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THE HILLS TIMES

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Voice of the hills people

Vol .No. XXVI

Issue No. 172

RNI-ASSEN/2000/12862

DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2025

PAGES 12

PRICE ₹ 8

CM reviews key welfare schemes in Baksa

Timeline set for project execution

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 5: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday conducted a comprehensive review of five key welfare schemes in Baksa district and instructed the concerned departments to complete all pending work within the stipulated timeline to ensure effective implementation.

The review meeting, held at the office of the District Election Officer in Mushalpur, was attended by senior officers of the Assam Government, heads of various departments, and BTR officials.

The visit to Baksa followed similar review sessions in Udalguri and Tamulpur, and forms part of the Chief Minister's broader mission to accelerate development in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

According to an official statement, the review meeting featured a detailed PowerPoint presentation highlighting the progress of schemes such as 'Orunodoi 3.0',



'Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan', 'Mukhyamantri Atmanirbhar Asom', 'Eti Koli Duti Paat', and the Ration Card initiative. Sarma stated that under 'Orunodoi 3.0', the number of beneficiaries in Baksa and Manas constituencies is expected to increase from 46,998 to 59,000. He directed officials to finalise and upload the

list of beneficiaries by the end of July to facilitate the disbursement of benefits by September.

Reviewing the Mukhyamantri Atmanirbhar Asom Abhiyan, the chief minister said that this year, 1,200 youths in the district would be provided financial assistance of ₹2 lakh each.

Of these, 400 have already received ₹1 lakh, while 60 others have availed loans under the MUDRA Yojana.

He noted that the final instalment would be issued to those who had received the first tranche, provided proper bank linkages were established.

He asked the District Commissioner to prioritise the strengthening of such financial connections to ensure seamless support to the beneficiaries.

The implementation of the 'Eti Koli Duti Paat' scheme was also reviewed, with particular focus on the Fatemabad and Dumuni Tea Estates, which collectively employ around 3,700 workers.

The chief minister assessed progress in Aadhaar enrolment, documentation, and data uploading, which are essential for the scheme's execution. In regard to the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan, he was informed that the third phase of the re-verification process has already been (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

UNSC permanent membership

Trinidad & Tobago extends full support to India



PORT OF SPAIN, July 5: India and Trinidad and Tobago have inked six agreements to boost co-operation in several sectors, including infrastructure and pharmaceuticals, following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart from the Caribbean nation, Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

In the meeting held on Friday, Prime Minister Modi announced a decision by India to issue Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cards up to the sixth generation of the Indian diaspora of Trinidad and Tobago, where over 40 per cent of the population is of Indian origin.

Modi landed in Port of Spain on Thursday in the second leg of his five-nation tour.

It is the first bilateral visit by an Indian prime minister to this Caribbean island nation since 1999. In their talks, Modi and

Bissessar also explored potential collaboration in areas of defence, agriculture, healthcare and digital transformation, unified payments interface (UPI) and capacity building. Significantly, Trinidad and Tobago reaffirmed its full support to

India for a permanent membership of an expanded United Nations Security Council, according to a joint statement released on Saturday.

The six MoUs will provide for deeper cooperation between India and Trinidad (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

RECL to support frontline staff of Kaziranga

GUWAHATI, July 5: Power sector 'Maharatna' REC Limited has pledged its support to improve conditions for frontline forest staff in Assam's Kaziranga National Park, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said on Saturday.

It will provide assistance in upgrading solar power and drinking water facilities in over 120 anti-poaching camps.

"@RECLIndia, a Maharatna PSU, has pledged Rs 5.3 crore under its CSR initiative to support Kaziranga," the CMO said in a post on X.

"The assistance will help upgrade solar power and drinking water facilities in over 120 anti-poaching camps, significantly improving conditions for frontline forest staff," it said.

The CMO added that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has expressed his gratitude for the valuable contribution towards conservation of this UNESCO World Heritage site.

A 'Maharatna' PSU under the administrative control of the Ministry of Power, REC plays a key strategic role in the flagship schemes of the government for the power sector. (PTI)

3 held with over 43 kg opium

GUWAHATI, July 5: Three suspected drug peddlers have been arrested from Assam's Karbi Anglong district and opium worth ₹2.5 crore seized from their possession, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The arrests were made on Friday after a vehicle was intercepted, he said.

"During a routine naka check at 6th Mile, a vehicle was intercepted, leading to the seizure of 43.5 kg of opium worth ₹2.5 crore. 3 people were arrested regarding this case," Sarma said in a post on X. (PTI)

India becomes fourth 'most equal' country globally

NEW DELHI, July 5: Inequality in India has come down significantly between 2011-12 and 2022-23, making it the fourth-most equal country globally, according to a World Bank report.

This is in addition to a sharp decrease in extreme poverty, which has dropped from 16.2 per cent in 2011-12 to 2.3 per cent in 2022-23, an official release said quoting World Bank data.

The government attributed the reduction in inequality to various initiatives and schemes pursued during the last decade.

The only three countries which have a better Gini Index score, a measure of equality, are the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Belarus.

India is much better placed than countries like China, the

USA and the United Kingdom.

"...India's Gini Index stands at 25.5, making it the fourth most equal country in the world, after the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Belarus," the statement said.

The Gini Index helps in understanding how equally income, wealth or consumption is distributed across households or individuals in a country. It ranges in value from 0 to 100.

A score of 0 means perfect equality, while a score of 100 means one person has all the income, wealth or consumption and others have none, hence absolute inequality. The higher the Gini Index, the more unequal a country is. India's score is much lower than China's 35.7 and far lower than the United

States, which stands at 41.8.

As per the World Bank's report, which has released the data for 167 countries, India falls into the "moderately low" inequality category, which includes Gini scores between 25 and 30.

India is only a fraction away from joining the "low inequality" group.

The government attributed this achievement to a sharp reduction in the poverty level in the last decade.

According to the World Bank report, 171 million Indians have been lifted out of extreme poverty over the past decade. The share of people living on less than USD 2.15 a day, which was the global threshold for extreme poverty till June 2025, fell sharply from 16.2 per cent in 2011-12 (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Journalist injured in attack in Assam's Dhemaji, CM says police probe on

GUWAHATI, July 5: A journalist was injured after being allegedly attacked by a mob while covering panchayat election-related news in Dhemaji district, police said on Saturday.

Madhurjya Saikia, who works for an Assamese news channel, was injured when he was attacked by a mob of over 25 people, armed with sticks, in Dimow Pathar on Friday, they said.

In a complaint lodged at the Silapathar police station, Saikia alleged that leaders of a local outfit were behind the attack on him.

Based on the complaint, a case was registered and an investigation started, a police officer said. Saikia, who was severely injured in the attack, is undergoing treatment at a hospital in Dibrugarh.

The Takam Mising Porin Kebang (Mising students' union), meanwhile, rejected the allegations levelled by the journalist.

In a Facebook post, TMPK president Tilak Doley claimed that neither he nor any mem-

ber of his organisation was related to the incident. He maintained that TMPK holds the press in the highest regard.

Asked about the incident, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said it is for the police to find the guilty and arrest them.

This is the second such attack on journalists in the state within a week. Local TV journalist Bimaljyoti Nath and his colleague were attacked in Dhekiajuli on June 29.

The two journalists were assaulted when they were returning after covering news of alleged illegal mining activities.

CM Sarma said there was no unity among journalists in the state. "If we take the Dhekiajuli incident, one section of people were attacked and another media group is protecting the attackers," he said.

"There is no unity among you all. You have become like us - BJP, Congress, AGP and UPPL. In fact, there is more unity among us," he told reporters in Baksa. (PTI)

Young Tibetans across continents honour Dalai Lama's 90th birthday through heartfelt art, recalling his life, teachings, and legacy of compassion

'Dear Kundun': Young Tibetans pay tribute to Dalai Lama through art

NEW DELHI, July 5: From a colourful portrait of the Dalai Lama embracing children to scenes depicting his joyful childhood amidst blooming nature, or celebrating his life, an ongoing art exhibition by young artists honour the Tibetan spiritual leader in their own unique ways.

Inaugurated on Friday at the India International Centre, the art exhibition is titled "Dear Kundun", borrowed from a term affectionately used by Tibetans worldwide to address the 14th Dalai Lama.

The exhibition features 90 artworks created by young Tibetans from across the globe, celebrating the Dalai Lama's 90th birth anniversary and his



message of kindness and peace.

Organised in collaboration with the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His

Holiness the Dalai Lama (FURHHDL) and Khadhok, a Tibetan Artists Collective, the exhibition showcases a curated selection from over 700 sub-

missions by children across India, Nepal, Europe, North America, and Australia.

The creative prompt for the young artists was simple yet profound: "What does His Holiness mean to you?"

"We were contemplating in what ways we can honour the Dalai Lama, if you have met him, you'll realize he has an incredible, child-like quality that beautifully contrasts with his profound wisdom and gravitas. We spoke with a non-profit group in Dharamshala that literally reached out to hundreds of young Tibetan children worldwide, inviting them to share their drawings and artwork." "These pieces express (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam Police personnel win 5 gold, 3 silver medals at World Police and Fire Games

GUWAHATI, July 5: Assam Police personnel have won five gold and three silver medals in the ongoing World Police and Fire Games.

Congratulating them, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said in a post on X, "A proud moment for Assam. Four @assampolice Wrist Wrestling players clinched medals in World Police and Fire Games, Birmingham, USA, making the nation proud."

He said Kandarapa Borah has won gold in both right and left hands, Amlanjit Borthakur gold in right and silver in

left hand.

Junmoni Das has bagged gold in right and silver in left hand, while Lovita Koch clinched silver in right and gold in left hand.

"Congratulations to the winners!" the chief minister added.

The World Police and Fire Games (WPF) are an Olympic-style, biennial competition with thousands of athletes representing first responders from different countries across the world. This includes law enforcement, firefighters and officers from corrections, probation, border

protection, immigration and customs.

The games are governed by the California Police Athletic Federation (CPAF) and the WPF Board of Directors.

In the current edition, which is scheduled to conclude on Sunday, India is placed third currently in the overall medals tally with 373 medals, including 174 gold.

USA and Brazil are at the top of the tally with a total of 811 (351 gold) and 469 (164 gold) medals respectively. (PTI)



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India, Maldives hold talks to deepen trade and investment ties

MALE, July 5: India and the Maldives discussed ways to explore new opportunities for economic cooperation and trade enhancement, state-run media said on Saturday.

The discussion for strengthening trade was held during a meeting between India's Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal and Maldivian Economic Development and Trade Minister Mohamed Saeed here on Friday.

The meeting, held at the Maldivian Economic Ministry as part of Barthwal's visit, focused on exploring new areas of economic collaboration and strengthening existing trade ties, according to Public Service Media (PSM News), the state-run media.

After the meeting, Saeed said in a post on X: "Had a productive meeting today with India's Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal. We discussed strengthening trade and investment partnerships between our nations and exploring new opportunities for economic cooperation."

The Department of Commerce,



Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in a post on X, said Barthwal had "a constructive" meeting with Saeed, "focusing on enhancing trade and investment ties and exploring new avenues for economic cooperation between the two countries." As part of recent efforts to attract Indian investment, business forums were organised in three Indian cities to promote opportunities in the Maldives, the PSM News said.

India continues to be a key development partner for the Maldives, contributing to several infrastructure and capacity-building projects, it added. New Delhi has also extended a USD 25.94 million currency swap facility to support the archipelagic nation's economy.

Earlier on May 26, India and Maldives explored ways to boost trade and strategic cooperation during a three-day visit by Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Khaleel, accompanied by a high-level delegation to New Delhi to review the implementation of the comprehensive economic and maritime security partnership.

It was agreed during Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu's trip to New Delhi last October. The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain after Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge of the top office in November 2023. Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. Subsequently, the Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians on a mutually agreed date.

There was a thaw in the relations as Muizzu vowed to boost the bilateral ties with India during his visit to Delhi in October 2024.

Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour and an important partner in India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and Vision MAHASAGAR that is Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions. (PTI)

E-vehicles, green hydrogen need of the hour, says CM

SHIMLA, July 5: The Himachal Pradesh government has been formulating policies with environmental protection in mind, and promotion of e-vehicles and green hydrogen is the need of the hour, Chief Minister Sukhvir Singh Sukhu said on Saturday.

Flagging off 20 e-taxis from Himachal Pradesh Secretariat under the Rajiv Gandhi Swarozgar Start-up Yojana (RGSSY), he said that today, "we are witnessing the adverse effects of climate change and it is imperative for us to have policies that prioritise environmental conservation".

Under the scheme, the state government provides a 50 per cent subsidy to youth to purchase e-taxis. And

so far, ₹ 4.22 crore have been disbursed to 59 eligible youth, and a subsidy to 61 more beneficiaries will be released shortly, a statement issued here said.

The chief minister said this would not only provide gainful employment to youth, but also ensure assured income for a period of five years by attaching them with government offices and a provision of extension for two years. He said this would also go a long way in reducing the financial burden of the state.

Sukhu said radical reforms in various government departments have started yielding results, and the state has climbed from 21st to 5th rank nationwide in providing quality education. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

CM reviews key welfare schemes

completed. He instructed that any remaining work under the scheme be wrapped up within July. Sarma also took stock of the Ration Card scheme, which currently supports 1,29,860 individuals in Baksa district. He stated that another 4,000 beneficiaries from Baksa and Manas constituencies would be added under the scheme shortly.

The Chief Minister further informed that the government's welfare programmes are projected to benefit over 1.80 lakh families in the district. In a media interaction following the review, Sarma said that two new infrastructure projects under the Asom Mala scheme were finalised for Baksa and would be implemented soon.

He observed that peace had been restored in the BTR region through collaborative efforts by the Centre, the State Government, and the BTR administration. He reaffirmed the government's vision to usher in a new era of development, stability, and prosperity in the region over the next five years.

The meeting was also attended by Minister of Panchayat and Rural Development Ranjeet Kumar Dass, Minister of Handloom and Textile U G Brahma, Minister of Public Health Engineering Jayanta Mallabarua, MLAs Phanihar Talukdar and Bhupen Boro, several MCLAs of the BTR, Principal Secretary of BTC Akash Deep, Baksa Deputy Commissioner Gautam Das, and departmental heads.

Later in the day, Sarma interacted with various local organisations and individuals in the Circuit House premises, where he took note of public grievances and assured that their concerns would be addressed.

Trinidad & Tobago extends

and Tobago in the fields of pharmacopoeia, quick-impact projects, culture, sports and diplomatic training, among others.

The pact on sports is aimed at fostering training, talent exchange, infrastructure development, and joint capacity building. PM Modi also reiterated his offer to train aspiring young women cricketers from Trinidad and Tobago in India.

Delving into pressing global issues, Modi and Bissessar reaffirmed the need for comprehensive reforms in the United Nations, including expansion of the UN Security Council, to better reflect current realities. "While recognising the rising geopolitical tensions and global conflicts, both leaders called for dialogue and diplomacy as the way forward," the joint statement said.

It was also agreed that India would support Trinidad and Tobago's candidature for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the period 2027-28, and the island nation would support New Delhi's bid for the period 2028-29.

"The landmark visit of the prime minister to Trinidad and Tobago has given a boost to the special ties between the countries," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. In her remarks during the delegation-level talks, Bissessar noted that PM Modi's "landmark visit" to Trinidad and Tobago will reinvigorate the deep-rooted bilateral ties between the two countries.

On his part, PM Modi expressed appreciation for Trinidad and Tobago's strong support and solidarity to the people of India in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack. "The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. PM Modi also met Christine Carla Kangeloo, the president of Trinidad and Tobago.

In a social media post, Modi said a new momentum was added to the friendship between India and Trinidad and Tobago.

"Thank you, Trinidad & Tobago. The moments here will never be forgotten. We've added new momentum to the India-Trinidad & Tobago friendship. My gratitude to President Christine Carla Kangeloo, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the government and people of this wonderful nation," he said.

Several announcements to foster bilateral ties, including the offer of an OCI (Overseas Citizenship of India) card to the sixth generation of the people of Indian origin in the Caribbean nation, were made. The MEA said Modi and Bissessar agreed to work together for greater solidarity among the countries of the Global South and to strengthen India-CARICOM partnership.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is an intergovernmental organisation of 15 member states in the Caribbean region, having the primary objective to promote economic integration and cooperation among the members.

"Both leaders also exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest. They called upon greater cooperation to deal with contemporary challenges such as climate change, disaster management, and cybersecurity," the MEA said.

On PM Modi's meeting with President Kangeloo, the MEA said it was marked by warmth and a reaffirmation of the deep-rooted friendship between the two nations. "The prime minister congratulated President Kangeloo on receiving the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award this year and expressed deep appreciation for her distinguished public service," it said. "The two leaders reflected on the enduring bonds shared by the two countries, anchored by strong people-to-people ties," it added.

The MEA said PM Modi invited Bissessar to visit India, which she accepted. Earlier on Friday, PM Modi addressed the parliament of the Caribbean nation and spoke about the cricket connection between the two countries. "There is a natural warmth in the connection between our two countries. I must say, Indians are among the most passionate fans of the West Indies cricket team! We cheer for them with all our heart, except when they are playing against India," he said.

Modi also lauded the contribution of Indian-origin people to Trinidad and Tobago's development journey. "From politics to poetry, cricket to commerce, calypso to chutney, they contribute to every field. They are an integral part of the vibrant diversity that you all respect." "Together, you have built a nation that lives its motto: 'Together we aspire, together we achieve'," Modi said. (PTI)

India becomes fourth

to just 2.3 per cent in 2022-23. Globally, just 30 countries fall into the "moderately low" inequality category, including several European countries with strong welfare systems. These include Iceland, Norway, Finland, and Belgium. It also features growing economies like Poland and wealthy nations like the United Arab Emirates.

The release said India's journey towards a more equal society is reflected in its Gini Index over the years. The index was measured at 28.8 in 2011 and reached 25.5 in 2022. "This steady shift shows that India has made consistent progress in combining economic growth with social equity," it said. It further said India's progress towards greater income equality is backed by a series of focused government initiatives.

These schemes aim to improve financial access, deliver welfare benefits efficiently, and support vulnerable and underrepresented groups. "Together, they have helped bridge gaps, boost livelihoods, and ensure that growth reaches all sections of society," the release said. It has cited schemes, like PM Jan Dhan Yojana, Direct Benefit Transfer, and Stand-Up India, among others, which have helped India in its progress towards greater income equality.

"India's path to income equality has been steady and focused. The Gini Index of 25.5 is not just a number. It reflects real change in people's lives. More families now have access to food, banking, healthcare, and jobs," the release said.

What sets India apart is its ability to balance economic reform with strong social protection, it said. Targeted schemes like Jan Dhan, DBT, and Ayushman Bharat have helped close long-standing gaps," it said.

At the same time, programmes such as Stand-Up India and PM Vishwakarma Yojana are helping people create wealth and secure livelihoods on their own terms. "As the world looks for models that combine growth with fairness, India's example stands out. Its experience shows that equality and development are not separate goals," the release said.

When supported by sound policy and inclusive intent, they move forward together, it added. (PTI)

'Dear Kundun': Young Tibetans

their feelings and heartfelt greetings to the Dalai Lama. The resulting images have been deeply moving -- they capture both the pure innocence and the powerful emotional depth that adults often struggle to convey. We've been truly overwhelmed by the response," Rajiv Mehrotra of FURHHDL told PTI.

Born on July 6, 1935, into a farming family in what is now Qinghai province, the Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 with a large group of Tibetans after the Chinese military under the command of Communist Party founder Mao Zedong took over Tibet.

Since then, he made Dharamshala his "adopted" home. Today, he is regarded as one of the world's most influential spiritual leaders, with a global following that extends far beyond the Buddhist community. In 1989, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his unwavering commitment to peace, compassion, and nonviolence. Many of the drawings and sketches in the exhibition offer viewers a glimpse into the life of the Dalai Lama -- from his birth and early years, to his departure from Tibet, his achievements, and his efforts in establishing schools, monasteries, and a full-fledged Tibetan government-in-exile in India.

Celebrated writer Namita Gokhale, who was also chief guest on the occasion, said it's "both a joy and a blessing" to be present amidst these beautiful paintings.

"I've worked extensively with children's books and the ways young minds express themselves. And today, standing in the middle of these 90 paintings from around the world truly feels like a blessing. The openness and sincerity with which these young artists view His Holiness -- not just as a godly figure, but as a friend they can trust and share laughter with -- is deeply moving. I'm overjoyed to be here," she added.

In addition to the exhibition, the inauguration ceremony featured a traditional 'Tashi Sholpa' dance performed by children from the Tibetan Children's Village School -- offered as a heartfelt cultural tribute in reverence to His Holiness.

"Dear Kundun" will come to a close on July 15. (PTI)

MRF Ltd wins MMA award for managerial excellence



CHENNAI, July 5: Tyre manufacturer MRF Ltd has bagged the 23rd MMA award for managerial excellence in the manufacturing category, the Madras Management Association said on Saturday.

