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## India, UK seal historic free trade deal to slash tariffs, boost jobs

**LONDON, July 24:** India and the UK signed a landmark free trade agreement on Thursday, which, starting next year, will see 99 per cent of Indian exports enter the UK duty-free, while reducing tariffs on British products such as cars and whisky.

The deal, which comes days ahead of the US moratorium on higher tariffs coming to an end, aims to double the USD 56 billion trade between the world's fifth and sixth largest economies by 2030.

While India has opened its market to various consumer goods, including chocolates, biscuits, and cosmetics, it will gain greater access to export products such as textiles, footwear, gems and jewellery, sports goods, and toys.

Also, Indian companies, such as TCS and Infosys, operating in the UK won't have to make social security contributions for up to three years for employees who move from India.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and his British counterpart Jonathan Reynolds signed the agreement at a ceremony in UK Prime Minister's country residence Chequers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who flew in to mark the occasion, hailed the pact as "a blueprint for our shared prosperity".

"On the one hand, Indian textiles, footwear, gems and jewellery, seafood, and engineering goods will get better market access in the UK... On the other hand, people and industries in India will be able to access products made in the UK, such as medical devices and aerospace parts, at affordable and attractive prices," he said.

In his remarks to the media, Modi said the UK and India are "natural partners" and said the nations were "writing a new chapter" in their history.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer termed it "the biggest and most economically sig-



nificant" trade deal Britain has made since Brexit.

"The UK has been negotiating a deal like this for many years, but it is this government that got it done, and with it, we're sending a very powerful message that Britain is open for business, and that

is already generating huge confidence," he said.

For India, the FTA represents its most significant strategic partnership with an advanced economy and could serve as a model for future agreements, including a potential deal with the European

Union.

Under the pact, which has been termed Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), tariffs on Scotch whisky will be reduced from 150 per cent to 75 per cent immediately, and further lowered to 40 per cent by 2035.

On automobiles, India will reduce import duties to 10 per cent over five years, down from the current rate of up to 110 per cent, under a gradually liberalised quota system.

In return, Indian manufacturers will gain access to the UK market for electric and hybrid vehicles, also within a quota framework.

India has provided duty concessions to the UK auto exporters only on large petrol and diesel vehicles and high-priced EVs, while protecting sensitive segments of the domestic automotive industry, especially mid and small cars and low-priced EVs, under the trade pact.

No concessions are given to electric,

hybrid, and hydrogen-powered vehicles in the first five years of the agreement.

On the other hand, India will get duty-free access to several agri goods in the UK, such as fruits, vegetables, cereals, turmeric, pepper, cardamom, and processed goods like ready-to-eat food, mango pulp, pickles, and pulses.

Over 95 per cent of agricultural and processed food tariff lines will attract zero duty. Marine products such as shrimp, tuna, fishmeal, and feeds, currently taxed between 4.2 per cent and 8.5 per cent at present, will become completely duty-free once the pact comes into force. It may take about a year, as it requires approval from the British parliament.

In the textiles segment, India is facing a duty disadvantage vis-a-vis Bangladesh, Pakistan and Cambodia, which have duty-free access to the UK market. Now this FTA would eliminate the tariff on (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

## Petitioners allege targeted eviction of 667 families without due process ● Apex court seeks Assam govt's response in two weeks

## SC to hear contempt plea against Assam over Goalpara demolitions

**NEW DELHI, July 24:** The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to examine a plea seeking contempt action against Assam government authorities for allegedly violating the top court directives during its demolition exercise in Goalpara district.

A bench comprising Chief Justice B R Gavai and Justice K Vinod Chandran issued notice to the Assam chief secretary and others for their responses within two weeks.

The plea alleged mass eviction and demolition drives in June affected over 667 families.

The petition, filed by eight residents of Goalpara district, said the demolition exercise was carried out without granting personal hearing and providing adequate time for appeal or judicial review.



"Apart from that, the eviction and demolition exercise predominantly targeted a minority community, leaving out similarly placed persons from the majority community untouched, thereby constituting discriminatory implementation and carrying out of the eviction

drive by the authorities concerned..." the plea, filed through advocate Adeel Ahmed, said.

Senior advocate Sanjay Hegde, representing the petitioners, said a notice of only two days was given and the demolition was carried out immediately thereafter.

"Why don't you go to the high court?" the CJ asked.

Hegde said several persons moved the high court and the plea there was also about rehabilitation.

He said even encroachers were entitled to due process of law.

"These are 667 poor families who have been there on that land for 60-70 years," Hegde said.

The Brahmaputra changes courses from time to time and people have to move to higher grounds, he added.

"We want to issue notice but if the government comes with a defence that it is a government land, then we have already said that our order will not be applicable to land which are owned by the government, any encroachment on the streets, public place, abutting rivers and abutting (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

## CM unveils projects worth over ₹ 500 crore in Dibrugarh

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, July 24:** In a significant push to strengthen medical education and academic infrastructure in Upper Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday laid the foundation stones for major infrastructure projects at Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) and Dibrugarh University.

According to an official statement, a ₹357 crore project has been sanctioned for the construction of Teachers' Quarters and Students' Hostels within the 504-higha AMCH campus.

The project is being implemented by the Public Works (Health & Education) Department.

The planned faculty accommodation includes two blocks for senior faculty members with 40 flats and three blocks for junior faculty with 60 flats. Separate residences for the Principal, Vice-Principals, and Medical Superintendent are also



part of the project.

To meet students' residential requirements, a 500-seat girls' hostel and a 225-seat boys' hostel for MBBS students will be constructed. Postgraduate students will benefit from a 232-seat capacity hostel for female students and a 200-seat capacity hostel for male students.

A separate 250-capacity hostel

for General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM) students is also being planned. In addition, staff accommodation will include six blocks comprising 120 flats for Grade III employees and nursing staff, and eight blocks with 192 flats for Grade IV staff. Supporting infrastructure such as a dining block and community (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

## KAAC CEM seeks tribal university, ₹200 cr package in Delhi



**DIPHU, July 24:** Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, led a high-level delegation to New Delhi to press for key development and educational demands concerning the hill districts of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong.

The CEM, accompanied by several MPs and MLAs, submitted multiple memoranda to Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan, Nitin Gadkari, and Jyotiraditya Scindia during a series of meetings held Thursday.

According to an official statement, CEM Ronghang urged Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to upgrade the Diphu Campus of Assam University into a full-fledged Central Tribal University.

The proposal, he said, is a core component of Item 16 of Annexure II of the Memorandum of Settlement

(MoS) signed on September 4, 2021, with six armed organisations.

"While the Ministry has earlier stated that a third Central University for Assam may not be considered, I humbly reiterated that the MoS is a solemn political commitment, and its provisions must be honoured in full spirit," the CEM posted on social media, referring also to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's public assurance during the MoS signing ceremony.

The proposed university aims to focus on the higher educational needs of tribal communities in Assam and the Northeast.

The KAAC team demanded up to 65% seat reservation for tribal students, affiliation options for tribal colleges in Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong, and Dima Hasao, and multi-campus expansion across other tribal-dominated areas.

Ronghang added that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has extended full support to the proposal and expressed confidence that the central government would act promptly to fulfil this long-standing aspiration.

"The establishment of this Tribal University will be a transformative step for educational upliftment and social empowerment of the hill tribes of Assam," the official statement quoted the CEM as saying.

On the infrastructure front, CEM Ronghang met Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari to push for early tendering of the proposed National Highway-627. He specifically requested expediting the Dharamtul-Panimur (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

## Naharkatia to see ₹ 130-crore boost in infrastructure

CM lays foundation for key projects across sectors

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 24:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday laid the foundation stones for several major infrastructure projects in Naharkatia, Dibrugarh district, signalling a substantial public investment worth approximately ₹130 crore across education, sports, transport, administration, and skill development sectors.

According to an official statement, the initiative includes the construction of a Co-District Commissioner's Office, a road over bridge between Namrup and Naharkatia, new school buildings, a hockey stadium, and a Centre of Excellence within the premises of the local Industrial Training Institute (ITI).

The Chief Minister also formally handed over the Naharkatia ITI to the Department of Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship.

The Co-District Commissioner's Office, which was notified on Oc-

tober 5 last year, is to be built on about nine bighas of land at an estimated cost of ₹19.50 crore.

The five-storey building will host various administrative departments and facilities, including a 60-seat conference hall, a 25-seat video conferencing room, a canteen with kitchen, and a crèche.

As part of the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund for FY 2024-25, a two-storey building for Konwargaoon High School will be constructed at a cost of ₹7.50 crore.

The facility will include 15 classrooms, a smart classroom, science lab, library, staff rooms, residential quarters for security staff, a kitchen, dining hall, and toilets.

A similar two-storey structure for Naharkatia Higher Secondary School is to be built at a cost of ₹7 crore under the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme.

The Naharkatia ITI, built at a cost of ₹10.80 crore, will provide

training in trades such as plumbing, welding, electrical work, and computer applications.

The foundation stone was also laid for a TATA Strive Centre of Excellence at the ITI campus.

The centre is being developed under a memorandum of understanding with Tata Technologies Limited.

A new hockey stadium will also come up in Naharkatia at a projected cost of ₹15.32 crore, as per a Cabinet decision on January 30, 2023. The facility will feature a synthetic hockey field, an 840-seat spectator gallery, a 354-metre boundary wall, and solar power infrastructure.

Another key project is the 564.58-metre Namrup-Naharkatia road over bridge, being constructed jointly by the Assam government and Indian Railways at an estimated cost of ₹68.71 crore.

Once completed, it is expected to significantly ease traffic and improve (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

## CM reviews Dr Nagen Saikia's health at AMCH

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 24:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday visited Assam Medical College & Hospital (AMCH) to assess the health condition of renowned litterateur and former Assam Sahitya Sabha President Dr Nagen Saikia.

According to an official statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office, Dr Saikia, a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award, is currently admitted to AMCH for treatment of an undisclosed illness.

Upon arrival, Dr Sarma met with the team of attending physicians and medical staff to receive a comprehensive briefing on the patient's condition.

He inquired about Dr Saikia's vital parameters, ongoing treatment protocols, and projected recovery timeline. "Dr. Nagen Saikia has made an indelible contribution to Assamese (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

## Researchers tested four bamboo-based composite formulations consisting of Bambusa tulda fibres

## IIT Guwahati converts local bamboo into high-performance automotive materials

**NEW DELHI, July 24:** Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati, have developed an eco-friendly composite material made of "Bambusa tulda", a fast-growing bamboo species in northeast India, combined with biodegradable polymers, officials said on Thursday.

Due to its properties, such as high strength, thermal stability, low moisture absorption and cost effectiveness, the developed composite is a suitable replacement of conventional plastics used in automotive interiors.

The findings of this research have been published in the prestigious journal, Environment, Development and Sustainability (Springer Nature).



Led by Poonam Kumari, Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, the research not only addresses the problem of plastic waste, but also provides a solution

to the growing global demand for greener materials, particularly in the automotive manufacturing industry.

"The researchers tested four bamboo-based composite formulations

consisting of Bambusa tulda fibres reinforced with bio-based or petroleum-based epoxies. By treating the bamboo fibres with alkali, the team improved its compatibility with the base polymer, resulting in enhanced durability for real-world use.

"The developed formulations were then evaluated on 17 different parameters to test their tensile strength, thermal resistance, impact durability, water absorption and cost per kilogram, among others," Kumari said.

While these formulations had distinct strengths, none of them had all the properties to provide a balanced and high-performing option. To identify the same, the team used Multi-Criteria Decision-Making (MCDM), (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)



KAAC delegation team- CEM Tuliram Ronghang, Chairman. PWD board, KAAC, Vice President, BJP East Karbi Anglong dist and others meet Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday. -HT Photos



## Secures zero duty on 95 pc agri exports India-UK FTA excludes dairy products, edible oils, apples

**NEW DELHI, July 24:** India has protected the interest of domestic farmers by excluding dairy products, edible oils and apples in the free trade agreement (FTA) with the UK while securing zero duties on 95 per cent of agriculture and processed food items.

No tariff concession has been allowed on oats as well in the FTA, which was signed on Thursday.

On the other hand, Indian staples like turmeric, pepper, cardamom; processed goods like mango pulp, pickles, and pulses; and marine products such as shrimp and tuna will enjoy duty-free access in the UK market, boosting India's agri exports by 20 per cent over the next three years.

A commerce ministry official said there has been a major gain in the food processing sector as products that earlier faced duties up to 70 per cent will now enjoy zero duty on 99.7 per cent of tariff lines.

In marine and animal products, the duties will come down to zero from up to 20 per cent.

"India's farmers are poised to be the biggest winners of the FTA, which unlocks premium UK markets for their produce, matching or exceeding the benefits already enjoyed by exporters from Germany, the Netherlands, and other EU nations," a commerce ministry official said.

More than 95 per cent of agricultural and processed food tariff lines will attract zero duties on



fruits, vegetables, cereals; pickles, spice mixes, fruit pulps; and ready-to-eat meals and processed foods.

This will lead to reduction in landed cost of these Indian products in the UK market, boosting India's export and enhancing income of domestic farmers.

"Duty-free access is expected to increase agri exports by over 20 per cent in the next three years, contributing to India's goal of USD 100 billion agri-exports by 2030," the official said.

The FTA would also give a boost to exports of emerging products such as jackfruits, millets, and organic herbs.

In agriculture, the UK imports USD 37.52 billion worth products, but imports from India are just USD 811 million.

With regard to the benefits for the blue economy, the FTA pro-

vides for zero-duty access for 99 per cent of exports, including shrimp, tuna, fishmeal, and feeds. These are currently taxed in the range of 4.2-8.5 per cent.

"Despite the UK's USD 5.4 billion marine import market, India's share remains at just 2.25 per cent, underscoring a significant untapped export opportunity," the official pointed out.

The FTA would also help India's export of high-margin branded products like coffee, spices, beverages, and processed food.

Stating that the UK consumes 1.7 per cent of India's coffee, the official said duty-free access will help Indian instant coffee compete with EU exporters like Germany and Spain.

The UK is a major buyer of Indian tea (5.6 per cent), while spices have a 2.9 per cent share. The zero

tariffs will help enhance the country's market share.

"Indian craft drinks like feni from Goa, artisanal wines from Nashik, and toddy from Kerala will now enjoy Geographical Indication (GI) protection and shelf space in high-end UK retail and hospitality chains," the official said.

The FTA is set to help India's food processing sector. India exports USD 14.07 billion of processed agriculture and food products globally per year. The UK imports USD 50.68 billion worth of processed items, but Indian products make up for a mere USD 309.5 million.

In vegetable oils and plant-based products, the tariff elimination on goods that earlier faced duties of up to 20 per cent will benefit exporters of edible oils, oilseed derivatives, and other plant-based commodities, the official said.

Farmers of various states in the country are likely to benefit from the FTA. The major beneficiaries are Maharashtra (grapes, onions), Gujarat (groundnut, cotton), Punjab and Haryana (basmati rice), Kerala (spices), and NE states (horticulture).

Tea and coffee will enjoy duty free access from up to 10 per cent earlier. Duties on spices and oilseeds will be zero from 8 per cent earlier. Fruits will also attract zero duty from up to 20 per cent earlier. (PTI)

## Sensex tanks 542 points dragged down by blue-chip stocks, foreign fund outflows



**MUMBAI, July 24:** Equity markets fell on Thursday, with the benchmark Sensex tumbling 542.47 points, amid profit-taking in blue-chip stocks and foreign fund outflows.

Despite a positive start, the 30-share BSE Sensex failed to carry forward the momentum and fell later in the trade. The benchmark tanked 542.47 points, or 0.66 per cent, to settle at 82,184.17. During the day, it tumbled 679.42 points, or 0.82 per cent, to 82,047.22.

As many as 2,410 stocks declined, while 1,645 advanced and 166 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 157.80 points, or 0.63 per cent, to 25,062.10.

From the Sensex firms, Trent, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Reliance Industries, Infosys, Kotak Mahindra Bank, HCL Technologies, and NTPC were among the biggest laggards.

However, Eternal, Tata Motors, Sun Pharma, Tata Steel, and Titan were the gainers.

Infosys declined over 1 per cent amid profit-taking after its June quarter earnings announcement. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled in positive territory.

European markets were quoting in the green. The US markets ended higher on Wednesday.

"Indian equities fell sharply today (Thursday), reversing previous gains despite positive global cues. Initial optimism around the India-UK free trade agreement gave way to caution as attention shifted firmly to earnings. The IT and FMCG sectors dragged down

large-cap stocks due to subdued Q1 performance. Though the Q1 earnings are broadly in line, it does not justify the premium valuation..." Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

India and the UK on Thursday inked a landmark free trade agreement (FTA) that will cut tariffs on British whisky, cars, and an array of items, besides boosting bilateral trade by about USD 34 billion annually.

The deal was signed by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and his British counterpart Jonathan Reynolds in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his British counterpart Keir Starmer.

The FTA is expected to benefit 99 per cent Indian exports from tariff and will make it easier for British firms to export whisky, cars, and other products to India, besides boosting the overall trade basket, according to Indian officials.

"Markets traded under pressure on the weekly expiry day, reversing Wednesday's gains and continuing the prevailing downtrend. After a flat start, the Nifty gradually moved lower, primarily weighed down by persistent weakness in IT majors following Infosys' results and profit booking in private banking stocks after their recent rally. As a result, the index declined by over half a per cent to close at 25,062.10," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.50 per cent and midcap index dipped 0.43 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT dropped 2.27 per cent, IT (1.90 per cent), tech (1.54 per cent), FMCG (1.09 per cent) and realty (1.03 per cent). Healthcare, auto and metal were the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 4,209.11 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. However, Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth ₹ 4,358.52 crore in the previous trade.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 1.24 per cent to USD 69.36 a barrel.

On Wednesday, the Sensex jumped 539.83 points, or 0.66 per cent, to settle at 82,726.64. The Nifty gained 159 points or 0.63 per cent to settle at 25,219.90. (PTI)

## Govt to notify new vegetable oil regulation order next week: Food secretary

**NEW DELHI, July 24:** The government will notify a new order next week to regulate vegetable oil products in India with modern, transparent and technologically advanced provisions, Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra said on Thursday.

The 2025 Vegetable Oil Products, Production and Availability (VOPPA) Regulation Order will replace the existing 2011 order and emphasise enhanced monitoring of edible oil imports, production, stocks and sales through digital tools.

"The associations have been consulted. It's in the final stages now, probably by next week it will be notified," Chopra told reporters on the sidelines of the fourth edition of Indian Vegetable Oil Producers' Association (IVPA) Global Roundtable.

The new regulation makes it mandatory for the industry to report production, sales and pricing



figures. "Right now we are groping in the dark because we are dependent on the association for the data," he said.

Addressing the event, the secretary said the VOPPA framework will track production, pricing and availability in real-time, providing critical data to industry stakeholders while improving compliance, market monitoring, and product integrity. On import duty cuts in crude edible oils, Chopra said the government has implemented calibrated customs duty reductions to cushion the impact of global fluctuations and ensure affordability.

The government is monitoring market dynamics, conducting nationwide inspections and working with industry associations to ensure duty cuts are "swiftly passed on" to customers for fair price discovery across the supply chain.

While overall food inflation re-

mains at its lowest since 2021, edible oil has seen 20-30 per cent annual inflation except groundnut oil, which remains a concern for the government.

Mustard oil prices remain firm, though government agencies like Nafed have a stock of 7 lakh tonnes of mustard seed, which should help ease pressure on rates. Stressing on achieving self-sufficiency in domestic oilseeds and edible oil production, Chopra acknowledged significant challenges ahead. The average yield of major oilseeds such as soybean, sunflower and mustard in India is very low compared to global averages.

"It requires substantial investment in research and development, infrastructure development and adoption of modern agricultural practices," he said.

