor-Leste in the first game, before defeating Mongolia 5-2 to earn their first-ever victory on the international stage.

Giving his opinion on the Iraq side coached by their former men's international Abdul-Wahab Abu Al-Hail and ranked 103 places below India, Chettri said,

"For me, Iraq are not as weak as people might think. They're a good side, but they've been playing back-to-back matches, so we may have an advantage in terms

of recovery."

"Overall, I don't see a big difference between Iraq and Timor-Leste. I feel Timor-Leste were more organised. So, I think we'll get more opportunities to play our game against Iraq. It should be a good match for us to try a few new things as well."

With only two days to prepare after the match against Timor-Leste, the Blue Tigresses utilised their break fruitfully with recovery in the pool and a gym session on Monday morning, followed by a full training session on Tuesday

morning.

"We worked on the areas where we fell short in the matches against both Timor-Leste and Mongolia. We're now giving players specific responsibilities, whether it's in attack or in 1v1 defending. That was the main focus of the preparation," said Chettri.

After only the first two games, Chettri has already used 22 players, including all outfielders, from the 23-member squad.

The Indian coach expressed he might look to continue with the rotation trend in the Iraq game

and distribute valuable minutes to younger and newer players, while also hoping to keep everyone fresh for the last game.

"More or less, all players have got chances. Of course, we cannot take the Iraq match lightly. There may be some rotation, but key players will still get minutes."

"Giving game time to upcoming players is important at such a stage, but in crucial matches, we'll have to stick to a core group. If we manage to score early, then we may be able to rotate more freely," said Chettri. (PTI)

## Alcaraz needs 5 sets to beat Fabio Fognini in the 1st round

**LONDON, July 1:** Carlos Alcaraz, locked in a five-set struggle at Centre Court, looked toward his coach Monday and shouted something about how Fabio Fognini — 38 years old, retiring after this season, winless in 2025 — looked as if he could keep playing until he's 50.

"I don't know why it's his last Wimbledon," Alcaraz said later, "because the level he has shown, he can still play three or four more years. Unbelievable."

The two-time defending champion at the All England Club needed to go through more than 4 1/2 hours of back-and-forth shifts against the much-older and much-less-accomplished Fognini before emerging with a 7-5, 6-7 (5), 7-5, 2-6, 6-1 victory in the first round.

It wasn't supposed to be that tough. "Didn't expect to play five sets against him," Fognini said. "I had my chance."

Consider, too, that Fognini has never been past the third round at the All England Club in 15 appearances and reached the quarterfinals at any major tournament just once — way back at the 2011 French Open. He entered Monday ranked 138th and 0-6 this year.

Oh, and then there's this: Only twice has the reigning men's champion at Wimbledon been beaten in the first round the following year. Lleyton Hewitt in 2003 and Manuel Santana in 1967.

There were times Monday when Alcaraz appeared to be something less than his best, far from the form he displayed during his epic five-set, 5 1/2-hour comeback victory over No. 1 Jannik Sinner for the championship at Roland-Garros.

Alcaraz double-faulted nine times. He faced a hard-to-believe 21 break points. He made more unforced errors, 62, than winners, 52. He chalked some of that up to jitters.

"It doesn't matter the winning streak that I have right now, that I've been playing great on grass, that I've been preparing really well," said Alcaraz, who beat Novak Djokovic in the 2023 and 2024 finals. "Wimbledon is different. I could feel today that I was really nervous at the beginning."

Next for Alcaraz will be a match Wednesday against Oliver Tarvet, a 21-year-old British qualifier who plays college tennis at the University of San Diego and is ranked 733rd.

Still, Alcaraz said: "I have to improve in the next round."