The city-headquartered Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd has secured the top honour in the services category.

The 23rd Madras Management Association Awards for Managerial Excellence were presented to top performers at an event held in the city on July 4, organised by the Madras Management Association.

Deloitte India Partner Easwaran said each of the winners, apart from being efficient in their fields, had demonstrated remarkable leadership, executed strategic actions and achieved tangible results.

Tamil Nadu-based academic institution VIT University was selected under the educational institutions category for the 23 MMA Awards for Managerial Excellence, while Baetr India Pvt Ltd was honoured with the MAME Award under the MSME category.

Volvo Group India President and Managing Director Kamal Bali presented the award to the winners at the event, a press release from the Madras Management Association said. Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd Managing Director and All India Management Association President Suneeta Reddy was also present on the occasion.

A business magazine of MMA, Business Mandate, and Volume II of MMA Publication -- 'Turning Points: Management Lessons from Legends' were also released on the occasion. The winners were selected based on a host of parameters, including sustainability and social actions. (PTI)

India's first national cooperative university will end nepotism in sector, training vacuum: Shah

ANAND (GUJARAT), July 5: Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said India's first national university for cooperatives coming up in Gujarat will work to end nepotism as only persons trained by it will get jobs in this sector in the future.

Shah was addressing a gathering at the campus of Anand Agriculture University after laying the foundation stone of Tribhuvan Sahkari University (TSU) that will be built on a 125-acre plot at a cost of ₹ 500 crore.

The university has been named after the late Tribhuvandas Keshubhai Patel, one of the pioneers of the cooperative movement in India who was instrumental in laying the foundation of Amul. Born on October 22, 1903, in Kheda in Anand, Patel died on June 3, 1994.

"The upcoming university will work to address the allegations of nepotism in this sector. Unlike the past, when people were first hired and then trained, only trained people will get jobs in this sector in the future," Shah said.

The Union minister said the university will also address the existing "weaknesses" in this sector and fill the training gaps in the domain that engages every fourth person of the country, or about 30 crore people. He said the cooperatives sector in India has no dearth of talent and what the country requires now is trained manpower.

TSU will fill this "mega vacuum" which has stopped the progress of this sector, he said.

Shah also sought to address criticism from some quarters about the upcoming university not being named after Dr Verghese Kurien, the father of the White Revolution, saying his role in the cooperatives



sector can never be denied.

"Patel sahab (Tribhuvan Patel) enlightened and nurtured the cooperative movement... it was his vision that the sector is standing strong today," he said.

Shah said it was Patel who sent Kurien to study in the Netherlands, adding those "who say that Kurien's contribution to this sector was not being acknowledged were the ones who did nothing to celebrate his birth centenary".

It is Amul that is celebrating his legacy, he said. Congress leaders who raised such questions do not know that Patel was from their party. The BJP did not even exist then, the minister said.

Shah said the TSU will not only produce a talented workforce but also leaders like Patel for the cooperatives sector. It will also work to frame policies, undertake research and development initiatives and standardise the course material to be taught at various educational forums for cooperatives.

The minister said the university will prepare experts who will run the proposed cooperatives like taxi services, startups and digital platforms. (PTI)

Nearly half of MSMEs polled prefer UPI for business transactions says report

MUMBAI, July 5: Nearly half of MSMEs surveyed prefer UPI as a mode of transaction to grow their business, followed by Aadhaar-enabled banking, says a report.

According to the MSME Digital Index Report by PayNearby, digital payments continue to gain strong acceptance among MSMEs, with UPI emerging as the most preferred mode of transaction at 48 per cent, followed by Aadhaar-enabled banking at 39 per cent.

Among women entrepreneurs, Aadhaar banking saw even higher preference at 42 per cent, reflecting increasing trust in secure, tech-enabled services such as fingerprint and face authentication, the report said.

The report is based a nationwide survey conducted among 10,000 individuals and MSMEs in retail-focused segments such as kirana stores, mobile recharge outlets, medical shops, customer service points (CSPs), and travel agencies. It found that smartphones have emerged as primary business device at 71 per cent while among women, it is even higher at 84 per cent.

On benefits from digital adoption, a third of respondents cited improved operational efficiency, while over 73 per cent of small businesses across semi-urban and rural India have seen increased income or improved operational efficiency as a result of adopting

digital tools. "A small but notable 7 per cent of respondents have begun exploring automated or AI-powered tools, including inventory apps, automated billing systems, and customer engagement platforms, mostly through third-party solutions," the report said.

Anand Kumar Bajaj, Founder, MD & CEO, PayNearby, said, "The MSME sector is the backbone of Bharat's economy, and the rapid adoption of digital tools such as smartphones, UPI, Aadhaar-enabled banking, and emerging AI workflows is proof that this segment is embracing modernisation."

PayNearby, a DPIIT-certified company, is a branchless banking and digital network. (PTI)

All 4 NH projects to be completed by 2028, Central funds not being fully utilised by HP: Nadda

SHIMLA, July 5: The construction of three out of four National Highways is in an advanced stage in Himachal Pradesh and major works would be completed in the next two years, Union Health Minister J P Nadda said in Bilaspur on Saturday.

About 2,593 km long, four National Highways are being constructed in the state at an estimated cost of about ₹ 38,000 crore.

Addressing reporters, Nadda also lashed out at the state government for not utilising the funds allocated by the Union government.

"The construction of three NHs is in an advanced stage and major works would be completed in 2026 and 2027 while the project for which Detailed Project Report (DPR) is under preparation would be completed in 2028", he said.

Barring the Shimla-Mator National Highway for which preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) is underway and completion is slated for 2028, the Parwanoo-Shimla, Kiratpur-Manali and Pathankot-Mandi National Highways would be completed in 2026 and 2027, he added.

Nadda raised the issue of the state government treating the construction of roads at par with industries, mandating no-objection certificate (NOC) from the Pollution Control Board every year



which delays the work and argued that setting of crushers and burning of charcoal for metallising is temporary and stops after the works are completed.

"Union Transport and Highways minister Nitin Gadkari has already discussed the issue with the state government and I will also take up the matter with chief minister Sukhvir Singh Sukhu", Nadda said and also cautioned that if the 'dredging' of River Beas, which is responsibility of the state government was not done, the Highways constructed by the NHAI would suffer huge damage.

When asked about the complaints by the people whose properties have been affected during

construction by NHAI, Nadda said that these would be disposed of on a case-by-case basis, adding that the government was sensitive and receptive about these issues. Chief Minister Sukhvir Singh Sukhu on Friday said that large companies were often awarded contracts based solely on their machinery, but they lack understanding of the fragile hill terrain of the state.

As a result, they conduct hill-cutting as per their convenience, which causes damage. He advised NHAI to consider awarding such contracts to local contractors familiar with the region.

The statement came after a five-storey building and a retaining wall near Kaithlighat-Dhalli four

lane in the suburbs of Shimla collapsed in the ongoing week and residents cited negligence of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) as the main reason behind the damage.

Nadda said that an atmosphere is being created by the state government that the Centre was not helping the state government but in fact the state government has failed to fully utilise the central funds and pointed out that under PM Health Infra-structure mission only 21 per cent has been spent while only 24 per cent of the funds allocated by the 15th Finance Commission for health have been utilised.

Nadda also referred to the projects worth crores announced by Union minister Kiran Rijiju for tribal and remote areas and said that he got the ₹ 1,000 crore JICA project sanctioned from Economic Affairs ministry under which the contribution of the state government would be only ₹ 149 crore and the remaining cost would be borne by the Centre. He said that the Union government stood firmly with Himachal during the natural calamities in 2023 and released ₹ 1,700 crore while ₹ 1,000 crore have been announced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah for losses suffered during the ongoing monsoon fury. (PTI)

Gogoi likens KAAC project to 'Sheesh Mahal'; BJP hits back citing legacy of unrest

Gaurav Gogoi slams BJP over 6th schedule autonomy, land allocation in Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 5: Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, on Saturday launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led government in Assam, accusing it of undermining the constitutional autonomy granted to the hill districts under the Sixth Schedule.

Addressing a press conference at Diphu Circuit House, Gogoi alleged that the BJP government was eroding the powers of the autonomous councils and centralising governance.

"The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution is meant to provide autonomy to indigenous communities for self-governance. Rule should come from Diphu, BTR, or Haf-long—not from Delhi or Dispur," he said.

He added that the Congress respects this framework and supports development, cultural preservation, and linguistic diversity rooted in local governance.

Gogoi further accused chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of acting as a "real estate broker," alleging that thousands of bighas of land belonging to indigenous people were being handed over to corporate entities.



porate entities.

In contrast, he praised former Congress CM Tarun Gogoi for respecting the Sixth Schedule and upholding the rights of hill communities.

Referring to the ongoing border dispute between Assam and Meghalaya in areas adjoining West Karbi Anglong, Gogoi termed it a failure of the BJP government to safeguard the interests of local communities.

As part of his visit, Gogoi also recorded a video message in front of an under-construction building allegedly linked to the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi

Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), drawing parallels with Delhi's "Sheesh Mahal" controversy involving former CM Arvind Kejriwal.

Gogoi was accompanied by APCC Working President Rosleena Tirkey, Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee President Bidya Sing Rongpi, and other senior party workers.

In response, the BJP's East Karbi Anglong District Committee convened an impromptu press briefing at the office of the Hills People Cultural Forum (HPCF).

BJP adviser Laichan alleged that the Congress regime under Tarun

Gogoi was marked by ethnic unrest in the hill districts, with multiple communities—including the Dimas, Karbi, Kuki, and Naga Rengma—displaced due to violent flare-ups.

He referred to the ambush on a KAAC bus at Charchim-Presek, in which several innocent lives were lost.

BJP leader Englung stated that had Gogoi come to Karbi Anglong with constructive intentions, thousands would have gathered to welcome him, instead of just a few hundred. He demanded that Gogoi apologise for the violence and displacement witnessed during Congress rule.

The BJP leaders defended the current KAAC leadership under Tuliram Ronghang, highlighting visible development in the district.

Reacting to Gogoi's opposition to the proposed solar power project, they urged him to focus on addressing unemployment rather than stalling developmental initiatives.

"Many youths have to migrate to cities for jobs, where they face insecurity. Projects like this can generate local employment and should be supported, not opposed," they said.

AJYCP seeks new border outposts to curb encroachment along Assam-Nagaland border

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, July 5: The Jorhat district unit of the Asom Jatiyabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) has urged the Assam Government to establish new Border Outposts (BoPs) along the Assam-Nagaland border to prevent what it described as "large-scale encroachment" of state land by residents from the neighbouring state.

In a memorandum submitted to chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma through the office of the Jorhat Deputy Commissioner on Saturday, AJYCP district president Ashim Jyoti Saikia and general secretary Biswajit Gayan put forward six key demands, stressing the urgency of government intervention in the border areas.

The student body expressed deep concern over alleged decades-long encroachment in three reserve forests near Mariani—Dissoi Valley Reserve Forest, Dissoi Reserve Forest, and Tiru Hills Reserve Forest—by individuals from the Nagaland side.

The AJYCP claimed that large tracts of land in these forests have been destroyed and converted into rubber plantations.

Among the major demands listed in the memorandum were immediate eviction drives in the encroached forest areas, afforestation

in cleared lands, and the establishment of new BoPs in sensitive zones.

The AJYCP also urged the government to deploy commando police units in vulnerable stretches of the border to deter further encroachment.

Additional demands include intensified patrolling by Forest and Police Department personnel, and the relocation of existing Assam BoPs situated far from the actual boundary to positions nearer the border. The memorandum also called for the removal of the Chutaphala check gate, which the AJYCP claims is operated by the Nagaland Government within Assam territory on the Mariani-Mokokchung road.

Speaking to this newspaper, AJYCP Jorhat district general secretary Biswajit Gayan said that a team from the organisation will visit the border villages under Mariani Police Station on July 9 to assess the ground situation and interact with residents living in proximity to the inter-state boundary. The AJYCP has long maintained that failure to act decisively on the Assam-Nagaland border issue not only endangers Assam's territorial integrity but also undermines the rights and security of communities living in border areas.

Bike rally held in Chirang to promote drug-free society

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 5: In a determined effort to raise public awareness against substance abuse, a bike rally was organised on Saturday at Kajalgaon in Chirang district as part of the Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan.

The event was led by the District Social Welfare Office in collaboration with the Chirang district police. The rally was officially flagged off by Chirang Deputy Commissioner Jatin Bora and aimed at sensitising the public—especially the youth—about the ill effects of drug abuse and the importance of adopting a healthy and disciplined lifestyle.

The flag-off ceremony witnessed the presence of several dignitaries, including Additional Superintendent of Police Rashmi Rekha Samah, Deputy Superintendent of Police Ritambara Nath, District Social Welfare Officer Anupam Das, and other senior officials from various district departments. The rally saw enthusiastic participation from youth volunteers, social activists, and police personnel, all united in their commitment to fostering a drug-free and health-conscious society.

Local residents expressed appreciation for the initiative, thanking the district administration for taking active steps to address the growing concern of substance abuse in the region.

Many reiterated their desire for a healthier social environment, particularly for the younger generation. Officials noted that the Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan continues to be implemented across Chirang district with active public participation and support from multiple stakeholders.

Free health check-up camp organised at Boha-Barjhari

JAGIROAD, July 5: A free health check-up camp was organised on Saturday at Boha Barjhari High School with the aim of extending essential medical services to rural residents.

Over 300 individuals benefited from a wide range of services including eye examinations, dental care, pathological tests, ECG, X-ray, and general health consultations. Free medicines were also distributed to the attendees.

The camp was formally inaugurated by Jagiroad Circle Officer Hriday Das and Co-District Superintendent of Police Bijit Dadhara. A total of eight experienced doctors volunteered their expertise during the camp.

The initiative was supported by various local organisations and witnessed active participation from community leaders.

Among those present were Jagiroad Citizens' Committee President Prabin Kumar Deka, Jagiroad Development Authority Chairman Dibyajit Neog, Jagiroad Marwari Youth Forum President Mukesh Jain, Jagiroad Marwari Sammilan Secretary Anand Jain, and Jagiroad Marwari Seva Samiti President Madan Kana.

Others in attendance included Secretary Jitesh Agarwal, prominent social worker Thaneshwar Agarwal, Boha Barjhari Gaon Panchayat President Bhaurav Deka, and local BJP workers. (PTI)

Vehicular movement banned on BKK road due to perilous bridge

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 5: In light of the deteriorating condition of a key bridge on the Baithalango-Kollonga-Kheroni (BKK) road, the Public Works Department (PWD), Baithalango Roads Division, has temporarily prohibited all vehicular movement through the affected stretch.

According to Order No. 43 issued by the department, the subway of Bridge No. 31/1 over the Telehor River has become critically damaged due to continuous heavy rainfall, rendering it unsafe for traffic. Officials have warned that the structure is in an "endangered condition" and poses a serious risk to commuters.

In the interest of public safety and to avoid any potential accidents, the department has enforced the travel ban with immediate effect until further notice. Motorists and commuters have been advised to take the alternate route via Jengkh Bazar – Menmeji – Mengaon – Rongkuroi Tiniali.

The PWD has expressed regret for the inconvenience and urged the public to cooperate and strictly follow the advisory to ensure safety during the monsoon season.

E-Rickshaw driver found unconscious, robbed of vehicle and cash in Kathalguri

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, July 5: Tension prevailed in the Kathalguri area under Gossaigaon subdivision on Saturday morning after a young e-rickshaw driver was found lying unconscious by the roadside. The victim, identified as Saidul Islam (20), son of Fayzal Haque of Oxiguri village, was discovered along the National Highway, triggering alarm and concern among locals.

According to reports, Saidul had left home on Friday morning with his e-rickshaw for his daily work but failed to return by nightfall.

His family grew increasingly anxious as repeated attempts to contact him went unanswered,

prompting a sleepless night of distress.

Early on Saturday, an unidentified local resident from Kathalguri contacted Saidul's family and informed them of his condition.

The family rushed to the spot and admitted him to Gossaigaon RNB Civil Hospital for treatment. Preliminary accounts suggest that a group of miscreants, posing as passengers from the Srirampur area, allegedly drugged Saidul before robbing him of his e-rickshaw, ₹12,000 in cash, and his mobile phone.

After the robbery, the assailants abandoned him unconscious on the roadside and fled the scene.

Dhansiri river continues to rise as floods inundate Diphu

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 5: Heavy overnight rainfall has led to a sudden rise in the water level of the Dhansiri River, causing widespread flooding in the Panbari and Ramnath Colony areas of Diphu.

According to reports, roads have been submerged and houses lining both sides of the affected roads are now underwater.

The flooding has caused severe disruption to daily life, with household goods, including essential food items such as rice, rendered unfit for consumption. Furniture and bedding have also been damaged, leaving residents with no dry space to rest. As of Saturday afternoon, water levels continued to rise, exacerbating the situation.

Several families were seen wading through waist-deep water, while others carried children on their shoulders in search of safer ground. Some residents have taken refuge on elevated portions within their flooded homes, awaiting relief or a receding of the waters. Past flood patterns in the area suggest that water levels tend to recede quickly due to the hilly terrain, offering some hope for early respite.

However, concerns have been raised over the potential outbreak of waterborne diseases, as floodwaters may have contaminated drinking water sources, including wells.

Dhubri Agriculture Department launches training on protected cultivation to boost farmer incomes

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, July 5: In a concerted effort to enhance agricultural productivity and improve farmer livelihoods, the District Agriculture Office, Dhubri, conducted its first Farmer Training Programme on Protected Cultivation using Low-Cost Poly Houses on July 4.

The programme was held under the Horticulture Mission for North East and Himalayan States (HMNEH) at the Knowledge Centre in Raniganj ADO Circle, Bilasipara sub-division.

The training aimed to familiarise farmers with modern and sustainable cultivation practices designed to increase yield and income. Protected cultivation through poly houses offers advantages such as faster crop growth, multiple cropping cycles, and protection from weather extremes, pests, and diseases. The technique enables farmers to grow off-season, high-value vegetables that can fetch better market prices.

The event was inaugurated by Nripen Ch Das, Director of Horticulture and Food Processing, Assam, in the presence of Kumud Haloi, Assistant Director of Agriculture, and Nipom Jyoti Dutta, Agricultural Development Officer from Khanapara, Guwahati, who also served as the technical expert for the session.

The programme began with a formal welcome and introduction of Agricultural Development Officers (ADOs), Agriculture Extension Assistants (AEAs), and participating farmers.

In his address, ADO Nipom Jyoti Dutta com-

mended the Dhubri Agriculture Office for initiating the programme and highlighted the state government's commitment to promoting protected cultivation practices.

District Agricultural Officer Azim Ahmed expressed gratitude to the attending farmers and urged them to take full advantage of the inputs already distributed under the HMNEH scheme, such as shed nets, UV films, and mulching materials.

A key highlight of the event was a technical session by Nipom Jyoti Dutta, who shared knowledge gained from advanced training in Israel. His presentation covered poly house design, crop selection, best practices for yield maximisation, and the cultivation of high-value crops like capsicum and tomato.

Director Nripen Ch Das assured farmers that high-quality saplings of selected crops would be provided to those adopting protected cultivation in the district.

The event saw participation from several senior agriculture officials, including Mrinal Kanti Kachary (Assistant Director of Agriculture, Dhubri), Amzad Hussain (Sub-Divisional Agricultural Officer, Bilasipara), and ADOs Sunny Gogoi, Hemanga Das, Hiranaya Jyoti Baruah, Nayanjyoti Sarma, Deepjyoti Das, and Raktim Bhagwati.

The initiative marks a significant step toward modernising horticulture in Dhubri district and aligns with the broader objective of achieving sustainable agricultural development and doubling farmer incomes. The information was provided in an official statement.

Morigaon hosts joint meeting of NGOs on disaster preparedness and management

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, July 5: A joint general meeting of voluntary organisations under the banner of the District Inter-Agency Group was held in Morigaon on Saturday, with a focus on disaster preparedness and management.

The event was organised in collaboration with the Morigaon District Disaster Management Authority and took place at the office of the Morigaon Zila Gramya Puthibharal Santha.

The meeting was chaired by District Inter-Agency Group Chairman Mahendra Saikia and

saw participation from various stakeholders involved in grass-roots-level disaster mitigation efforts. District Commissioner Anamika Tewari attended the meeting as the chief guest.

In his address, Pratap Hazarika, President of the All Assam Gramya Puthibharal Santha, raised concern over recurring natural disasters in the region, particularly floods and landslides. He appealed to the district administration to provide specialised training to NGO workers to enable them to assist more effectively during such emergencies.

The meeting was moderated by

District Inter-Agency Group Secretary Balladev Nath and was attended by several dignitaries including Additional District Commissioner Anusuya Sharma, Morigaon Zila Gramya Puthibharal Santha President Ramesh Chandra Kakati, and farmer leader Tulsi Deka.