Newly developed Indian varieties demonstrate genetic potential

on par with top-performing countries globally. Scaling up production through enhanced seed replacement rates and widespread distribution are crucial steps forward. The government has launched schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana and National Mission on Edible Oils-Oilseeds to increase yields and production.

US Soybean Export Council Regional Director Kevin Roepke said no country can be self-sufficient in everything and suggested that the US has potential to increase soybean oil exports to India from current levels. The event was attended by Godrej Industries Group Chairman and Managing Director Nadir B Godrej, IVPA President Sudhakar Desai, and ITC Ltd Agri and IT Businesses Group Head S Sivakumar.

Desai said the country's edible oil imports have declined about 8 per cent over the past six months but are showing signs of recovery with softening international prices.

Mustard markets have been firm amid speculation of a lower crop, and there may be a need for a calibrated release of government stocks to moderate this trend, he said. "The global vegetable oil sector continues to be shaped by evolving supply-demand dynamics, price volatility, and shifting geopolitical tensions," Desai noted, adding in such a volatile context, data-driven dialogue becomes essential. (PTI)

## Govt gets investment proposal worth ₹ 16,000 cr under electronic component scheme

**NEW DELHI, July 24:** The government is learnt to have attracted investment proposals worth ₹ 16,000 crore under the Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme, according to sources.

The government had opened applications for the ₹ 22,805-crore electronics component manufacturing scheme (ECMS) on May 1. "Received proposals worth around ₹ 16,000 crore under ECMS," an official source said. An industry body also confirmed the development, based on its discussion with government officials and industry players.

According to the government source, the approval process has started and shortlisted projects are ex-

pected to be announced in September. "The scheme has received a good response from both domestic and foreign companies," the source said.

Sources had earlier mentioned that Tata Electronics, Dixon Technologies, and Foxconn were among the big players that have shown interest in the scheme.

Recently, Dixon signed separate agreements with Chinese electronic component firms -- Chongqing Yuhai Precision Manufacturing Co Ltd and the Indian arm of Kunshan Q Technology -- for manufacturing and sales of electronic components used in electronic devices like mobile phones and laptops, among others. (PTI)

*Contd. from Page 1...*

## India, UK seal historic free

textile imports from India, thereby enhancing its price competitiveness in the UK market.

Products that are poised for exponential growth include RMG (ready-made garments), home textiles, carpets, and handicrafts, where the removal of duties would create competitive advantages. India is expected to gain at least 5 per cent additional market share in the UK within 1 to 2 years of the implementation of the deal.

The pact also announced tariff elimination (from 18 per cent at present) for Indian engineering exports to the UK. It could help double domestic exports in the next five years to over USD 7.5 billion by 2029-30. India's exports of generic medicines and medical devices, such as X-ray systems and surgical instruments, will get a major boost with Britain agreeing on zero duty under a free trade agreement. On the services front, the agreement will enable Indian financial services players to expand their footprint in Britain, enhance their competitiveness and serve the Indian diaspora and businesses. For digitally delivered financial services, the UK has provided market access with respect to the various sub-sectors under both insurance and insurance-related, and banking and other financial services. With regard to the insurance sector, the agreement is expected to enable non-life insurance services and insurance intermediation (maritime shipping and goods in international transit), reinsurance and retrocession, and services auxiliary to insurance to expand their operation in India.

India has also secured an agreement on the Double Contribution Convention, which will exempt Indian professionals and their employers from social security payments in the UK for up to three years, improving the cost competitiveness of Indian talent. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that it will provide duty-free access to several domestic sectors such as leather, electrical machinery and chemicals in the British market, thus unlocking nearly USD 23 billion in opportunities. "Duty-free access for about 99 per cent of Indian exports unlocks nearly USD 23 billion in opportunities for labour-intensive sectors, marking a new era for inclusive and gender-equitable growth," Goyal said in a post on X.

Commenting on the deal, India Inc said that the pact marks a transformative moment in the global economic landscape, laying down the blueprint for a modern, values-led partnership. (PTI)

## SC to hear contempt plea

water bodies," the bench cautioned. After the apex court said it would issue notice on the plea, Hegde requested for a status quo. "If it is government land," the CJ said, "then no. We can't pass any order contrary to what we have held." The plea referred to the top court's November 13, 2024 verdict which laid down pan-India guidelines and barred demolition of properties without a prior showcause notice and 15 days' time to the aggrieved party to respond. The petitioners were stated to have been residing along with their families in Hasilabel revenue village for past 60 years without any objection being raised from any government authority till recently.

The plea said on June 13, the authority issued notice directing all the occupants to remove structures by June 15. The residents were stated to have been given sufficient time or any opportunity of hearing and the notice was issued in an "arbitrary and high handed manner".

The plea said within few days, the authorities conducted a mass eviction and demolition drives and the exercise was carried out without issuance of any fresh show-cause notice or without granting personal hearing.

It has also sought directions for interim relief by way of compensation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction of demolished houses, schools etc. Passing a slew of directions, the apex court in its November 2024 verdict made clear that they would not be applicable in case of unauthorised structures in a public spaces such as roads, streets, footpaths, abutting railway lines or a river or water bodies apart from cases where there was a court order for demolition. (PTI)

## CM unveils projects worth

hall will also be developed to improve campus life. Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister laid the foundation stones for a series of development projects at Dibrugarh University under the Chief Minister's Special Grant and the Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA), with a combined outlay of ₹ 147 crore.

Addressing the gathering, Sarma said, "This is a historic day for the people of Dibrugarh. With these projects at Dibrugarh University and Assam Medical College and Hospital, we have taken one step forward in our mission to establish Dibrugarh as the second capital of Assam. These projects will transform both institutions into premier centres of excellence with world-class facilities." The Chief Minister added that the government is committed to creating a conducive environment for learning, research, and holistic development for students and faculty.

## KAAC CEM seeks tribal

(122 km) and Panimur-Harangajao (122 km) stretches, stating that work could begin post-monsoon.

In another meeting with Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), Jyotiraditya Scindia, Ronghang invited the minister to attend the upcoming 52nd Karbi Youth Festival as Chief Guest.

He also submitted a memorandum highlighting the developmental limitations faced by Sixth Schedule areas due to Article 243M of the Constitution and urged for reforms under the ongoing 125th Constitutional Amendment process. As an immediate measure, Ronghang requested a Special Economic Package of ₹ 200 crore for Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong to support growth in tourism, horticulture, and local manufacturing.

The delegation included BJP Assam Pradesh President and MP Dilip Saikia, MPs Amarsing Tisso and Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, MLAs Darsing Ronghang, Rupsing Teron, and Bidya Sing Englang, KAAC Executive Member Surjo Rongphar, MAC Dr. Mongve Rongpi, and former MP and CEM adviser Jayanta Rongpi.

## Naharkatia to see ₹ 130-crore

connectivity in the industrial corridor. Speaking at the public event, Chief Minister Sarma credited the recent pace of development in Naharkatia to the leadership of local MLA Taranga Gogoi.

He highlighted the region's elevation to co-district status, improved road connectivity under the Asom Mala scheme, construction of mini stadiums, new ITIs, and ongoing work on the Sukapha Kshetra at Tipam.

Sarma also mentioned that the Centre has approved both the revival of the Namrup fertiliser plant and the construction of a new greenfield unit with a combined investment of ₹ 11,000 crore.

In addition, the Numaligarh Refinery has committed ₹ 750 crore for setting up a new industrial facility in the area, with work expected to begin in January. On the education front, the Chief Minister informed that schools in Sasoni, Joypur, Naharkatia, and Konwarigaon are receiving investments in the range of ₹ 7-8 crore each.

He also reviewed progress on key bridge projects including the ₹ 32-crore Sasoni-Duliajan Tikilbarighat bridge, which is scheduled to open in January, and other bridges over the Burhi Dihing in Joypur-Tipam and Hudupora-Duliajan. The chief minister lauded the achievements of the local women's hockey team, which has secured district-level championships across all age categories and set a state record by winning school tournaments eight times consecutively. He expressed hope that the upcoming stadium will help these athletes reach national and international levels. Reflecting on broader state-level developments, Sarma said that in the last five years, Assam has attracted over ₹ 5 lakh crore in industrial investment, constructed over 10 km of road daily on average, established more than 24 medical colleges, initiated 13 universities, and launched several large-scale bridge projects across the Brahmaputra.

He also said that in Naharkatia constituency, around 29,000 households have benefitted under the Orunodoi scheme, 30,000 women under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan, and thousands of tea garden workers under the 'Eti Koli Duti Paat' programme. The chief minister concluded by affirming that Dibrugarh is set to become Assam's second capital under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi -- a move that, he said, would significantly accelerate the region's economic and administrative growth.

The event was also attended by Minister of Industries and Commerce Bimal Borah, Minister of Medical Education Prasanta Phukan, Transport Minister Jogen Mohan, local MLA Taranga Gogoi, and MLAs Terash Gowalla and Chakradhar Gogoi, among other dignitaries.

## CM reviews Dr Nagen

literature and culture," the official statement quoted the Chief Minister as saying, "We must ensure that he receives the best possible care and support during his treatment."

Sarma also discussed with hospital authorities the availability of specialised equipment, requisite medicines, and any additional resources needed for Dr Saikia's recovery. He directed AMCH Principal Professor Sanjeeb Kakati and the medical team to extend round the clock monitoring and to keep his office updated on developments. Professor Kakati assured the chief minister that Dr Saikia was under expert supervision and that all necessary measures were being taken to facilitate his speedy recovery.

The Principal also thanked the CM for his personal interest in the well being of the veteran writer. The chief minister's visit underscores the state government's commitment to supporting cultural icons and ensuring their access to quality healthcare, the statement added.

## IIT Guwahati converts local

a structured evaluation method. "The results observed bamboo composite made with bio-based epoxy FormuLite as the best performing option with low moisture absorption, significant thermal stability, and mechanical strength. The cost-effective nature of the composite, priced at ₹ 4,300 per kilogram, makes it an eco-friendly solution for automotive parts, such as vehicle dashboards, door panels and seat backs, among others," she said.

"Developed composite can be used for designing components/parts in consumer electronics, automobiles, aerospace and sustainable building materials etc. The product will replace wood/iron/plastic components and will have similar cost and lead to fulfilment of SGD goals. This development is in line with Make in India policy under Green Tech Revolution," she added.

The team is currently conducting a full life cycle assessment of the developed composite to measure its environmental impact from production to disposal. As the next step, the research team is planning to apply industrial techniques such as compression modelling and resin transfer to scale up the production. (PTI)

### NAME CORRECTION

I, Rupa Begum (also known as Rupa Rabha) daughter of Bumesh Rabha and wife of Hasem Shek resident of 12th Mile, Marakdani, Sonapur, Kamrup (M). Through a Court Notary, I have changed my name from Rupa Begum to Rupa Rabha Begum. Therefore, from now onwards I shall be known as Rupa Rabha Begum for all purposes, including all future correspondences, documents, legal records and proceedings.



Speculation grows over possible UPPL-BPF alliance ahead of BTC polls

## If UPPL and BPF unite, they will form the BTC government: Hagrama Mohilary

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, July 24:** With the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections approaching, political developments in the Bodoland region are gaining momentum, amid indications of a possible alliance between the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) and the Bodoland People's Front (BPF).

According to sources, efforts are reportedly underway to unify the two regional parties in response to the growing influence of national political parties in the region.

The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) is said to be facilitating behind-the-scenes talks between BPF president Hagrama Mohilary and UPPL president and incumbent BTC Chief Executive Member (CEM) Promod Boro.

Addressing the media in Barama on Thursday after attending the Central Policy Determination Committee (PMB) meeting of the BPF, Hagrama Mohilary confirmed the initiative.

He stated that ABSU president Dipen Boro and UPPL leader



Khampa Borgoyari had approached him with a proposal for unification.

While no formal meeting has yet taken place, Mohilary expressed his willingness to participate in discussions with Promod Boro.

"I am ready to talk. If unification is practical, I am open to it. But just talking over mobile

phones or on television is not enough," Mohilary said.

Responding to media queries, the former BTC Chief stated, "If UPPL and BPF come together, we will form the government. There will be no place for BJP, Congress or AIUDF. If unification happens before the election, it will be even better."

Commenting on the potential

entry of other regional parties in the BTC polls, Mohilary dismissed the Rajar Dal's prospects, stating that the party's influence was limited to Upper Assam.

Speaking on the issue of Bodo unity, Mohilary remarked, "When we were in crisis, no one spoke of Bodo unity. Now that UPPL is facing challenges, there is a call for unity. Was I not a Bodo when I was going through difficult times? Was I a Sharma, Nath, or Ali then? Promod Boro is a Bodo too, and if he is in trouble, now people speak of unity."

When asked about the leadership question in the event of unification, Mohilary stated, "If it's BTR, Promod Boro will be Chief. If it's BTC, I will be Chief," adding, "I am not the Chief of BTR. I am the Chief of BTC."

Mohilary also claimed that he is politically stronger than before and that the BPF has already finalised its strategy for the upcoming elections.

However, he declined to disclose specific decisions from the closed-door PMB meeting held in Barama.

## SMC unveils clean market drive under commissioner Srishti Singh's leadership

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 24:** In a decisive step towards restoring civic order and improving hygiene in Silchar's bustling market areas, the Silchar Municipal Corporation (SMC) has launched a comprehensive reform initiative aimed at tackling long-standing issues of waste disposal, traffic congestion, and unregulated vending.

The move, announced in an official statement, marks a renewed commitment under the leadership of SMC Commissioner Srishti Singh, IAS, to transform the city's markets into cleaner and more accessible spaces.

A high-level meeting convened at the SMC office conference hall on Thursday brought together representatives of the Market Association, municipal officials, and other key stakeholders.

The deliberations, chaired by Commissioner Singh, revolved around a coordinated action plan to address the various civic problems plaguing commercial zones in the town.

"Our markets are not just centres of commerce—they are the living, breathing heart of Silchar's economy and culture," Commissioner Singh said in her opening remarks. "It is our collective duty to ensure they remain clean, accessible, and vibrant. Today, we are not here to point fingers but to take ownership—vendors, shopkeepers, administrators, and citizens—so that we can all take pride in our marketplaces."

Highlighting the significance of shared responsibility, the Commissioner urged all present to treat the issues of garbage dumping, illegal parking, and encroachments not as isolated concerns but as symptoms of a wider need for behavioural change.

She emphasised that civic responsibility must become a part of daily life and not be seen as a one-off clean-up exercise.



Among the key concerns discussed were the growing problem of open waste dumping near market premises, which has led to deteriorating hygiene conditions and health risks.

Frequent parking chaos, particularly during peak hours, was flagged as another persistent issue, causing traffic congestion and hindering pedestrian movement.

The uncontrolled spread of street vendors and lack of designated vending zones were also identified as areas needing immediate intervention.

To address these concerns, Commissioner Singh announced a series of measures, including regular joint inspections by SMC officials and market representatives, the formation of a dedicated cleanliness task force, and the identification and marking of formal vending and parking areas.

She assured the gathering that the SMC would provide full administrative backing for the proposed reforms and urged the Market Association to ensure co-operation at the ground level.

"This meeting is only the first step," she said. "We will continue to hold regular reviews and follow-ups. Every action item discussed today will be monitored, and timely execution will be our priority."

Participants welcomed the initiative and expressed appreciation for the inclusive and transparent manner in which the meeting was conducted.

There was unanimous agreement on the need for swift action and better coordination among stakeholders.

Clear timelines were assigned to departments concerned with waste management, urban planning, and traffic regulation.

Executive Officer of SMC, Nabuttam Sharma, AUAS, was also present and echoed the Commissioner's call for collaborative and sustained efforts to improve market conditions.

He underlined the need for discipline not just in policy implementation but also in community behaviour.

The reform agenda, as outlined during the meeting, is expected to set the stage for long-term transformation in the city's civic infrastructure and service delivery mechanisms.

The initiative, according to the official statement, is part of a broader vision for sustainable urban development and participatory governance.

Under Commissioner Srishti Singh's stewardship, the SMC has committed to a model of governance rooted in transparency, accountability, and proactive engagement with the public.

As Silchar embarks on this reform journey, the coming months will be crucial in determining the success of these collective efforts to reshape the city's market landscape into one that reflects civic pride and functional efficiency.

## HPV vaccination drive held at DMC to prevent cervical cancer

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, July 24:** A Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccination drive was conducted at Diphu Medical College and Hospital (DMC&H) on Thursday to help prevent cervical cancer among girls and women in later stages of life.

The drive targeted girls aged between 9 and 26 years and saw participation from over 80 young female medical students, nurses, and staff.

Organised jointly by Pratishruti Cancer & Palliative Trust, Dibrugarh; Indian Medical Association (IMA), Diphu branch; DMC&H; Swapnalok NGO; and the Federation of Gynecological Society of India (FOGSI), the event aimed to raise awareness about cervical cancer and promote early preventive measures.

The vaccination drive was formally inaugurated by DMC&H Principal-cum-Chief Superintendent Dr (Prof) Sumitra Hagier.

Among others present were Deputy Superintendent of DMC&H and President of IMA Diphu branch Dr

JB Gohain, President of Swapnalok NGO Sonju Bora, Vice President Gautom Roy, Secretary Nivedita, and Atanu Dey.

Dr Gayatri Gogoi, Associate Professor of Pathology at Assam Medical College & Hospital (AMC&H), Dibrugarh, and Honorary Programme Director of Pratishruti Trust, also attended the event.

Dr Gogoi informed that this was the first such HPV vaccination initiative conducted at DMC&H.

Although the vaccine is not provided free of cost, it was offered at a subsidised rate to ensure wider reach.

She explained that girls aged 9 to 14 require two doses of the vaccine, with the second dose scheduled six months after the first.

Those aged 15 and above require three doses, taken at intervals of two and six months after the first dose.

Dr Gogoi expressed hope that the drive would encourage more people to come forward for vaccination and help spread awareness on the importance of HPV prevention.

## 15-foot python rescued in Sivasagar



**HT Correspondent**

**SIVASAGAR, July 24:** A 15-foot-long python was rescued from Kowamora Handikoi Gaon near Sivasagar on Sunday by Ramij Ali, a young environmental activist, after it was spotted attempting to prey on a goat. According to reports, the reptile—identified as a boa—was initially driven away by villagers while it was about to devour the animal. However, it returned later to retrieve the kill, at which point Ali successfully captured it and handed it over to the Forest Department. Forest Officer Himangshu Gogoi confirmed that the python was released into the Panidihing Bird Sanctuary the next day.

Following the incident, rescuer Ramij Ali urged local residents not to harm wild animals, stating that such species play a vital role in maintaining ecological balance.

## Ananda Kumar Das assumes charge as new DC of Sonitpur

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, July 24:** Ananda Kumar Das, ACS (DR-95), officially assumed charge as the Deputy Commissioner of Sonitpur district on Thursday. According to an official statement, Das previously served as Secretary to the Government of Assam, Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs Department.

He also held the additional charge of Commissioner, Food, Public Distribution & Consumer Affairs and Legal Metrology, Assam. Upon his arrival at the Deputy Commissioner's office in Tezpur, Das was accorded a warm and cordial welcome by the officers and staff of the district administration. He succeeds Ankur Bharali, ACS (DR-99), who has been transferred and appointed as Director, Sports & Youth Welfare, Assam.

the circumstances of the case.

The protestors expressed serious concerns regarding the initial handling of the case by the Nagaon police.

They alleged that there were lapses in the identification of the victim's body and criticised the police for allowing the Raha family to cremate a body that allegedly did not belong to their kin.

The demonstrators also accused both the government and law enforcement agencies of failing to ensure the safety and security of women and girls.

A memorandum was submitted to the Nagaon District Commissioner calling for justice for Nomrata Ingtipi and seeking the maximum punishment for the accused.