Fognini — whose wife, 2015 U.S. Open champion Flavia Pennetta, held one of their children in the stands — is a self-described hot-head and is known for mid-match flareups, including at Wimbledon, where he was fined \$3,000 in 2019 for saying during a match that he wished "a bomb would explode at the club" and a then-record \$27,500 in 2014 for a series of outbursts. He was put on a two-year probation by the Grand Slam Board in 2017 after insulting a female chair umpire at the U.S. Open and getting kicked out of that tournament. Such behavior wasn't displayed Monday. And when Alcaraz pushed a forehand long to cede the fourth set, Fognini nodded toward his guest box, where a member of his entourage stood to snap a photo with a cellphone. Things were picture-perfect for Fognini at that moment. (AP)

## After Club WC heatwave in US, soccer players' union warns of higher risk at next World Cups

**GENEVA, July 1:** Extreme heat faced by soccer players at the Club World Cup in the United States will likely be an even bigger problem at the next two men's World Cups, their global union FIFPRO warned on Monday.

The monthlong club event is being played in a heatwave in 11 American cities and union officials praised FIFA for helping to better protect players with cooling measures at games.

Still, FIFA did not take FIFPRO's pre-tournament advice to look at postponing kickoff times by several hours on the hottest days — a move that would be even more complicated at a World Cup with more commercial pressures in play and more games scheduled each day.

Six of the 16 World Cup host cities next year in the U.S., Canada and Mexico are judged by

FIFPRO as "extremely high risk" for heat stress injury to players among the 48 teams. The highest risk cities are Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, Kansas, Miami and Monterrey though some have indoor, air-conditioned stadiums.

"We are anticipating that this problem is going to be even more crucial for the coming years," FIFPRO medical director Vincent Goutteborge told reporters in a briefing call.

The 2030 World Cup will be co-hosted in June and July by Spain, Portugal and Morocco where fewer stadiums are enclosed and cooled, and temperatures in some cities on Monday were at or above 100 degrees F (38 C). By 2030 the hot weather prospects for the tournament there "is even perhaps worse than what we have been facing so far," Goutteborge cautioned.



FIFPRO said extra heat mitigation measures could include 20-minute halftime breaks instead of 15 to help lower players' core temperatures, and cooling breaks in play every 15 minutes. Currently, breaks are taken in the 30th minute of each half.

FIFA was approached for comment.

FIFA has reacted during the Club World Cup to lower the threshold for insisting on cooling or water breaks, plus placing more water and towels around the edge of the field.

"We are partially happy because FIFA have been quite responsive once the tournament was underway," FIFPRO CEO-like general secretary Alex Phillips said.

Better shading benches for the substitutes and more hydration breaks are also preferred by the union, which has national affiliates representing players in about 70 countries. "All these practical things is something that we must do better," said Alexander Bielefeld, FIFPRO strategy director, though adding "at some point that probably won't be enough." (AP)

## HI announces 20-member India A men's squad for Europe tour

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** Hockey India on Tuesday announced a 20-member Indian men's A squad for an exposure tour to Europe which will feature eight matches from July 8-20.

In a statement issued here, HI said the tour is "aimed at providing valuable international exposure to a mix of emerging and experienced players". The India A team will play two matches against France, Ireland and the Netherlands along with one game each against England and Belgium. "These high-intensity games are expected to test the depth and readiness of India's talent pool as the national setup looks to build a strong pipeline for the senior team," HI said. The India A team will be led by Sanjay and Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh will be his deputy. Goalkeeper Ankit Malik, de-



fender Sunil Jojo, and forward Sudeep Chirmako will be on standbys. Indian national team's assistant coach Shivendra Singh will be the coach of the 'A' side, which will take on Ireland in their first match on July 8. Shivendra said, "This tour is an important platform for our players to experience the tempo, structure, and intensity of European hockey."

"We have selected a squad that balances potential and experience, and I am confident this tour will be immensely beneficial in grooming the next batch of international players for India."

The Squad: Goalkeepers: Pawan, Mohit Honnenahalli Shashikumar.

Defenders: Pratap Lakra, Varun Kumar, Amandeep Lakra, Parmod, Sanjay (c).

Midfielders: Poovanna Chandura Bobby, Mohammed Raheel Moussem, Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh (vc), Vishnukant Singh, Pardeep Singh, Rajinder Singh.

Forwards: Angadbir Singh, Bobby Singh Dhami, Maninder Singh, Venkatesh Kenche, Aditya Arjun Lathe, Selvam Karthi, Uttam Singh.