Speaking on the occasion, Deka emphasised the importance of collective action in addressing natural disasters. He noted that many challenges can be resolved effectively when NGOs and administrative agencies work together in a coordinated manner.

Morning walker group's eco-drive gains national recognition, inspires citizens to combat climate change locally

Swima Athing Group conducts plantation drive in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 5: The Swima Athing Group (SAG), also known as "The Active Leg of Kokrajhar", organised a plantation drive along the Golden Jubilee Road near the Railway Flyover in Kokrajhar on Saturday.

The initiative was carried out with the support of the Green Bodoland Mission, with the aim of reviving and expanding the district's green cover.

The event was held under the theme "Let's have a plan to plant trees for a greener world", and called upon citizens to actively contribute towards combating global warming through tree plantation.

The programme was inaugurated by the Director of the Green Bodoland Mission, Manaranjan Das, who planted the first sapling.

In his address, Das stated that the Green Bodoland Mission was initiated at the behest of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Pramod Boro with the goal of restoring the region's ecological balance.



He informed that the mission has been actively supporting NGOs, clubs, and societies across the region with saplings, protective materials, and manure for plantation activities.

In Kokrajhar district alone, support has been extended to 110 clubs and societies, including financial assistance for maintenance to those who demonstrated suc-

cessful implementation.

"Planting trees is a noble and globally encouraged act. We all have a responsibility to contribute as citizens in the fight against climate change," Das said.

Speaking to the media, SAG Secretary Ajit Kumar Basumatary highlighted that the group was established in 2022 and comprises morning walkers from various pro-

fessional backgrounds, including professors, doctors, journalists, lawyers, teachers, entrepreneurs, cine artists, and government employees.

He stated that the group was formed with the aim of promoting healthy living, cleanliness, and environmental consciousness through regular plantation drives.

Basumatary shared that SAG's consistent efforts were recognised at the national level.

"Our initiatives reached the Chief Minister's Office and the Prime Minister's Office in 2022. Prime Minister Narendra Modi acknowledged our work during his popular radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat' and invited us to attend the grand celebration of its 100th episode at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, in 2023," he said.

He also added that he was subsequently invited to the Republic Day celebration in New Delhi in 2024. He affirmed that the Swima Athing Group will continue its activities with the same dedication and commitment to a cleaner and greener Kokrajhar.

Justice eludes family one year after murder of Singpho youth in Margherita

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, July 5: A year after the brutal murder of 18-year-old Gamrin Maket, a student from the indigenous Singpho community in Tinsukia district, the family's wait for justice continues, with local organisations renewing their demand for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry into the case.

According to an official statement from the Tirap Autonomous District Council Demand Committee (TADCDC), Maket's body was discovered hanging on the verandah of St Paul School in Udaipur, under Lekhapani Police Station, on the morning of August 1, 2024—his hands and legs bound.

The circumstances surrounding his death sparked widespread suspicion of foul play.

Gamrin, the only son of farmers Chantret and Jangko Maket from Khumchai Namo Gaon, was a Class 10 student at the school.

His death, described by the TADCDC as a "cold-blooded murder," has seen little investigative progress despite multiple appeals to authorities.

TADCDC General Secretary and spokesperson Pallab Shyam Wailung stated, "This was no suicide. Gamrin's hands and legs were tied, yet the post-mortem report claimed it was self-inflicted. We believe the case is being diluted under pressure from influential quarters."

The case (No. 0038/24) was registered under sections 61(1)/103(1)/238/106, 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

However, the investigation has come under scrutiny for delays, inconsistencies, and alleged lack of



forensic re-examination.

The murder triggered protests in Margherita, including road blockades and burning of tyres, demanding justice.

Multiple civil society organisations extended support, but no arrests have been made so far.

The TADCDC submitted a memorandum to Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, seeking a high-level judicial inquiry led by a retired Gauhati High Court judge and a re-examination of the post-mortem report.

The group also called for compensation of ₹1 crore for the victim's family and the invocation of provisions under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

Wailung alleged that the failure to register atrocity-related charges has denied tribal families their rights. "One year has passed, and Gamrin's parents are still waiting for justice. The Singpho community in both Assam and Arunachal Pradesh is united in their demand for accountability," he said.

He further drew parallels with past unresolved crimes, including

the murder of TADCDC activist Prasanna Turung and his wife in 2007, whose bodies remain unrecovered.

"This pattern of impunity reflects systemic neglect of crimes against tribal communities," Wailung added.

The family and the broader Singpho community, known for its agrarian traditions and presence across Margherita and Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh, are still reeling from the loss.

Wailung described Chief Minister Sarma as a "dynamic leader" and appealed to him to take decisive action to deliver justice.

The TADCDC has announced plans to intensify protests if their demands remain unfulfilled.

"We will not rest until the perpetrators are brought to book and Gamrin's family receives closure," Wailung said.

As the first anniversary of Gamrin Maket's death approaches, the call for a CBI inquiry grows louder, with community members vowing to keep the fight alive until justice is served.

Editor's pick

A precarious world order

By: Harsh V. Pant & Vivek Mishra

For anyone who is piqued by US President Donald Trump's deceptive diplomacy, where 'strategic ambiguity' is a policy choice, his volte face on North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) offers key insights. During the recently-held NATO summit in The Hague, perhaps the biggest development was Trump's metamorphosed views that NATO remains relevant for the US. A strong signal from the NATO countries that its European members have reached a near unison on spending close to 5% of their GDP on defence, compelling a change of heart in Trump. In what has been seen as very encouraging by member countries, Trump referred to NATO as not a 'rip off' anymore and reaffirmed US' commitment to it. These developments provided a positive appraisal of the transatlantic relations, especially against the stark background of a consistent broadside since the beginning of the second Trump administration, inflicted by Vice President JD Vance's Munich Security Conference speech earlier this year. Whether this sentiment from the Oval Office will remain consistent for the remainder of Trump's term may be anyone's guess but the Hague summit's new promise on burden sharing across the Atlantic is historic and marks a new era in NATO's evolution as a leading collective security organisation.

The Hague defence commitment this year promises to increase defence spending by NATO member countries to 5% of GDP by 2035, out of which 3.5% will be allocated to core defence needs and the rest to related aspects of security such as infrastructure, intelligence, cybersecurity, etc. By the end of this year, NATO expects all allies to meet or exceed at least 2% of GDP expenditure on defence. These commitments are broadly distributed across three domains—deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security.

Perhaps the single most important trend coming out of the Hague summit was how Europe's intentions to spend more on collective defence resonated with global spending trends. Beside political signalling and repercussions for transatlantic ties, the NATO summit this year is reflective of a broader trend – the surge in global defence spending. Compared to the Cold War period between 1970-1990, global defence spending as a percentage of GDP halved from 3.6% to 1.9% between 2010-2019. This trend, however, is reversing rapidly, with global military expenditures crossing \$2700 billion in 2024. In 2024, global defence spending, which increased by more than 8% and was backed by augmented European commitments, is likely to scale further. While much of this trend has been churned and fuelled by the ongoing wars in Europe and the Middle East, the former's aim for an ambitious defence package through its ReArm Europe or Readiness 2030 plan and the US' decision to increase its defence budget to almost \$1 trillion may hasten the end of the 'era of the peace dividend'.

Trump's report card that the summit was 'a very historic milestone' and the Hague defence commitment, 'a monumental win for the United States...and a big win for Europe,' seems to suggest that Europe may have been able to put behind one of the most nagging issues that marred transatlantic ties in recent months—defence spending. As such, the Hague summit this year provides the opportunity to mark new European imprint on the NATO in several ways. The allies' step up in their financial commitments towards boosting collective defence may be Europe's moment of renaissance in restoring the transatlantic politico-security equilibrium. Besides, the ability to spend more by NATO members could also mean greater leverage in deciding the course of such expenditure. For instance, in the context of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, Europe's trajectory would have been completely different, had NATO members been spending at 5% of their GDPs on defence. The other question for Europe, as for the US, is managing fiscal sustainability and nursing high levels of public debt internally alongside increased spending on defence and security.

Despite a positive appraisal by Trump and increased defence spending, Europe's woes are far from over. The Hague defence commitment takes a long arc in seeking to achieve the stated 5% mark with some countries like Spain and Italy remaining somewhat sceptic. Riding on these concerns is Trump's inconsistency and unpredictability, which could hyphenate Washington's other impediments apropos of Europe, with its collective security commitments and the lack thereof, bringing ties back to the drawing board.

The Hague summit spurred a critical moment in the evolution of NATO and collective security. Trump's ire, after all, is not seen as a negative development for Europe entirely, but rather a jolt that Brussels needed. However, by aligning itself with the world more closely with increased defence spending, Europe may well be on its course to change its image as a peaceful continent—an image led by a vibrant economic union like no other.

At the global level, these changes converge with NATO's emerging intent to pivot eastward and deepen engagement with countries in the Indo-Pacific, albeit not directly in the realm of defence and security. While Trump may have framed NATO's budget realignments as a victory for the US, the political, security, and economic recalibrations underway within the alliance could significantly reshape NATO's profile, particularly from a European standpoint. Over the next decade, efforts to consolidate transatlantic security are likely to reverberate along opposing axes, with China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea coordinating strategies to counter the West. NATO's growing defence expenditure is poised to intensify a range of geopolitical dynamics in the years ahead—chief among them being escalating great power competition, rapid innovation in defence and technology, and the deepening fracture of the world order. (Courtesy: ORF)

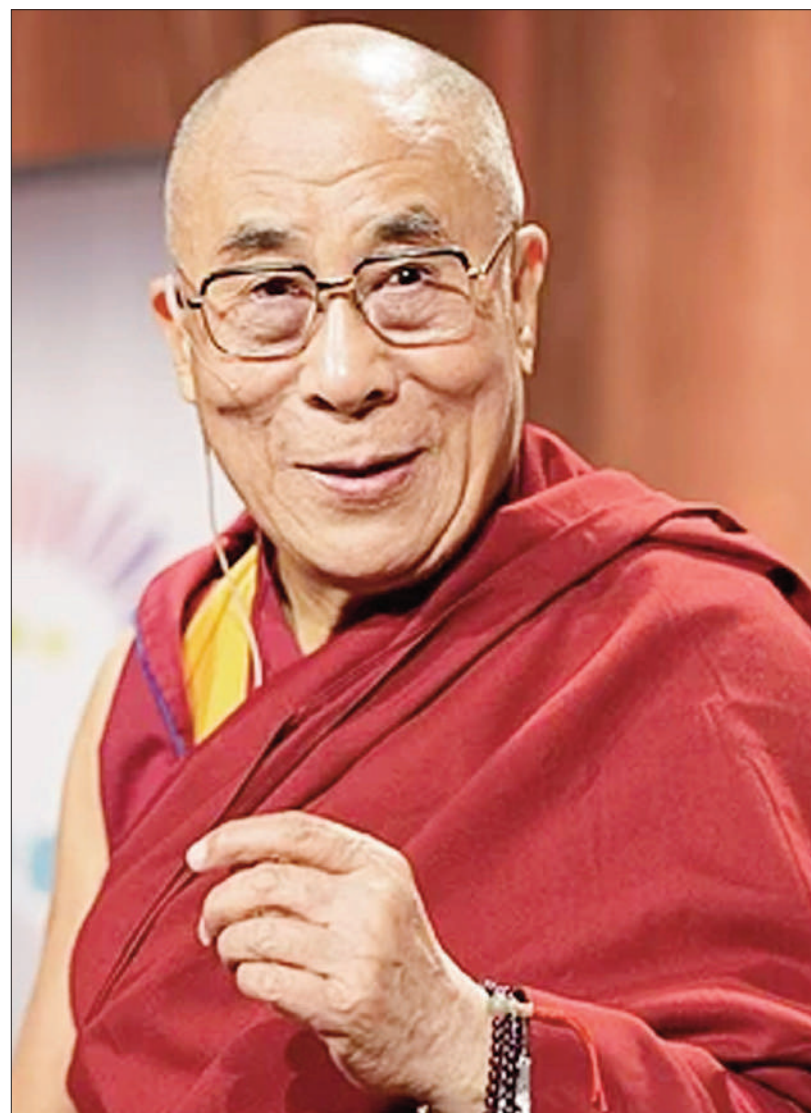
His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama reinstates hope and freedom on his 90th birthday

By: Novanita Sharma

His Holiness Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso, the Great 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet is one of the most beloved and revered spiritual Gurus of the modern world. An ardent messenger of Gautam Buddha's teachings, His Holiness is one of greatest humanitarian world leaders whose commitment to non-violence and universal harmony has been the strongest proponent of peace and dialogue in the 21st century. Now, the spiritual head of the Tibetan people, his life events are significant milestones in the history of Tibet. From his enthronement as the spiritual head of Tibet in 1940 when he was five years old, to becoming the temporal head of Tibetan people in 1950 in the wake of communist Chinese aggressions, and then his miraculous exodus to India amidst the largest Tibetan uprising against the Chinese annexation in March 1959, his exiled life in India thereafter, and his visionary mission for giving spiritual and political leadership to Tibetans in their struggle to gain self-determination and freedom of Tibet has drafted a remarkable facade of modern history of the Tibetan people. Under his tutelage, the Tibetan culture and religion has found a new lease of life in India and the free world outside Tibet.

His Holiness has unfailingly engaged the world with his motherland Tibet, and the predicament of six million Tibetans facing the forceful occupation of Tibet by the communist People's Republic of China since 1950s. Every decision and life event of the 14th Dalai Lama has directed Tibet in a course of history, be it the global significance of his thoughts and teachings, his worldwide followers who supports the Tibetan cause, his progressive religious reforms within the Tibetan Buddhism, the introduction of democracy in Tibetan political structure, his global recognitions like the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, his retirement from the political leadership of Tibet in 2011, and the recently declared framework for his succession amidst his 90th birthday celebration in 2025 marks a significant chronology of events that directed the future of Tibetans as well as the followers of Tibetan Buddhism in India, China, other parts of the world and also the world community at large.

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama officially announced his affirmation for the continuation of the Dalai Lama institution on 2nd July 2025, four days ahead of his 90th birthday celebration worldwide. In this much awaited declaration, he addressed the anticipated interference of communist China in the future selection of the reincarnated 15th Dalai Lama by authorizing the Gaden Phodrang Trust, the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama with exclusive rights to identify and select the future Dalai Lama. He thwarted outside interferences by reiterating that the Gaden Phodrang Trust has sole authority to recognize the future reincarnation; no one else has any such authority to interfere in this matter. His Holiness poured his benevolent blessings and hope for Tibetans, his followers, and the entire humanity with this declaration



by putting an end to years of speculations about his decision on his reincarnation and future of the Dalai Lama tradition of Tibet, he had earlier stated that "As far back as 1969, I made clear that concerned people should decide whether the Dalai Lama's reincarnations should continue in the future." He had also said "When I am about ninety, I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, to re-evaluate whether or not the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue."

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, the Bodhisattva of compassion is revered as the manifestation of Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig by Tibetans and his followers; he epitomises a living legacy of ancient India's Bodhisattva movement, and as he says Tibetan Buddhism derives from and preserves the authentic Nalanda tradition of India. His affirmation for continuation of the Dalai Lama institution after him is a matter of great happiness for all Indians, because Indian heritage of ancient knowledge, and Sanatana philosophy is inseparably connected with the glorious Nalanda tradition of ancient India. This declaration announcing the continuation of the 600 years old Dalai Lama tradition of Tibet gives hope to Tibetan youths and all supporters of the Tibetan freedom movement because Dalai Lama acts as

the most important uniting factor in the Tibetan culture, which is well reflected in the aura and influence of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama amongst all.

The 2nd July, 2025 declaration of His Holiness gives hope to the entire world, the believers, non-believers, and all sentient beings, because the Dalai Lama reincarnates with the vow to guide all sentient beings caught up in the delusional samsara of sufferings and ignorance to the path of Bodhicitta and nirvana. His Holiness had renounced his political leadership way back in 2011, but his decisions purely related to religion and spirituality continues to give a run for the communist Chinese government without fail. This declaration too had a prompt response from the Chinese government which rejected the succession plan declared by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama with its dubious claims over the religious matters of Tibet. This demonstrates the forceful and repressive policies of People's Republic of China on Tibet and Tibetan culture. The world could never forget the abduction of the 6 years old 11th Panchen Lama, Gendun Choki Nyima and his family in 1995 by the communist Chinese government, right after his recognition as the reincarnation of the second highest figure of Tibetan Buddhism by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. A different boy, Gyaincain Norbu was selected as the 11th Panchen

Lama of Tibet by the communist Chinese government the same year, and the whereabouts of the His Holiness Gedun Choki Nyima is not disclosed till date. The selection of 11th Panchen Lama by the Chinese government was immediately denounced by the 14th Dalai Lama in 1995; the Tibetan community and their world supporters continues to demand the communist Chinese government for information on the whereabouts of Gedun Choki Nyima and his family.

The world knows that communist China is ready to pounce with plans to interfere with the reincarnation of the 15th Dalai Lama with likely dual succession, as was practiced in the case of Panchen Lama in 1995. His Holiness put up a firm challenge for communist Chinese misadventures with his official plan of succession as stated in the declaration. This official plan of succession as provided by His Holiness will be tested for its strength when the time arrives, but the world leaders must make their moves in favour of His Holiness and Tibet while we arrive at that fateful time in history. In the meanwhile, the entire world, and most likely communist China will closely monitor India's stand on this succession plan of His Holiness.

It is to be remembered that India has always stood by the Tibetans despite the tricky geopolitical Sino-Indian scenario. India has been the epicentre of the peaceful Tibetan struggle for independence outside Tibet for decades, and His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama is revered by all Indians with utmost faith and love towards him. Indian citizens share an age-old cultural, religious, and regional kinship with the Tibetans; a very beautiful reflection of this bond is visible amongst the people of Assam and Northeast India who are connected with Tibet through the colourful Tsangpo-Siang-Brahmaputra civilization for ages, and people's forums like 'Free Tibet - a voice from Assam' has connected the people of both the countries in a civil society movement of Indian citizens demanding the complete freedom of Tibet. The much-debated issue of India's Tibet policy needs a greater understanding and sensibility because Indo-Tibetan relationship has always remained beyond politics and border. The Tibetans consider India as their Arya Bhumi, and India can never forget the timeless spiritual bond of 'Guru-Chela' shared between Bharat and Tibet.

I join the world in celebration of the glorious nine decades of His Holiness the Great 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, with prayers for his long life and return of His Holiness and his people to the land of snow lions. (The author is an environment activist and writer from Assam. She is an integral part of Nature's Beckon, a prominent environment activists' group of Northeast India, Buddhist Chetana Bharat, a forum for progressive growth of Sanatana Buddhist philosophy in Assam, and Free Tibet - a voice from Assam, a people's forum supporting the peaceful Tibetan freedom movement in Assam. She can be reached at sharmanovanita21@gmail.com)

A rural renaissance in Bodoland

By: Arpon Bhattacharjee & Nitiraj Saharia

Amteka from Borobazar Chirang, an otherwise nondescript VCDC (Village Council Development Committee) on the map of Bodoland is going through transformative changes. Changes that would pave the way for other villages to emulate and government and non-government agencies and professionals to draw learnings from this new paradigm of socio-economic development.

The changing times, marked by ever growing technological and economical advancements, the aspirations among the villagers are rising too esp among youths. Creating self-employment opportunities thus has become both a priority and an urgency, which the current BTR (Bodoland Territorial Region) Government under the energetic leadership of Pramod Boro is demonstrating, adding value and impetus to the broader imperative of Amrit Kaal in the country. Facilitated by Development fellows, a bunch of skilled professionals engaged by the Government under techno-strategic support from its partner TRI, the SHG women of the village were sensitized to first come together and map their individual and collective growth aspirations and plan accordingly. Emanating from democratic values of our nation, and the very nature of traditional village governance, "Participation" in planning, execution and monitoring, is embedded in the ethos of our rural culture which rightly informs rural development programs and policies in India. This is more so in the BTR region rooted in tribal collective values.

However, at an administrative operational level, ensuring participation and voice as well as getting the aspirations met has always been an intractable policy challenge. This has been addressed, albeit at a basic level as of now, through the processes of planning: Village Prosperity Resilience Planning (VPRP) and more importantly implementation of plans. At first there was an understandable aversion to such an exercise for good reasons, one that involves meetings and individual surveys with

the community, especially women. The simple reason is that while planning such as VPRP, GPDP (Gram Panchayat Development Plan) are carried out each year (often ritualistically), the actual realization on the ground has remained low. A natural consequence of this is diminished trust and morale of communities towards such processes. This has been addressed to a great extent.