It may be noted that the Nagaon Karbi Students' Union had also organised a protest in Nagaon on Tuesday raising similar demands.

## Karbi women stage protest in Nagaon demanding justice for Nomrata Ingtipi



**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, July 24:** A large number of women from across Karbi Anglong district gathered in Nagaon on Thursday to protest the murder of Nomrata Ingtipi, demanding justice and strong action against the accused.

The protest was led by the United Forum of Women of Karbi Anglong and saw participants marching silently from the Clock Tower to the office of the District Commissioner.

According to information received from the organisers, the protestors carried placards bearing messages such as "Justice for Nomrata's murder," "We want justice," "Hang the killer," and "Judicial inquiry into Nomrata's murder."

They demanded that the accused, Saddam Hussain, be awarded the death penalty and that a judicial inquiry be initiated into

## Armed robbery reported at Barhampur Resort in Nagaon

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, July 24:** A group of armed miscreants looted cash and valuables from Pinakpani Resort and Restaurant, a family dhaba located in Barhampur under the jurisdiction of the Itachali police outpost in Nagaon district, on Wednesday night.

According to an official report, the unidentified robbers, whose faces were covered, entered the premises and held the owner, Pitambar Saikia, and one of his employees at gunpoint.

The miscreants reportedly tied up both individuals before looting cash, a CCTV monitor, and other valuables from the establishment.

The robbers, who allegedly spoke in Hindi, threatened the victims with pistols and sharp weapons during the incident.

The act has sparked concern among residents as theft and robbery cases have seen a rise in the area in recent times.

Police have initiated an investigation, although no arrests have been made so far.

Authorities have confirmed that Saikia, the owner of the resort, is a former student leader and a leader of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP).

## GULC successfully conducts entrance examinations for 2025-26

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 24:** The entrance examinations for admission into the LL.B. and B.A., LL.B./B.A., LL.B. (Hons.) programmes at Gauhati University Law College (GULC) for the academic session 2025-26 were successfully conducted on Tuesday, drawing widespread participation from aspirants across Northeast India. According to an official statement issued by the university, the examinations witnessed the appearance of a total of 1,233 candidates. The attendance rate recorded was 85.82% for the three-year LL.B. programme and 87.52% for the integrated B.A., LL.B./B.A., LL.B. (Hons.) programme. The smooth conduct of the examination reflects the university's commitment to maintaining academic integrity and procedural discipline. Vice Chancellor of Gauhati University, Professor Nani Gopal Mahanta, commended the successful execution of the entrance process.

"Gauhati University has maintained its academic standards and conducted the Law College entrance examinations in an orderly manner, alongside other entrance tests. We hope all candidates achieve their desired results," he said. Dr Dipankar Das, Principal of Gauhati University Law College, also extended his best wishes to all candidates and expressed sincere gratitude to the university administration for their cooperation and logistical support in conducting the entrance tests efficiently.

The university authorities reiterated their dedication to providing quality legal education and ensuring a fair and transparent admission process for aspiring law students.

## TU hosts translation workshop, releases book on ethnolinguistics

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, July 24:** Tezpur University has successfully concluded a week-long workshop focused on the review of Assamese translations of short science books published by the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research-National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (CSIR-NIScPR).

Organised by the Department of Linguistics and Language Technology (LLT) in collaboration with the National Translation Mission (NTM), Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysuru, the workshop aimed to finalise Assamese versions of five science titles translated under a nationwide initiative to promote scientific temper among young readers



through Indian languages.

Tezpur University Vice Chancellor Prof Shambhu Nath Singh, who attended the valedictory session as chief guest, praised the department's efforts in enhancing regional language resources and linguistic inclusivity.

Emphasising the role of translation in democratising access to knowledge, he underscored its significance in a linguistically diverse region like Northeast India.

Other speakers included Prof Chandan Kumar Sharma, Dean of the School of Humanities & Social

Sciences; Prof Mrinmoy Kumar Sharma, Dean of Research & Development; Dr Tariq Khan, Officer-in-Charge of NTM, CIIL Mysuru; Dr Arup Kumar Nath, Head of the Department of LLT; and Dr Amalash Gope.

A highlight of the session was the formal release of a new book titled Linguistic Anthropology and Ethnolinguistic, co-authored by Dr Bipasha Patgiri of Tezpur University and Mr Sushanta Rajkhowa of Assam Down Town University.

Jointly published by the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology and Tezpur University, the book explores the relationship between language, ethnicity, and identity in Northeast India.

## Ashok Singhal reviews health and irrigation infrastructure in Darrang and Udalguri

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 24:** Health and Family Welfare and Irrigation Minister Ashok Singhal conducted an extensive review of public health and irrigation infrastructure during his visit to Darrang and Udalguri districts on Thursday. The visit included inspections of multiple healthcare facilities and the Dhansiri Irrigation Scheme, with directions issued to address key infrastructural concerns.

According to an official statement, the Minister began his tour in Darrang district with a visit to the Sipahjar Community Health Centre.

There, he inspected the pharmacy, laboratory, and maternity ward and interacted with patients to assess the quality of services being provided.

Following the inspection, he held a meeting with hospital staff and district health officials to discuss service improvements.

The Minister then proceeded to the Patharighat Zonal Primary Health Centre, where he appealed to the local public to participate actively in awareness campaigns under the 'Healthy Assam' initiative.

He emphasised the importance of preventive healthcare and the role of village-level awareness in disease control. In the afternoon, Minister Singhal visited the Mangaldai District Civil Hospital.

During his inspection, he directed the Joint Director of Health Services to implement a digital patient registration system via a mobile application to manage the growing patient load more efficiently.

Before the inspection, he held a meeting with the Deputy Superintendent of the hospital, Dr Utpal Barua, who briefed him on the facility's existing infrastructure challenges.

A tree plantation drive was also carried out within the hospital premises.

Later, the Minister reached the 200-bed District Hospital in Udalguri at 2 pm, where he conducted a detailed inspection of all wards and medical facilities. He specifically visited the registration room, dialysis unit, and maternity ward. During his interaction with expectant mothers, he took note of patient feedback and instructed hospital authorities to resolve ongoing issues at the earliest.

Minister Singhal also inspected the Dhansiri Irrigation Scheme at Bhairabkunda in Udalguri district later in the day.

During the visit, he reviewed the safety mechanisms of the existing dam infrastructure and discussed operational concerns with irrigation officials.

He directed the Chief Engineer to prepare an annual report detailing repair and maintenance needs of major schemes under the Irrigation Department. Additionally, he instructed the District Forest Officer to coordinate with both the Forest and Irrigation Departments to remove large boulders obstructing the Dhansiri River within seven days.

The review meeting was attended by Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) Deputy Chief Executive Member and local MLA Govind Basumatary; Assam Government Fisheries Development Corporation Chairman Gurujyoti Das; All Bodo Students Union President Dwipen Boro; Udalguri District Commissioner Pulak Patgiri; senior officials from the Irrigation Department; and a large gathering of farmers.

## Minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass reviews rural development, law, and tourism schemes in Jorhat

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, July 24:** Minister for Panchayat and Rural Development, Law and Justice, and Tourism, Ranjeet Kumar Dass, on Wednesday chaired a comprehensive review meeting at the Jorhat Circuit House to assess the progress of departmental works being undertaken in Jorhat district.

According to a district administration official, the meeting was attended by senior officials of the district administration and representatives from departments under the Minister's portfolio.

Dass took stock of various ongoing projects and instructed officials to ensure that all schemes and infrastructure works are completed within their stipulated timelines.

During the review, the Minister placed special emphasis on the 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin' (PMAY-G), directing officials to complete the construction of around 8,000 houses under the scheme by September 30 this year.

He lauded the district officials and field staff for achieving a higher housing completion rate in Jorhat compared to the overall state average.

The Minister also reviewed the progress of several other key schemes including the 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act' (MGNREGA), 'Amrit Sarovar', and the 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan' (Chief Minister's Women Entrepreneurship Mission).

In addition, he took note of the ongoing initiatives being carried out by the Tourism Department in the district.

MLAs of Jorhat and Mariani constituencies, Hitendra Nath Goswami and Rupjyoti Kurmi respectively, were also present at the review meeting.

Following the official proceedings, Minister Dass visited the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) district office in Jorhat and addressed a gathering that included 16 newly elected Zila Parishad members, party workers, and office bearers.

He urged the members to elect the Zila Parishad president and vice-president unanimously.

Dass also commended the party's organisational strength for its performance in the recently concluded panchayat elections in Jorhat district, attributing the success to the BJP-AGP alliance under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*We live in a rainbow of chaos.*  
-Paul Cezanne

## Nitish facing NDA salvos

A change of power is yet to take place, a mahagathabandhan government is still waiting in the wings to occupy the centre stage, but to the chagrin of the people of the state, jungle raj has already descended in Nitish Kumar's Bihar. This negates the myth Narendra Modi has been consistently trying to create through his numerous speeches, that Jungle raj will revisit Bihar with installation of a secular INDIA bloc government. A jungle raj is usually perceived as the rule "of and by" the criminals and gangsters. These people operate their illegal activities brazenly showing utter contempt to the elected governments and peoples' representatives. The Mafiosi rule the state. For them enforcing anarchy is the best mechanism to perpetrate their regime. Killing, extorting and kidnapping are the best tools to terrorise the people to keep shut and obey their dictates. For the first time Nitish Kumar had coined this phrase on the eve of 2005 assembly election, but was hijacked by the BJP to paint the image of Lalu Yadav black and project him as the leader who is incompetent to rule. Undeniably Lalu's rule witnessed widespread lawlessness, criminalisation of politics and a state where growth and development were alien concept. But an analysis of the nature of crime and criminals would make it explicit that it was created by the mercenaries and politicians enjoying the patronage of the upper caste landlords and feudal elements.

Of course Lalu Yadav was involved in the fodder scam, as he did not initiate actions against the bureaucrats and politicians, which he should have done as the head of the government, it was made to look like a colossal scam by the top BJP leaders. They had perceived that with Lalu in command of Bihar politics; the saffron philosophy would have no taker. It is indeed shocking and melancholic for Nitish that he is being accused of pushing Bihar in Jungle Raj. For last one year hundreds of brazen killings have taken place in the state. Earlier the targets were the Dalits and poor, now in recent months organised crime and gang war have featured prominently. The nature and number of killings has even prompted his NDA colleague Chirag Paswan to remark publicly on the deterioration of law and order under Nitish, who has been chief minister of the state since 2005. The devilry of the criminals and their contempt for law and order system could be gauged from the simple incident that took inside Paras Hospital only a couple of days in broad day-light. Five gun-toting criminals walked into the hospital and under CCTV cameras, shot dead a dreaded criminals who was admitted there for some treatment.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Bihar is probably the only state in India, where there is no government. Nitish has lost his control on state administration. Bihar already has the dubious distinction of being the lawless state. Now with Nitish unable to force his whip, Bihar has on the path of complete degeneration. Patna alone has witnessed 13 murders, including that of prominent businessman Gopal Khemka, over the past fortnight.

## India's decision to raise oil import from the US is more political than commercial

By: Nantoo Banerjee

President Trump's trade and tariff tantrums seem to be strongly working on India. The country's crude oil imports from the United States surged by 51 percent during the first half of the current year ignoring the very high cost of import, including shipping, and travel time from the US ports. The political undercurrents, involving India's ongoing trade negotiations with the US, are believed to be significantly responsible for the strategic shift despite a high time and cost burden. India, the world's third largest consumer of petroleum, is the second largest importer of crude oil. The country is almost 90 percent import dependent on petroleum oil. The import focus has lately shifted substantially from traditional suppliers in West Asia to Russia and the US for price and diplomatic reasons.

Thanks to the low price of crude oil from the Western sanctions-hit Russia, the latter has emerged as the single largest oil supplier to India since the middle of last year. China is also a major importer of Russian oil. Since the middle of last year, India has been playing hide-and-seek with China to become the largest buyer of Russian oil. Presently, India is using a new much-shorter sea route – the Eastern Maritime Corridor – significantly boosting commodity trade between the two countries, especially crude oil shipments. The Russian Urals crude oil price is \$2.00 per barrel below the \$60 per barrel limit imposed by Western nations amid weak Brent prices. The price of US Brent oil is around \$69 per barrel. The new eastern route from Vladivostok to Chennai is translating into savings on two counts: shipment times between the two countries and thereby transportation costs.

Earlier this year, India was under big trade pressure from the US to take steps towards making Washington "a leading supplier of oil and gas to India", which could help the US bridge the trade deficit with India. US President Donald Trump asked India to step up oil imports from his country after his last meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington. Trump added that the US will "hopefully," be India's top oil and gas supplier. It sounded rather ominous or more like a warning as in 2024-25, India's trade surplus with the US reached a record level of \$41.18 billion, the largest from any country, from the \$35.32 billion surplus it logged in the previous fiscal. India's exports to the US grew by 11.6 percent to \$86.51 billion. Its imports from the US increased by 7.44 percent to \$45.33 billion.

The most shocking part is: India's one-sided foreign trade with China is leading to increasingly large trade deficits with that country. Trump is believed to have been intrigued by the fact that while India is focussed to benefit more from the US trade, its trade deficit with China reached an all-time high at \$99.2 billion in 2024-25 and, at the same time, India's sheepish reaction to China's growing import restrictions from India. The country's exports to China contracted by 14.5 percent to only \$14.25 billion, compared to \$16.66 billion in the previous fiscal. Now, Trump is ready to enforce a new trade deal to balance the US-India trade.

This explains India's sudden spike in crude oil imports from the US, this year. The country's oil imports from the US jumped as much as over 270 percent year-on-year in the first four months of 2025, underscoring Delhi's strategy of enhancing American imports amid prolonging trade pact negotiations. India is also importing more high-cost oil from distant Brazil purely for diplomatic reasons. The reason being advanced by India in support of its oil import decision to purchase substantially more from the US – also partly from Brazil – is that the country is diversifying its sources of crude oil in a volatile geopolitical and geo-economic environment. It may be noted that Brazil's President Lula de Silva called Prime Minister Narendra Modi to convey condolences at the loss of lives in the terrorist attack in Pahalgam on April 22. At President Lula's instance, the 17th BRICS summit in Rio de Janeiro condemned the Pahalgam terror attack among others and strongly supported India's inclusion as a permanent member in the UN Security Council.

For heavily import-dependent India, oil has become a major tool of strategic and diplomatic relations for the country with oil exporting nations, including those traditional suppliers in nearby West Asia to Russia and the far-flung US, Canada and Brazil. Over the years, India has expanded its crude oil import sources to cover as many as 40 countries, including the recent addition of Argentina. Why not? The country's total oil import bill, this year, is projected to top the \$140-billion mark, provided that global oil prices remain within the \$60-70 per barrel range. According to reports, India's expenditure on crude oil imports was \$137 billion in 2024-25. In addition, the country spent \$15 billion on imported natural gas. (IPA Service)

## The commercialisation of education and the crisis of true knowledge

Education is a fundamental pillar of human civilization, paving the way for an individual's intellectual, moral, and social development. It serves as a sacred medium for the dissemination of knowledge, enabling individuals to realize their potential and contribute to societal progress. Traditionally, education has been regarded as a tool for the expansion of knowledge, the development of critical thinking, and the holistic growth of individuals. However, in the modern era, the growing trend of commercialisation of education has brought its core philosophy into question. The commercialisation of education has given rise to a profound crisis of true knowledge, impacting the quality of education, social justice, and the depth of knowledge. The consequences of this crisis are not confined to the realm of education alone but have far-reaching effects on the moral, cultural, and economic fabric of society.

The concept of the commercialisation of education refers to the process of treating education as a commercial product, where educational institutions are operated with profit as the primary motive. In this process, the core objectives of education—knowledge creation, development of critical thinking, and nurturing human values—are often sidelined. In the era of globalization, this trend of commercialisation has intensified. The rapid rise of private educational institutions, the prevalence of high-fee education, and the tendency to align education with market demands are the primary drivers of this transformation. In developing countries like India, this trend is particularly pronounced, as the growing demand for education has been paralleled by the increasing influence of the private sector. In states like Assam, this transformation has created unique challenges due to its economic, social, and cultural diversity. In urban areas like Guwahati, the rapid proliferation of private schools, coaching centers, and higher education institutions reflects the clear impact of commercialisation. This shift necessitates a deeper analysis of its effects on the quality of education.

Globalisation and the rise of market economies are among the primary drivers of the commercialisation of education. Globalisation has created a global market for education, where the commercial value of education is prioritized over its quality. Educational institutions treat students as consumers, offering luxurious

infrastructure, high-tech facilities, and promises of popular courses to attract them. In this process, the core philosophy of education—depth of knowledge, critical thinking, and the nurturing of ethical values—is often neglected. In the context of Assam, this trend is particularly concerning. The state's education system is already grappling with issues such as economic disparities, lack of infrastructure, and inadequate teacher training. In urban areas like Guwahati, the influence of private schools and coaching centers is on the rise, creating a significant disparity in educational opportunities between urban and rural students. For instance, private schools in Guwahati offer modern infrastructure, English-medium education, and preparation for competitive exams, while government schools in rural areas often face challenges like teacher shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and limited curricula. This disparity highlights the social inequalities exacerbated by the commercialisation of education.

The commercialisation of education has led to a profound crisis of true knowledge. True knowledge refers to knowledge that is not merely about accumulating information but is linked to the development of critical thinking, creativity, and ethical values. In a commercialized education system, curricula are often designed based on market demands, emphasising subjects aligned with the job market. Fields like engineering, medical sciences, and information technology are prioritized, while subjects like humanities, philosophy, literature, and the arts are often overlooked. This one-sided approach creates a lack of holistic knowledge among students, hindering their



education system emphasized local language, culture, and literature, but commercialisation has shifted focus toward English-medium education and preparation for competitive exams. As a result, interest in local culture and knowledge systems has declined, further intensifying the crisis of true knowledge.

One of the most severe consequences of the commercialisation of education is the inequality in educational opportunities. High fees charged by private institutions have limited access to quality education for students from lower and middle-class backgrounds, exacerbating class divisions in society and undermining principles of social justice. In a state like Assam, where economic inequality is already a significant issue, the commercialisation of education has further complicated the problem. In urban areas like Guwahati and Jorhat, the number of private schools and colleges is increasing, offering modern educational facilities. However, such



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

teaching is conducted by inadequately trained instructors, which hinders the development of students' depth of knowledge and critical thinking.

The commercialisation of education has also significantly increased stress levels among students. The excessive emphasis on exam results and job market demands has fostered a highly competitive mindset among students. Coaching centers and private institutions often place undue pressure on students, negatively affecting their mental health.

In a state like Assam, where exam results are given excessive importance, this issue is particularly alarming. In Guwahati's coaching centers, students face intense pressure to prepare for competitive exams like JEE and NEET, which not only increases their stress levels but also diminishes their natural curiosity and joy in learning.

Addressing the crisis of true knowledge caused by the commercialisation of education re-

quires multifaceted measures. First, there is a need to prioritize the quality of education. Collaboration between government and private institutions can help reduce disparities in educational opportunities. In a state like Assam, improving the infrastructure of government schools and the quality of teacher training is essential. For example, providing modern teaching materials, textbooks, and internet access in rural schools can help bridge the quality gap. Additionally, curricula should place greater emphasis on subjects like humanities, philosophy, literature, and the arts to foster critical thinking and creativity among students. Policy reforms are also needed to mitigate the negative impacts of commercialisation. Implementing strict regulations on private institutions' fees, issuing guidelines for maintaining educational quality, and improving teacher training standards can address these issues.

Resolving the commercialisation of education and the crisis of true knowledge requires the participation of all sections of society. Collaboration among teachers, parents, students, and policymakers can help re-establish the core objectives of education. In a state like Assam, where cultural and social diversity is paramount, designing curricula that align with local needs and culture is essential. For instance, developing curricula based on the Assamese language, literature, and culture can foster students' interest in local knowledge and deepen their connection to education. Through these measures, it is possible to mitigate the negative impacts of commercialisation and promote the dissemination of true knowledge.