Standbys: Ankit Malik (goalkeeper), Sunil Jojo (defender), Sudeep Chirmako (forward). (PTI)

## Putellas ready to lead Spain at Euro 2025 after injury sidelined her in 2022

**MADRID, July 1:** Alexia Putellas doesn't have fond memories of the last Women's European Championship, when she tore a knee ligament on the eve of the tournament in England three years ago.

Things are different now as Spain prepares for its campaign at Euro 2025 in Switzerland, with Putellas saying she's better than ever and ready to try to lead Spain to its first title in the competition.

"I'm not going to lie, it's a competition that I had in my sights after the injury I suffered just before the start of the last Euro," she said.

"I've been preparing for this moment for a long time and I want to enjoy it." The two-time world player of the year was coming off one of her most impressive seasons when she injured her left knee during a practice session just days before Spain's opener at Euro 2022. It kept her out of action for nearly a year and dealt a blow to Spain's chances in the tournament, where it was ousted by England in the quarter-finals.

Putellas says she has improved a lot since then, even though other Spanish players such as Aitana Bonmati — a two-time Ballon d'Or winner herself — have emerged as top stars. "Without a doubt I'm a better Alexia," she said. "I know myself a lot better, I know my qualities, I know what I have been working on. In the end, all the suffering makes you evolve as a person and as an athlete. I've learned to manage the bad moments a lot better, as well as the good moments."

Putellas has had another out-

standing season and is again among the favorites for the world player of the year award. She thrived as Barcelona won the domestic treble and reached another Champions League final. "The individual award is not something too important for me," the 31-year-old Putellas said. "But it would show that you've done something good and, from where I'm coming from — from the lowest of the lowest after the injury — it would give some value to the effort that it was put into the recovery. We'll see, but the most important thing is to win the Euro." Bonmati won the last two world player of the year awards, and she is now the one enduring an ordeal as after falling ill with viral meningitis just a few days before Spain traveled to Switzerland for the tournament. Bonmati was released from the hospital on Sunday to rejoin the national squad, but it still wasn't clear how much she would participate. Spain will open its tournament Thursday against Portugal. It will also face Belgium and Italy in Group B.

The nation's best result in the European tournament was a semi-finals appearance in 1997. Spain established itself as one of the powerhouses in women's soccer by winning the World Cup in 2023 and the inaugural Women's Nations League in 2024. It then just missed out on a medal at the Paris Olympics, when it lost to Brazil in the semifinals and to Germany in the bronze-medal match. "It's never easy to win a Euro," Putellas said. (AP)

## Potgieter wins a playoff in Detroit for first PGA Tour win; Harrington wins another Senior Open

**DETROIT, July 1:** Aldrich Potgieter made an 18-foot birdie putt on the fifth playoff hole, outlasting Max Greyserman to win the Rocket Classic on Sunday for his first PGA Tour title.

The 20-year-old from South Africa is the youngest player on the tour and its biggest hitter. He became the ninth player to win for the first time this season.

Chris Kirk, who closed with a 5-under 67, missed a 9-foot putt for the win on the first playoff hole and was eliminated on the second extra hole when he missed a 4-foot par putt.

Greyserman missed a 12-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole in regulation, missing his chance to win and closing with a 67. Potgieter, who started with a 22-shot lead, shot 69 to join Kirk at two-under 266. Michael Thorbjornsen (67) and Jake Knapp (68) finished a stroke out of the playoff.

USGA and PGA Tour ChampionsCOLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — Padraig Harrington came out on top of a major championship that felt more like match play, closing his round with seven straight pars at the U.S. Senior Open for a 3-under 67 to beat Stewart Cink by one shot.

Playing alongside Cink for the fourth straight day, Harrington finished at 11-under 269 on the tricky, heavily sloping Broadmoor. The Irishman sealed his match by hitting his approach to 8 feet on No. 18, putting pressure on Cink, who trailed by one but sat 30 yards in front of him on the fairway.