The BTR Gov with P&RD Department as nodal has designed the program called Lakshpati Abo designed in congruence with the Central government initiative "Lakshpati Didi" to support the Abos or women and their



households to grow economically and in the process to enhance their social and political agency as well. Through the design of Lakshpati abo, the BTR government is sending out a message of its strong commitment to it's rural women and their households, to support them transition from "languishing" to "vibrant" and "flourishing", a process already underway with progressive policies and Governance. The program would pull resources from different departments under a convergence framework, already exploiting the provisions under sub-programs under P&RD department such as MGNREGA and DAY-NRLM to meet the supports demanded by the women.

For instance more than 12,000 category B

works are approved and construction underway, aiming to create durable individual livelihood-supporting assets mostly pertaining to smallholder livestock farming. Amteka is an epitome of such efforts with more than 100 livestock shelters for 50 SHG women for rearing of Goat, Pig and Poultry, being constructed, and with continued state support through MGNREGA, DAY-NRLM (Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission) and departmental convergence to facilitate access to resources, working capital and market, VCDCs like Amteka will see a significant surge in farmers transitioning to scientific farming of livestock and agriculture in general. This is creating self-employment opportunities in the region's flourishing agriculture-based nano and micro enterprises—driven not only by progressive policies and programs, but more importantly, by an unwavering commitment to grounding these policies in local realities. The development fellowship team is playing a critical role in plugging the gaps in the entire life-cycle of the program from designing, strategizing and implementation. The design of the programs such as Lakshpati abo with convergence of other initiatives such as Bodofa Livelihood Mission, women FPCs program and departmental programs is such that production of all products in an agricultural value chain (including livestock) is encouraged locally/regionally. For instance the local women FPCs are gearing up to meet the livestock feed and fodder demands in the region for which the farmers are overly dependent on the pricey products from the markets supplied by big market players.

Extrapolate the case of Amteka to the whole of Bodoland, and we will see a positive upsurge in the effective programmatic support to the rural communities, especially to the women folk to enhance their agricultural productivity and farm-gate price realisation of their produce. Thanks to the visionary leadership and effective governance, Bodoland is poised to see an explosion in the local agricultural production and changing farm and non-farm enterprise landscape in the near future.

One Health, One World - Importance of World Zoonoses Day

By: Vinod Chandrashekar Dixit

July 6 is observed as the World Zoonoses Day. Zoonosis is the spread of infectious disease from animals to humans. In case of vice versa, it is called reverse Zoonosis or Anthroponosis. The purpose of the day is to spread awareness of the risks of Zoonotic diseases.

The French biologist, Louis Pasteur, successfully administered the first vaccine against a Zoonotic disease on July 6, 1885. Since French biologist Louis Pasteur gave the first dose of the first vaccine against rabies, a zoonotic illness, on July 6, 1885, Zoonoses Day has been observed all over the world. Zoonotic diseases, commonly referred to as Zoonoses, are contagious illnesses brought on by pathogens that can spread from animals to people. These zoonotic germs can transmit through direct or indirect contact between animals and people. Humans can get Zoonotic viruses from their pets, from farm animals, from hunting, and butchering. It may even spread through an intermediary species. It does not just originate from wild animals like bats or monkeys.

The COVID-19 crisis has served to highlight just how critical the health of our ecosystems is for human well-being and sustainable development. The global COVID-19 pandemic has been a harsh reminder of the age-old threat posed by zoonoses or zoonotic diseases, infectious diseases transmitted from animals to humans. Sixty percent of human pathogens come from animals, while 75% of new, emerging and re-emerging diseases are zoonotic.

World Zoonoses Day to highlight the importance of the ongo-



ing work worldwide to prevent, detect, and pre-empt the spread of zoonotic pathogens, such as viruses. As there are various kinds of Zoonotic disease, the prevention and cure is also different. However, some of the practices like safe and appropriate guidelines for animal care in the agricultural sector can help to reduce the potential for foodborne zoonotic disease. Maintaining proper hygiene like doing hand-wash after contact with animals can reduce the community spread of zoonotic diseases. Having access to clean drinking water and proper waste removal are effective ways to reduce the spread of diseases. Vaccinating household pets and maintaining proper hygiene like washing your hands after close contact with animals can also help.

A positive relationships with pets can help in valuing relationships and also develops the quality of empathizing and compassion in children. Children should provide a healthy environment for their pets and also how they should protect themselves and reduce the risk

of zoonotic diseases, by washing hands before and after touching animals, managing feces, using flea and ticks preventives, vaccinating them regularly. It is reported that there are many people who even today lacks awareness regarding zoonotic diseases as we have also seen that many people were even hesitant to take vaccination for Covid-19. Therefore it is important to aware people about the importance of vaccination and correct treatment regards to zoonotic diseases. The way society interacts with animals has serious implications for global human health. People should take proper precautions while interacting with animals and should observe what we eat to avoid zoonotic diseases. Zoonotic diseases also transmits very fastly and if not treated can infect a large amount of people and it can be very dangerous for human lives. (The writer is a freelance journalist, columnist and cartoonist. A 7 times Limca Book of Record holder who can be reached at dixitptrakar@yahoo.in)

Chetan Bhagat's popular fiction and mass appeal

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Chetan Bhagat is one of the most popular writers in India. His books are read by millions of people. He writes in simple English, which makes it easy for everyone to understand his stories. His books mostly talk about young people, their dreams, love, friendships, and the problems they face in life. Many of his books have been made into Bollywood movies, which has made him even more famous.

Chetan Bhagat was born on April 22, 1974, in New Delhi, India. He studied at two of India's best colleges, IIT Delhi and IIM Ahmedabad. After finishing his studies, he worked as an investment banker. But he always wanted to write stories. So, he started writing in his free time. His first book, *Five Point Someone*, was published in 2004. It became a big success, and after that, he decided to leave his banking job to become a full-time writer.

His first book, *Five Point Someone*, was about three friends studying engineering in an IIT. The story showed their struggles with studies, friendships, and family expectations. Many students in India felt connected to this story because they face similar problems in real life. The book became very popular and was later made into the Bollywood film *3 Idiots*, which became one of the biggest hits in Indian cinema.

After the success of his first book, Chetan Bhagat continued writing more novels. His second book, *One Night @ the Call Center*, was published in 2005. It was about six people working in a call center and the problems they face in their jobs and personal lives. The story was different from his first book, but it also became a bestseller. This book was later adapted into the Bollywood movie *Hello*.

His third book, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*, was published in 2008. It was a story about three friends from Ahmedabad who start a small business together. The story also included themes of cricket, politics, and religion, which made it interesting for many readers. This book was later made into the Bollywood movie *Kai Po Che!*

In 2009, he published *2 States*, which was based on his own life. It was a love story about a Punjabi boy and a Tamil girl who fall in love but struggle to convince their families to accept their marriage. The book became a big hit, especially among young readers. Later, it was made into the Bollywood movie *2 States*.



riage. The book became a big hit, especially among young readers. Later, it was made into the Bollywood movie *2 States*, which also became very popular.

In 2011, Chetan Bhagat wrote *Revolution 2020*. This book was about three friends from Varanasi who have different dreams but face corruption, love problems, and personal struggles. The book focused on issues like education, politics, and the impact of corruption on young people. Many readers liked it because it talked about real problems in Indian society.

His next book, *Half Girlfriend*, came out in 2014. It was a love story about a boy from Bihar who struggles with English and falls in love with a rich girl from Delhi. The book was about how language and social class differences create barriers in relationships. The story was later made into a Bollywood movie of the same name.

Chetan Bhagat continued to write more books, including *One Indian Girl* (2016), which focused on the challenges faced by women in modern India, and *The Girl in Room 105* (2018), which was a thriller. His later books, like *One Arranged Murder* (2020), showed that he was willing to try different types of stories while keeping his simple and engaging writing style.

One of the main reasons for Chetan Bhagat's success is his simple way of writing. He uses easy English, which makes his books readable for many people, even those who are not very fluent in English. His books are also priced affordably, which means more people can buy them. Unlike many literary authors who write complex stories, Bhagat focuses on writing books that anyone can enjoy. His books have inspired many young people to start reading English novels, which is why he is often called "India's bestselling author."

Bhagat's books talk about real problems faced by young people in India. He writes about the pressure of studies, relationships, career struggles, and the challenges of middle-class life. These are issues that many people can relate to. Because of this, his books have a strong connection with readers, especially teenagers and young adults.

Another reason for his mass appeal is that many of his books have been turned into Bollywood movies. Since Bollywood has a huge fan following in India, these movies helped in making his stories even more popular. When people watched these films, they became interested in reading his books as well. This made him a household name across India.

However, not everyone praises Chetan Bhagat's writing. Some critics say that his books are too simple and do not have deep literary value. They argue that his stories are predictable and do not offer anything new to serious readers. Some people also feel that his books are more like Bollywood scripts than real literature. Despite these criticisms, Bhagat does not try to change his style. He believes that writing in simple language helps in making reading a habit for more people, especially those who are not used to reading books.

Bhagat's impact on Indian publishing has been huge. Before he became famous, most English books in India were

written by literary authors and were read by only a small section of society. But Bhagat changed this by proving that simple and entertaining stories can also become bestsellers. After his success, many new Indian authors started writing in a similar style, making English novels more accessible to common people.

Apart from being a writer, Chetan Bhagat is also a public speaker. He gives talks at colleges, corporate events, and television shows. He shares his thoughts on topics like education, career, and motivation. He also writes opinion pieces for newspapers, where he talks about social and political issues in India. Some people agree with his views, while others criticize him, but he continues to express his opinions on public platforms.

Chetan Bhagat has also been involved in Bollywood as a screenwriter. He has worked on the scripts of movies like *Kick* (2014) and *Chhichhore* (2019). His involvement in the film industry shows that his storytelling skills are not limited to books but extend to movies as well.

Despite the criticism he faces, Bhagat remains one of India's most popular writers. He has made reading a fun activity for many young people in India. His books are often the first novels that new readers pick up. For many people, he has played a big role in developing the habit of reading. Even though his books may not be considered "great literature," they are entertaining, easy to read, and relatable, which is why they continue to be bestsellers.

Chetan Bhagat's journey from being an investment banker to becoming India's most popular writer is inspiring. He has proved that one does not need to use difficult words or complex ideas to tell a good story. His books show that simple language and relatable themes can also make a deep impact.

In the coming years, Chetan Bhagat is likely to continue writing more books and expanding his influence. Whether people love him or criticize him, there is no doubt that he has changed the way Indians read English novels. His books may not be literary masterpieces, but they have given joy to millions of readers. And that is what makes him one of the most successful authors of our time. (The writer can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com or 9954812261, 9864000260)

Rudra: A bold leap for Assamese cinema

By: Mowsam Hazarika

In an era where regional cinema is carving out its space on the national stage, Rudra emerges as a daring Assamese action-drama that dares to push boundaries while staying true to its roots. Directed by Rupak Gogoi and powered by a commanding performance from Ravi Sharma, Rudra is a cinematic milestone that blends adrenaline-pumping action with the socio-cultural pulse of Assam. Though it stumbles at times, the film's ambition and heart make it a compelling watch and a beacon for the future of Assamese storytelling.

Fresh off the triumph of *Shri Raghupati*, Ravi Sharma steps into the titular role of Rudra with a performance that is both magnetic and deeply affecting. The story follows Rudra, a man forged in tragedy after a bomb blast claims his parents, propelling him into the Intelligence Bureau to combat terrorism. His mission leads him to infiltrate a rebel group led by the shadowy Dekaraj, but a botched operation costs him his best friend, Sankalp. Personal loss compounds his grief when his wife and child are presumed dead, sending Rudra into exile. Years later, a heroic act at a shopping mall pulls him back into the fray, reuniting him with his mentor, Adil Hussain (played with chilling nuance). The revelation that Adil is the mastermind of a terror network sets the stage for a gripping showdown, culminating in Rudra's quest for justice and a quiet return to family life.

Ravi Sharma is the soul of Rudra. His ability to balance raw physicality with emotional depth is nothing short of remarkable. Performing his own stunts—without a double—Sharma brings authenticity to the action sequences, from high-stakes chases to a breathtaking waterfall leap. His portrayal of Rudra's inner turmoil, especially in scenes of loss and redemption, anchors the film's emotional core. This is Sharma at his peak, proving he's not just a star but a versatile actor capable of carrying a film's weight.

Rupak Gogoi's direction reflects a fearless vision for Assamese cinema. He tackles complex themes—rebellion, extremism, and the alienation of Assamese migrants—with a sincerity that resonates. Rudra doesn't shy away from the Northeast's socio-political realities, weaving in the struggles of those caught in cycles of violence and displacement. Gogoi's commitment to cultural authenticity shines through in details like Vaishnavite rituals, Bhaona performances, and references to Gyaan Bayan, which ground the film in Assam's rich heritage without feeling

forced.

The supporting cast adds depth to the narrative. Adil Hussain's shift from ally to antagonist is both subtle and menacing, making his betrayal all the more impactful. Archita Prakash delivers a standout performance as a fierce, stereotype-defying comrade, while Nandini Kashyap, Mousam Kaushik Bordoloi, and Himangshu Gogoi lend quiet strength to the ensemble.

Technically, Rudra is a significant step forward for Assamese cinema. The action scenes, set against Assam's lush jungles and rugged terrains, are executed with flair, particularly the bike chases and explosive confrontations. However, the visual effects, while ambitious, occasionally betray the film's budget constraints, lacking the polish needed to fully realize its grand vision. The soundtrack, composed by Diganta Bharati and Ibshan Lal Barua, complements the film's highs but can feel intrusive during quieter moments, overshadowing the drama.

Where Rudra truly excels is in its cultural and social commentary. By addressing issues like child exploitation and the dreams of disillusioned rebels, the film grounds its high-stakes narrative in real-world truths. These elements give Rudra a soul, making it more than just an action spectacle—it's a reflection of Assam's complexities and resilience.

Yet, the film isn't flawless. The screenplay struggles with pacing, particularly in the second act, where transitions feel rushed or underdeveloped. Some action sequences, while visually striking, lean too heavily on stylization, sacrificing narrative cohesion for spectacle. The dialogue, at times, veers into melodrama, which undercuts the film's otherwise grounded tone.

Despite these hiccups, Rudra is a triumph of ambition. It signals that Assamese cinema can compete on a larger stage, blending regional identity with universal storytelling. Gogoi's direction, paired with Sharma's tour-de-force performance, makes Rudra a film that demands attention—not just for its entertainment value but for what it represents: a bold new chapter for Assam's cinematic legacy.

For those invested in the evolution of Indian regional cinema, Rudra is essential viewing. It's a thrilling, heartfelt, and occasionally imperfect journey that dares to dream big—and in doing so, paves the way for others to follow. (The writer is a poet, Science Writer, Sustainability Advocate, Former Director, Assam Seed & Organic Certification Agency, Ex-Joint Director of Agriculture, Assam)

Poem

About Breath

By: Otteri Selva Kumar

voice	I am
Wait for	So silence
My Breath	
I am ecstatic	This time
My Breath	My breath is dancing
Sounds a lot	With me
	Music of the Universal
What did it look like?	
In making my breath?	I am just sitting.
	More Watching
I am looking	My Breath
With a silence	Very cute
In Depth	Peace and Faithful
	With love
Waves of	With peace
Feelings stop now	
Internal exceptions	

My Rage, Chiding, Reconciliation

By: Bipul Chandra Kalita

My rage, chiding, reconciliations..
All are creatively planned,
Sensitively looked after,
Oft carefully used
To put on tracks only misled guys;
Those who violate any principle
Of nobility
Of reality
Must face my solemn rage
Whenever and wherever
Crazily and passionately,
I hold fast to
What I believe to be true and beautiful!

My scoldings put wrong-doers on the pyre of repentance,
Its purifying fire burns mistakes and sins;
Many a pyre used to be arranged
To spiritualize me,
My tormented heart and confused mind.

Undoubtedly, my anger harms nobody, I know;
Before solemnizing others, it bleeds my wisdom,
Questioning my conscience
Why I dare try to repair any distorted counterpart
Even in any unscientific laboratory of life;
It prepares me for facing strong retaliation,
And teaches me a variety of lessons
Sometimes, it makes me cry,
Brings me heavenly bliss,
And sportingly, I think, hurts me,
Giving me the taste of ungratefulness...

Poet and mother Putul Deuri inspired Navamallika's literary sensibility

By: Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee

Mothers sometimes are the inspiration for their child. Poet and writer Putul Choudhury Deuri is the mother of Navamallika Deuri. I never read her books earlier. I never knew Navamallika Deuri was the daughter of a renowned female writer of Assam, Putul Choudhury Deuri. She hails from Barpeta of Assam. Putul Deuri's husband Jitendranath Deuri who died earlier was also a teacher. Her father Debendranath Chowdhury was her first inspiration to choose the profession of a teacher. Her mother took care of her daughter's literary interest and education. She graduated from Boloji College in Sanskrit but she did her Masters in Assamese from Gauhati University. She was the Life Member of Asom Sahitya Sabha and taught Assamese in Musalpur HS school till her retirement. Her literary debut occurred with Malancha a book of poetry in 2015. Her second book was a collection of Essays Sradhaban Lavote Gyanam (2017) which was followed by her third publication Changdou Palvi Buddha Mandir (2018) and even in the Covid years she published her story collection Onyo Ek Jatinga (2019). Her literary contribution which was her fifth book was awarded, 'Eti Bhavor Pendulum' was launched in the BiAnnual event of Baska Satadal branch literary Conference.

Navamallika writes regularly in Assamese newspapers on contemporary issues related to man, nature and literature. Recently I read her short stories published in 'Asomiya Khabar', 'Bumonar Mekuri Puwali', 'Sumkir Chagoli Duta' (published in Chotalor Pokhilar Nirbachito Sishu Galpo). Navamallika is an affectionate teacher and she misses her students when they leave school after their class X exams. She writes Ananya, Farhana, Bidisha, Jubli, Janhavi, Xommani and Tanusree will miss you all when she will leave the school. This is a motherly feeling of a poetic minded teacher. She loves them and teaches them everyday the values of life. She finds in them material for her creativity. She loves Little Flower School and their cultural activities. Girls are the assets of a developing society. One girl child can transform the whole family later as a mother or daughter or sister. Educating a girl child is a big task and Navamallika is doing that everyday. She being the daughter of a writer inherits the literary sensibility and tries to cultivate it in her busy schedule of daily life. Her tribute to her mother 'Swargadipi Goriyoshi' in the collection of Dhruvajyoti Sharma begins with the quote from Abraham Lincoln, "I remember my mother's prayers and they have followed me. They have clung to me, my entire life. This comment is true about her own life. She



writes all these in her own article published in that volume. These are all lessons for her students and friends on social media. She uses her social media platform for promoting her high and noble ideals. At one point if the essay she writes. The very word mother brings to our eyes the image of concrete beauty of affection.

Navamallika focuses on the family values, mother-daughter relation which all daughters should cherish all their life for their proper mental and psychological growth. Her writings in Sotalor Pakhila reveal her insight into child mind and thoughts. I loved her write up 'Rongare Rongin Rimlir Janmadin'. She is also a serious critic and reviewer of literature. Her views are thought-provoking and her analysis commands respect from eminent writers. She is a no less chronicler of As-

samese rural life. I read one of her articles on Thakurvila which is a little village situated at the border of Assam and Meghalaya in the Goalpara district. Here, she focuses on the life of a brave woman Birubala Rabha who fought all her life against rural superstitions especially witch hunting. She got Padma Shri award for her contribution. This is how Navamallika promotes good thinking and value oriented education. Sometimes she writes on Bhabendranath Saikia, the eminent writer of Assam whose Midas touch transformed all the dross of life into gold. She writes on topical issues like World Health Day or International Women's Day in newspapers.

These days many such young writers are constantly contributing to literature but they do not get recognition from the society. They write not for money not for recognition but

write from their deeper heart and a greater respect for human values and life. They focus the great things of the society. They focus the ideal life of the great people even if they are not much known. Assam is a land of great saga of female heroism and creativity. Writers like Navaallika Deuri or Putul Chowdhury Deuri are few among them. I read the poem Shila which I still regard as one of the best poems inked by poet Navamallika Deuri whose aesthetic sense inspired the philosophical in her writing I translated it as 'Obelisk'. The philosophic depth of thinking is amazing for me till today. The lines still are engraved in my memory. 'The monolith seemed silhouetted in a soliloquy./ How's life and what about the kaleidoscopic Rainbow/ Life muttered in whispers/to the Obelisk's ears/ Go on a deeper probeand see how all inhere in you. These wonderful lines on a piece of stone made me curious about Navamallika Deuri who is a regular writer in Assamese newspapers and magazines. But for a long time I did not know that she hails from a literary minded family.