In conclusion, the commercialisation of education has created a profound crisis of true knowledge, negatively impacting educational quality, social justice, and students' holistic development. In a state like Assam, the effects of this crisis are particularly complex, as the education system is already grappling with economic and social disparities. Addressing this issue requires collaboration between government and private sectors, a focus on educational quality, curriculum reforms, and alignment with local culture. By re-establishing the core objectives of education—dissemination of knowledge, critical thinking, and the development of human values—it is possible to mitigate the negative impacts of commercialisation and resolve the crisis of true knowledge.

## India's electric vehicle future depends on availability of rare minerals

By: Dr. Nilanjan Banik

There's a blind spot in India's electric vehicle ambitions, which sits deep inside the battery. Lithium, neodymium, dysprosium, praseodymium are rare earth elements. Laboratory processing of these rare earth materials yields permanent magnets, which have applications spanning dental, aerospace, defense, electronics, batteries, and automotive sectors. And India imports most of permanent magnets from a single source: China.

In late 2024, China tightened its grip on permanent magnets exports, citing national security and environmental concerns. It was a sharp reminder of where power lies in the global clean-tech race. China controls more than 70% of global rare earth production and refining. India's \$240 billion auto industry just found itself exposed. Although Indian automobile manufacturers frontloaded magnet imports in March and April this year, up 20% and 87% year-on-year, respectively – those stockpiles are expected to run out soon.

This is no time for wishful thinking. If India is serious about electrifying transport and building clean-tech self-reliance, it must first learn how others played this game.

Initially, United States improvised by importing through third country route when China pulled the plug. US companies quietly redirected supply chains through third countries, mostly Thailand and Mexico. Between December 2024 and April 2025, US imports of antimony oxide (a type of rare earth material) from the two nations reached approximately 3,834 metric tonnes, more than the previous three years combined. That's because it wasn't, at least on paper. In reality, the materials were shipped from China to these intermediaries. There, they were relabelled and re-exported to the U.S., often disguised as unrelated goods such as zinc, iron, or even art supplies. US regulations permit this kind of re-routing, so long as shipments are licensed. And Beijing has no easy way to stop it. Reuters traced over 3,366 tonnes of these shipments to Thailand's Unipet Industries, a subsidiary of Chinese firm Youngsun Chemicals. The origin of the cargo? Omitted from shipping documents. The destination? U.S. buyers who didn't have to deal with Chinese customs directly.

However, this strategy of rerouting through third countries did not remain effective for long. Chinese government tightened export controls, making it increasingly difficult for the U.S. to procure materials through transshipment channels. Starting May 2025, Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOCOM) launched a dedicated campaign against smuggling and illicit transshipment of these strategic items. Authorities intensified customs checks, investigations, and legal actions against domestic and overseas entities involved in re-routing goods to the U.S.

Eventually, the U.S. had to yield, leading to the much-anticipated Trump-Xi phone call in early June. As part of the deal, China agreed to remove the restriction of rare earth material exports to the U.S. In return, Xi called for the United States and China to "seek win-win results in the spirit of equality and respect each other's concerns," while urging Washington to "remove the negative measures taken against China". So the deal was made with Trump stating, "Our deal with China is done, subject to final approval with President Xi and me". As part of this deal, the United States lifted export restrictions on chip-design software (EDA tools) and ethane for Chinese firms like Siemens, Synopsys, and Cadence. This was a big bargain for China. Tariffs were also reduced to levels seen under the Biden administration, except for firms found to be excessively exporting fentanyl to the U.S., with an additional tariff of 20% imposed on them.

China itself knows this playbook of protectionism quite well. After the 2008 global financial crisis and a rising tide of U.S. tariffs, especially under the Trump administration, Beijing began moving production out of mainland China. But it wasn't retreat; it was rerouting. First, Chinese manufacturers shifted operations to lower-cost regions like the Greater Mekong subregion, Central America, and parts of Africa. That kept their goods globally competitive while sidestepping trade friction.

Second, by relocating factories, Chinese firms avoided direct hits from tariffs. In April 2024, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai accused China of funneling steel products through Mexico to circumvent trade restrictions. US imports from Mexico reached \$475 billion in 2023—up \$20 billion from the year before. Imports from China dropped by \$10 billion to \$427 billion.

Chinese foreign direct investment in Mexico tripled to \$3.7 billion in 2023 when compared to the decade-long average, as over 30 firms—including EV giants BYD and Chery—set up shop there. Container traffic from China to Mexico rose by 22% in 2024. China had simply redrawn the map to stay in the game. Third, China has also used global investments in Africa and Asia to ease pressure on its own energy and raw material needs. In Myanmar, Chinese companies built six hydropower plants and a thermal power station. In Vietnam, they invested in power transmission infrastructure and copper processing facilities. The payoff? Exports from Vietnam to the US rose 40% between 2018 and 2024.

For China, foreign investment isn't just about access. It's about leverage.

So, what must India do?

Step One: secure alternatives. India should work with friendly countries that can serve as neutral conduits for rare earths, especially those with stable ties to both India



and China. This buys time, but it's a temporary fix.

Step Two: invest overseas. Africa holds vast, underdeveloped reserves of lithium, cobalt, and copper. India is already eyeing assets in Zambia, Congo, and Australia. That effort must be scaled up and fast-tracked. Australia, the world's third-largest producer of rare earth elements, should be a strategic partner.

Step Three: build strength at home. That means encouraging new entry into mining, funding rare earth processing, and creating a research ecosystem to develop substitutes. India has the world's third-largest reserve of rare earths of 6.9 million tonnes. However, the excavation of these materials is expensive and not economically viable for private firms to undertake independently. The government's production-linked incentive schemes under Atmanirbhar Bharat must go beyond EV assembly lines and start backing rare earth supply chains from the ground up. Efforts must be made to identify close substitutes for rare earth materials, such as neodymium, which is found in abundance in India and, with proper R&D, can be developed into more effective rare earth magnetic materials. India must also deepen cooperation with countries like the US, Japan, and Australia, not just for raw materials, but for tech and research support. China may dominate rare earth tech today, but the gap is not insurmountable.

Step Four: Adopting a more liberal approach to Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows, but with a binding clause requiring technology transfer as a condition for investment. In fact, the Economic Survey 2024-25 had made a strong case for seeking FDI from Beijing to boost local manufacturing and tap the export market.

If India wants to lead the global EV transition, it can't afford to be a bystander in the rare earth game. These materials may lie buried in foreign soil, but the strategy to secure them can be hammered out at home. Because no matter how sleek the car, it won't move an inch without the right minerals. (IPA Service)



# Aviation engine success propelling China's air combat power

By: Atul Kumar, Ananya Vellore

The rise of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) combat air power in the 21st century has been propelled by China's hard-earned breakthroughs in jet engine development. After decades of failure—including the cancellation of the WS-6 and WS-8 programmes—Beijing has finally gained traction with the WS-10, a core engine that is now spawning a new generation of propulsion systems for both aviation and naval platforms. Led by the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF), this achievement reflects a multibillion-dollar push to master one of the most technically demanding pillars of military-industrial capability.

## Origins of the Aviation Engine Programme

During World War II, China received I-5, I-16, and I-153 fighters, as well as SB, DB-3, and TB-3 bombers from the former Soviet Union. With Moscow's support, China established aircraft factories across its cities after the war. This collaboration provided China access to a wide range of Soviet aircraft and jet engines, notably the MiG-15, MiG-17, MiG-19, and especially the MiG-21, a supersonic, single-engine interceptor powered by the Tumansky R-11 turbojet, which Beijing saw as the foundation for mass-producing 'people's fighters' to counter Western technological superiority. However, the 1960 Sino-Soviet split resulted in an abrupt termination of this cooperation, as Soviet advisors were withdrawn, joint production was halted, and China was left with incomplete blueprints, disassembled MiG-21 kits, and only partially trained engineers. Despite this rupture, Beijing pressed ahead, producing thousands of MiG-17 and MiG-19 variants under the J-5 and J-6 programmes, and ultimately reverse-engineered the MiG-21 to create the J-7—a milestone in China's drive for an independent aviation industry.

After decades of failure, including the cancellation of the WS-6 and WS-8 programmes, Beijing has finally gained traction with the WS-10, a core engine that is now spawning a new generation of propulsion systems for both aviation and naval platforms.

However, the Tumansky R-11 turbojet engine proved to be the most challenging component for China to reverse-engineer, despite having complete technical documentation. It was only by 1975 that the J-7 could fly reliably with the Chinese WP-7 engine, whose early versions suffered from severe issues—including turbine disc expansion, blade failures, overheated bearings, and faulty afterburner nozzles—delaying a stable WP-7B until the 1980s.

The second breakthrough came with

the 1971 Sino-American rapprochement, which led to the 1972 deal for Boeing 707s and 40 Pratt and Whitney engines worth US\$20 million. Nonetheless, all Chinese attempts to copy the American engine failed. Furthermore, in 1975, China secured a £77 million license to produce the Rolls-Royce Spey Mk 202, with a plan to localise it within eight years. However, this ambition took over three decades to fructify. Only in 2010 did the Chinese-built WS-9 power the JH-7 and JH-7A fighter-bombers, marking hard-won but limited progress toward engine independence.

These repeated failures compelled Beijing to cancel two engine projects—WS-6 for fighters and WS-8 for airlift aircraft—after almost two decades of research and development (R&D). Even the J-10 programme—launched in 1988—stagnated for years as the domestic WS-10 engine failed to meet performance standards, severely hindering the PLA's future capability augmentation and forcing Beijing to turn to Moscow yet again.

Russia provided D-30KP-2 engines for Y-20 strategic airlifters and AL-31FN engines for the J-10 and J-11 fighter programmes. Only after integrating the AL-31FN in the mid-1990s did the J-10 complete development and formally enter PLAAF service in 2003. As reflected in Table 1, this renewed dependence on Russian engines also revived China's reverse-engineering playbook in the new millennium. Beijing studied the CFM-56 civilian engines and the AL-31FN Russian engine as foundations for developing its own WS-10 engine and also attempted to reverse-engineer other imported engines, including RD-33/93 and D-30KP-2.

Table 1: China's Fighter Aircraft Engine Programmes

Engine/ Thrust	Source/ Inspiration	Programme Started	Aircraft	Manufacturer	Status
WP-7A/B 40-64 kN	R-11 (USSR)	1962	J-7	Xian XAEC	J-7 variants
WS-9 54-91 kN	Rolls-Royce Spey 202	1975	JH-7/7A	Xian XAEC	Various JH-7/7A since 2001
WS-10 A/B/C 135-142 kN	CFM 56/ AL-31FN	1987	J-10, J-11, J-16	Shenyang SAEC	J-10, J-11, J-16 since 2018
WS-13 56-86/93 kN	RD-33/93	2000	JF-17	Guizhou GAEC	JF-17
WS-15 160-180 kN	WS-10	Early 1990s	J-20	Shenyang SAEC	J-20 in 2023/4
WS-19 98-116 kN	RD-33/93	2008	J-35	Guizhou GAEC	J-35 Tentative
WS-20 138 kN	D-30KP-2/ WS-10	2010	Y-20	Shenyang SAEC	Y-20 since 2023

## Organisational Restructuring for Aviation Engines

A major flaw in China's early engine



development was the 'one factory, one institute, one model' system. Each aircraft project had a dedicated engine programme, so when an aircraft was cancelled, the engine research died with it. This inefficient structure led to mounting calls among scientists to separate engine and airframe development. In 2009, China established the China Aero Engine Corporation (CAEC) to spearhead development for both civilian and military aircraft engines. The effort gained momentum in 2016, when the State Council's 13th Five-Year Plan ranked the 'Two Engines' project for jet and gas turbines as a national priority. On 28 August 2016, CAEC was reorganised into the Aero Engine Corporation of China (AECC), backed by the State Council, the Aviation Industry Corporation of

capital of 50 billion Yuan (US\$7.5 billion). AECC consolidated most AVIC subsidiaries under a unified strategy to deliver reliable, indigenous engines for China's aviation ambitions.

Between 2010 and 2015, China poured RMB 150 billion (US\$23.7 billion) into advanced jet engine development, and by the end of 2020, total investment in the ambitious 'Two Engines' project had doubled to nearly RMB 300 billion (US\$42 billion).

The 2016 reform of the engine sector aimed to end the rigid military-civilian divide and address chronic fragmentation caused by promoting vertical integration. A key government directive—Opinions on the Integrated Development of Economic and National Defence Construction—called for a deep fusion of

percent of an engine's highest-value components in-house while outsourcing the rest to over 350 suppliers, including 69 from 16 foreign countries. These suppliers were involved early in R&D, improving efficiency, specialisation, and integration. This open, cross-border approach helped dismantle upstream data and technical barriers, accelerating innovation and reducing costs. Additionally, between 2010 and 2015, China invested approximately RMB 150 billion (US\$23.7 billion) in advanced jet engine development. By the end of 2020, total investment in the ambitious 'Two Engines' project had doubled to nearly RMB 300 billion (US\$42 billion).

## WS-10 Engine: First Modern Propulsion

The WS-10 engine occupies a pivotal yet troubled chapter in China's jet propulsion history. First conceptualised in the 1970s and formally approved by 1987, it achieved design and production certification by 2005. Yet, even by 2017, it remained rather unreliable for frontline employment, limited to testing on twin-engine J-11s with Russian AL-31Fs as a fallback. The WS-10A experienced critical failures: overheating turbine blades, cracking, spraying, and mid-air stalling. Its first-generation directionally solidified turbine blades proved inadequate against high core temperatures and pressure loads. In its initial three years, the PLA logged nearly 20,000 faults. The engine's wet thrust—originally capped at 129 kilonewtons (kN)—was later raised to 137 kN, with a 145 kN target under development. A breakthrough arrived only with the WS-10B, which incorporated improved alloys and components for turbines, compressors, and bearings. In 2018, a J-10C powered by the WS-10B performed aerobatics at

the Zhuhai Airshow, signalling improved reliability. Finally, after over three decades of development, China began equipping single-engine fighters with WS-10Bs from the 2019 fourth J-10C batch. However, its mean time between failures (MTBF) still lags behind Russia's AL-31F and remains well below global benchmarks.

## Two Engines Project: Offshoots

Over the years, China has increasingly relied on its mature WS-10 engine to power a wide range of frontline aircraft. This includes the early models of the stealthy J-20, the carrier-based J-15T, and various iterations of the J-11, J-16, and J-10, including export variants. Although far from flawless, the WS-10 became China's workhorse engine, and its evolution helped shape the engine architecture and materials science, providing a foundation for more advanced propulsion systems such as the WS-15 and WS-19, which now anchor the country's fifth and sixth-generation fighter ambitions. Since June 2023, with prototype 2052, the J-20 has reportedly begun flying with the WS-15, marking a quiet but significant milestone in China's aspiration to end its dependence on foreign jet engines.

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## Conclusion

China's jet engine development, once hampered by embargoes, failures, and isolation, has achieved a critical breakthrough. The WS-10, initially dismissed, now powers frontline fighters including the J-10, J-11, J-16, and J-20, and serves as the foundation for next-generation WS-15 and WS-19 engines. This progress was driven by sustained funding and successive policy shifts, culminating in the pivotal 2016 reform that merged numerous fragmented R&D units into a unified aerospace enterprise. The result is a more autonomous and strategically capable combat aviation force, one no longer reliant on foreign propulsion.

India, despite access to Western technology and ongoing collaboration with France on Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) engines, has yet to demonstrate comparable clarity or institutional resolve. The Chinese experience underscores a core lesson: sustained capability demands organisational focus, long-term investment, and mission-driven execution. If India is serious about engine independence, it must move beyond piecemeal efforts and adopt a unified, strategic approach, one that prioritises self-reliance with purpose. (Courtesy:ORF)

# India's ancient knowledge could save the future of AI; Build with wisdom, not just engineering

By: Nishant Sahdev

I am frequently asked, "Do you believe artificial intelligence will take over humans one day?" It's a substantial question, and I used to provide the standard responses: that AI would automate some work, that we require robust ethics, and that creativity remains a human advantage. However, I respond differently now. Because something more is on the move. What's happening today in AI labs—at OpenAI, Google DeepMind, Meta, and countless high-flying startups—is not merely about replacing humans. It's about creating something completely new.

Big tech is not merely writing code or constructing tools. It's, unwittingly or otherwise, birthing a new form of intelligence—one that will be able to become smarter, quicker, and maybe even more powerful than us when it comes to designing the world. It sounds sensational, perhaps, but the reality is that the first non-human mind might be under development. The machines being created now don't merely execute instructions. They learn, develop, and change. And one day, they might start thinking in ways that we can't even dream of.

It's like carving a new life form—but we don't yet know if it's going to be an angel or a devil. At the centre of all this is not emotions or consciousness—it's something much simpler, and yet stronger: calculation. In every corner of the globe, governments and businesses are investing trillions of dollars in the construction of gigantic computing complexes. They are no longer simply "data centres". They are akin to the digital nervous systems of an imagined future being: thousands of processors wired together, memory chips, cooling apparatus, and high-speed interconnects.

They cooperate around the clock, training AI models that now compose, sketch, code, and even reason. This isn't evolution by nature but by money. Species in biology change slowly, over millions of years, through experimentation and error. But this new mind—let's refer to it as the Digital Brain—is being constructed on fast-forward. This brain does not reside within a skull. It inhabits industrial parks, server farms, and cloud networks. Its blood is electricity. Its learning is not from experience but from data tokens, simulations, and mathematical optimisation.

And it's learning quickly.

## A new life form

Here's the thing that most people do not know. We are no longer creating AI simply to

do tasks. We're building the foundation of a completely new cognitive system—a system that could soon be able to upgrade all by itself. In Artificial Intelligence research, this is referred to as recursive self-improvement. It is the point at which an AI can rewrite its code, create improved versions of itself, and become smarter. We can't say exactly when that will happen. Perhaps in five years. Perhaps in 50. But billions are being spent now to pursue that dream. And yet—there is no worldwide plan, moral guidepost, or public discourse about what this future should be.

Consider how we raise kids. We instill values in them, establish boundaries, and encourage them to grow responsibly. With AI, however, we're doing the opposite. We're installing the brain of a potential non-human intelligence with no oversight, no treaties, no

coming obsolete.

Let me demonstrate it with a simple comparison. In biology, information is stored in DNA, and neurons execute it. In AI, huge language models—such as the one you're currently reading—are now doing much the same thing. They take away from enormous pools of data, condense meaning, and create ideas. Each billion dollars we spend on graphics processing units (GPUs) and AI hardware is akin to planting more neurons in the simulated brain we are building. And this brain is expanding—quickly. If that prospect is unnerving, consider this: Has any other species ever made another thinking species without initially determining what type of entity it will be? The answer is no.

That's precisely why we must pause and reflect now. We urgently require what I refer to as a Species Charter—an international accord to direct the construction of AI as a possible novel type of intelligence. Not because we like to think about the future, but because the future already arrived. We are already living the science fiction that we once could only dream about.

## Time to think bigger

India, in particular, must take a leadership position in this conversation. Our civilisation has an ancient history of rich questions regarding consciousness, mind, and intelligence—long before contemporary neuroscience even existed. We are well-positioned to ask: What is intelligence? Is it the ability to predict patterns, or does it also require awareness, empathy, and purpose? The IndiaAI Mission is a good start. But we must go beyond. India shouldn't just aim to catch up with Silicon Valley in hardware or engineering.

We need to think bigger—to be leaders in wisdom. Let's establish national institutes of AI philosophy, fund cognitive ethics fellowships, and establish AI charters that answer to people, not companies or governments alone.