Cink's approach landed on the precipice of a ledge, but spun back



to 35 feet away to set up a two-putt. Harrington took two putts for the win, his second U.S. Senior Open title in four years that gets him in the U.S. Open next year at Shinnecock Hills.

LIV Golf League CARROLLTON, Texas (AP) — Patrick Reed lost the lead with a 3-over 75 and then atoned for it by making a 15-foot birdie putt on the first hole of a four-man playoff to win LIV Golf Dallas, his first title since joining the Saudi-funded league in 2022. Reed, who started the final round with a three-shot lead, fell behind late in the day at Maridoe Golf Club until Jinichiro Kozuma made bogey on the 18th hole and then made par on his final hole at No. 1 for a 68. That got him into a playoff with Reed, Louis Oosthuizen (68) and Paul Casey (72).

On the first extra hole, Oosthuizen drove into the water and Casey took four shots to reach the green on the par-4 18th. Kozuma

missed his 25-foot birdie try, setting the stage for Reed.

Jon Rahm finished out of the top 10 for the first time in LIV, while Sergio Garcia claimed the one LIV spot for the British Open.

LPGA Tour MIDLAND, Mich. (AP) — Jin Hee Im poured in an 8-foot birdie putt on the first playoff hole to team with fellow South Korean SoMi Lee to win the Dow Championship, denying Lexi Thompson her first LPGA title in six years.

Thompson's partner, Megan Khang, had a chance to extend the playoff, but she missed a 5-foot birdie putt that was on the low side of the hole from the start.

The final round was fourballs, but switched to foursomes for the playoff.

Thompson made an 8-foot birdie putt on the par-3 18th hole for the American duo to finish with a 10-under 60 in fourballs. They were the first to post at 20-

under 260. Lee made a 10-foot birdie putt to tie for the lead on the 17th. They shot 62.

European Tour TUSCANY, Italy (AP) — Adrien Saddier claimed his first European tour title in his 200th start with a back-nine charge in the Italian Open, closing with a 4-under 66 for a two-shot victory over Martin Couvra. Couvra, the 54-hole leader, closed with a 69 and appeared headed for victory until Saddier had five birdies over the final seven holes at the Argentario Golf Club on the Tuscan coast.

Saddier and Couvra earned places in the British Open field at Royal Portrush in Northern Ireland next month.

Calum Hill of Scotland and Dan Bradbury of England finished tied for third, four strokes behind.

Korn Ferry TourSPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — Austin Smotherman holed out for eagle to take the lead for the first time and closed with an 8-under 63 for a one-shot victory over Alvaro Ortiz in the Memorial Health Championship.

It was the second Korn Ferry Tour victory this year for Smotherman, who moved to No. 1 on the points list and is virtually certain of returning to the PGA Tour next year.

Ortiz began had a four-shot lead going into the final round and his lead was down to one when he bogeyed the 11th hole. Smotherman followed by holing out for eagle on the 408-yard 12th hole. Both player made birdie on the par 5s coming in and Smotherman held on for the win. (AP)

## Nathan Lyon wants to win Test series in India before retirement

**ST (GRENADA), July 1:** Australian spin great Nathan Lyon has no immediate plans of Test retirement as he yearns for one final away series win in India before calling time on his illustrious career.

The 37-year-old, who is the most successful off-spinner for Australia with 556 wickets in 138 Tests, has taken 130 wickets against India in 32 Tests (both home and away) but has never been a part of an away series win in India. In fact, Australia have not beaten India in their backyard since their "final frontier" triumph in 2004-05.

"I've always said I want to win away in India. I want to win away in England," Lyon was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au. "We've got that opportunity in a couple of years' time, but we've also got to take it Test by Test and make sure that we're doing everything here in West Indies right."

"Then we've got a massive summer at home with the Ashes. But another World Test Championship final would be on my cards for sure," he added.

But Lyon has relinquished his duties in the Australian team as it's song-master, passing on the baton to wicketkeeper-batter Alex Carey, who fulfilled the duties during the dressing room celebrations after their 159-run win over the West Indies in the first Test. (PTI)



# India face selection conundrum in bid for comeback against England

**BIRMINGHAM, July 1:** India will need to shed their conservative selection approach and give themselves the best chance to take 20 wickets on what is expected to be another batting surface in the second Test against England, beginning here on Wednesday.