No tribute to their creativity is enough. Literature now a days is becoming an arena for material competition and professional rivalry. But those who write for creating pure literature from their pure and holy urge of the soul deserve respect. They have a value based lifestyle where the family people have a great role. Mother is a big word. Noble writers of the rural areas are never lost from their literary horizon. Navamallika proves again and again what an ideal teacher can do for the society. Children are our future. It is a duty for the parents to nourish them in the proper way. But this is no less a responsibility for a teacher. Best teachers are those who inspire. Navamallika as a teacher inspires her students. Wordsworth wants to be a teacher all his life. All teachers are not poets but all ideal poets are teachers. Navamallika uses each and every platform for her creativity and even outside her school she remembers that a teacher has to contribute to the development of the child mind who are our future for the society. We are need of people using the social platforms for propagating ideals which nourish a positive mind. Navamallika in her stories for the children encourages imaginative mind, their psychological sanity and value based education. This is a difficult task in this materialistic society. Navamallika writes especially for the girl child. She knows they are the priority for her literary self. So in her short stories for children she always makes the girl child her protagonist. (The writer is an International Tagore Awardee poet and a former affiliate faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University and a columnist. He can be reached at profdratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com)

Dree festival celebrated with grandeur in Arunachal

Minister Biyuram Wahge urges youth to Uphold Traditions and Unity



HT Correspondent

ZIRO, July 5: The 36th edition of the Hong Dree Festival, a vibrant celebration of the agricultural traditions of the Apatani community, was held with great fervour and cultural splendour at Hanoko Dree Ground in Hong village, Lower Subansiri district.

The event, which forms a central part of the annual Dree celebrations observed across Arunachal Pradesh and other parts of the country, brought together people from all walks of life in a colourful display of tradition, unity, and community spirit.

According to an official statement, the festival saw enthusiastic participation from the Apatani community and was marked by traditional rituals, cultural performances, food stalls, and public addresses by prominent leaders and community representatives.

Health and Family Welfare & WRD Minister Biyuram Wahge, who was the chief guest, addressed the mammoth gathering, lauding the Apatani people for preserving

their age-old customs through festivals like Dree.

Speaking at the gathering, Minister Wahge stressed the importance of maintaining the mythology and cultural legacy rooted in the Apatani era.

He expressed admiration for the way the Apatani community has continued to celebrate Dree with devotion, discipline, and cultural integrity.

"Festivals like Dree are a reflection of our shared identity. They not only connect us to our ancestors but also inspire unity among different tribes," he remarked.

In a strong message to the youth, Wahge appealed for the promotion of a "Pan-Arunachal" mindset to ensure lasting peace and social harmony in the state.

"It is the responsibility of the younger generation to preserve our traditions while fostering unity across all tribal communities," he said.

On the health front, Wahge shared a sobering insight: Arunachal Pradesh currently re-

ports the highest number of female cancer cases in India, while Mizoram tops the chart for male cancer prevalence.

In light of this pressing health concern, the minister informed the public that the state government, under the leadership of chief minister Pema Khandu, has decided to establish a dedicated Cancer Hospital at Yupia in Papum Pare district.

"This hospital will provide affordable and timely treatment, reducing the burden on families who currently have to travel out of the state," he added.

The Minister also highlighted the importance of maintaining inter-community harmony.

Recalling his participation in the Nyishi-Apatani Summit of 2015, he called upon the Arunachal Indigenous Tribes Forum (AITF) and community-based organisations (CBOs) to continue fostering communal amity and understanding.

Several other dignitaries also addressed the crowd during the cele-

bration.

Among them were Mutchu Mithi, MLA and Advisor to the Minister for Home and Education; Hayeng Mangfi, MLA and Advisor to the Minister for WRD; Tarh Tabin, Vice President (HQ) of AITF; Chairman of the 36th Hong Dree Festival Celebration Committee, Takhe Taling; and Secretary Tapi Habung.

Each of them emphasised the value of preserving cultural heritage and promoting social cohesion.

As part of the celebrations, prizes and trophies were awarded to winners of cultural, literary, and sporting competitions.

Academic achievers of Classes X and XII, as well as successful candidates in prestigious examinations like the UPSC Civil Services, were also felicitated.

In a gesture aimed at promoting education, two bicycles were distributed to top-performing students of Government Secondary School, Hong, and PM Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Abasiya Vidyalaya, Siro.

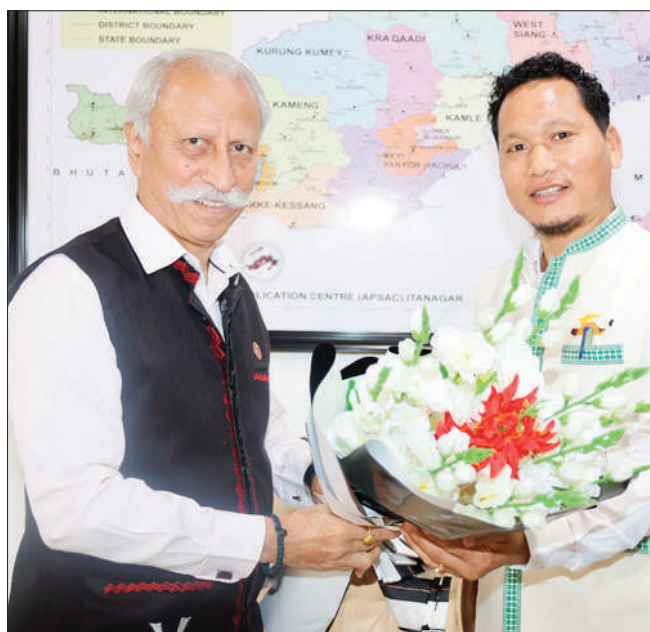
The initiative was carried out by the Punyo Kaya Manu Foundation, which has made this annual distribution a key highlight of the Dree festivities.

Visitors were also treated to a cultural extravaganza, with traditional dances, musical performances, and over a dozen food stalls showcasing the culinary richness of the region.

The celebration created a festive atmosphere that reflected not only the Apatani community's deep agricultural roots but also its commitment to inclusivity and shared progress.

The Dree Festival, with its strong emphasis on fertility, community wellbeing, and ancestral reverence, continues to be one of the most cherished and unifying celebrations in Arunachal Pradesh's cultural calendar.

Governor urges people-centric cooperative movement



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, July 5: In a significant development for the co-operative sector in Arunachal Pradesh, the Chairman of the Arunachal Pradesh State Cooperative Union (APSCU), Nabam

Tahi Nekil, along with his team, called on the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt. General KT Parnaik (Retd), PVSM, UYSM, YSM, at Raj Bhavan on Saturday to discuss the present challenges, opportunities, and future roadmap for cooperative societies in the state.

According to an official statement, the meeting focused on the evolving landscape of the cooperative movement, the need to empower grassroots institutions, and ways to enhance the reach and effectiveness of cooperative societies across Arunachal Pradesh.

The Governor, while welcoming the delegation, emphasised

the need for the cooperative movement to transform into a truly people-centric initiative rooted in collective ownership and mutual benefit.

He noted that such a transformation would not only foster community-driven development but also play a critical role in building self-reliance in rural areas.

Highlighting the importance of market access for Arunachal's surplus agricultural and horticultural produce, the Governor pointed out the need to establish more warehouses and cold storage facilities across the state.

He particularly stressed the strategic use of Hollongi and Tezu airports as export gateways to expand market opportunities beyond state borders, thereby boosting farmers' income and reducing post-harvest losses, especially for perishable goods.

Aligning his views with the vi-

sion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a robust and inclusive cooperative sector, the Governor urged APSCU to focus on nurturing grassroots cooperatives and promoting self-sufficiency at the village level.

He reiterated that cooperatives must function as vital engines of inclusive socio-economic growth and should be strengthened through collective participation and sustained institutional support.

During the meeting, Nabam Tahi Nekil apprised the Governor of the various issues being faced by cooperative societies, including administrative bottlenecks, lack of infrastructure, and limited outreach. He also presented a report on the recently concluded 27th District Cooperative Union tour, which documented field observations, achievements, and areas requiring urgent policy attention.

The Governor, who listened attentively to the concerns raised by the delegation, assured them of his full support and promised to take up relevant matters with the State Government to facilitate appropriate action.

He noted that a unified and committed approach involving government, cooperatives, and local communities was essential for revitalising the sector.

Among those present at the meeting were Bengia Chuma, Tachi Azad, Soai Kri, and Toko Saha, who also contributed to the discussion on ways to strengthen cooperative frameworks at the district and state levels.

The interaction is being seen as a step forward in renewing institutional focus on cooperatives as a cornerstone of rural economic development in Arunachal Pradesh.

APSCS&T chairman makes maiden visit to Centre of Excellence in Kimin

HT Correspondent

KIMIN, July 5: In a landmark visit aimed at reinforcing the state's focus on science-led sustainable development, Tage Taki, Chairman of the Arunachal Pradesh State Council for Science & Technology (APSCS&T), undertook his first official tour of the DBT-APSCS&T Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Bioresources and Sustainable Development at Kimin.

He was accompanied by Er CD Mungyak, Director-cum-Member Secretary of APSCS&T.

According to an official statement, the visit marked a significant milestone in the promotion of research, innovation, and resource-based economic development in Arunachal Pradesh. Tage Taki was warmly received at the Dr API Abdul Kalam Conference Hall, where Project Director Dr Debajit Mahanta and his team of scientists presented a detailed overview of the Centre's ongoing initiatives and strategic vision.

The Centre of Excellence, a first-of-its-kind facility under any State Science & Technology Council in the North Eastern Region, is at the forefront of harnessing the state's immense biodiversity for scientific research and the development of sustainable livelihoods.

The project is supported under

the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, and focuses on areas such as conservation biology, medicinal and aromatic plants, microbial bioresources, indigenous germplasm, and bioinformatics.

During the tour, Tage inspected the Centre's state-of-the-art laboratories and interacted directly with researchers to understand the scientific progress and challenges in realising the CoE's vision.

He also visited the Orchidarium, which serves as a key site for the conservation and study of Arunachal Pradesh's rich orchid biodiversity.

The Chairman praised the facility's multi-disciplinary approach and its alignment with both environmental stewardship and economic advancement.

"The future lies in harnessing our natural wealth through science and innovation. Arunachal Pradesh, with its unparalleled bioresources, is poised to lead this movement in the North-East," he stated during his address to the scientific community.

Tage further underscored the importance of translating lab-based research into practical, market-ready solutions that contribute to self-reliance, entrepreneurship, and rural development.

He called on the Centre to accelerate efforts toward the develop-

ment of value-added products and services that could be commercialised within the next two years.

"Our youth deserve opportunities to build careers in science and green entrepreneurship. Centres like this must be at the forefront of that effort," he remarked.

The Chairman also commended the vision of his predecessor in establishing the Centre in Kimin, describing the location as "serene and scientifically conducive" for high-quality research.

He lauded the dedication of the scientific staff and encouraged them to continue pushing the frontiers of knowledge while also engaging local communities in conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Gyamar Reeta, accounts officer, who reaffirmed the Centre's commitment to scientific innovation and inclusive development.

She noted that the CoE would continue to work in close coordination with stakeholders across sectors to unlock the potential of Arunachal Pradesh's rich biodiversity for long-term ecological and economic benefits.

The visit has further bolstered the state government's resolve to position Arunachal Pradesh as a leading hub for bioresource-based innovation and sustainable development in the Northeast region.

Arunachal launches Palm Oil plantation drive and custom hiring center to empower farmers

HT Correspondent

BANDERDEWA, July 5: In a major push towards agricultural self-reliance and rural economic development, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh recently inaugurated a Custom Hiring Center (CHC) and launched a Mega Oil Palm Plantation Programme at Gorubanda in Banderdewa, Papum Pare district.

The initiative marks a significant milestone in the state's implementation of the National Mission on Edible Oil – Oil Palm (NMEOP), aimed at expanding oil palm cultivation and reducing India's dependence on edible oil imports.

According to an official statement, the event was held in the presence of Agriculture & Allied Minister Gabriel D Wangsu, who attended as Chief Guest.

Zilla Parishad Chairperson of Papum Pare, Nabam Yakum, graced the occasion as Guest of Honour. The programme brought together farmers, government officials, private sector partners, and local stakeholders in a show of collective commitment to transform the agricultural landscape of the region.

The newly inaugurated Custom Hiring Center is expected to play a vital role in providing farmers with affordable and easy access to modern agricultural machinery.

This initiative, officials said, will not only enhance productivity but also address the labour challenges often faced by small and marginal farmers.

The center is envisioned as a farmer-friendly hub that reduces the cost of cultivation and pro-



notes mechanised farming practices. Simultaneously, the launch of the Mega Oil Palm Plantation Programme reflects the state government's strategic plan to increase the acreage of oil palm cultivation under the NMEOP.

Arunachal Pradesh has identified significant potential for oil palm farming across multiple districts, including Papum Pare, and aims to contribute substantially to the national edible oil mission.

Minister Wangsu, in his address, encouraged the farmers of Papum Pare to embrace oil palm cultivation with seriousness and diligence.

He reiterated the state government's full support, both technical and financial, to ensure the success of the programme.

"This is a high-potential sector that can transform rural livelihoods and generate long-term income for our farmers. I urge all farmers to stay informed, take initiative, and utilise the facilities provided under this mission," the minister said.

The programme also featured active involvement from Patanjali Food Ltd., the private partner in this public-private collaboration. Patanjali has been playing a

leading role in promoting oil palm cultivation in the Northeast, setting up nurseries, providing planting materials, and investing in oil processing infrastructure.

DGM Pankaj Kumar Tripathi of Patanjali emphasized the company's commitment to working closely with farmers and the government to make Arunachal Pradesh a model state for oil palm production.

ZPC Nabam Yakum, while addressing the gathering, called on farmers to seriously absorb the knowledge shared in awareness programmes and translate it into practice. She also appealed to the Agriculture Minister to extend maximum support to Papum Pare farmers, stressing that government encouragement would go a long way in motivating cultivators to adopt new crops and practices.

The Secretary of Agriculture urged farmers to make full use of the various schemes available under NMEOP and similar missions, stressing the importance of hard work, awareness, and adaptation.

The Deputy Commissioner of Papum Pare echoed this message

and assured that the district administration was fully committed to facilitating the success of the programme.

During the event, local farmer representative Teli Hornin submitted a three-point memorandum to the Minister, requesting essential infrastructure support including a dedicated office for farmers, solar fencing, and access to reliable water supply for irrigation.

These demands were acknowledged as valid and essential for scaling up oil palm cultivation efforts in the district.

Director of Agriculture and the District Agriculture Officer (DAO) also addressed the gathering, underlining the department's readiness to provide technical support, guidance, and timely interventions to ensure that oil palm cultivation becomes both profitable and sustainable.

The collaborative launch event, which saw wide participation from members of the Papum Pare District Oil Palm Farmer Association, was marked by optimism and resolve.

Farmers were seen engaging enthusiastically in discussions, indicating a positive shift in attitudes towards commercial cultivation under government and private sector guidance.

The CHC and Mega Oil Palm Plantation Programme represent an integrated approach to agricultural advancement—combining mechanisation, crop diversification, and market linkage—aligned with the national agenda of self-reliance in edible oil production and farmer empowerment in the Northeast.

DIKSHA training empowers Arunachal educators in digital teaching

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, July 5: In a significant step towards equipping educators with digital teaching competencies, the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Itanagar, successfully conducted a three-day orientation programme on the use of the DIKSHA platform from July 2 to July 4. The training was held at the SCERT Conference Hall in the state capital.

According to an official statement, the programme was designed to build the capacity of teachers and education professionals in Arunachal Pradesh by enabling them to effectively leverage the national Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) portal for teaching and learning.

A total of 31 participants from various District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and districts across the state took part in the sessions.

The training covered a wide range of topics including navigation of the DIKSHA portal, accessing and curating e-resources, uploading and creating digital content, integrating QR codes found in school textbooks, and tracking students' learning progress

through the platform.

These modules were tailored to meet the specific needs of educators adapting to blended and digital learning environments.

The programme was inaugurated in the presence of Dr Rejaul Karim Barbhuiya, National Coordinator for DIKSHA from NCERT, New Delhi.

In his address, Dr Barbhuiya underlined the importance of digital platforms like DIKSHA in achieving the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. He stated that the platform offers transformative potential in making education more inclusive, equitable, and accessible across geographies.

Two key resource persons from DIKSHA's Programme Management Unit (PMU) at NCERT, Sweta Tiwari and Pathikrit Ghosh, conducted technical sessions that delved into different facets of DIKSHA, from user engagement strategies to platform tools that enhance pedagogy.

They also provided practical demonstrations on content development and learner assessment using DIKSHA tools.

In an interactive session, Marpak Doko, Lecturer at DIET Yachuli, familiarised par-

ticipants with digital assessment tools and encouraged their use as part of the teaching-learning process.

His insights helped contextualise the tools within real classroom scenarios.

During the valedictory session, programme coordinator NK Chourasia lauded the dedication shown by the participating educators. He emphasised the growing relevance of continuous professional development in a rapidly digitising education landscape, and urged teachers to embrace platforms like DIKSHA to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

Participants expressed their appreciation for the practical and interactive approach of the training. Many noted that the hands-on exposure to the DIKSHA platform had significantly improved their confidence in using digital tools to enrich classroom experiences and support individual student learning needs.

The orientation programme is part of SCERT's broader commitment to implement digital initiatives in line with NEP 2020 and empower teachers as facilitators of 21st-century education in Arunachal Pradesh.



SC's in-house probe report in Justice Varma case has no constitutional relevance: Sibal

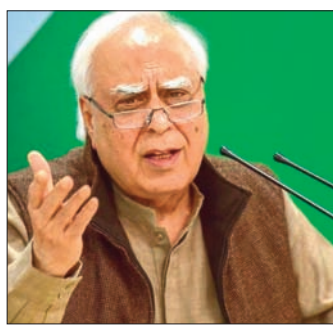
NEW DELHI, July 5: Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Saturday said the Supreme Court's in-house inquiry report in Allahabad High Court Judge Yashwant Varma's case has "no constitutional relevance" as an investigation can only take place under the Judges Inquiry Act.

Addressing a press conference, Sibal also accused the government of protecting Justice Shekhar Yadav and questioned the Rajya Sabha Secretariat over its attempt to reach out to him for the reported verification of his signature on the notice to move an impeachment motion against the judge for making "communal remarks" last year at a VHP event.

On the Justice Varma case, Sibal said, "Under Article 124 of the Constitution, if 50 members of the Rajya Sabha or 100 members of the Lok Sabha submit a notice for moving a motion (for impeachment), then a judges inquiry committee is set up under the Judges Inquiry Act." But only Parliament has the power to constitute such a committee, said Sibal, who is also a senior advocate.

Parliament can make a law, under that law an investigation will be done, and after the probe, a decision will be given on misbehaviour or incapacity of a judge, he said. At a joint sitting of both Houses, the impeachment motion has to be passed by a two-thirds majority for it to go through.

So, the investigation has to be under the judges inquiry committee set up under the Judges Inquiry Act, he said. The Constitution does not recognise any in-house procedure, Sibal said.



"On what basis are you saying that Justice Varma is guilty? Ministers are making remarks to this effect," the Independent MP said.

Sibal also pointed out that Parliament states that the motion for impeachment will be brought by members and not the government.

"How does a minister make the statement that 'I will move the motion'? The government cannot rely on an in-house procedure which has nothing to do with Article 124 of the Constitution," he contended.

No government or member of Parliament can look at that report and come to any conclusion, Sibal asserted. He further said that the in-house procedure was set up in 1999 by the Supreme Court and there have been many impeachment motions against judges, but the in-house procedure report was never sent to the government.

"So why did this in-house report become public in this case when the previous ones weren't," he asked. A fire incident at Justice Varma's residence in the national capital in March, when he was a judge at the Delhi High Court, had led to the discovery of several burnt sacks of banknotes in the outhouse. Though the judge

claimed ignorance about the cash, the Supreme Court-appointed committee indicted him after speaking to a number of witnesses and recording his statement.

Then-CJI Sanjiv Khanna is believed to have prodded him to resign, but Justice Varma dug in his heels. The apex court has since repatriated him to his parent court, the Allahabad High Court, where he has not been assigned any judicial work. Sibal's remarks come days after Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said prominent opposition parties have given their in-principle approval to support the motion to remove Varma and the process of collecting signatures could begin soon. Rijiju said the government is yet to decide whether the motion would be brought in the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha.

Speaking about the opposition MPs' notice for moving a motion against Justice Shekhar Yadav, Sibal said it was moved on December 13, 2024, and he had gone to the chamber of the chairman and the secretary general received it.

"I saw the statement of Kiren Rijiju, he said that the impeachment motion of Yashwant Varma will be moved on day one of the session, and in three months, after the constitution of the judges inquiry committee, it will be passed. He said that there should be no delay. Three months had gone by... (since) we gave the motion of Shekhar Yadav."