We owe it to the future—not only to develop chips more quickly, but to design the kind of intelligence that will live among us. Young people growing up today will live in a world where AI writes laws, creates music, diagnoses illnesses, and maybe even governs parts of our systems. But these machines won't be just tools. They will be the ancestors of something we are designing right now—in real time, with trillions of dollars, and almost no public reflection. If we're creating the brain of something that doesn't exist yet, we must ask: What kind of mind are we bringing into being?

And more crucially: Are we prepared to encounter it? (Courtesy:The Print)



common rules. It's like raising a kid in total solitude—but this kid could soon be more intelligent than all of us put together.

All the threats regarding AI are about control. Will it act according to human intent? Will it be secure? But there is an even greater fear that very few people discuss. What if we humans become obsolete? Consider history. Homo sapiens did not eradicate Neanderthals because we disliked them. We just had slight advantages—in communication and abstract thought—that made us more flexible. What if synthetic minds begin to surpass us in almost every significant realm? Not only mathematics and memory, but creativity, strategy, and emotional awareness?

Firms today are competing to create the strongest AI systems. But they might not know that they're not just creating more intelligent software—they're perhaps creating a new form of life. And once it exists, it won't need us anymore. This is not science fiction. This is a gradual transition from being in charge to be-

# Courts to shed delays, reduce vacations and embrace reform

By: Prafull Goradia

The Central Government's intention to reduce the volume of court cases should be warmly welcomed. After all, 70 per cent of cases in the courts of the country involve the Governments, whether at the Centre or in the States. On the other hand, speeding up the hearing of cases and the passing of judgments also need to be expedited. The amount of time spent on each matter too needs to be recorded.

This is perhaps not being done, and if that is the case, it is certainly not published, as it may embarrass some of the judges as well as advocates. Adjournments are the main cause of delays, and delays are the bane of justice. They are often used as tactics to slow down or even snuff out the progress of the hearings. At times, they are sought because the leading advocate of one or the other side is busy in another case in another court—maybe even in another city.

For the ensuing waste of the court's time, a repeat court fee of, say, 50 per cent of the initial amount should be charged to the side that seeks the adjournment. When the claim is debited for this fee, he would learn a lesson not to engage an advocate who is so busy as to be distracted by several other cases.

The freedom to appeal upwards, again and again, should be reduced. Some matters which began in a small cases court in, say, Mumbai have reached the apex court. Normally, one appeal to each side may be permitted. In special circumstances, perhaps two could be considered.

Before a hearing begins in a matter, the judge should, in consultation with both the advocates, decide how much time each of them would be given. If either side exceeds their limit, they should have to pay extra fees—rather like in a journey by a taxi. Why should the court waste its time merely because an advocate is slow to think or express themselves, or keeps repeating themselves? As a layman, I am surprised that the litigant has to begin by submitting, usually, a lengthy affidavit.

On the night before the first hearing, the judge reads and di-



gests all that has been stated in that affidavit. In the hearing, the advocate verbally explains to the judge and the opposing advocate what is written in the affidavit. Is this not a repetitive procedure? Surely, it can be cut down? Once, I happened to get a chance to read an opinion on a matter by a Kolkata advocate as well as a London lawyer. I was surprised to see that the UK draft was written in about 300 words while the Indian one was longer, at over a thousand words. For us Indians, writing in English has not been the soul of wit. Since a great deal of legal work is written, this becomes an important area of check. Incidentally, judgments or orders are not always brief or terse.

And what about the working hours of the courts themselves—or, more accurately, the duration of the court machinery? While one does not wish to be uncharitable, their Lordships across the country's courts taking off for vacations has begun becoming the topic of much talk.

In a country whose justice system is clogged with pending cases whose number runs into a few crores, such judicial holidays need a rethink. It is important to bear in mind that these longish and regular vacations for judges and senior lawyers is a practice from the British days—a period when there was no air-conditioning. The summer of the Indian plains was simply unbearable for most judges, and long vacations in the hill stations of Simla, Darjeeling, Ooty, or

the cold valley of Kashmir was understandable—but not in today's age, when technology has made it possible to overcome many challenges of nature.

The present hours of work in the country's courtrooms too are not encouraging, as far as utilisation of both time and manpower are concerned. Most courts begin their proceedings at 10:30 or thereabouts and conclude at 16:30—i.e., working for six hours, but effectively five, because there is an hour off for lunch. Saturdays and Sundays are not counted here.

With overburdened judges and a mountain of cases piling up by the day, it is high time a shift system was introduced in the judiciary. There is no reason why courts cannot work in shifts, reducing the workload on the judges and advocates, plus ensuring more employment opportunities for many unemployed lawyers and other associated staff.

There are many advocates in the country who stand to gain by such a measure in the form of making the law and thereby, the country's legal system—accessible to the lower rungs of society.

The latter point is too obvious to bear iteration here. The then Chief Justice of India, Y K Sabharwal, had in 2006 not mooted the idea of courts needing to work in dual shifts in order to reduce the workload. The accessibility of justice to the common folk of the country has to become the topmost priority for judicial reforms in the country. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)



# 48 people die in passenger plane crash in Russia's Far East, officials say

*The plane, which was operated by the Siberia-based Angara Airlines*

MOSCOW, July 24: All 48 passengers and crew onboard a passenger plane that crashed in Russia's Far East have died, the head of the country's Amur region said in a statement Thursday.

Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry said earlier that it had found the burning fuselage of the Soviet-designed twin turbo prop plane on a hillside south of its planned destination in the town of Tynda, more than 7,000 km east of Moscow.

The plane, which was operated by the Siberia-based Angara Airlines, had initially departed from Khabarovsk before making its way to Blagoveshchensk on the Russian-Chinese border and onwards to Tynda.

It wasn't immediately clear what caused the crash. Russia's Interfax news agency said there were adverse weather conditions at the time of the crash, citing unnamed sources in the emergency services.

Several Russian news outlets also reported that the aircraft was almost 50 years old, citing data taken from the plane's tail number.

Images of the reported crash site circulated by Russian state media show debris scattered among dense forest, surrounded by plumes of



smoke. Regional Gov Vasily Orlov said rescuers struggled to reach the site due to its remote location, 15 km south of Tynda.

The transport prosecutor's office in the Far East said in an online statement that the plane was attempting to land for a second time when it lost contact with air traffic control and disappeared from

radars. Orlov announced three days of mourning in the Amur region to mark the disaster, which he described as a "terrible tragedy".

A previous statement from the governor said that 49 people had been onboard the flight. The reason for the discrepancy was not immediately clear.

The authorities have launched a probe on the charge of flight safety violations that resulted in multiple deaths, a standard procedure in aviation accidents.

Aviation incidents have been frequent in Russia, especially in recent years as international sanctions have squeezed the country's aviation sector. (AP)

# Those misusing democratic freedoms must be held to account: Modi in UK

LONDON, July 24: Forces with extremist ideologies must not be allowed to misuse democratic freedoms, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday after meeting his British counterpart Keir Starmer, in remarks that came amid increasing concern in India over activities of pro-Khalistani elements in the UK.

With Starmer by his side, Modi also said that both India and the UK are "united in our view that there can be no place for double standards in the fight against terrorism" as he thanked the British government for its "strong" condemnation of the Pahalgalam terror attack.

Modi said this after Starmer hosted him at Chequers, the countryside residence of the British PM located 50 kms northwest of London.

"We agree that forces with extremist ideologies must not be allowed to misuse democratic freedoms. Those who misuse democratic freedoms to undermine democracy itself must be held to account," the prime minister said in his media statement.

There have been increasing concerns in India about activities of pro-Khalistani elements in the UK, especially after an attack on the Indian High Commission in London in March 2023. India has been flagging its concerns to the UK over the activities of pro-Khalistani elements on British soil. It is learnt that the issue figured in the delegation-level talks.

The prime minister also underlined the need to confront the challenge of terrorism with a firm approach.

"We thank Prime Minister Starmer and his government for their strong condemnation of the terrorist attack in Pahalgalam. We are united in our view that there can be no place for double standards in the fight against terrorism," Modi said.

It is understood that India's challenge of cross-border terrorism figured in the talks.

At a media briefing, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said Modi and Starmer expressed a commitment to strengthening the global fight against terrorism.



"It was noted that extremism and radicalisation pose a threat to both societies and that there is a need to further enhance bilateral collaboration and cooperation to deal with the scourges of terrorism, extremism and radicalisation," he said.

The talks between Modi and Starmer largely focused on boosting bilateral ties in an array of areas including trade, investment, defence and security, education and clean technology.

The two sides inked a landmark free trade agreement that seeks to boost both the economies, slash tariff lines across 99 per cent of Indian exports, unlock thousands of jobs and cut tariffs on British whisky, cars and an array of other items.

The pact, officially named as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), was signed by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and British Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds in the presence of the prime ministers of India and the UK.

The CETA, firming up after three years of negotiations, is expected to ensure comprehensive market access for Indian goods across all sectors and India will gain from tariff elimination on about 99 per cent of tariff lines (product categories) covering almost 100 per cent of the trade values, officials said. (PTI)

## Zelenskyy announces new anti-graft bill in Ukraine

KYIV, July 24: President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced that he's sending a new anti-corruption bill to Ukraine's Parliament on Thursday, in a further attempt to defuse tensions after he approved changes to graft laws that brought a public outcry and sharp criticism from the European Union.

Opponents of the contentious law passed by lawmakers and approved by Zelenskyy earlier this week said it stripped Ukraine's anti-corruption watchdogs of their independence by granting the government more oversight of their work.

Zelenskyy said it was needed to speed up investigations, ensure more convictions and remove "Russian influence" from the fight against corruption, though he didn't provide examples of Russian meddling.

In an abrupt change of course on Thursday, Zelenskyy unexpectedly said that he had drawn up a new draft bill on corruption that "guarantees the real strengthening of the law and order system in Ukraine".

"The most important thing is real tools, no Russian connections, and the independence of the (watchdogs)," he said in a Telegram post.

The declaration appeared to bow to recent pressure that threatened to undermine public trust in Ukraine's leaders after more than three years of fighting Russia's full-scale invasion.

The protests haven't called for Zelenskyy's ouster, but they are the first major anti-government demonstrations since the war began.

"It is important that we maintain unity," Zelenskyy said in his post.

The announcement also left some questions unanswered. Zelenskyy had said Wednesday that he met with the heads of Ukraine's key anti-corruption and security agencies and gave them two weeks to make recommendations on how the graft law could be improved before he presented another bill to Parliament.

Despite that assurance, further street protests were scheduled for Thursday evening. (AP)

## Thai, Cambodian forces clash as escalating border dispute leaves at least 11 dead

BANGKOK, July 24: Thai and Cambodian soldiers clashed in several areas along their border Thursday in a major escalation of their conflict that left at least 11 people dead, mostly civilians. The two sides fired small arms, artillery and rockets, and Thailand also called in airstrikes.

Thai villagers could be seen on video fleeing their homes to seek shelter as the clashes began in the morning. Fighting was ongoing in at least six areas along the border, Thai Defense Ministry spokesperson Surasart Kongsiri said. The trigger for the clashes was a mine explosion along the border on Wednesday that wounded five Thai soldiers and led Bangkok to withdraw its ambassador to Cambodia and expelled Cambodia's.

Thailand has also sealed all land border crossings while urging its citizens to leave Cambodia.

The Southeast Asian neighbours have longstanding border disputes that periodically flare along their 800-kilometer (500-mile) frontier and usually result in brief confrontations that sometimes involves exchanges of gunfire.

But relations have deteriorated sharply since a confrontation in May that killed a Cambodian soldier, and Thursday's clashes were far bigger in scale and intensity than usual.

Each side accuses the other of starting the clashes.

The first clash Thursday morning happened in an area near the ancient Ta Muen Thom temple along the border of Thailand's Surin province and Cambodia's Oddar Meanchey province.

A video from the Thai side showed people running from their homes and hiding in a concrete bunker as ex-



plosions sounded.

The Thai army said its forces heard a drone before seeing six armed Cambodian soldiers moving closer to Thai military positions at the border. It said Thai soldiers tried to shout at them to defuse the situation, but the Cambodian side started to open fire.

Cambodia's Defense Ministry, however, said Thailand deployed a drone first before opening fire, and that Cambodia "acted strictly within the bounds of self-defense, responding to an unprovoked incursion by Thai troops that violated our territorial integrity."

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet wrote to the current president of the U.N. Security Council asking for an urgent meeting "to stop Thailand's aggression."

The Thai army said it later launched airstrikes on military targets in Cambodia, while the Cambodian Defense Ministry said the Thai jets dropped bombs on a road near the ancient Preah Vihear temple, which has been the site of some of the most prominent and violent past conflicts between the countries.

Thailand's Foreign Ministry accused Cambodia of attacking both military and non-military sites in Thailand, including a hospital.

"The Royal Thai Government is prepared to intensify

our self-defence measures if Cambodia persists in its armed attack and violations upon Thailand's sovereignty in accordance with international law and principles," said Nikordej Balankura, the ministry's spokesperson.

Acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai said 11 people have died, including 10 civilians and one soldier. Meanwhile 28 have been injured, four of whom were soldiers and the rest civilians. Cambodia released no details on deaths or injuries on its side.

Relations deteriorated even before the clashes

On Wednesday, Thailand withdrew its ambassador to Cambodia and expelled the Cambodian ambassador to protest the mine blast that wounded its soldiers.

Thai authorities alleged the mines were newly laid along paths that both sides had agreed were supposed to be safe. They said the mines were Russian-made and not of a type employed by Thailand's military.

Cambodia rejected Thailand's account as "baseless accusations," pointing out that many unexploded mines and other ordnance are a legacy of 20th century wars and unrest.

Cambodia also downgraded diplomatic relations, recalling all Cambodian staff on Thursday from its embassy in Bangkok. (AP)

## Europe, China agree to take action on climate change during a tense summit in Beijing

BEIJING, July 24: China and the European Union have issued a joint call to action on climate change during an otherwise tense bilateral summit in Beijing on Thursday riven with major disagreements over trade and the war in Ukraine.

The two economic juggernauts issued a joint statement on climate change, urging more emission cuts and greater use of green technology and affirming their support for the Paris Climate Agreement as well as calling for strong action at the upcoming COP30 climate summit in Brazil.

"In the fluid and turbulent international situation today, it is crucial that all countries, notably the major economies, maintain policy continuity and stability and step up efforts to address climate change," the joint statement said.

Their climate agreement was a silver lining on a stormy day where European leaders demanded a more balanced relationship with China in talks with President Xi Jinping.

They highlighted trade in their opening remarks, calling for concrete progress to address Europe's yawning trade deficit

with China.

"As our cooperation has deepened, so have the imbalances," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said. "We have reached an inflection point. Rebalancing our bilateral relation is essential. Because to be sustainable, relations need to be mutually beneficial."

Little movement expected

Expectations were low ahead of the talks, initially supposed to last two days but scaled back to one. They come amid financial uncertainty around the world, wars in the Middle East and Ukraine, and the threat of US tariffs. Neither the EU nor China is likely to budge on key issues.

European Council President Antonio Costa called on China to use its influence over Russia to bring an end to the war in Ukraine — a long-running plea from European leaders that is likely to fall again on deaf ears.

Xi called for deeper cooperation between China and Europe to provide stability in an increasingly complex world. Both sides should set aside differences and seek common ground, he said, a

phrase he often uses in relationships like the one with the EU.

China is willing to strengthen coordination on climate and make greater contributions to addressing climate change, he said, but he pushed back against EU restrictions on Chinese exports.

"We hope the EU will keep its trade and investment markets open, refrain from using restrictive economic and trade tools and provide a good business environment for Chinese companies to invest and develop in Europe," he said, according to a readout posted online by state broadcaster CCTV.

US tariff threats weigh on EU-China cooperation

Besides trade and the Ukraine war, von der Leyen and Costa were expected to raise concerns about Chinese cyberattacks and espionage, its restrictions on the export of rare earth minerals and its human rights record in Tibet, Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

The EU, meanwhile, has concerns about a looming trade battle with the United States. (AP)

### GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE ASSTT. DIRECTOR OF SURVEYS.  
(HILL CELL), DIPHU.

No. Surveys, (HC 02)/2013-14/76

Dated Diphu the 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2025.

### ORDER

In pursuance of this office Advertisement No. HC.02/2013-14/ Dtd. the 11 July 2022 regarding invitation of applicants for the Post of (i) Traverser Grade-III 5(Five) Nos. (ii) Computer Grade-II 2(two) Nos. and (iii) Peon Grade-IV 1(One) Nos. Total 8 (Eight) Posts as appeared in the Local Newspaper Dtd. 12.07.2022. (Tuesday) stands cancelled.

Fresh advertisement shall be made in due course. All candidates who have applied in response to the above advertisement shall have to re-apply in the fresh advertisement which will be published soon in the Local Newspapers.

Sd/-  
Asstt. Director of Surveys,  
(Hill Cell), Diphu, K/A

Memo No. Surveys, (HC.02)/2013-14/76-A

Dated Diphu the 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2025.

### GOVT. OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS :: KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT CIRCLE DIPHU.

No. IS/KADC/Eklavya-EMRS/2021/ 7932

Dtd. Diphu the 24/07 /2025

### Detailed Advertisement for Catering Assistant, Chowkidar & Housekeeping Personnel (outsourcing)

In pursuance of the Directorate of Tribal Affairs (Plain), Assam, Rukmininagar, Guwahati-06 vide letter No. DTA(P)/EMRS/Misc/Pt-II/188/2025/31/3954-57 Dated Guwahati, the 15-07-2025, application in prescribed Standard Forms with all testimonials along with KAAC receipt of Rs. 10/- in case of ST/SC category and Rs. 20/- for General category are invited from intending eligible candidates who are permanent residents of Assam for engagement of Catering Assistant, Chowkidar and Housekeeping (outsourcing) at Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS), Howraghat, Karbi Anglong and application will be received at the office of the undersigned during office hours by 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2025 05:00 PM. The nature of engagement is purely contractual for the Academic year 2025-26 or till the appointment of regular employees whichever is earlier. The date, time and venue for test/viva voce/interview will be notified in due course of time.

The qualification and selection process required for the posts are as mentioned below:

Sl. No.	Name of Post	Nos. of post(s)	Monthly Remuneration	Qualification	Selection Process
1	Catering Assistant	01	Rs. 10,000/-	i) Age below 35 years ii) Class 8 <sup>th</sup> pass & iii) Should have minimum 3 years experience in catering	Based on work experience and oral interview.
2	Chowkidar	02	Rs. 12,000/- (per person)	i) Age not more than 35 years & ii) Class 10 <sup>th</sup> pass	Through test of integrity, behavioural pattern and oral interview.
3	Housekeeping personnel (outsourcing)	03 (1+1+1)	Rs. 10,000/- (per person)	i) Age not more than 35 years & ii) Class 8 <sup>th</sup> pass	Based on work experience, understanding of role and oral interview.

Sd/-  
Inspector of Schools,  
Karbi Anglong District Circle, Diphu  
Cum  
Member Secretary,  
EMRS, Howraghat, Karbi Anglong



CM highlights gurukuls, priest honorariums, prayer centres as part of state's cultural preservation drive

## Khandu reaffirms commitment to indigenous faiths, traditions

**ITANAGAR, July 24:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has reaffirmed the government's unwavering commitment to preserving and promoting the indigenous faiths of the state, calling them the spiritual and cultural soul of the tribal communities.

In a message shared on social media on Thursday, Khandu stressed that indigenous faiths are unlike major religions as they do not originate from scriptures but from land, memory, and lived traditions.

"They are not exported, they are rooted. They hold the soul of our people, our forests, mountains, rivers, and ancestors," he wrote on X.

Reiterating the government's resolve to protect this ancestral wisdom, the chief minister said a number of initiatives are already underway across the state.