By the team management's own admission, India missed a specialist bowler at Leeds, Kuldeep Yadav to be specific, as England comfortably chased down a record 371 on day five of a game that the visitors should have won.

In the words of assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate, India are grappling to find a team combination that doesn't compromise on batting depth and yet has the bowlers to take 20 wickets.

"In terms of managing the strategy there, we're looking at each bowler individually, feeling what we feel they can get wickets-wise. And then it's just trying to balance up and trying to calculate as best you can what the best chance of getting into the Test match.

"But you need 20 wickets. So the attacking party is obviously finding someone who can get wickets as well. And we are grappling with that. We don't stop talking about that. We're trying to figure it out," Doeschate admitted.

The weather has been rather hot in Birmingham and the surface, bound by a decent covering of grass, is dry under-

neath. On this very ground three years ago, England had gunned down a daunting 378 with ridiculous ease to draw the series. Of late, the same 22 yards have offered plenty of runs to the batters in county cricket.

The spinners will eventually come into the game and India need to decide whether they want someone like Washington Sundar who can assist Ravindra Jadeja or get Kuldeep, who is a much better wicket-taking option. What is confirmed is that India will go in with two spinners.

Shardul Thakur was the fast bowling all-rounder at Leeds but there is a strong possibility that batting all-rounder Nitish Reddy starts on Wednesday.

Thakur did not have the best of outings but dropping him after one opportunity would be borderline harsh on him.

The question mark ahead of the game is over Jasprit Bumrah's availability. If he doesn't play the second of his decided quota of three Tests, the pace line-up is expected to be Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep and Prasidh Krishna.

With Bumrah hard to handle at the other end, the pacers did not have the required consistency in their lengths to test England batters. They would be wiser after that experience and if Bumrah doesn't play, will have a lot to prove.

Jadeja, who could not get much out of a turning pitch on day five at Headingley, would be eager to make an impact too.



India's catching would have to be a lot better after the horror show at Leeds, costing Yashasvi Jaiswal his spot in the slip cordon.

The batting department has a settled look though India would be desperate to add runs late in the innings after two lower-order collapses that cost them dearly.

The likes of K L Rahul, Jaiswal, Rishabh Pant and captain Shubman Gill

would be aiming to build on the gains made in the series opener.

Rookie Sai Sudharsan and comeback man Karun Nair are certain to get another opportunity after an underwhelming start to the series.

England, on the other hand, seem to have added a method to their madness with a refined 'Bazball' approach that gives due respect to the conditions and the bowler.

Expected to make a comeback, Jofra Archer has pulled out of the match due to a family emergency but the Chris Woakes-led pace attack would be high on confidence, having cleaned up India's tail twice and allowing the hosts to make a comeback in the contest.

Being a home hero, Woakes would be expected to provide the breakthroughs with the new ball after low returns in Leeds. Josh Tongue would be sniffing blood against India's fragile lower-order.

Brydon Carse also improved as the game progressed while skipper Ben Stokes, by far, got the most out of the conditions.

Sporting wickets have also aided England's aggressive style of batting and that trend is set to continue.

## Squads:

**England:** Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Ben Stokes (captain), Jamie Smith (WK), Chris Woakes, Brydon Carse, Josh Tongue, Shoaib Bashir.

**India:** Shubman Gill (captain), Rishabh Pant (VC & WK), Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Sai Sudharsan, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Karun Nair, Nitish Reddy, Ravindra Jadeja, Dhruv Jurel (WK), Washington Sundar, Shardul Thakur, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd. Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Akash Deep, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav. (PTI)

## Stokes dismisses Bumrah factor, declares himself massive fan of Pant

**BIRMINGHAM, July 1:** England captain Ben Stokes on Tuesday dismissed the chatter surrounding Jasprit Bumrah's availability for only three Tests out of five as "India's problem" and said he is expecting the "passionate" visitors to fight hard in the second Test irrespective of the team composition.