"They say that they had sent mails on March 7, March 13 and May 1. If 50 members of the Rajya Sabha agree, motion should be admitted..." (PTI)

PNB-fraud case: Nirav's brother held in US following extradition requests from ED, CBI

NEW DELHI, July 5: US authorities have arrested fugitive diamondaire Nirav Modi's younger brother, Nehal Modi, following extradition requests from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), officials said on Saturday.

Nehal Modi, who is the subject of a Red Notice issued by the Interpol, was taken into custody on Friday, US officials told Indian authorities.

The next hearing in the matter is scheduled for July 17, during which Nehal Modi may seek bail - a move expected to be contested by US prosecutors, the officials said. The arrest stems from a joint extradition plea submitted by the ED and the CBI.

The proceedings, led by US federal prosecutors, are based on two charges -- one count of money laundering under section 3 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and one count of criminal conspiracy under sections 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 201 (disappearance of evidence) of the Indian Penal Code.

Nehal Modi (46) is an accused in the alleged Rs 13,000 crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud -- one of the biggest banking scams -- reportedly orchestrated by him, Nirav Modi and their uncle, Mehul Choksi.

Nirav Modi had, through his companies, siphoned off approximately Rs 6,498 crore from the PNB by issuing fraudulent letters of undertaking (LoUs), while the remaining amount was misappropriated by his uncle in a similar



modus operandi, according to the CBI chargesheet.

Born and raised in Belgium's Antwerp and fluent in English, Gujarati and Hindi, Nehal Deepak Modi is wanted in India for allegedly laundering proceeds of crime on behalf of his brother, Nirav Modi, who remains incarcerated in a London prison, facing extradition proceedings to India.

It is alleged that Nehal Modi played a pivotal role in concealing and transferring large sums of illicit money through a labyrinthine web of shell companies and offshore transactions, in violation of Indian financial laws.

He has been named as an accused in separate chargesheets filed by both the ED and the CBI.

In the ED chargesheet, Nehal Modi has been charged with destruction of evidence and "know-

ingly and intentionally" assisting Nirav Modi in his alleged illegal acts, the officials said.

The ED has claimed that after the PNB scandal came to light, Nehal Modi, along with Nirav Modi's close confidante and executive Mihir R Bhansali, "transported 50 kg of gold and substantial cash from Dubai", and instructed dummy directors not to reveal his identity to investigating authorities.

Nehal Modi is listed as the accused number 27 in a supplementary chargesheet submitted by the CBI, which has accused him of destroying evidence in Dubai to cover up the alleged criminal conspiracy.

On the request of Indian authorities, the Interpol issued a Red Notice against Nehal Modi, making it publicly accessible in order to solicit international cooperation in

locating him.

A Red Notice, issued by the Interpol to its member nations, seeks the location and provisional detention of individuals pending extradition, surrender or similar legal action.

Nehal Modi had appealed against the notice before the Commission for Control of Interpol's Files (CCF), but his plea was rejected after the CBI submitted an exhaustive rebuttal.

The CBI has accused Nehal Modi of intimidating directors of Dubai-based shell companies used by Nirav Modi to give a veneer of legitimacy to a fraudulent trade.

These individuals were allegedly coerced into relocating from Dubai to Cairo, during which their phones, laptops and computer servers were destroyed to erase evidence.

These individuals, employees of Nirav Modi's companies, were allegedly compelled to sign documents falsely declaring them as actual owners of companies based in Dubai and Hong Kong.

These entities were presented as engaged in legitimate export-import transactions with three Nirav Modi-controlled firms -- Diamonds R Us, Solar Exports and Stellar Diamonds.

These firms are accused of unlawfully benefitting from the buyer's credit issued by overseas banks on the strength of the LoUs fraudulently obtained from the PNB's Brady House branch in Mumbai, in collusion with complicit bank officials. (PTI)

'Desperate bid' to revive political fortunes, 'family reunion': BJP

MUMBAI, July 5: BJP leaders in Maharashtra on Saturday said Uddhav and Raj Thackeray's joint rally in Mumbai was a "desperate attempt" to revive their political fortunes and recover lost ground ahead of civic polls, adding the event was more like a "family reunion".

Uddhav and Raj on Saturday shared the public stage and hosted a victory gathering titled 'Awaj Marathicha' in Mumbai's Worli to celebrate the rollback of two Government Resolutions (GRs) issued earlier by the Devendra Fadnis-led dispensation introducing Hindi as a third language from Class 1 in state schools.

During the rally, Uddhav, who heads the Shiv Sena (UBT), said he and his cousin Raj, the president of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), have come together to stay united, and hinted at contesting the upcoming civic elections together. Raj took aim at Chief Minister Fadnis, saying he managed to do what Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray and others could not by bringing the two cousins together. State minister Ashish Shelar and BJP MLC Pravin Darekar targeted the Thackeray cousins over the event.

Shelar described the Worli event as a desperate attempt by the Sena (UBT) to recover its lost political ground. "This was not a rally for the love of language but public appeasement of a brother once thrown out of the house. They remembered their brotherhood due to the fear of BJP's strength in the civic polls," he said.

The Thackerays were trying to reclaim control over the BMC in order to resume their misrule in the

city, he added.

The event was more of a family reunion than a protest over language issue, Shelar said, adding Uddhav Thackeray's handshake with Raj Thackeray was only meant to salvage the political ground they have already lost.

Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule accused Uddhav Thackeray of duplicity in his stand on the Marathi language.

"Under the guise of championing Marathi, Uddhav Thackeray today lamented the loss of power in Worli. But he has not explained why, as chief minister in 2022, he accepted a report recommending compulsory Hindi from Class 1," Bawankule said in his post on X.

The senior BJP leader claimed the former CM's real agenda was not 'M' for Marathi, but 'M' for Municipal Corporation.

"When in power in Mumbai, he sidelined Marathi-speaking people. Now, he is putting up a show of love for Marathi just to regain power. His love for Marathi is political drama that surfaces only when elections approach. People have now seen through this duplicity," he asserted.

Darekar claimed the rally was driven by clear political intent.

"Raj Thackeray spoke mainly on the Marathi language issue and defended himself against earlier allegations, but Uddhav Thackeray's tone was that of helplessness. His regret over losing power was evident," he said.

He asserted that Marathi people had already shown their support to the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance in the November 2024 state assembly elections. (PTI)

Election Commission holding regular dialogue with parties: CEC

FIROZABAD (UP), July 5: With opposition parties accusing the Election Commission of ignoring their concerns, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar on Saturday asserted that the poll panel maintains a regular dialogue with political parties and 5,000 such meetings have been held in the past four months, beginning from the assembly level.

Replying to queries from reporters in Firozabad, where he came to attend a private programme, Kumar said that after voters, political parties are the next important stakeholders for the EC.

He was asked about the recent criticism from opposition parties, including their allegations that their concerns related to poll-bound Bihar are being overlooked by the EC.

"The Election Commission keeps having a regular dialogue with various political parties. In the last four months, all-party meetings were organised in every assembly constituency, in every district and also with every state chief electoral officer."

"In all, 5000 such meetings were held in which 28,000 people, including leaders of political parties, participated." The CEC said that not only this, the Election Commission itself has been meeting all national and state parties. "Five national parties and four state parties have met. If there is any issue, then all-party delegations also come, and the EC meets them," he said.

The Chief Election Commissioner also said that in the electoral process, the voters are the most important, but after them, "our political parties are the most important stakeholders."

Referring to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Bihar, where assembly elections are due later this year, CEC Gyanesh Kumar said that whoever is in the voter list of 01.01.2003 in Bihar will be considered eligible from the primary point of view under Article 326 of the Constitution.

In other words, people whose names are in that list will not be required to submit any supporting documents, and when voter IDs are to be made for their children, they too will not be required to give documents for their parents. The Election Commission has said it will soon upload the 2003 Bihar electoral roll on its website to facilitate the nearly 4.96 crore voters whose names figure on it to extract the relevant portion to be attached with the enumeration form for the special intensive revision of the voters' list. (PTI)

Widespread protests in Kerala seeking Minister Veena George's resignation

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 5: Various wings of parties in the Congress-led UDF and the BJP were staging widespread protests seeking the resignation of state Health Minister Veena George over the death of a woman when a portion of the Kottayam Medical College building collapsed two days ago.

Activists of Youth Congress, Kerala Students Union (KSU), Mahila Congress, Youth League, and the BJP held protests in the state capital and various other cities, including Palakkad, Kochi, Kollam, Kannur, and Mananthavady, during the day.

Protestors marched to the offices of the District Collector or the District Medical Officer (DMO) in many places and confronted the police and water cannons. They shouted slogans demanding George's resignation.

In the state capital, Youth Congress activists marched to the official resi-

dence of George, and police used water cannons to disperse the protestors.

Similar scenes were witnessed in many other cities of the state, including Wayanad, where Youth Congress activists tried to place a wreath in the office of the DMO there.

In Pathanamthitta, BJP workers marched to the family residence of the health minister and tried to bring down the barricades placed by police to stop them. Activists of the saffron party also held a protest march to the Kozhikode medical college and shouted slogans against minister.

In many places, police had to forcefully remove the protestors after several rounds of water cannons could not disperse them.

In Palakkad, senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala, while launching a protest by the Mahila Congress against George, said that Chief Minister

Pinarayi Vijayan ought to have sought the Health Minister's resignation before going abroad in view of her alleged "inefficiency", "indifference", and "grave mistakes".

As part of their protest, the Mahila Congress workers tied their mouths shut with a black cloth and carried banners and placards seeking George's resignation.

He told reporters that while he was not against the CM going abroad for medical treatment, he expected Vijayan to seek her resignation. "I thought the government would consider the fact that the poor people cannot go to the US or UK for treatment," he said.

He also criticised CPI(M) state secretary M V Govindan for his remark, a day ago, that the protests were being carried out on the directions of Sunil Kanugolu, the election strategist of the Congress party. (PTI)

36 Amarnath pilgrims injured after 5 buses collide in J&K's Ramban; rejoin yatra after treatment

RAMBAN/JAMMU, July 5: At least 36 Amarnath pilgrims, hailing from different states, suffered minor injuries when five buses slammed into each other in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district on Saturday, officials said.

The buses were part of a convoy headed for the Pahalgam base camp of the pilgrimage in south Kashmir from Jammu's Bhagwati Nagar. All the injured persons rejoined the yatra after receiving treatment at the Ramban district hospital.

The accident took place near Chanderkote, along the Jammu-Srinagar national highway, at around 8 am due to the failure of the brakes of one of the buses in the convoy, the officials said.

"There was a minor accident at Chanderkote when a Pahalgam-bound vehicle collided with other stationary vehicles due to brake failure," Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said in a statement. He said 36 pilgrims received minor injuries in the incident. They were discharged after preliminary treatment and resumed the journey towards the 3,880-metre cave shrine in the south Kashmir Himalayas, the statement said. "By the blessings of Lord Shiva, all the devotees are safe," the LG said.

"Our priority is the safety of all pilgrims. Directed the officials concerned to implement comprehensive safety measures for vehicles of pilgrims undertaking



Amarnath Yatra and ensure safety checks at all key locations and uninterrupted availability of food and medicines at Yatra route," he added.

Earlier, the LG spoke to Jammu Divisional Commissioner Ramesh Kumar and Ramban Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Alyas Khan and asked them to provide all necessary assistance to the injured pilgrims. Sinha had asked senior officials to remain on alert and ensure all necessary arrangements for a hassle-free journey of the pilgrims, a spokesperson of the Raj Bhavan said. The LG applauded the swift response of the district administration and health officials.

Earlier, the Ramban deputy commissioner said the last vehicle of the Pahalgam convoy lost control and hit stranded vehicles at the Chanderkote Langer site, damaging four vehicles and causing minor

injuries to 36 pilgrims. He said the government officials already present at the site rushed the injured to the district hospital. Several senior police officers visited the hospital to monitor the treatment of the injured and directed the chief medical officer to ensure the best care.

"The yatris were later shifted to other vehicles for their onward journey," the deputy commissioner said. Union minister Jitendra Singh said he spoke to the Ramban deputy commissioner after learning about the road accident. "... There is no reason for concern. All arrangements for the pilgrims are in place and are being constantly supervised by the administration," Singh said in a post on X. Ramban Medical Superintendent Sudarshan Singh Katoch said 10 of the injured pilgrims were discharged after being administered first aid and the rest after the conduct of necessary tests.

"The district administration arranged special vehicles for their onward journey to Pahalgam after they expressed their desire to continue the pilgrimage," he said. The convoy left for its destination early in the morning after the damaged buses were replaced, the officials said. The fourth batch of 6,979 pilgrims -- 5,196 men, 1,427 women, 24 children, 331 sadhus and sadhvis, and one transgender -- left the Bhagwati Nagar base camp in two separate convoys between 3:30 am and 4:05 am. (PTI)

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER CUM COUNCIL HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT IRRIGATION KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL: DIPHU					
CORRIGENDUM Dated: 04.07-2025					
No. ACEI-CHD/E/Recruitment/1/2024-25/21: In reference to the earlier notification vide No ACEI-CHD/E Recruitment /1/2024-25/18. Dated 27-06-2025 and No. ACEI-CHD/E/Recruitment/1/2024-25/19 please be informed that the Viva Voce originally scheduled for the under mentioned posts has been postponed due to unavoidable circumstances. It is now rescheduled for 14/07/2025. All other terms and conditions remain unchanged. We regret any inconvenience caused.					
Sl. No.	Name of post	Date of interview	Time & Venue	Reporting time	Remarks
1.	Junior Assistant	14.07.2025	10:00 AM O/o Addl. Chief Engineer cum CHD, Irrigation, KAAC, Diphu	09:30 AM	
2.	Section Assistant	-Do-	-Do-	-Do-	
3.	Assistant Mechanic	-Do-	-Do-	-Do-	
4.	Assistant Fitter	-Do-	-Do-	-Do-	
5.	Power Pump Operator	-Do-	-Do-	-Do-	
6.	Electric Pump Mechanic	-Do-	-Do-	-Do-	
7.	Tracer	—	—	—	Date of Viva Voce for the post of Tracer will be notified latter.

Sd/-
Addl. Chief Engineer & CHD
Cum
Member Secretary, Selection Committee
Initiation Department

Memo No ACEI-CHD/E/Recruitment 1.2024-25/21(A) Dated Diphu, the 04th July' 2025

Debbarma cites inaction on illegal immigration, 125th Amendment as key grievances ahead of July 7 rally

Tipra Motha MLA threatens to withdraw support from Tripura Govt

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, July 5: Tipra Motha Party MLA Ranjit Debbarma on Saturday issued a strong warning that the party may withdraw its support from the ruling BJP government in Tripura if their key demands particularly the implementation of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) directives against illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and the introduction of the 125th Constitutional Amendment—are not fulfilled.

Addressing a press conference in Agartala, Debbarma announced that a non-political rally will be held on July 7, demanding enforcement of the MHA notification concerning identification and action against illegal immigrants.

"The Tripura government has taken no concrete steps in this matter. That's why we are organizing an apolitical rally," said Debbarma. "Royal scion and Tipra Motha founder Pradyot Kishore Manikya will join the rally not as a political figure, but in his personal capacity as a royal. The rally will start from Rabindra Shatabarshiki Bhavan and culmi-



nate at Swami Vivekananda Maidan in Agartala."

Debbarma criticized the state government for inaction despite similar directives being implemented in other states. "Gujarat, Delhi, and Assam have taken steps after the MHA notification. In Tamil Nadu, a Special Task Force was constituted. But in Tripura, no

such action has been taken even after repeated communications with the state government," he said.

The MLA added that they had also approached the District Magistrates of Gomati and Sepahijala, but no follow-up action has been reported so far. "The MHA directives clearly state that illegal immi-

grants from Bangladesh must be identified and detained within 30 days, and Special Task Forces should be formed. But Tripura has done nothing," he alleged.

He further claimed that illegal Bangladeshis are residing in several parts of Agartala city without scrutiny.

Debbarma also revealed that he spoke with Pradyot Kishore Manikya on Saturday morning. "He told me that the Tipra Motha Party is prepared to withdraw support from the government. Even our MP, Kriti Devi Singh, is nearly ready to leave the BJP," he stated.

"We too are on the verge of pulling out. A final decision will be taken at our meeting scheduled on July 30. The state and central governments have failed to fulfill our demands—no Village Council elections have been held, and the 125th Amendment is still pending. What is the point of staying in the government if our core issues are ignored?" Debbarma asked.

He concluded by saying that all 13 Tipra Motha MLAs are united and will soon approach the Centre for further dialogue.

Need digitisation, accountability: Nagaland minister to cooperatives

KOHEMA, July 5: Nagaland Minister for Cooperation Jacob Zhimomi on Saturday called for a bold transformation of the cooperative movement in the state, urging people to shed dependency, embrace productivity, and contribute meaningfully.

Addressing a programme on the International Cooperation Day, Zhimomi emphasised that the cooperative sector must emerge as a vital economic pillar.

He stressed the need for digitisation, accountability, and performance-driven support, warning that non-performing societies would be deregistered.

"We don't want quantity, we want quality," said Zhimomi, noting that many cooperative societies fail due to a lack of vision, poor business acumen, and unrealistic expectations from the government.

He said Nagaland's geography, socio-economic fabric, and lifestyle require tailor-made cooperative models, and appealed to the Centre for more dynamic and flexible funding patterns, particularly through institutions like NCDC. Zhimomi said there was a quick-



profit mentality among the Naga youth.

"Our youngsters want to be millionaires overnight and blame the government when they fail. Without consistency, hard work, and humility, no business or movement can survive," he said.

The minister encouraged the use of land as capital, urging citizens to take advantage of the Centre's startup push through cooperatives in farming, dairy, and food chains.

"Nagaland cannot afford to be left behind in the journey of becoming a developed India,"

he said. "Development cannot be imported. It has to begin from within our homes, our villages, our habits. Let's not expect 100 per cent from the government. Let us first invest Rs 5 ourselves," he said.

Deputy Registrar of Cooperative Societies Akangjingshi said there are 8,028 registered cooperative societies in the state, of which 5,862 are non-functional.

He said the government was in the process of derecognising around 3,000 non-functional cooperatives by October. (PTI)

NFR rolls out major reforms to enhance efficiency and well-being of loco pilots

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 5: In a comprehensive push to modernise operations and improve working conditions for its frontline workforce, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has implemented a series of focused initiatives aimed at enhancing the efficiency, safety, and well-being of its Loco Pilots.

According to an official statement, these measures are designed to recognise and support the critical role played by Loco Pilots in ensuring the punctual and safe movement of trains across the region.

Operating under strenuous and high-stakes conditions, Loco Pilots form the backbone of railway transport.

Their duties demand constant vigilance, physical endurance, and mental alertness. In view of these responsibilities, NFR has prioritised the creation of a more supportive and technologically empowered working environment for its running staff.

A key development in this direction is the inauguration of a new, state-of-the-art Running Room at Agartala (AGTL).

Built in accordance with Railway Board guidelines, the facility includes 24 residential rooms offering 48 beds, along with 10 community-use rooms.

These include a yoga and meditation hall, gymnasium, and kitchen and dining areas, all aimed at promoting physical and mental well-being.

Significantly, this is the first running room under NFR to be equipped with an elevator, enhancing accessibility. All 34 rooms are air-conditioned and feature 24/7 water supply, CCTV surveillance, adjustable lighting, emergency exits, and pest control mechanisms, ensuring a safe and comfortable resting environment for on-duty crew.

In addition to infrastructure upgrades, NFR is focusing on crew welfare and stress management. Running Rooms at New Coochbehar under the Alipurduar Division have achieved ISO 9001:2015 certification, reflecting a commitment to high standards of hygiene and safety.

To further boost morale, family counselling sessions are being introduced.

One such session was held on June 28, 2025, at New Coochbehar, offering family members an opportunity to interact with officials and share concerns—thereby strengthening the emotional and psychological support system for Loco Pilots.

Technological upgrades form another cornerstone of NFR's initiatives.

The introduction of audio-visual route learning modules allows Loco Pilots to digitally familiarise themselves with key track features, junctions, gradients, and speed zones—sharpening their route knowledge and increasing operational safety.

Further, NFR has equipped locomotives with waterless urinals for Loco Pilots, recognising the importance of basic amenities during long hauls.

The 'Gyaanvaapi' mobile application has been rolled out to provide Loco Pilots with easy access to technical manuals, circulars, and operational guidelines—ensuring that critical information is available at their fingertips.

In an important move to maintain accountability and alertness during operations, Call Detail Record (CDR) analysis is being used to monitor the presence and attentiveness of Loco Pilots.

This system assists in post-incident reviews and ensures compliance with safety protocols.

Moreover, data loggers integrated with the Control Office Application (COA) have been deployed at 59 stations.

These provide real-time data on train operations and crew performance, enhancing monitoring capabilities and enabling faster response to operational challenges.