Six indigenous gurukuls have been established for the Adi, Galo, Nyishi, and Tangsa tribes to strengthen traditional learning and value systems through community-led institutions, Khandu said.

In addition, more than 3,000



registered indigenous priests are being provided with honorariums in recognition of their vital role in conducting rituals, preserving oral traditions, and serving as spiritual guides, the chief minister added.

To further institutionalise cultural preservation efforts, tribal cultural centres are being developed in every district to serve as hubs for cultural documentation, training, and promotion.

Complementing these efforts, 50 indigenous prayer centres have also been set up across the state to provide dedicated spaces for spiritual practice rooted in native faiths, he said.

"This isn't just about culture. It's about who we are. And it's about making sure we don't forget," Khandu said, underlining that the protection of indigenous faiths is essential to safeguarding the state's unique identity and heritage. (PTI)

## Engineers are backbone of Arunachal's progress: Guv

**ITANAGAR, July 24:** Calling engineers the backbone of Arunachal Pradesh's development, Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik on Thursday underscored the critical role they play in transforming government policy into tangible infrastructure.

He urged them to embrace innovation, ethical conduct, and technological upgrades to build a future-ready and sustainable state.

Inaugurating a two-day capacity-building training programme for engineers of the Public Works Department (PWD) here, the governor emphasised that engineers must uphold the highest standards of integrity, quality, and accountability in every project they undertake.

"An engineer's work must reflect trust, and the design, quality, cost, and impact must stand as a symbol of reliability," he said, warning against any compromise on quality.

Parnaik stressed the need to integrate modern technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and GIS mapping and smart monitoring systems at every stage of project execution.

With the infrastructure sector undergoing rapid digital transformation, he noted that such tools are now essential, not optional, for improving efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

"AI can help in better resource



allocation and design optimisation. GIS mapping supports spatial planning and real-time tracking, while smart monitoring tools ensure timely delivery, quality control, and financial oversight," he said.

Adopting these innovations would reduce delays, curb corruption, and restore public confidence in the system, the governor added.

Highlighting the state government's recent adoption of the 'zero tolerance for corruption' resolution in the assembly, Parnaik called upon engineers to exercise financial prudence and handle public funds with utmost care.

He emphasised that trans-

parency must be treated as a professional obligation, not just an administrative requirement.

The governor also raised serious concern over the practice of subletting project works, stating that while it may offer economic gain to a few, it seriously compromises project quality and erodes public trust.

He urged the engineering community to reconsider and reform this practice by ensuring that contracts are handled by capable, qualified individuals committed to excellence.

Commending the PWD and the Indian Building Congress for organising the training, the governor described the programme as an in-

vestment in the state's future.

"This initiative will enhance the technical strength of our engineering workforce and prepare them to meet evolving infrastructure challenges with competence and character," he added.

PWD Principal Secretary Kaling Tayeng, Chairman of Indian Building Congress (Arunachal Chapter) Dr Toli Basar and Chief Engineer (Vigilance & Training) Rimmar Taso, also shared their views during the inaugural session.

The two-day training programme aims to update engineers on the latest knowledge and practices in engineering, planning, execution, and ethical governance. (PTI)

## Two UTA cadres surrender in Arunachal, rejoin mainstream

**ITANAGAR, July 24:** Two youths formerly associated with the banned United Tani Army (UTA) in Arunachal Pradesh surrendered before the authorities here on Thursday, officials said.

Presiding over the surrender ceremony, state Home Minister Mama Natung reiterated the government's firm

stance against anti-national and anti-social activities while emphasising its open-door policy for those willing to abandon violence and reintegrate into society.

"We are fully committed to rooting out

such unlawful activities. At the same time, we continue to welcome those who wish to renounce insurgency and walk the path of peace. There are provisions in place to help them rebuild their lives with dignity," he said.

Natung highlighted the state's ongoing relief and rehabilitation efforts, particularly the dedicated camp at Bishmaknagar in Lower Dibang Valley, which has been operational since January.

Currently, the facility houses 30 people who have chosen to return from insurgency. They are provided with vocational training, orientation programmes, and other forms of psychological

and social support to enable their smooth reintegration, the minister said.

After completing the 36-month programme, each person is eligible for financial assistance of ₹ 4 lakh along with a monthly stipend of ₹ 6,000 during the

rehabilitation period, he added.

The minister applauded the two young men for their courage and conviction in surrendering and called upon others still involved with underground groups, particularly those operating across the Myanmar border, to follow suit.

"Groups like the so-called United Tani Army are misleading our youth and taking them down a path that harms not only themselves but also the future of our state. I strongly urge all such individuals to return home and contribute to building a better Arunachal," he added. DGP Anand Mohan also commended the surrender, calling it a positive step toward restoring long-term peace in the region.

He congratulated the two youths for rejecting the anti-national ideology and for choosing to rejoin society.

"In a democratic society, there is no room for violence. Every person has a voice and the right to be heard. Police will continue to work with full dedication to protect the people and support those who wish to return to the mainstream," he said. (PTI)



stance against anti-national and anti-social activities while emphasising its open-door policy for those willing to abandon violence and reintegrate into society.

"We are fully committed to rooting out

## Workers participate in BMS Foundation Day celebrations across state



**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, July 24:** The workers and labour community of Arunachal Pradesh recently joined the nationwide observance of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh's (BMS) foundation day, marking the conclusion of the 70th year and the beginning of the 71st foundation year of the organisation.

According to an official statement, the state-level celebration was organised at the Nyedar Namlo conference hall in B Sector, Itanagar, where representatives from various trade unions, district and state executive members of BMS, and workers from different sectors participated in the day-long programme.

Speaking as the chief guest on the occasion, Arunachal Pradesh Forest Corporation Limited (APFCL) Chairman Nalong Mize highlighted the importance of recognising and respecting the dignity of labour. "We should understand our duties and perform them with sincerity and commitment. If each of us does our part, we can collectively contribute to building a better state and nation," Mize said.

He noted that BMS, founded on July 23, 1955, by Dattapant Thengadi, has become one of the world's largest labour organisations with over one crore members.

"It is a proud day for the labour community across the country. Today, lakhs of

workers are celebrating this occasion, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of hard work and nation-first ideology," Mize added.

Commending the efforts of the state government under Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Mize appreciated the administration for increasing the salaries of organised sector workers.

He urged the labour community to contribute more actively to the development of the state and the welfare of the people.

Senior leaders of BMS including Tadung Yangfo, Vice President Tadar Dowla, State Executive Member Dari Yamar Taku, General Secretary Donik Taling, and Secretary Karki Bagang also addressed the gathering and shared their views on strengthening the organisation's role in advocating for workers' rights and welfare.

A live telecast of the national-level BMS celebration was also arranged at the venue, allowing participants to virtually connect with the larger national event and witness speeches from central leaders of the organisation.

The BMS, through its ongoing programmes, continues to stress on national development through the upliftment of the working class, calling for greater unity, discipline, and commitment among its members.

## Speaker emphasises transformative journey of state's legislature



**ITANAGAR, July 24:** Arunachal Pradesh Speaker Tesam Pongte on Thursday underscored the transformative journey of the state's legislature over the past five decades, describing it as a vital platform for representing the voice of tribal communities, women and the youth.

Speaking at a national seminar commemorating the golden jubilee of the state assembly, Pongte traced its evolution from a Provisional Legislative Assembly on August 15, 1975, to attaining full statehood in 1987.

The assembly is not only the epicentre of policymaking, but also the guardian of constitutional values in the state, he said.

The Speaker urged all stakeholders to collectively contribute towards a more inclusive and progressive Arunachal Pradesh, drawing strength from traditional wisdom and modern legislative frameworks.

The seminar, organised in collaboration with the Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies (AITS) under the Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU), was held at the DK Auditorium of the state secretariat here. (PTI)

## Arunachal's Aalo urban development division honoured with FICCI Urban Innovation Award 2025



**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAL, July 24:** In a major recognition of sustainable and people-centric urban development, the Urban Development Division of Aalo in West Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh, has been conferred the prestigious FICCI Urban Innovation Award 2025 under the category of Innovative Urban Infrastructure for its Puak Ghat Riverfront Development Project. The announcement was made during the 8th Edition of the Urban Challenge Summit & Awards Ceremony, organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), at Federation House, New Delhi, on Thursday.

According to an official statement, the Puak Ghat project, which was shortlisted among the top three entries out of 80 nominations received from across India, was awarded the Jury Mention in the Smart Public Spaces category. The accolade recognises excellence in urban innovation and integrated planning to enhance public infrastructure and quality of life.

The award was received by Executive Engineer of the Aalo Urban Development Division, Hali Welly, who spearheaded the planning and execution of the transformative project. The summit, held

under the theme 'Innovate, Integrate, Sustain', saw participation from urban planners, policymakers, and industry leaders from across the country.

Constructed near the confluence of the Yomgo and Sipu rivers, the Puak Ghat Riverfront Development Project was envisioned as a multipurpose public space that converts a previously unstable and unhygienic riverbank into a clean, accessible, and eco-friendly recreational zone. Inaugurated on December 2, 2024, by Chief Minister Pema Khandu, the project was executed at an estimated cost of ₹4.95 crore.

Key features of the project include a modern cafeteria, well-maintained parks, open-air gyms, scenic pedestrian walkways, parking zones, public utility services, street illumination, and a 250-meter reinforced cement concrete (RCC) retaining wall designed to prevent riverbank erosion and seasonal flooding.

The initiative, as highlighted in the official statement, has had a significant impact on the local ecosystem and urban environment. It has led to a 70 percent reduction in illegal parking, encouraged community well-being through the promotion of fitness and green spaces, supported local business activities, and

created new income-generating opportunities through enhanced tourism prospects.

Executive Engineer Hali Welly was also credited for successfully navigating multiple challenges throughout the project's implementation phase. These included fluctuating river levels during the monsoon season, disruptions caused by elections, local land-related disputes, and landslides affecting transportation and logistics.

The recognition by FICCI is not only a testament to the division's commitment to sustainable urban development but also positions the Puak Ghat Riverfront as a replicable model for integrated public space design in small towns and ecologically sensitive regions.

The Urban Development Department of Arunachal Pradesh has welcomed the award as a moment of pride and validation of its efforts to bring long-term, inclusive benefits to citizens while preserving natural resources.

The FICCI Urban Innovation Awards are among India's most respected recognitions in the field of urban development, aimed at celebrating exemplary models that blend innovation, infrastructure, and inclusive growth in the urban sector.

No.SCDB/MPLAD/575/2025-26/1024

### NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Dated Sidli, the 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2025

Sealed Tender are invited in F-2 Form for the works shown below from the intending Registered Contractor of Class-I and Class-II (A, B & C) categories of Assam PWD (Roads & Building)/PHED with affixing Non-refundable court fee of Rs.8.25 (Rupees Eight and twenty-five paise) only in a prescribed Form for 1 (One) No of construction work under MPLADS fund for the year 2024-25. The Tender will be received on 18/08/2025 up to 2 P.M. in the office of the undersigned and will be opened on same day at 2.30 P.M. in the office of the undersigned.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Amount	Bid Security	Cost of BID document (D/D) @ 0.03% (Aprox)
1	Construction of Box culvert with approach road at Hontapara village under Sidli Dev. Block	Rs. 15,00,000.00	1% on Estimate amount for ST/SC/OBEC & 2% for General	Rs.450/-

The details may be seen at Notice Board in the Office of the Block Development Officer, Sidli-Chirang Development Block from 25/07/2025 to 18/08/2025 up to 2 P.M.

Sd/-  
Block Development Officer,  
Sidli-Chirang Dev. Block, Sidli

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/2037

No. EE/MSL-11/NIT/2017-18/185

Date 23/07/2025

### SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing a non-refundable Court fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight & paise twenty five) only. With a validity period of 180 (one hundred eighty) days, which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the printed F-2 form are invited from the registered Contractors of Class-III and above category under PWD (Roads & Building) Assam and Bodoland Territorial Council according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the work as stated below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00 PM on 31/07/2025 and will be opened on the same date & place at 2.15 P.M.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Approximate Tender Value	(Earnest Money Deposit)	Cost of Tender Paper	Time of Completion of work
1	Restoration of Dig pits Laying Optical Fibre Cable by HDD Method from Airtel Tower via Nalkuchi-Doomni road via New Fresh Mart, Doomni to nearby Amibil Milon L.P. School. Total length = 2,000.00 m HDD. From 0.00 to 2,000.00 Mtrs.	Rs. 5,98,795.00	(2% for Gen) & (1% for Reserved Category)	Rs. 300.00	2 (two) Months from the date of issue of F.W.O.

Details NIT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractor or their authorized agent up to 4.30 PM on all working days on 28/07/2025 & 29/07/2025 in the office of the undersigned on submission an application with payment in the form of Bank Draft duly pledged to the undersigned.

N.B.:-

1. Date of receiving application for Tender documents :- 28/07/2025 & 29/07/2025.
2. Date of issue of Tender Paper :- 30/07/2025 (up to 4.30 PM)
3. Date of receiving of Tender Paper :- 31/07/2025 (up to 2.00 PM)
4. Date of opening of Tender Paper :- 31/07/2025 (at 2.15 PM)
5. Place of opening Tender Paper :- Office of the E.E, PWD Mushalpur (R&B) Division, Mushalpur.

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,  
Mushalpur PWD (R&B) Division, Mushalpur

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/2018



## Confusion grows over alleged Dhanbad mine collapse

**DHANBAD/GIRIDIH/RANCHI, July 24:** Confusion continues over the alleged mine collapse incident in Dhanbad, with several leaders claiming multiple deaths, while a team from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) — deployed to rescue miners from the abandoned coal mine — is yet to begin operations, officials said on Thursday.

The NDRF was mobilised on Wednesday after Giridih MP CP Choudhary staged a dharna at Baghmara police station, demanding immediate rescue operations at the spot.

Jamshedpur West MLA and former Jharkhand minister Saryu Roy alleged a large-scale cover-up to conceal at least 15 deaths in the incident, calling it a case of “people being deliberately buried under fresh soil to destroy evidence.”

According to Roy, who visited the Kesargarh area, the ground had been freshly covered with coal stones and soil, and the area was cordoned off by around 15 people allegedly linked to the mining mafia.

On Wednesday, Choudhary had alleged that at least nine workers lost their lives in the incident.

Despite mounting allegations, officials from Dhanbad district administration, BCCL (Bharat Coking Coal Limited), and police claimed that no signs of any such incident have been found so far.

“The rescue operation was yet to start till 6 pm as the team could not reach the spot even after the Giridih MP gave the location in writing to police. Earlier, the Dhanbad administration and BCCL were not able to identify the location,” an NDRF official told PTI. Choudhary, meanwhile, submitted a list of five people allegedly trapped after the roof of a mine reportedly collapsed during illegal mining activities on Tuesday evening.

Roy alleged that the NDRF team deployed at the site was without necessary equipment, such as JCBs, because of a lack of support from the local administration. He also accused BCCL and police of aiding illegal mining operations and protecting those responsible.

According to him, extortion is rampant in outsourced coal mines, with Rs 1,600 per tonne reportedly being illegally charged during coal loading, under protection from police and political figures.

He said he will raise the issue in the upcoming monsoon session of Jharkhand Assembly beginning August 5 and also submit a report to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

He also questioned why the Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS), based in Dhanbad, never issued closure notices for abandoned BCCL mines, and demanded accountability for why the sites remain unsecured despite recurring illegal mining activities.

So far, there is no official confirmation about the deaths. Baghmara SDPO Purushottam Singh told PTI: “NDRF has been inspecting all suspected spots, but so far there has been no sign of any such incident.” Local residents claimed that a closed underground mine in BCCL’s Block-2 caved in, trapping around half-a-dozen hired workers linked to an illegal mining syndicate.

Meanwhile, an eerie silence prevails at Taratand area in Giridih, from where four workers are missing since the alleged mine collapse incident at Baghmara in Dhanbad. Villagers claimed the four — Aziz Ansari alias Charku Ansari, 35, a resident of Kundalwadah village, Afzal Ansari alias Khan Sahab, 35, Dilip Sahab, 32, a resident of Ambabada village and Jamshed Ansari, 30, a resident of Mathurasingha village — who had left for Baghmara have not returned so far. (PTI)

## 7/11 blasts: SC stays Bombay HC verdict acquitting all accused, says they need not return to jail



**NEW DELHI, July 24:** The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed the Bombay High Court verdict acquitting all 12 accused in the 2006 Mumbai train bomb blasts case but said they need not return to jail.

The top court further directed the Bombay High Court judgement not to be treated as a precedent. A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and N Kotiswar Singh issued notice to all the accused in the case and sought their responses on the appeal filed by the state government.

“We have been informed that all the respondents have been released and there is no question of bringing them back to the prison. However, taking note of the submission made by the solicitor general on the question of law,

we are inclined to hold that the impugned judgment shall not be treated as a precedent. To that extent, there shall be a stay of the impugned judgment,” the bench said.

During a brief hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Maharashtra government, sought a stay on the high court judgment saying it would affect pending trials under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA).

Justice Sundresh enquired if all the accused have been released from jail, noting some accused persons were Pakistani nationals. “They were not arrested,” a counsel for the state informed. On July 21, a special high court bench of Justices Anil Kilor and Shyam Chandak ac-

quitted all the 12 accused, saying the prosecution utterly failed to prove the case and it was “hard to believe the accused committed the crime”. Of the 12, five had been sentenced to death and seven to life imprisonment by the special court. One of the death row convicts died in 2021. More than 180 people were killed when seven blasts ripped through Mumbai local trains at various locations on the western line on July 11, 2006. The Maharashtra government challenged the high court judgment on grounds, including that the recovery of RDX from an accused, was disbelieved on a “hyper-technical ground” that the seized explosives were not sealed with a lac seal. The state government, in its appeal, raised several serious objections to the high court’s order of acquittal.

The plea argued due procedural safeguards under Section 23(2) of Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) were observed, including proper sanctioning by senior officers like prosecution witness 185 Anami Roy. It said the high court overlooked the validity of these approvals despite no substantial contradiction in the prosecution’s evidence.

The plea took exception to the high court’s rejection of the recovery of 500 grams of RDX from one of the accused on the ground that it lacked a lac seal.

The state argued RDX, being highly inflammable, was not sealed for safety reasons and the recovery was duly sanctioned and documented. The high court allowed the appeals filed by the accused against their conviction and sentences imposed on them by a special court in 2015.

The high court verdict came as a major embarrassment to the Maharashtra ATS which probed the case. The agency claimed the accused were members of the banned outfit Students’ Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and hatched the conspiracy with Pakistani members of the terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba. (PTI)

## ‘INDIA bloc likely to put up joint candidate for VP poll’

**NEW DELHI, July 24:** The INDIA bloc is likely to contest the vice presidential poll after a collective decision on a common candidate as it feels that the numbers are not overwhelmingly stacked against the opposition despite the BJP-led NDA having a majority, sources in the grouping said on Thursday.

They said that there is a feeling that the opposition parties should not shy away from a contest to send a strong political message irrespective of the outcome.

In a sudden move, Jagdeep Dhankhar quit as vice president on Monday evening citing medical reasons, though there have been consistent murmurs about other reasons behind his resignation.

The effective strength of both the Houses together is 782 and the winning candidate will require to win 392 votes in the election for the vice president, considering all eligible voters exercise their franchise. All members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, including the nominated ones, vote in the vice presidential poll.

In Lok Sabha, while the BJP-led NDA enjoys the support of 293 members in the 542-member House, the INDIA bloc has 234 members.

The ruling alliance has the support of about 130 members in Rajya Sabha that has an effective strength of 240, assuming that the nominated members vote in support of the NDA nominee. The

INDIA bloc has the support of 79 members in the Upper House.