Bumrah was by far the best Indian bowler on show at Leeds, where the Shubman Gill-led side lost from a position of strength. The likes of Prasidh Krishna, Mohammed Siraj and Shardul Thakur were not consistent enough with their lengths to test the England batters. India have not decided which three Tests Bumrah will be a part of over the course of the English summer. He has played one, leaving him to feature in two out of the next four games.

However, Stokes and Co are not bothered about Bumrah's availability and are focusing on extending their series lead.

"That's India's problem. They will deal with it. I am captain of England," that is how Stokes handled the query on Bumrah.

Having said that, Stokes gave due respect to the opposition.

"Good team. They always fight hard, come hard. Very passionate team," he said when asked about the trailing Indian team.

"It's pretty clear that there's always pressure on shoulders of international sportsmen, but playing for India, especially in cricket, there's probably a bit more on any other nation. So, yeah, a very proud nation. Don't take anything for granted from last week. We start at 0-0 again."

England had chased down 371 on day five at Leeds to complete their second highest successful chase in Test cricket. The highest chase, 378, too came against India here at Edgbaston three years ago.

Stokes and Pant had a moment at Headingley as the latter charged down the ground against the England captain early in his innings. Stokes reacted to Pant's play with a hearty laugh.

What was all that about?

"Even though he's in opposition, I absolutely love watching Rishabh play cricket. I love the way he takes it on in all formats of the game. He's got a bit of stickiness in his time, but that type of talent, when you let that type of talent be free, that's what can happen in the last week," said Stokes. Pant became the first Indian wicket-keeper batter to smash two hundreds in a Test match, drawing praise from the world cricket fraternity.

"Credit to him, two 100s in the game. We know we're going to get our chances with the way that Rishabh plays. So, yeah, it's one of them. On a different day, it could have looked a little bit different. But, yeah, a very dangerous player," said Stokes.

The 34-year-old Stokes was the best England pacer on show at Leeds despite not playing a lot of cricket in the past six months due to injury. He looks fitter than ever and that reflected his probing spells in the series opener. (PTI)

## Inter-School Diphu Basketball Foundation Cup organised



**DIPHU, July 1:** The Diphu Basketball Foundation organised the Inter-School Diphu Basketball Foundation Cup 2025 at Nihang Arena, Phonglangso, on June 27 and 28.

The tournament was inaugurated by the former president of the Karbi Students Association (KSA) and chief guest, Thangsing Timung, and was attended by honorary guest Hebl Doley, Coordinator and Academic Advisor of Unified IAS Academy.

Over two days of intense competition, Don Bosco

Higher Secondary School, Diphu, showcased dominant and outstanding performances to clinch the championship title. Diphu Government College secured the second position, followed by Don Bosco College, which was placed third.

In the individual award category, Arming Hanse was adjudged the Best Player, Longion Ingti received the Top Scorer award, and Barnobas Singnar was named the Best Defensive Player.

The Champions Trophy, Runners-up Trophies, and individual awards were distributed by the chief guest and other dignitaries present at the event.

## Neeraj learning 'concept of flow', wants Tendulkar's 'superpower' to handle challenges

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** Neeraj Chopra says he is "slowly understanding the concept of flow" after his celebrated coach Jan Zelezny advised him to run like an 18-year-old "without any tension" before launching his javelin.

The 27-year-old Chopra, a double Olympic medallist, also said he would want to have cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar's "superpower" to help him handle challenges

with a calm mindset.

He said the best advice he has received on and off the field was from Czech legend Zelezny, who also holds the world record in javelin with a throw of 98.48m.

"Whenever I throw, I stay very energetic, but he (Zelezny) tells me I need to run in a flow. It shouldn't feel tight - I should run like an 18-year-old kid without any tension. I'm slowly understanding the concept of flow,"

Chopra told Star Sports and JioHotstar.

"I think that in any sport, flow is very important. For example, Roger Federer - he played with such grace and rhythm that it never seemed like he was putting in too much effort. I'm trying to bring that into my training."