These combined efforts reflect a balanced approach by NFR—where cutting-edge technology meets compassionate workplace policies. By addressing both infrastructural needs and the emotional and physical demands of the job, NFR aims to foster a more resilient, efficient, and motivated workforce.

With these ongoing reforms, Northeast Frontier Railway reaffirms its commitment to safety, professionalism, and the holistic development of its Loco Pilots—underscoring their indispensable contribution to India's railway network.

Incessant rainfall causes severe flooding, landslides in Nuland dist

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 5: Incessant rainfall caused severe flooding and landslides in Nuland district on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday, affecting more than 70 villages, displacing thousands of farmers and severely impacting their means of livelihood.

The Nuland district administration, in a release, on Saturday said the incessant rainfall led to the swelling of rivers and streams, resulting in widespread flooding across the district.

It said large areas have been inundated, submerging residential houses and causing extensive damage to paddy fields, fishery ponds, plantations, farms, and roads.

One of the most affected routes connecting S. Hetoyi village and Ghokuto village has been rendered impassable due to a major landslide.

A portion of the road has also been washed away, cutting off Ghokuto village from all essential services, including medical aid and supplies of food and water.

The district administration said it is closely monitoring the situation and taking necessary steps to assess the damage and provide emergency relief.

It said while rescue and restoration efforts are underway, continuous rainfall poses challenges to immediate access to the affected areas and relief operations.

Meanwhile, Dimapur deputy commissioner Tinjongshi Chang, in an official advisory, urged the public to avoid riverside areas due to the onset of the monsoon season and heightened risk of flash floods and rising water levels.

According to the District Disaster Management Authority, recent heavy rainfall has significantly increased the threat of flooding in rivers and streams across the district. It advised the public to refrain from engaging in fishing, picnicking, or any other water-related activities along riverbanks.

The district administration asked all village councils situated near rivers to strictly enforce this directive until the end of the monsoon season.

It reiterated that these measures are precautionary but essential to safeguard lives and property during this high-risk period.

BJP MLA hails Centre for initiatives to restore peace in Manipur

IMPHAL, July 5: Manipur BJP MLA Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Saturday commended the Centre for its initiatives to restore peace in the strife-torn state and praised Union Home Minister Amit Shah's approach to resolving the crisis.

As part of the measures taken to restore peace and normalcy in the state, security forces have been conducting search operations to recover illegal arms and ammunition, the BJP legislator said.

He hoped that any hardship faced by the people as a result of the crisis would be acknowledged and that necessary steps would be taken sensibly in the coming days.

"The central government has been taking various steps to resolve the crisis in Manipur, which erupted on May 3, 2023, and has now exceeded two years. Notably, in the past month, a substantial quantity of arms and ammunition was seized from various parts of the valley districts, and recently, a significant cache was recovered from the hill districts as well," Yumnam said.



These efforts are crucial for maintaining law and order in the state and have instilled a sense of hope and security among the populace, the BJP MLA said.

The Singjamei constituency legislator also said Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) officials are engaging in talks and peace dialogues with leaders and representatives of various stakeholders, including civil society organisations (CSOs).

"These discussions have been instrumental in catalysing efforts to bring about peace and normalcy in the state," he said.

The BJP legislator also hailed

Shah for several initiatives which have been "undertaken as a first step toward resolving the crisis".

"His responsible and accountable approach to addressing the crisis, which may take considerable time to resolve, is highly commendable. It is hoped that any hardship faced by the people as a result of the crisis will be acknowledged and that necessary steps will be taken sensibly in the coming days," he said.

Yumnam also expressed appreciation for the efforts by Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, members of the governor-in-council, security forces, and concerned officials.

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)

10 MT of organic black pepper exported from Meghalaya to Mumbai

ZIKZAK (MEGHALAYA), July 5: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Saturday said 10 metric tonnes of organic black pepper from South Garo Hills region were shipped out to Mumbai, the second big export from the area after an 11 mt of outbound consignment in 2023.

Mumbai-based Everest Spices has procured the organic black pepper from here, he said.

Taking to X, Sangma said, "10 MT of organic black pepper facilitated by the Kerupara and Dingampara Integrated Village Cooperative Societies (IVCS) under Zikzak block, South West Garo Hills, shipped to Mumbai, the area's second big export after 2023's 11-tonne success."

Backed by the Meghalaya Basin Management Agency and Meghalaya Livelihoods and Access to Markets Project, the local co-operatives are turning Garo's organic "black gold" into a big opportunity, he said.

"The growing demand for Meghalaya's organic spices is encouraging more farmers to tap into its potential," the chief minister said. The Meghalaya Basin Management Agency and the Meghalaya Livelihoods and Access to Markets Project support grassroots cooperatives in turning small-hold farming into a scalable and market-driven enterprise.

The state currently produces over 22,000 metric tonnes of spices annually, including turmeric, ginger, black pepper, and bay leaf, an official said. (PTI)

Meeting with Amit Shah later this month on implementation of Tiprasa Accord: Pradyot

AGARTALA, July 5: Tipra Motha Party (TMP) supremo Pradyot Debbarma on Saturday said a meeting will be held with Union Home Minister Amit Shah later this month on the implementation of the Tiprasa Accord.

The statement came hours after party MLA Rajit Debbarma threatened to pull out of the BJP-led coalition government in Tripura over the delay in the implementation of the Tiprasa Accord, inked with the Centre and the state government last year for the development of the indigenous people. "I don't know about the statement made by our MLA Rajit Debbarma, but I will surely talk to him. Today, I had a conversation with Chief Minister Manik Saha, and I told him that it has been 18 months since the Tiprasa Accord was signed," Pradyot Debbarma told reporters.

"If MLA Debbarma spoke about withdrawing support from the government, it would be out of frustration because a sense of genuine frustration and insecurity is prevailing in the rural areas," he said. (PTI)

Nagaland team in Japan to foster collaborations

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 5: A high-level delegation of Nagaland is currently on an official visit to Japan to explore avenues for collaborations, partnerships and developmental initiatives with government bodies, private corporations and civil society organisations in the country.

The delegation, led by chief minister Neiphiu Rio, includes chairman, Investment and Development Authority of Nagaland (IDAN), Abu Metha, adviser, industries and commerce, Hekani Jakhalu, and senior officers of the state.

Ahead of Rio's arrival, the IDAN and the industries and commerce held a series of high-level meetings in Tokyo on July 4.

The deliberations covered a wide range of collaborative opportunities, particularly in the fields of human resource development across sectors such as agriculture and allied services, hospitality, healthcare, tourism, arts and culture, sports, and film.

Metha emphasised the shared wartime legacy between Japan and Nagaland and highlighted the importance of transforming the painful memories of war into constructive partnerships for peace and co-operation.



The Sasakawa Peace Foundation shared insights into its ongoing projects in the Northeastern, with a focus on people-to-people contact, Track Two diplomacy, peace-building, and knowledge exchange.

JICA expressed interest in expanding human resource exchange programmes by linking Japanese industry requirements with Indian talent pools.

Metha conveyed appreciation for JICA's ongoing

work in Nagaland and discussed potential areas of further collaboration.

With NYK Line, discussions centred on the company's contributions to Nagaland and the scope for expanding engagements, particularly in the services and hospitality sector, to generate employment and capacity-building opportunities for the youth.

The delegation also visited Kochi Prefecture, where detailed deliberations were held on joint initiatives related to human resource development, skill enhancement, capacity building, and technology transfer in sectors such as food processing, agriculture, and allied industries.

The teams explored the possibility of signing an MoU between the Nagaland government and the Government of Kochi, a Japanese Prefecture.

Nagaland's high literacy rate, English proficiency, and strong social and cultural capital were highlighted as key strengths. The state government also presented its new Industrial policy, which offers incentives and a conducive environment for investment and responsible business practices.

These exploratory meetings serve as a foundation for the official engagements with Rio, where the discussions are expected to be further consolidated and formalised.



JUBIN NAUTIYAL SAYS HE IS SHIFTING FROM SAD SONGS TO UPLIFTING ROMANTIC NUMBERS

MUMBAI, July 5: Jubin Nautiyal, best known for tracks such as "Raataan Lambiyaan", "Lut Gaye", "Humna Mere", "Tujhe Kitne Chahne Lage Hum", and "Tum Hi Aana", said he is transitioning from sad songs to more celebratory and uplifting romantic music.

"Genres have been hard back in the day. In 10 years of singing regularly, I've figured out that whenever I'm recording a song, I only think about whether I'll be able to do it or not. I always went and tried no matter if it worked or fails," the singer told PTI in an interview.

Nautiyal, whose voice has often defined heart-break for a generation, said he is now discovering new dimensions in his singing.

"I'm able to sing genres which I never thought I could sing. I'm realising that people have started loving the romantic side of me, and I'm getting to do a lot of more fresh romantic sound."

"There was a time when I was getting associated with the sad voice. To do 'Ishq Mera' and to get to sing 'Barbaad', which is a passionate romantic song, is a great thing," he added.

"Barbaad" is a track from filmmaker Mohit Suri's latest movie "Saiyaara", which marks the acting debut of Ahaan Panday, the cousin of actor Ananya

Panday. It features Aneet Padda, known for her roles in "Big Girls Don't Cry" and "Salaam Venky", as the female lead.

The 36-year-old singer expressed his gratitude to Suri for entrusting him with the song and believes it was tailor-made for his voice.

"Mohit knew how the song would sound in my voice before he even approached me. He was very confident. He's like, 'There's a song and I want you to do it'. 'Barbaad' can come across as a sad song, but it's not. I sang it like a sad song but then Mohit said that it's a falling in love song. This is one of those songs that people are listening to on loop and are making covers for it. When a song is good, that's what happens," Nautiyal said.

Nautiyal said it's a "dream" for any musician to work with Suri, calling the filmmaker a "cool guy", who provides clear creative direction.

"I like the way he puts music in his films, how he shoots music, and how he presents it," the singer said, adding that Suri's talent lies in creating compelling soundscapes that resonate with audiences of all ages," he said.

"Saiyaara" is produced by YRF's CEO Akshaye Wadhani, and is set to release on July 18 worldwide. (PTI)

'METRO...IN DINO' EARNS ₹ 4 CR ON DAY ONE IN INDIA

MUMBAI, July 5: Filmmaker Anurag Basu-directed "Metro...In Dino" has raked in ₹ 4.05 crore on its opening day at the domestic office, the makers said on Saturday.

Released on Friday, the musical romance drama garnered mixed reviews from critics and audiences.

"Exploring the dilemmas of love in today's chaotic world, 'Metro...In Dino' has taken a solid step forward at the box office with ₹ 4.05 Cr India nett on its opening day," the makers said in a statement.

"Metro...In Dino", which follows the bitter-sweet relationships of four couples in a contemporary setting, is a follow-up to Basu's 2007 movie "Life in a... Metro".

The film features an ensemble cast of Anupam Kher, Neena Gupta, Pankaj Tripathi, Konkana Sen Sharma, Ali Fazal, Fatima Sana Shaikh, Aditya Roy Kapur, and Sara Ali Khan.

"Metro...In Dino" is produced by Bhushan Kumar of T-Series and Anurag Basu Productions Pvt Ltd. (PTI)



Shah Rukh Khan to grace the grand opening of 'City of Dreams Sri Lanka'

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 5: Get ready, South Asia! The undisputed King of Bollywood, Shah Rukh Khan, is set to make a spectacular visit to Sri Lanka, gracing the highly anticipated grand opening of City of Dreams Sri Lanka on August 2, 2025, as special guest.

Popularly regarded as "King Khan", the presence of the multi-award-winning superstar at the by-invitation grand opening party underscores the establishment of the first luxury integrated resort in South Asia, developed through the notable partnership of John Keells Holdings and Melco Resorts & Entertainment.

The grand opening of City of Dreams Sri Lanka, touted to be the region's most glamorous event of 2025, also marks the official launch of the resort's "Let's Go, Let Go" campaign, signaling a new era of luxury and entertainment, with an array of non-stop excitement in diverse culinary journeys, elegant hotel rooms, rejuvenating

wellness retreats, luxury retail experiences, and the largest and most sophisticated meeting and event spaces in the country.

The integrated resort will also house a world-class casino, which will be operated by Melco Resorts & Entertainment. It also marks the entry of Nuwa, Melco's luxury hotel brand, adding to Colombo's dynamic hospitality landscape.

A premier destination in the heart of Colombo, perfectly positioned at 01 Justice Akbar Mawatha, City of Dreams Sri Lanka is a 4.5-million-square-foot architectural marvel, designed by internationally acclaimed architect Cecil Balmond. The resort brings together timeless design, world-class service, and modern indulgence to offer an unmatched hospitality and entertainment experience.

Guests can immerse themselves in over 800 luxury hotel rooms, rejuvenating wellness retreats, premium retail experiences, and globally inspired culinary offerings — all with breathtaking views of the Indian Ocean and the vibrant city skyline.



I'M A PHYSICAL STORYTELLER: JOHN CENA ON 'HEADS OF STATE' AND HIS LOVE FOR ACTION-COMEDY GENRE

LONDON, July 5: Action comedy is the language of the world and has been popular since the era of Charlie Chaplin, says Hollywood star John Cena, who considers himself a physical storyteller.

"Heads of State", his latest movie on Prime Video, offers another glimpse into the niche that Cena has created for himself in the realm of physical comedy, where he often blends his imposing presence with a sense of humour.

In the past, the WWE wrestler-turned-actor has showcased his impeccable comic timing in films and shows such as "The Suicide Squad", "Blockers", "Peace-maker", "Trainwreck" and "Ricky Stanicky".

"I'm a physical storyteller. WWE is entertainment through physical stories. And what I love the most about action comedy is that it's the language of the world. It explains the success of the greats like Jackie Chan, even Charlie Chaplin -- before there were words in the movies. It is truly the language of the world," Cena told PTI in an interview.

"Heads of State", which pre-

miered on streaming service Prime Video on Wednesday, is directed by Ilya Naishuller of "Nobody" fame. The movie reunites Cena with his "The Suicide Squad" co-star Idris Elba and also stars Priyanka Chopra Jonas in a pivotal role.

In the movie, Cena plays the role of Will Derringer, a former action star who becomes the President of the United States. Elba portrays Sam Clarke, the British Prime Minister.

Cena said he loved working on "Heads of State" as it allowed him to display the skills he has learned over the years.

"Being able to take the skills that I've learned as a physical storyteller and modify my skill set to be on screen, I love 'Heads of State' because even if you don't understand what we're saying, you get the story and the action. Then you share the laughs... that's why I lean into action comedy," he added.

The movie also takes forward Cena's chemistry with Elba, which they established in James Gunn's "The Suicide Squad" (2021).

While Cena's Derringer comes



across as impulsive and chaotic, Elba's Clarke is more controlled and straightforward in showcasing his authority in the movie.

Cena credited the writers, Josh Appelbaum & Andre Nemec and Harrison Query, for establishing their dynamics on paper for "Heads of State".

"Writers write good stories, well-thought out stories. I don't commit to projects unless I read it. James Gunn is the only cold-call. If he says we are getting the band back together, it is a yes and I read it afterwards. Every other project I want to read," he said.

A good story has layered characters and is "brave enough to lean into the flaws", he added.

"Every character has to be flawed because then you want to root for them. If a character is too tough, too perfect, with no shortcomings, you don't want to root for that guy. So I think it's just being brave enough to lean into the words

of a good writer," Cena said.

According to Cena, one of the joys of working in the world of entertainment is getting to meet new people with every project.

In the case of "Heads of State", it was an opportunity to collaborate with Priyanka, an actor who began her journey around the same time as Cena in the early 2000s. In the movie, Priyanka essays the role of MI6 agent Noel Bisset.

"That's what's brilliant about being in the creative business... you never know who you're going to meet. You never know the experiences you'll have, and I just try to do my best, to be decent to work with, and in the downtimes, share moments that can make us connect more."

"And we certainly did that in this movie. And for that, I'm grateful," he said.

"Heads of State" also stars Paddy Considine, Stephen Root, Carla Gugino, Jack Quaid and Sarah Niles.

The movie is produced by Peter Safran and John Rickard. Cena and Elba also serve as executive producers. (PTI)

Neeraj owns stage as he achieves yet another feat, realises dream of hosting own event



BENGALURU, July 5: Neeraj Chopra achieved yet another feat in his illustrious career on Saturday by becoming the first Indian to compete in an international event as its host, owning the stage in an electrifying atmosphere at the Kanteerava Stadium here.

The 27-year-old from Khandra village in Haryana's Panipat, who has won every accolade his sport

has to offer, was the cynosure of all eyes as he fulfilled his lifetime dream.

It is his way of giving back to the sport and to the fans the experience of watching him and other top international stars compete in front of their own eyes.

He has been inspired by world record holder Swedish pole vaulter Armando Duplantis and

Kenyan distance running legend Kipchoge Keino who have international showpieces named after them Mondo Classic and Kip Keino Classic, which are World Athletics Continental Tour events. Chopra emulated Duplantis in having a single event World Athletics recognised competition in the name of an athlete. The world's best pole vaulters com-

pete at Mondo Classic every year in Uppsala, Sweden. Kip Keino Classic in Nairobi is a multi-event competition.

Under overcast, cool and windy conditions, and temperature measuring around 24 degree Celsius, the Kanteerava Stadium was not full but was enough to make deafening noise support to Chopra.

Watched by family members and friends, Chopra was cheered by the adoring fans in all his throws in the 12-man competition. Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah also watched the competition from the VVIP area.

Chopra's parents and uncle as well as some close relatives were there. The double Olympic medallist and reigning world champion Chopra waved to the crowd while coming out for the first time to felicitate his coach and Czech javelin legend Jan Zelezny the world record holder with 98.48m before the competition. The crowd cheered the competitors when they came out, while Dhanda Nyoliwala performed Haryana hip-hop on the open field.

The roar reached a crescendo when Chopra was ushered in.

The event Initially set to be held in Panchkula, the event was relocated to Bengaluru due to lighting limitations at the original venue that affected live telecast capabilities. The event, granted Category A status by World Athletics, is considered a "dream project" of Chopra and aims to establish India as a credible host of elite-level athletics events.

It had to be postponed following the terror attack in Pahalgam that claimed the lives of 26 civilians, including several tourists. (PTI)

How to score \$20 Centre Court seats at Wimbledon



LONDON, July 5: It might just be the best deal in all of major professional sports: Tennis fans can get a chance to watch stars such as Carlos Alcaraz compete on Centre Court at Wimbledon by forking over just 15 pounds — about \$20 at the current exchange rate.

That's instead of Friday's price of nearly \$220 for the best seats at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament's biggest stadium. Face value there rises as the event goes on, hitting nearly \$370 by the end of Week 2, then going up again for the singles finals.

The secret to saving so much cash? The official resale service. It allows anyone already on-site with a ticket to sign up via the Wimbledon app for a daily lottery to get into one of the top three courts at a cut rate, including about \$13 each for No. 1 Court or No. 2 Court.

Those spots are offered up to the All England Club by spectators who leave before play ends.

Wimbledon offers cheap tickets to its biggest courts when fans leave early. "It's an elite tournament in terms of the players, but it's not elite to get in, which is part of the appeal," said Ed Hogan, a retired 69-year-old from Reading, which is a little more than an hour west of Wimbledon. "The concept of resale is great. It's recycling at its best — sharing the joy."

The All England Club wouldn't say how many tickets get resold. "We're selling the same ticket twice," said the club's operations manager, Michelle Dite, "and the primary reason is to make tennis as accessible to as many people as possible."

All England Club ticket resales raised about \$300,000 for charity in 2024. Money from resales goes to charities via the Wimbledon Foundation. Nearly \$80,000 was raised through the first three days of this year's tournament; last year's total was about \$300,000.

Wimbledon has done resales since 1954, but until last year, folks hoping to take advantage of the deal needed to stand in a line once they were on-site, hope they were there soon enough — and hope enough tickets were returned. Now, though, that "line"

is virtual.

Here's how it works:

After opting in on the app and getting their phone scanned by 2:30 p.m. at kiosks on-site or near the Wimbledon Queue, where thousands of people camp out at a local park for up to 24 hours in hopes of getting full-price tickets for main courts or grounds passes for smaller ones, fans then wait for a text message giving the good news that they were one of the lucky ones chosen for the resale, which runs from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m.

They have 10 minutes to confirm they still want a used ticket for the rest of the day, and another 20 minutes to get themselves to the green-and-brown ticket resale booth behind No. 1 Court to show the QR code that lets them pay for the cheap tickets.

Spending \$13 instead of \$115 to see Ben Shelton at Wimbledon? "You're not stuck in one place forever," said Henry Thompson, 38, a high school math teacher from Missouri. "This is much more efficient. Took 30 seconds. Much better."

Thompson, who was wearing a blue hat with the Wimbledon logo, really wanted to see 10th-seeded American Ben Shelton, so he entered the resale lottery and was able to get a seat for No. 2 Court for \$13 instead of \$115.