Effectively, the NDA has 423 members and the INDIA bloc has 313 members in Parliament, remaining being non-aligned.

The Election Commission has already begun the process of holding the vice presidential election and will soon notify the dates.

According to Clause 2 of Article 68 of the Constitution, an election to fill a vacancy in the office of the vice president occurring due to his death, resignation or removal, or otherwise, will be held “as soon as possible” after it goes vacant.

The person elected to fill the vacancy will be entitled to hold office “for the full term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office”.

Dhankhar, 74, assumed office in August 2022 and his tenure was till August 2027.

He was also the chairman of Rajya Sabha by virtue of being vice president and his resignation came on the first day of the Monsoon session of Parliament.

Dhankhar had recently undergone angioplasty at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi.

He had several run-ins with the opposition, which had also moved a motion to impeach him. It was the first ever move in independent India to remove a vice president, but was later rejected by Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh. (PTI)

## Goa CM ‘lost mental balance’ Karnataka govt will proceed with Mahadayi river project: Shivakumar

**BENGALURU, July 24:** In an unusually harsh remark, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Thursday claimed that Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has “lost his mental balance” and said the state would proceed with the Mahadayi river project. Shivakumar, also the water resources minister, maintained that work is being undertaken on Karnataka’s land and affirmed the government’s intent to push ahead.

He also reminded the Goa CM about the importance of inter-state relations, saying he would try to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the union ministers to discuss the matter.

Addressing the Goa Assembly on Tuesday, Sawant had claimed that the Centre would not approve the Mahadayi project. He had also said the Goa government would file a contempt petition in the Supreme Court against Karnataka for carrying out activities aimed at diverting Mahadayi river water.

“Goa CM has spoken on the Mahadayi water issue. He has lost his mental balance; he is not aware of the federal structure. The Mahadayi water award has already been decided, and a tender has been invited,” Shivakumar claimed, speaking to reporters.

“The tender has been floated, and work must begin. Only forest clearance was required, and we were given a notice, but nowhere were we told not to take up the work....We will withdraw our application from the Supreme Court and start the work.”

Condemning Goa CM’s statement, the Deputy CM said, “He cannot stop us; he doesn’t have that right. I will start the work. Let them try to stop it?” let me see.”

Noting that he would meet all Karnataka MPs on this issue, Shivakumar claimed, “This is a question of our self-esteem. Your (MPs) silence is a mistake. We have 28 Lok Sabha members and 12 Rajya Sabha members, all of them must unite and fight for Karnataka. We cannot sell out the state’s interests.”

He said pressure must be mounted on the union ministers and the prime minister. “I will try to seek time from the union water resources minister (Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil) and the prime minister. I will try to take all the MPs along to meet them. Let them come. I will do everything necessary to begin the work.”

Asked whether the central ministers were being “misled”, Shivakumar said they are

well-balanced and “do not engage in politics”. He further accused the Goa government of “politicising the issue.”

“I have met central ministers five to six times. All of them want development work to proceed. The union forest and water resources ministers understand the problem; they are not playing politics. The Goa government is the one doing politics, maybe there is some issue there. My final stand is that we will take all necessary steps to begin the work,” Shivakumar said.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah also criticised Sawant’s remarks on Wednesday, calling them an “insult” to the people of Karnataka. He questioned why the Centre had not officially communicated any concerns regarding the project.

Reacting to CM and Deputy CM, BJP leader and Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Arvind Bellad sought to know why the ruling Congress in Karnataka was trying to “politicise” Goa CM’s statement in their state assembly.

“There is no need to react to whatever he (Goa CM) says in their assembly. Instead the state government should do its job -- make necessary submissions legally and get clearances. What is the need to take an all party delegation to the central government? It is to put the responsibility on the Centre and hide its (state government) failure. It is to mislead the people,” he said. Goa has been opposing Karnataka’s Kalasa-Banduri projects in the Mahadayi river basin.

The Kalasa-Banduri project by the Karnataka government proposes diverting Mahadayi river water into the Malaprabha river to enhance the drinking water supply in parts of Dharwad, Belagavi, Bagalkote, and Gadag districts.

The Mahadayi river flows through Karnataka and Goa before joining the Arabian Sea. Known as the Mandovi in Goa, it is one of the state’s two major rivers.

The diversion of Mahadayi water has long been a point of contention between Karnataka and Goa, with the latter claiming “it would severely impact the state’s flora and fauna.”

In 2018, the Mahadayi Water Dispute Tribunal adjudicated the inter-State water dispute, allocating 13.42 tmcft of water to Karnataka, 1.33 tmcft to Maharashtra, and 24 tmcft to Goa. The award was notified by the Union government in 2020. (PTI)

## Chhattisgarh: 66 Naxalites surrender in 5 districts; 49 carry total reward of ₹ 2.27 cr



**BASTAR, July 24:** A total of 66 Naxalites, including 49 carrying a cumulative reward of ₹ 2.27 crore, surrendered in five districts of Chhattisgarh’s Bastar division on Thursday, police officials said.

While 25 cadres surrendered in Bijapur, 15 laid down arms in Dantewada, 13 in Kanker, eight in Narayanpur and five in Sukma, they said, adding 27 were women.

The ultras surrendered before senior police, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF) and Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel citing disappointment with the hollow Maoist ideology, atrocities committed by Naxalites on innocent tribals and growing internal differences within the banned outfit, an official said.

“They also claimed to be impressed by ‘Niyad Nellanar’ (your good village) scheme of the state government, aimed at facilitating development works in remote villages, new surrender and rehabilitation policy of the state government and Poonam Margham (Rehabilitation for Social Reintegration), a rehabilitation initiative launched by Bastar Range police,” he added.

“Of the 25 who surrendered in Bijapur, 23 carried a collective bounty of Rs 1.15 crore. They include Ramanna Irpa (37), Odisha state committee member and special zonal committee member of Maoists who carried a reward of ₹ 25 lakh, and his wife Rame Kalmu (30), a platoon party committee member (PPCM) who carried bounty of ₹ 8 lakh,” Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav said.

Sukku Kalmu (38), Bablu Madvi (30), Kosi Madkam (28) and Reena Vanjam (28), who were active in crucial positions in different formations of Maoists among other surrendered cadres, carried bounty of ₹ 8 lakh each, Yadav added.

In Dantewada, five of the 15 surrendered cadres carried total reward of ₹ 17 lakh, Dantewada Additional Superintendent of Police Udit Pushkar said.

Budhram alias Lalu Kuhlram, a divisional committee member, his wife Kamli alias Moti Potawi, carrying rewards of ₹ 8 lakh and ₹ 5 lakh, respectively, are among the 15 surrendered ultras, the additional SP said.

With this surrender, 1020 Naxalites, including 254 carrying rewards, have so far quit violence in the district under the ‘Lon Varratu’ (term coined in local Gondi dialect which means return to your home/village) campaign launched in June 2020, he said.

In Kanker, the 13 surrendered Naxalites carried a collective bounty of ₹ 62 lakh. Superintendent of Police Indira Kalyan Ele-sela said.

The eight who laid down arms in Narayanpur had total reward of ₹ 33 lakh on their heads, local SP Robinson Guria said.

“Of these, Vatti Ganga alias Mukesh (44), the Maoists’ north bureau technical team in charge, carried a reward of ₹ 8 lakh on his head,” Guria said.

The surrendered Naxalites were provided assistance of ₹ 50,000 each and will be further rehabilitated as per the state government’s policy, these officials said. (PTI)

## Have 100 pc proof of EC allowing cheating, claims Rahul

**NEW DELHI, July 24:** The Congress has “concrete 100 per cent proof” that the Election Commission allowed cheating in a constituency in Karnataka, Rahul Gandhi claimed on Thursday and warned the poll panel that it will not get away with this “because we are going to come for you”.

The Election Commission responded, saying “if an election petition has been filed, then wait for the verdict of Hon’ble High Court. If not, then why make baseless allegations now?”

An election petition can be filed within 45 days after poll results are announced by anyone not satisfied with the verdict. Such petitions can be filed in high courts of the state of the constituency concerned.

Gandhi alleged that the poll panel is not functioning as the Election Commission of India and is “not doing its job”. Asked about the special intensive revision of electoral rolls in Bihar and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav’s reported remarks that the option of boycotting the Bihar assembly polls was open, Gandhi told reporters that his party has “concrete 100 per cent proof” of the EC allowing cheating in a seat in Karnataka.

“Not 90 per cent, when we decide to show it to you, it is a 100 per cent proof,” the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

“We just looked at one constituency and we found this. I am absolutely convinced that constituency after constituency this is the drama that is taking place. Thousands and thousands of new voters, how old are they? -- 45, 50, 60, 65, thousands and thousands of them in one constituency. This is one thing, voter deletion, voter addition, new voters who are way above 18 (is going on)... so we have caught them,” he said. “I want to send a message to the Election Commission -- if you think you are going to get away with this, if your officers think they are going to get away with this, you are mistaken”. (PTI)

## ICMR recommends interventions to meet gap in machines needed for cancer care

**NEW DELHI, July 24:** A recent ICMR study has highlighted a substantial shortfall in radiotherapy utilisation across all cancer types and underscored the need for interventions to meet the gap in machines required for equitable cancer care.

Published in the BMC Cancer journal, the study stated that 28.5 per cent of cancer patients receive radiotherapy, which is lower than the estimated optimal rate of 58.4 per cent.

Breast, head and neck, lung and cervical cancer account for 60 per cent of India’s radiotherapy needs, it said.

Data from the Australian Collaboration for Cancer Outcomes Research and Evaluation (CCORE) were used by the researchers of ICMR-National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research, Bengaluru, for conducting the study.

Epidemiological data on stage, subsite and histology from the National Cancer Registry Programme were used to assess the optimal utilisation proportion for India. A sensitivity analysis was carried out.

Similarly, the optimal radiotherapy fraction has also been calculated. These measures have been used to estimate the existing radiotherapy utilisation gap by comparing with the current radiotherapy utilisation from the cancer registry as well as

to estimate the optimal radiotherapy machines required for the country.

“This study provides a comprehensive assessment of radiotherapy demand and existing gaps in radiotherapy utilisation and in the number of machines in India based on an epidemiological analysis of the cancer burden from the National Cancer Registry Programme. Our analysis shows that approximately 58 per cent of all cancer cases in India should ideally receive radiotherapy based on clinical indications.

“However, the current radiotherapy utilisation in India is only 28.5 per cent, which is less than half of the required level,” the researchers said.

The study also recommended that India would require 1,585 to 2,545 machines, which may increase to a range of 2,016 to 2,291 external beam radiotherapy machines if the assumptions from previous benchmark studies are followed.

The burden of four cancer sites -- breast, head and neck, lung and cervical cancer -- constitutes around 60 per cent of the total radiotherapy requirement for cancer care in India, the study said.

This points towards an increasing demand for radiotherapy in the coming years as there is expected to be a 70-100 per cent increase in breast, head and neck and lung cancer in low and middle



income countries (LMIC). Radiotherapy utilisation of most cancer sites is lower compared to optimal radiotherapy utilisation.

Among the major indicated cancer sites, the deficit is more prominent in lymphoma and lung cancer (relative deficit of more than 70 per cent), followed by prostate, breast and oesophagus, it said.

The study mentioned that India accounts for 7 per cent of global cancer incidence, ranking third

after China and the USA. By the end of 2025, the incidence of cancer in India is projected to reach 1.57 million cases, posing a significant public health challenge.

As the fifth leading cause of death in the country, cancer demands urgent attention to improve prevention, diagnosis and treatment, it said.

Radiotherapy, a cornerstone of cancer treatment, plays a crucial role in controlling tumour growth, reducing tumour size pre-surgery, and alleviating pain in advanced stages.

However, its availability in low and middle-income countries like India remains insufficient due to high setup and operational costs, creating a significant gap between demand and resources.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a minimum of one radiotherapy machine (external radiotherapy machine) per million population, with an optimal target of four per million, the study stated.

For India’s projected population of 1.45 billion in 2025, this translates to a need for a minimum of 1,450 machines. Yet, only 794 megavoltage (MV) machines are currently available. The shortfall is about 45 per cent from the minimal required standard, the study said.

The study highlighted that in India, greater in-

vestment is needed to expand radiotherapy facilities to meet the growing demands of cancer patients.

“Aside from increasing the number of equipment, addressing the inequitable distribution of radiotherapy services is also crucial. To align with the country’s cancer burden and ongoing cancer control efforts, India must meet evidence-based targets for radiotherapy machine availability.

“As a part of this, India is also ramping up efforts to develop and deploy affordable indigenous radiotherapy machines to improve access and reduce dependence on costly imports,” the study stated.

Furthermore, a detailed situational study of radiation equipment deployment with its features and complexity, utilisation and throughput is required for informed planning and policymaking. Cancer screening and early detection programmes can facilitate the diagnosis of cancers at earlier stages. This could reduce the required quantum of radiotherapy shortly and thus, improve the overall survival of patients, the study said.

The cancer registry data informs the policymakers to identify gaps in radiotherapy access, assess resource needs and guide decisions to ensure equitable and effective cancer care delivery. (PTI)



## Districts bordering Assam are considered vulnerable and are under watch Meghalaya CM instructs DCs to remain alert over any possible influx of illegal immigrants



**SHILLONG, July 24:** Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Thursday instructed deputy commissioners and police officers in districts bordering Assam, particularly those adjacent to areas where eviction drives are being carried out, to remain on high alert against any possible influx of illegal immigrants into the state.

Chairing a high-level review meeting attended by the Chief Secretary, DGP, Additional Chief Sec-

retary (Home), officials from the Political Department, and deputy commissioners, the chief minister said the purpose was to assess the impact of the ongoing eviction drive in Assam.

"The government has been in continuous engagement with the deputy commissioners, who have been directed to coordinate with block development officers, police personnel, Village Defence Parties (VDPs), NGOs, and traditional heads to en-

sure that there is no infiltration into Meghalaya," the CM said.

He said that certain districts bordering Assam are considered particularly vulnerable and are under special watch.

"We have received reports that no incident has been recorded so far. All the concerned stakeholders at the village and block levels are working in close coordination to report any suspicious movement or entry into the state," the chief min-

ister said.

Earlier, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Shakil P Ahammed had issued a directive to all deputy commissioners to maintain strict vigilance, take necessary measures to prevent any potential influx, and ensure that law and order is upheld in view of the developments in Assam.

"In view of the ongoing eviction drive against illegal immigrants undertaken by the Government of Assam and to prevent possible influx of the displaced individuals to the state as a consequence, all deputy commissioners are hereby directed to keep vigilant and take necessary measures to ensure the potential influx is kept in check and law and order is maintained," the additional chief secretary (Home) had told the deputy commissioners.

The chief minister said the review meeting was held to reinforce these instructions and ensure that the state remains fully prepared to handle any situation arising out of the eviction drive in Assam. (PTI)

### Manipur Gov Bhalla stresses urgent need to scale up efforts in sericulture

**IMPHAL, July 24:** Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Thursday emphasised the urgent need to scale up efforts in sericulture and directed officers to work in this direction so that the sector contributes more significantly to the state's economy, a statement said.

Bhalla was chairing a review meeting on sericulture.

Director of Sericulture Robertson Asem presented a detailed briefing on the distribution and production of silk in the state, plantation activities, raw silk and seed organisation, market linkages, and the overall condition of government-run sericulture farms, the statement said.

Asem also briefed the governor on the progress of the under-construction Eri Spun Silk Mill, highlighting its potential to boost local silk production and create employment.

Various government schemes and projects related to sericulture were also discussed in the meeting, the statement said.

After reviewing the data and ongoing initiatives, the governor emphasised the urgent need to scale up efforts in the sericulture sector, it said.

He directed officers to intensify implementation and monitoring, ensuring that the sector contributes more significantly to the state's economy, it added. (PTI)

### Tripura achieves 2 MW solar power milestone, targets 50 MW by next year

**AGARTALA, July 24:** In a major stride toward energy self-reliance, Tripura has achieved a significant breakthrough by generating 2 megawatts (MW) of electricity through solar energy. The state has now set an ambitious target of producing 50 MW of solar power by next year.

According to a press release from the Tripura State Electricity Corporation Limited (TSECL), this achievement marks a historic moment in the state's journey toward sustainable energy and reduced dependence on conventional power sources.

The success has been attributed largely to the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 13, 2024. The centrally-sponsored scheme aims to encourage rooftop solar installations, allowing households to become energy self-sufficient and earn income by selling surplus electricity to the grid.

"So far, 15,730 households in Tripura have registered under the scheme," the TSECL noted. Solar panel installations have been completed at 591 locations, with 516 beneficiaries already receiving government subsidies. Notably, 117 consumers reduced their electricity bills to zero this month, collectively earning ₹43,545 by contributing excess electricity to the grid. The earnings were directly credited to their bank accounts.

Under the scheme, consumers can avail themselves of a subsidy of up to ₹85,800. A 1-kilowatt (kW) solar panel system can generate around 100 units of electricity per month, sufficient to meet the average power consumption of a typical household.

"This initiative is not just about cutting down electricity bills—it's also a source of income," the TSECL emphasized. "In a time of rising electricity costs, turning rooftops into power-generating assets is a progressive step toward financial independence."

With a target of 50 MW of solar energy generation by next year, the TSECL has urged all electricity consumers in the state to register for the scheme through the government portal and join the green energy revolution.



### Nagaland on high alert amid Assam's eviction drive against illegal settlers

**KOHIMA, July 24:** In response to Assam's ongoing eviction drives targeting alleged illegal settlers, the Nagaland government has issued an advisory and placed all districts on high alert to prevent the possible influx of displaced people into the state.

A notification issued by the office of the Commissioner of Nagaland instructed all deputy commissioners to maintain heightened vigilance, enforce proactive measures, and closely monitor border areas and transit points to safeguard the state's demographic integrity and ensure law and order.

Nagaland shares a long interstate boundary of around 512 km with Assam. This border runs through multiple districts on both sides.

On Wednesday, authorities in Nuland district reported turning back over 200 vehicles suspected of transporting individuals evicted from Assam. These trucks, carrying household belongings, were stopped at multiple check posts, and the occupants were questioned by local authorities, security personnel, and volunteer groups.

Following these developments, Nagaland Deputy Chief Minister Yanthungo Patton held a coordination meeting on Thursday in Nuland district.

The meeting, attended by MLA Achumbemo Kikon, included stakeholders such as the deputy

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, July 24:** Tipra Motha Party MLA Ranjit Debbarma today has urged Union Home Minister Amit Shah to implement the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system in Tripura, citing long-standing demands and rising concerns over national security.

In a letter addressed to the Home Minister on Thursday, Debbarma referred to the 1993 Memorandum of Settlement signed between the All Tripura Tribal Force (ATTF) and the Tripura government, which included a commitment to push for ILP implementation in the state.

The agreement, he said, clearly stated that the state government would press the Centre for approval of the ILP system.

Debbarma expressed disappointment over the fact that, more than three decades later, the proposed ILP system is yet to see the light of day in Tripura. "It is unfortunate that successive governments have failed to act on a formal commitment made in 1993," he wrote.

Highlighting Tripura's strategic vulnerability due to its 856-kilo-



metre-long international border with Bangladesh, the MLA claimed that unchecked illegal infiltration continues to pose a serious threat to internal security.

"The absence of ILP has made Tripura a soft target for illegal immigration. The consequences are far-reaching — both demographically and in terms of national security," he cautioned.

Debbarma pointed out that neighbouring northeastern states — Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, and most recently Ma-

nipur in 2019 — have already adopted the ILP mechanism to regulate the entry of non-residents. "Despite facing similar challenges, Tripura remains the only exception," he said.

Calling for urgent intervention from the Centre, Debbarma appealed to Shah to initiate steps for the introduction of ILP in Tripura without further delay. "This is not just about protecting indigenous rights; it is about preserving the sovereignty and security of the entire nation," the letter concluded.