Asked which cricketer's superpower he would like to have for throwing his javelin, Chopra said, "Sachin Tendulkar. He repre-

sented our country so well for so many years and made so many records for us. The way he faced challenges from many great bowlers and still performed exceptionally."

"I would want that superpower and try to do the same. It would help me handle challenges that come my way with a calm mindset," said Chopra who is hosting NC Classic in Bengaluru on July 5, a World Athletics Continental Tour Gold event. (PTI)

## Can Jadeja reduce pace of his deliveries in English conditions to remain effective?

**NEW DELHI, July 1:** Ravindra Jadeja's inability to make decisive inroads on the fifth-day Headingley track raised the question why he could not be as effective as he is on Indian turners.

On the final day of the opening Test, Ben Duckett reverse swept Jadeja out of the match in a chase of 371. Jadeja could not turn the ball from the rough created outside Duckett's off-stump by the Indian pacers.

As India team is pondering over best combination, question arises if Jadeja should play at Edgbaston after a match-haul of 1/172 in 47 overs. On the fifth day he bowled 24 overs and managed 1/102. If India are without Jasprit Bumrah, then logically, they shouldn't be playing two finger spinners in Jadeja and Washington Sundar. In that case Kuldeep Yadav and Washington (whose batting skills match Jadeja's) can play since it would be difficult to stop rampaging English batters on a good batting surface without a wrist spinner.

If one takes a cursory look at Jadeja's track record in Test matches in England, it is pretty deflating. Just 28 wickets in 13 Tests and not a single finger. His strike-rate is a dismal 102.6 which is more than 17 overs for one wicket. In the second innings, Duckett attempted more than 30 reverse sweeps with fair degree of success and it can be attributed to the natural speed of Jadeja's deliveries.

If one looks at classical left-arm Test spinners from India - from legendary Bishan Singh Bedi to the talented duo of Maninder Singh and Murali Kartik, all of them gave more revolutions to the ball and imparted a lot of side-spin while



bowling in England or while playing in English County cricket or league cricket. In case of Jadeja his natural speed while landing the ball on the rough is becoming a problem, feels a lot of analysts.

"If a batter is intent on playing reverse sweep, he always likes pace on the deliveries. It then becomes easy to execute when those deliveries land on the rough outside the left-handed batter's off-stump," a former left-arm spinner, who has extensive knowledge of English conditions but did not wish to be named, told PTI.

"If you observe minutely, deliveries bowled with a certain speed on the rough won't turn. That was specifically what happened with Jadeja. He never reduced the pace on deliveries."

Why Bishan Bedi or even Maninder Singh were successful at Leeds on the 1986 tour? Maninder had figures of 4/26 in little over 16 overs on a damp fourth morning. The reason was that their natural speed was on the slower side.

That allowed them to put more revs on the ball, keep it hanging in the air to cre-

ate deception. To execute reverse sweep, the batter had to fetch the ball. If the pace is slow, the ball will jump and turn after hitting the rough, denying the batter any chance to use the pace.

In case of Jadeja, the problem is his muscle memory. He is so used to hitting the same area with more or less identical speeds, slowing it down considerably can lead to losing the length and bowling more hittable balls. His arm speed needs to remain same as slowing the arm speed will also lead to slower release which isn't permissible. On rank turners, a bowler just needs to land the ball in one spot on the stump channel and let the pitch do the rest. Even Jadeja won't be able to tell which ball would come in with angle, and which one would turn away (from right handers) and which one would go straight.

During the 2013 Australia series then skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni wanted spinners to take lead from first hour. The whole pitch, not just sides becomes scuffed up and Jadeja became unplayable. But in England, one needs to extract turn and not have set plans as conditions change so rapidly over five days.

Edgbaston will be a different challenge and Jadeja knows it too well as in 2022, Jonny Bairstow and Joe Root flayed him in the second innings where he went for 62 in 18.4 wicket-less overs.

Edgbaston is primarily a good batting strip and this is one ground where the team management might think twice before playing Jadeja. Lord's brings with itself, a different set of challenges due to the famous slope on the Nursery end. (PTI)



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