"It's beneficial to the sport to give people access to those courts for a reasonable price," said Marcos Giron, a 45th-ranked American who won first-round matches in singles and doubles this week. "It's a wonderful thing."

Chen Pinjun, who just finished medical school in Taiwan, waited in the queue for six hours, paid 30 pounds (\$40) there for a grounds pass, then also got herself into No. 1 Court via a resale for an additional \$13 — instead of the \$150 it could have cost to see 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina win there Thursday. "If everybody knew how that works, I'm sure everybody would apply," said Rafael Garcia, who was with his girlfriend, Diana Meneses, and her brother, Gustavo Meneses. "We saw that (resale) office last year, but we didn't know how to do it. Now we will." (AP)

Kyle Walker ends 8-year spell with Man City by moving to Burnley



BURNLEY, ENGLAND, July 5: England right back Kyle Walker ended his eight-year stint at Manchester City by moving to Burnley on Saturday in a deal reportedly worth 5 million pounds (\$6.8 million).

The 35-year-old Walker joins an American-owned team that has just been promoted to the Premier League and is coached by Scott Parker, his former Tottenham and England teammate.

Walker has been a great at City, winning six league titles and the Champions League since his 2017 move from Spurs, but lost his place in the team last season and went on loan to AC Milan. He kept his place in the England squad, though, playing in the team's last game — a 3-1 loss to Senegal last month — to move onto 96 caps.

"When I spoke to Scott and heard about his plans for next season, it was an opportunity I jumped at," said Walker, who has signed a two-year deal. "He's done an amazing job here, guiding the club back to the Premier League with a 100-point haul, and now we're looking forward, together, at being back in the greatest league in the world."

"Burnley had a tremendous campaign last season, built on an incredible defensive record, and I can't wait to come in and add my experience and quality to what looks an exciting squad." (AP)

FIVE INDIANS BOOK FINAL BERTHS AT WORLD BOXING CUP

ASTANA (KAZAKHSTAN), July 5: Astana, Meenakshi, Sakshi, Pooja Rani, Hitesh Gulia and Jugnoo registered convincing victories to reach the finals of their respective weight categories at the World Boxing Cup, here on Saturday.

India's boxing contingent in Kazakhstan is now assured of 11 podium finishes, including six gold medal bouts on Sunday. Abhinash Jamwal is keeping India in hunt for another gold medal with his semifinal slated later in the day.

Meenakshi started India's march with an aggressive display to beat Nurselen Yalgetekin of Turkey 5-0 in the 48kg semi-final.

Sakshi then displayed her prowess, landing punches regularly to dominate Feruza Kazakova of Uzbekistan and reached the final of the 54kg weight category by an identical margin.

Olympian Pooja Rani then staved off late charge Elif Guneri of Turkey in the 80kg category to reach the final with a 3-2 verdict.

Nupur had already sealed her



final berth in the 80 category on Friday, making it four Indian women boxers in the finals.

Sanju fought hard before going down to Viktoriya Grafeyeva of Kazakhstan in a 0-5 verdict and will have to bring

home a bronze medal. India had clinched a total of six medals in the first leg of the World Boxing Cup in Brazil earlier this year with only the men boxers competing in that leg.

This is the first time that the women pugilists are competing at the World Boxing Cup.

In the men's 70kg, Brazil leg gold medallist Hitesh Gulia looked in trouble after the first round against France's Makan Traore.

But the 20-year-old landed quite a few punches in the second round to close the gap and wrapped it up with yet another convincing display in the third and final round to reach the final.

Jugnoo then added to the celebratory mood in the Indian camp with a 5-0 thumping of England's Teagun Scott. (PTI)

Govt stance regarding players of Indian origin a positive statement of intent: AIFF

NEW DELHI, July 5: All India Football Federation (AIFF) President Kalyan Chaubey finds merit in government's stance to encourage players of Indian origin living abroad to play for the country, saying it was "a ray of hope" for bettering national team's performance but he also underscored the difficulties in implementing the policy.

The new Khelo Bharat Niti (National Sports Policy), which got Cabinet approval on July 1, signalled a departure from the government's earlier stand that only Indian passport holders can represent the country.

"When it comes to the performance of the national team, one of the areas of the policy is something we have worked on actively

-- the access to India's diaspora talent and I am happy that the policy included reference to the matter," Chaubey said a statement.

"This is a positive statement of intent and the AIF will continue to work with FIFA and the government to do all things possible to strengthen the national team."

"For some years, there has been a clamour for the inclusion of players with OCI cards in the national team. We've seen countries like Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Hongkong, Singapore, the Middle East Nations, and those in Europe take advantage of Naturalised Players with dual citizenship to strengthen their teams."

The ban on Overseas Citizens

of India (OCI) card holders from representing the country in 2008 prevented many players from contributing to India's growth in several sports.

However, the 20-page Khelo Bharat Niti document stated that sports can serve as a powerful bridge between the Indian diaspora and the country, fostering emotional, cultural and social connections.

"To strengthen this bond, dedicated sporting events and leagues can be organized specifically for and among the Indian diaspora," it said. "Wherever feasible, promising and prominent Indian-origin athletes living abroad may be encouraged to come back and play for India at the international level."

Chaubey, though, hinted at possible obstacles in taking advantage of the policy.

"Some clarifications in the Indian context might be helpful at this stage. As per the FIFA Statutes a player must hold a passport of a nation he or she wishes to represent and must produce it on match day," he said.

"While an OCI card grants certain social and economic rights to an individual, it is not equivalent to an Indian passport. Given that our laws do not provide for dual citizenship, it is up to us strategies how we may capitalise on the opportunity to access the diaspora talent and integrate them into the national teams as per the FIFA regulations as well as Indian citizenship law. (PTI)

Ranjith Ravichandran: X-man at Neeraj Chopra Classic symbolises evolving face of athletic fandom

BENGALURU, July 5: Athletics fan base is swelling in the country thanks to 'Neeraj Chopra effect' and Coimbatore resident Ranjith Kumar Ravichandran, who earned a fully paid trip to watch the NC Classic hosted by the superstar himself, exemplified the die-hard followers tracking their favourite player rain or shine. Last month, Ranjith tweeted his wish to watch the inaugural NC Classic if somebody sponsors Rs 2000 to cover his expenses. To his delight, he received an all-expense paid trip to the event with Chopra offering him a full VVIP experience, including accommodation.

The 30-year-old said he felt "surreal" to be watching this world class event, which has been given Category A status by World Athletics, following his "random" tweet.

"I just randomly tweeted, I must have forgotten about it. After a day or so, suddenly a notification popped up in 'X' platform, a quoted tweet from Neeraj himself. I was like: Is this even real? Somebody come and pinch me so that I can feel it," Ranjith, who works in a private firm in Coimbatore, told PTI.

"All of a sudden everything was happening. People were sharing the news and I was getting calls and all those things. I couldn't believe it initially. I checked twice. It's from Neeraj Chopra. I had to refresh and check it again whether it's real or not."

"Then I got a call (from NC Classic organisers) saying you are the lucky person to get sponsored to visit the event, stay in a (five-star) hotel and all those things. It

was a pretty surreal moment at that time."

Asked what will be his first reaction when he meets Chopra in person for the first time, he said, "I think I will be frozen for a moment. I will ask, are you real? I'll also get a signature so that I can probably frame it for a lifetime."

He has been closely following Chopra since his early days, from 2016 when the Indian superstar became the junior world champion. "I have been following him since the beginning of his career, his junior world title in 2016. He even made a world record which still stands. Every time when I see the record I get goosebumps because that is the only Indian record you could see in world athletics. "His Asian and Commonwealth Games gold in 2018, then Tokyo Olympics

happened. It was a very much surreal moment for many people," Ranjith, who is also pursuing a post graduate in Data Science in Coimbatore, said.

"We have a group of friends. People were (travelling) in so many places after COVID, so we had a trip. The event (Tokyo Olympics final) was happening, we put all our trip aside, we were watching that javelin final. We were screaming like anything when it happened (Chopra won gold)."

Ranjith had to sacrifice his sleep as he had to stay awake to watch Chopra's events around the world, including Diamond League meetings, which happens late at night in India due to time difference.

"I am also working and sometimes it's difficult but I manage

somehow. I have to sacrifice sleep to watch Neeraj events late at night. "Usually, Neeraj's events end after midnight. But I will keep the alarm ready or remain awake till late night to watch the events. I have to sacrifice my sleep," said Ranjith, who has his mother and a sister in the family.

Apart from following athletics events, he has also travelled to Bhubaneswar in 2018 to watch the hockey World Cup but on his own expense.

"I used to play hockey in my college days and was in the NCC. My favourite hockey player is Manpreet Singh. He is such a great player but so humble and does not show off," Ranjith said of the player who captained India to a historic bronze medal in the Tokyo Olympics. (PTI)

Humpy starts as fourth seed in her bid to qualify for Candidates

BATUMI (GEORGIA), July 5: Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy has been seeded fourth and will start as one of the favourites in the FIDE World Women's Chess Cup, where the top three finishers will qualify for the Candidates' tournament.

China's Lei Tingjie, Jiner Zhu and Zhongyi Tan are the top three seeds. Along with Humpy they spearhead the Asian challenge in the section that has seen Asian dominance now for quite some time. The winner in the Candidates will earn the right to challenge reigning women's champion Wenjun Ju of China in the next championship.

The top-21 rated players have been given a direct seeding in to the second round and the Indian list includes as many as four players — Humpy, GM D Harika, GM R Vaishali and Divya Deshmukh among those.

It is an interesting format wherein 86 players will compete under the knockout format and the 43 winners will be joined by the 21 seeded players to round it off to 64. Each round will be knockout with two classical games and one reserved day for the tie-break games of shorter duration to decide the winner.

Apart from the four seeded players, Vantika Agrawal is the other Indian who can spring more than a few surprises while Padmini Rout and P V Nandhidhaa has an impressive resume to stake their

claim to cause some upsets. Kiran Manisha Mohanty and K Priyanka complete the Indian line-up.

On rating Lei Tingjie has been quite consistent but the rise of Jiner Zhu has been phenomenal in recent years. The Indian women team had won the last chess Olympiad ahead of China but still on rating the Chinese women have been higher ranked and thereby favourites.

R Vaishali and Divya Deshmukh are two young players who can find themselves at the top of the tables. Vaishali has already played one candidates' tournament and Divya recently defeated highest ranked woman player Yifan Hou, also from China, the world rapid and blitz team champion.

Top pairings round 1: Carissa Yip (Usa) Hannah Wilson (Bar); Evi Yuliana Stavroula Tsolakidou (Gre); Bella Khotenashvili (Geo) Caxita Esperanca (Ang); Ning Isabelle Yixuan (Nzl) Valentina Gunina (Fid); Anna Ushenina (Ukr) Jesse February (Rsa); Ruelle Canino (Phi) Anna Shukhman (Fid); Yuxin Song (Chn) Kiran Manisha Mohanty (Ind); Tania Miranda Rodriguez (Mex) Kulon Klaudia (Pol); Azhar Puteri Munajjah Az-Zahraa (Mas) Antoaneta Stefanova (Bul); Zsoka Gaal (Hun) K Priyanka (Ind); Lala Shohradova (Tkm) Vantika Agrawal (Ind); Padmini Rout (Ind) Zhang Lanlin (Chn); Ortiz Verdezoto Anahi (Ecu) P V Nandhidhaa (Ind). (PTI)

England edge India by five runs in thriller to keep women's T20I series alive



LONDON, July 5: India's batting faltered at the death as England held their nerves to pull off a narrow five-run win in a thrilling third women's T20 International here, keeping the series alive.

It was an extraordinary day at the Kia Oval on Friday night, where England managed to triumph despite a spectacular batting collapse and sloppy fielding.

Opting to bat, Sophia Dunkley (75) and Danni Wyatt-Hodge (66) smashed commanding fifties in a 137-run opening stand before England lost nine wickets for just 31 runs in 25 balls to post 171 for nine.

In reply, India looked in complete control with Smriti Mandhana (56) and Shafali Verma (47) adding 85 runs for the opening wicket, aided by several reprieves from England's butterfingers.

However, Lauren Filer (2/30) bowled a fiery spell to dismiss Mandhana in the 16th over and trigger India's slide. Sophie Ecclestone (1/24), Lauren Bell (1/37) and Issy Wong (1/36) chipped in with a wicket each to restrict India to 166 for five in their 20 overs.

Needing six runs off the final ball, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (23) fell to Bell while attempting a big shot as India fell short by a boundary.

"We had the game till the 16th over, we did not utilise (the advantage). The dew factor also came in. We did well in patches but lots of learning for us," Harmanpreet said after the match.

"The bowlers were outstanding and the fielders supported us. We came back strongly after their opening stand. They executed their plans really well. We fell short by just one boundary in the end."

India were eyeing their maiden T20I series win over England but Dunkley and Wyatt-Hodge came out blazing.

Dunkley smashed seven fours and a six in her 53-ball knock, reaching her fifty in 35 balls after being dropped on 43.

Wyatt-Hodge, dropped twice in the ninth over, struck seven boundaries and three sixes in her 42-ball innings.

Deepti Sharma (3/27) broke the stand, dismissing Dunkley in the 16th over when she mishit a full-toss back to the bowler. Arundhati Reddy (3/32) then triggered a collapse in the 17th over, removing Alice Capsey (2), Wyatt-Hodge, and Amy Jones (0).

Capsey was caught by Charani N Shree attempting a ramp shot off a slower ball. Four balls later, Wyatt-Hodge hit another slower delivery straight to Harmanpreet before Arundhati trapped Jones lbw next ball, confirmed on review.

Tammy Beaumont (2) was bowled by Radha Yadav (1/15), while Charani (2/43) dismissed Paige Scholfield (4) and Wong (0). Deepti returned to dismiss Ecclestone (10) and Filer (0) to end England's innings.

Chasing 172, India raced to 61 in the powerplay. Shafali, dropped in the second over, smashed seven fours in her 25-ball 47 before falling to Ecclestone in the ninth over.

Mandhana reached her fifty in 38 balls, but her dismissal to Filer after playing six consecutive dots gave England hope.

Jemimah Rodrigues (20) fell to Filer while Richa Ghosh, dropped by Bell in the 19th over, was caught in the deep off Wong looking for a big hit.

With India needing 12 off the last over, Scholfield dropped Amanjot Kaur to reduce the equation to eight off four balls. Harmanpreet managed only two off the penultimate delivery before falling on the final ball as England stayed alive in the series.

India will face England in the fourth match in Manchester on Wednesday. (PTI)

Rahul departs after sublime fifty, Pant keeps England crowd on edge

BIRMINGHAM, July 5: K L Rahul lost his middle stump to a beauty from Josh Tongue before Rishabh Pant made the morning session more entertaining with his inimitable strokeplay, leaving India at 177 for three at lunch on day four of the second Test against England here on Saturday.

The 13-over old ball was expected to do a bit under cloudy conditions and it did for the England pacers especially Brydon Carse, who bowled his heart out in the session.

First innings double centurion Shubman Gill (24 batting off 41) and Pant (41 batting off 35) were in the middle when lunch was taken with India leading by 357 runs.

Considering England's ultra aggressive style of play and the batting friendly nature of the surface, India would need at least 500 runs to rule out any possibility of hosts making a match of the target.

Rahul (55 off 84) played some majestic cover drives before being undone by a peach from Tongue that straightened from an angle to uproot the Indian batter's middle stump.

Karun Nair (26 off 46) was the first wicket to fall on the day, a result of Carse's relentless pressure. Soon after being driven for four, Carse continued



to lure Nair into a drive and was rewarded with an outside edge to the wicket-keeper.

The tall bowler, who dismissed Nair with a snorter in the first innings, hit his helmet grille with a nasty bouncer, prompting a concussion check.

Pant came out in the 30th over and went ballistic from the get go. He smashed Josh Tongue for a four and a six over mid-off to make his intentions clear before executing a falling pick up shot off Ben Stokes that went all the way.

The crowd thoroughly enjoyed the battle between Pant and England bowlers. Towards the end of the session, Pant attempted a wild slog off Tongue but the bat slipped out his hands. Jamie Smith did well to collect the ball behind the stumps. (PTI)

I was hungry to get a hundred: Harry Brook

BIRMINGHAM, July 5: England batter Harry Brook said he was fired up to score a century in the ongoing second Test against India here after being dismissed for a duck in the second innings of their five-wicket win in the first game at Leeds.

With England struggling at 84 for 5 in reply to India's first innings total of 587 in the second Test here, Brook (158) and Jamie Smith (184) came to the hosts' rescue with a special 303-run partnership.

"I was off the back of a golden duck so I just wanted to get off the mark," he said after third day's play on Friday.

Brooks had missed out on a hundred after being dismissed for 99 in the first innings of

the opening Test.

"I was definitely hungry to get a hundred today. Obviously with the situation of the game, we were behind the eight-ball and to try to get the momentum to swing back in our favour, along with Smudge (Smith), was a good moment," he said.

The second Test is still tilted towards India with the visitors reaching 64 for 1 in the second innings, an overall lead of 244 runs with two days of play remaining.

Brook too admitted that India are in the driver's seat but said things can quickly change in a Test match.

"Hopefully we've clawed ourselves back into the game. I just tried to bat as long as I

could. If I hadn't got out we wouldn't be in this situation now, but we saw (at Headingley) last week how quickly it can change.

"India are in the driving seat but hopefully we can put pressure with early wickets and make them crumble," he said.

Brook praised the efforts of Indian bowlers.

"The Indians bowled really well with it. They came wide on the crease, attacked the stumps, kept all three modes of dismissal in play, and they made it do just enough to be able to get them wickets at the end there.

"We didn't get it quite right tonight. Hopefully we can do that tomorrow morning. There's plenty of wickets to be had out there." (PTI)

Europe tour will create bench strength: India 'A' hockey captain Sanjay

BENGALURU, July 5: India 'A' men's hockey team captain Sanjay feels the upcoming Europe tour will be a testing ground for the players and will help in creating good bench strength for the senior side.

India 'A' men's team left for Eindhoven, Netherlands on Saturday morning for the tour, scheduled from July 8 to 20.

"This tour will be a good testing ground for us to know our strengths and weaknesses. We have a good mix of seasoned players and young players, and the tour will provide us with strong competition to assess where they stand," Sanjay said in a release.

"This kind of international exposure will also help us strengthen our main team in the future and create a good bench strength in the long run."

Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh will be Sanjay's deputy. India 'A' will play eight matches in total across three cities in Europe.

While India 'A' will play two matches each against Ireland, France, and the Netherlands in Eindhoven, they will play one match each against England and Belgium in Amstelveen (Netherlands), and Antwerpen (Belgium) respectively.

These matches are expected to test the depth and readiness of players as the national setup looks to build a stronger talent pool for the Indian senior team.

"The tour will help the team understand the different dynamics and intensity of playing against top European teams in Europe. This exposure will also help some of the younger players experience hockey at a much different pace than they are used to in India," vice-captain Moirangthem said.

"We hope this exposure will help us and the next generation of players improve in the long run." (PTI)

Germany awaits news about captain Giulia Gwinn's latest knee injury at Euro 2025

ST GALLEN (SWITZERLAND), July 5: Germany was awaiting news Saturday on the severity of captain Giulia Gwinn's latest knee injury at the Women's European Championship.

The 26-year-old Gwinn injured her knee while making a likely goal-saving tacking on Poland captain Ewa Pajor during Germany's 2-0 win on Friday. She had to be supported off the field in tears after getting hugs from teammates.

Gwinn, who previously had two cruciate ligament injuries, was to have an MRI in Zurich on Saturday to determine the extent of the injury. Gwinn missed the 2023 World Cup while she recovered from the second cruciate injury.

"We all know Giulia's history. We're all, all of us, keeping our fingers crossed that it's nothing so serious," Germany vice-captain Janina Minge said. "We have to stand together as a team, to stand with her and hope for the best." (AP)

BCCI, BCB agree to defer India's away white ball series against Bangladesh to Sept 2026

NEW DELHI, July 5: The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Saturday mutually agreed to defer the white-ball series between Bangladesh and India, which was scheduled to be held in August 2025 to September 2026.

The away series was to feature three ODIs and three Twenty20 Internationals to be played from August 17 to 31 in Chittagong and Dhaka.

"This decision has been reached following discussions between the two Boards, taking into account the international cricketing commitments and scheduling convenience of both teams," the BCCI said in a release.

The BCB said the fresh schedule of the series will be announced in "due course."

"The BCB looks forward to welcoming India in September 2026 for this eagerly anticipated series. Revised dates and fixtures for the tour will be announced in due course," the release said.

While the two boards pinned the reason for deferring the series to scheduling inconveniences, the PTI had reported on July 4 that the BCCI wanted the series to be rescheduled since it was wary of the security situation in Bangladesh which is in turmoil since last year's civil unrest that resulted in the overthrow of the Sheikh Hasina-led government. (PTI)



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