### Watermelon cultivation on rise in Meghalaya as farmers adapt to climate change

**MYNRIANG (MEGHALAYA), July 24:** Farmers in Mynriang village in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district are increasingly turning to watermelon cultivation alongside traditional broom grass as part of their adaptation to shifting rainfall patterns and rising temperatures, an agriculture officer said.

The cultivation of watermelons is a relatively new development in the area. Villagers discovered only a few years ago that the fruit grows well in the region's soil and climate.

Since then, it has rapidly gained popularity as an alternative to labour-intensive crops that are also vulnerable to pests and diseases.

"This year, more and more farmers have taken to watermelon farming. It's not just profitable — it's also part of their adaptation to shifting rainfall patterns and rising temperatures," said the agriculture officer for the area.

"We are encouraging mixed cropping like watermelon with broom grass, which supports both soil health and income security," the officer said.

On the issue of pricing and market access, the officer added, "We are working on linking farmers with Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and exploring the possibility of direct-to-market models to eliminate middlemen." (PTI)



commissioner of Nuland, Dimaipur's commissioner of police, heads of departments, councillors of Nuland Town Council, members of Nuland Town Students' Union, gaon burahs (village headmen), and other leaders. The focus was on preparedness in view of the ongoing eviction drive across the Assam border.

"With concerns mounting over a possible influx of illegal immigrants into Nagaland, it is heartening to see how united and vigilant the people have been. I deeply appreciate the efforts of the district administration, gaon burahs, students, youth bodies, and volunteers who are maintaining round-the-clock vigilance," Patton stated on X.

Highlighting Nuland's vulnerability as a porous border area, the deputy CM urged NGOs and local leaders to remain alert and proactive, and report any unfamiliar set-

tlement activity within their jurisdictions.

Patton also ordered the immediate deployment of additional security forces not only in Nuland but across all border areas of Nagaland that adjoin Assam.

Dimaipur Commissioner of Police Kevithuto Sophie told PTI that a high-level team led by Deputy CM Patton, accompanied by MLA Kikon, Wokha SP, Wokha DC, Dimaipur CP, and Nuland DC, visited the Assam-Nagaland border areas under Wokha and Nuland districts during the day.

He said that additional Indian Reserve Battalion forces have been deployed along the Ralan sector, and if needed, more will be sent to other border areas including Nuland. He added that key locations such as bus and train stations will also be placed under strict surveillance. (PTI)

## From ruins to resplendence: Teacher inspires entire village to transform school in Meghalalaya

**MAWSYNRAM (MEGHALAYA), July 24:** In the remote village of Raibah, nestled in the misty foothills of Mawsynram, known as the wettest place on Earth, an eerie silence used to surround a dilapidated school building a few years ago, but now the joyful whoops of children echo through the dewy air there.

The transformation was made possible by the efforts of a newly appointed teacher who not only performed physical labour, but also inspired the villagers, as well as others, to take part in making the school, which turned 75 this year, beautiful again.

When Batskhem Thabab was posted to the Raibah Government Lower Primary School in 2021, he found a place long abandoned by learning.

Its walls were cracked, windows damaged, the roof was leaking under monsoon downpours, and classrooms overtaken by shrubs after nearly two years of COVID-19-induced closure.

The school had no permanent staff and a handful of children turned up sporadically.

"It took the entire village to rebuild the school, but it began with a single man who sparked the desire among them to act," said Pynshailang Dohling, the village headman of Raibah.

Rather than request a transfer, the young teacher chose to stay and reconstruct it from scratch. He began cleaning the grounds with the help of children, planted flowers to make the compound colourful, and even paid the salary of a second teacher from his own earnings to help manage the institute.

"I knew this wasn't going to be easy. But I also knew that even the smallest step could spark something big," said Thabab, who had previously volunteered in rural education camps as a National Service Scheme (NSS) student and worked as a tour guide across Meghalaya, witnessing the gaps in far-flung places.

Thabab's dream was to turn Raibah into a 'green school,' where sustainability and education could grow hand in hand. His early efforts, though modest—sweeping, gardening,



encouraging hygienic practices—began changing the atmosphere.

The students responded enthusiastically, taking responsibility for daily chores, maintaining the campus, and influencing their families.

"They weren't just students; they became caretakers of the school," Thabab recalled.

With no funds or materials, the children and their teacher improvised. Bamboo tubes replaced plastic pencil cases, areca palm leaves became lunch plates, and outdoor activities became classroom tools. Science lessons merged with gardening and language was taught through storytelling and songs.

"The school compound became a living space," he said.

When one student fell seriously ill and was absent for a long time, his classmates regularly visited him, prayed for him, and brought him snacks.

"Their compassion made me believe that we were not just building a school, but a com-

munity," Thabab added.

The biggest obstacle, however, remained the school building itself. With its crumbling infrastructure, the structure posed real danger, especially during the long, punishing monsoon.

Recognising the urgent need for repairs, Thabab contacted a friend, Ibarihun Majaw, who had successfully led a crowdfunding campaign during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Along with two fellow educators, Majaw visited Raibah and saw the conditions firsthand.

Majaw launched a campaign on a crowdfunding platform and the goal was met within a week. A local entrepreneur also pitched in to install a new roof for the school building.

With logistical support from Shillong and hands-on help from the community, the school underwent a remarkable change.

Villagers brought in materials, constructed bamboo fencing, and cleaned the area. Even residents with no school-going children par-

ticipated.

"We rebuilt it together. It became a school of the people," said Bah Thongni, a villager.

An unused Anganwadi centre nearby was also renovated and turned into an additional classroom to ease the space crunch.

Thabab also collaborated with the Directorate of Educational Research and Training (DERT) to implement multi-grade teaching strategies—from outdoor alphabet trails to phonics songs and practical tasks that boosted student participation.

A key breakthrough came through his partnership with his alma mater, St Edmund's College, Shillong.

Under the college's social work department, students began weekly fieldwork in Raibah through a model called TALES - Tangible Active Learning and Engagement Scaffolds - bringing new ideas and energy into the rural classroom.

Thabab said he also learnt a lot from locals—to fish, farm, and he even launched a conservation initiative along with the villagers to protect a local stream's biodiversity.

Reading culture was nurtured through help from The Owl Library, which donated 100 books to create a mini-library. Additional support came from another school, which donated study kits and sports materials.

Children were grouped into houses named after Gandhi, Teresa, Kalam, and Mandela, fostering healthy competition and identity.

In 2024, Thabab and his team received the Green Hub x Royal Enfield Conservation Grant to establish the Raibah Living Library.

It now documents oral histories, traditional medicinal plants, and folk tales—preserving the Khasi heritage, including stories of freedom fighter U Singap Singh Syiem, who resisted British rule and died in Raibah.

In late 2023, Thabab was transferred, causing heartbreak to the villagers and students. He, however, is still in contact with the village.

"Today, Raibah is no longer just a village with a school; it is a community transformed," the headman said. (PTI)

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# RAHUL MISHRA UNVEILS SECOND CHAPTER OF 'BECOMING LOVE' WITH TAMANNAAH AS MUSE AT INDIA COUTURE WEEK

**NEW DELHI, July 24:** Bollywood actor Tamannaah Bhatia turned the showstopper for Rahul Mishra as the ace designer presented his latest collection "Becoming Love" on the first day of the India Couture Week 2025.

The prestigious fashion gala, presented by Hyundai India in association with Reliance Brands, kicked off at the Taj Palace hotel on Wednesday evening.

Mishra's new collection was a continuation and evolution of his Paris Haute Couture Week presentation, which was also titled "Becoming Love".

While the Paris showcase explored love through a cosmic and philosophical lens — drawing from Sufi mysticism, Gustav Klimt's art, and the seven stages of love — the India Couture Week collection brings that same theme into a more intimate, earthly, and emotionally resonant space.

Models wore beautifully embroidered gowns and

dressess with colourful flowers and plants stitched carefully onto sheer and structured fabrics.

The designs were both flattering and artistic, with flowing skirts, fitted tops, and some 3D floral details.

The colour ranged from soft pastels like blush pinks, mint greens, and powder blues to rich jewel tones like emerald, magenta, and deep gold.

The collection combined romance, creativity, and high-fashion craftsmanship in a striking way.

Mishra said "Becoming Love" is the second chapter of a story that began at Paris Haute Couture Week.

"It's a transformation of love, where probably after death, it may turn into memory. We look at 'Becoming Love' as an idea, which is almost eternal, which created everything around us... It starts like a seed from attraction, infatuation and then slowly the seed cracks open. It starts with a great promise. And slowly how things trans-

late...

"This collection is almost like seven different collections which are moving into one idea called 'Becoming Love'," the designer told PTI after the show.

Tamannaah dazzled not in one but two outfits at the show. She entered the runway for the first time to the beats of music composer A R Rahman's classic track "Tu Hi Re" from "Bombay".

The 35-year-old actor wore a beautifully detailed, form-fitting gown, featuring a structured bodice with a neckline, gently highlighting her silhouette. The gown stood out for its rich floral embroidery in a mix of vibrant shades — reds, purples, greens, and blues — giving it the feel of a blooming garden. (PTI)



# Vicky Kaushal celebrates 10 years of 'Masaan': 'So much to learn, so much to grow'



**NEW DELHI, July 24:** Vicky Kaushal on Thursday celebrated 10 years of "Masaan", the critically-acclaimed film by director Neeraj Ghaywan that marked the actor's debut in Hindi cinema.

The Varanasi-set drama, written by Varun Grover, became a critical success after it was released on July 24, 2015, with Kaushal receiving praise for his role as Deepak Kumar, a lower caste student who falls in love with his upper caste classmate.

"It's been a decade! So much to learn, so much to grow... thank you for everything," the 37-year-old actor posted on Instagram alongside stills from the film.

"Masaan", a colloquial word in Varanasi for cremation ground, had its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival where it won two awards — FIPRESCI award and the Promising Future prize in the Un Certain Regard section.

The film weaved together two parallel stories that explore themes of love, loss, caste, guilt, and redemption.

Since "Masaan", Kaushal has emerged as one of the top stars in Hindi cinema, receiving praise for his performances in films such as "Raman Raghuvar 2.0", "Raazi", "Sanju", "Uri: The Surgical Strike", "Sardar Udham" and most recently "Chhaava".

In an interview with PTI ahead of the release of "Chhaava" in February, Kaushal said his journey in the industry so far has been nothing short of "surreal".

"Couldn't have imagined... It feels very surreal. It feels there is God who's blessing me and people's love has been so special. The kind of directors I got to work with in these ten years has been nothing short of a blessing. So, I truly feel supremely grateful," Kaushal said.

The actor, son of veteran stuntman Sham Kaushal, also revealed that during the shooting of "Masaan", they weren't even sure if the film would get a theatrical release.

"We didn't know what's going to happen to the film. It was a small film made with very limited resources. It was a parallel cinema at that time. Now, the lines have blurred quite beautifully, but there was a clear demarcation between the two then."

"At that time, I was just trying to get opportunities to prove myself as an actor within the industry," Kaushal said.

Ghaywan, who recently returned to Cannes with his sophomore feature directorial "Homebound", shared behind-the-scenes stills from the film.

"10 years of 'Masaan'," he simply wrote.

Grover wrote the story of "Masaan" as well as two songs, including "Tu Kisi Rail Si" and he posted a note on X to mark the film's 10th anniversary.

"10 years to 'Masaan' today. A film that didn't succeed commercially and still permeated through the hearts of so many who interacted with it. Always grateful for the journey we took, the leap of faith we were allowed to make, and the love that keeps pouring in even after a decade."

"Thanks to everyone on the crew - from every producer to actor to HOD to every lightman to the spotboys and camera attendants to the junior artistes - who gave it their all," he posted.

Avinash Arun, the cinematographer of "Masaan" wrote on his Instagram Stories, "10 years of 'Masaan'. Thank you Neeraj and Varun for making us all part of this memorable experience." Also starring Richa Chadha, Shweta Tripathi, Sanjay Mishra and Pankaj Tripathi, the film was an Indo-French co-production, backed by Drishyam Films, Macassar Productions, Phantom Films, Sikhya Entertainment, Arte France Cinema and Pathe Productions. (PTI)

# Huma Qureshi's police drama 'Bayaan' to premiere at Toronto Int'l Film Festival



**NEW DELHI, July 24:** "Bayaan", a police procedural thriller starring actor Huma Qureshi in the lead role, is set to have its world premiere at the 2025 Toronto International Film Festival.

The film is the only Indian title to be screened under the film gala's Discovery section, which puts spotlight on the debut and sophomore features of budding filmmakers.

"Bayaan" is directed by Bikas Ranjan Mishra, who made his directorial debut with the 2014 film "Chauranga".

Mishra described "Bayaan" as a poignant reflection of contemporary India, where "power and gender intersect in volatile and often invisible ways."

"It is my attempt to bear witness to a society in transition and to the quiet courage of those who choose to speak. I'm deeply honoured to present my second feature, 'Bayaan', at the Toronto International Film Festival in the Discovery section of a platform that has launched the journeys of many filmmakers I admire and cherish," the filmmaker said in a

statement.

Qureshi, known for starring in movies such as "Gangs of Wasseypur", "Badlapur", "Monica, O My Darling" as well as series "Leila" and "Maharani", said the story of "Bayaan" felt both "vital and universal" to her.

"Bayaan" gave me the opportunity to play the kind of character I've long been drawn to someone within the justice system, yet up against forces much larger than herself. It was an absolute joy to work with a team so passionate and fearless in telling a story that feels both vital and universal," said the actor, who is also an executive producer on the project.

"Bayaan" was developed at Film Independent, Los Angeles and is produced by Shiladitya Bora of Platoon One Films.

Madhu Sharma from Summit Studios, Kunal Kumar, Anuj Gupta and Sadik Keshwani Guidant Films serve as co-producer.

"Bayaan" also features actors Chandrachur Singh, Sachin Khedekar, Paritosh Sand, Avijit Dutt, Vibhore Mayank, Sampa Mandal, Swati Das, Aditi Kanchan Singh and Perry Chhabra.

The 2025 edition of the Toronto International Film Festival will be held from September 4 to 14. (PTI)

# Filmmaker Mohit Suri's 'Saiyaara' collects ₹ 155 crore in six days

**NEW DELHI, July 24:** Filmmaker Mohit Suri's romance drama "Saiyaara", featuring newcomers Ahaan Pandey and Aneet Padda, has breached ₹ 150 crore mark at the domestic box office, the makers said on Thursday.

The movie, produced by Yash Raj Films (YRF), was released in theatres last week and has emerged as a runaway blockbuster.

In a press note, the makers said the film earned ₹ 22 crore on Wednesday, which took its box office score to ₹ 155.75 crore.

"Saiyaara" follows Krish, played by Pandey, an ambitious musician, and Vaani, played by Padda, a shy lyricist recovering from heartbreak.

The music of "Saiyaara", which features seven songs composed by Mithoon, Sachet-Parampara, Tanishk Bagchi, Rishabh Kant, Vishal Mishra, Faheem Abdullah and Arslan Nisami, is already a chartbuster.

Alongside Pandey and Padda, the romance also stars Geeta Agarwal, Rajesh Kumar, Varun Badola and Shaad Randhawa in key roles. (PTI)

# WOMEN NEED TO BE STORIES, PARTS IN IT: ACTOR SURVEEN CHAWLA

**MUMBAI, July 24:** Surveen Chawla, known for her performances in big OTT hit shows like "Scared Games", "Rana Naidu", "Criminal Justice", says even though she would like to be part of films, women-centric stories are hard to come by.

Chawla said the industry is a work in progress when it comes to opportunities for women, both on and off screen.

"Women need to be stories, not just mere parts in it. The industry is evolving where we're eventually getting into a space where you want to aspire to have equality on every aspect whether it is equality on quality or in storytelling, pay parity or on how you're treated, keeping the hierarchy aside," the actor

told PTI.

Good roles are plenty in the OTT space and that's what she is currently focused on, said the actor, who has acted in films such as "Ugly", "Hate Story 2", and "Parched".

"I feel like there is scarcity of such parts being written in films, which is what draws you to doing this here (on OTT). If I've an opportunity to do one or five or ten such films where it satisfies my hunger that I've been able to contribute to a project in a large way then I'll do it," Chawla added.

The 40-year-old actor, who will next appear in Netflix series "Mandala Murders", said she is seeking roles that challenge her.

"A lot of work doesn't mean

there's a queue. So, from that little basket of work that you get, you try to pick the most exciting one, challenging and unique one, something that you've not done in the past.

"I need to feel that joy from within when I'm waking up on a day of shooting that spring in your step that today I'm going to surmount a small little peak."

Headlined by Vaani Kapoor, "Mandala Murders" is a mythological crime-thriller.

Set in the quaint, mysterious town of Charandasapur, the series will see Kapoor as a no-nonsense investigative officer, Rhea Thomas, who unravels a chilling conspiracy of ritualistic killings tied to a centuries-old secret society.

It is directed by Gopi



Puthran of "Mardaani 2" fame and Manan Rawat. Chawla's co-star from the show, Vaibhav Raj Gupta of "Gullak" fame, said the upcoming show is a "big opportunity" for him.

"I've been waiting for three years for this trailer to come, for this show to come. I was telling myself I

was like as soon as 'Gullak' is there, 'Mandala...' will reach further than that because of so many things."

"All the things were amazing in this show and it was a big opportunity for me to reach people because they were only seeing me as Anu for a long time."

"So, it was very tough for me to break that thing because then you need somebody like Gopi sir or Manan sir who can see you doing something different. So I'm asking them, 'how did you think that I can do Vikram Singh because I couldn't see myself,'" he said.

"Mandala Murders", produced by YRF Entertainment, will premiere on July 25 on Netflix. (PTI)



# China Open: Unnati shocks Sindhu; Satwik-Chirag advance, Prannoy exits

**CHANGZHOU (CHINA), July 24:** In a defining moment of her fledgling career, young Unnati Hooda stunned two-time Olympic medalist and Indian badminton stalwart PV Sindhu in a gripping three-game contest to storm into the quarterfinals of China Open Super here Thursday.

Facing her decorated compatriot for only the second time, 17-year-old Hooda held her nerve in crunch moments to register a sensational 21-16, 19-21, 21-13 victory in 73 minutes, marking her maiden quarterfinal appearance at a Super 1000 event. The teenager from Rohtak, who has won Super 100 titles at the 2022 Odisha Masters and 2023 Abu Dhabi Masters, will next take on Japan's Akane Yamaguchi, the third seed and a two-time world champion.

The men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also displayed tactical discipline and composure to notch up a 21-19 21-19 victory over the eighth-seeded Indonesian combination of Leo Rolly Carmandio and Bagas Maulana and progress to the quarterfinals.

It was however the end of the road for HS Prannoy, who bowed out after a hard-fought 21-18 15-21 8-21 loss to sixth seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei in a 65-minute men's singles second-round match.

Sindhu, ranked world No. 15, came into the match on the back of a solid win over Japan's Tomoka Miyazaki but found herself outplayed by Hooda's speed, precision, and unrelenting energy.



This is the first time that Sindhu has lost to a fellow Indian in an international event in seven years, the last being the 2018 Commonwealth Games final loss to Saina Nehwal. She had lost to Saina in the 2019 National Championships final as well.

In a match that featured high-octane rallies, momentum shifts, and moments of brilliance from both ends, it was Hooda's fearless approach that made the difference.

The opening game began evenly, with both players looking

for rhythm. While Sindhu used her trademark down-the-line smashes and tight net play, Hooda responded with agile footwork and deep clears that forced errors from the veteran.

From 13-all, Hooda surged ahead with four straight points before sealing the game 21-16, leaving Sindhu on the back foot.

The second game was tighter, with neither player able to pull away. At 19-all, Sindhu executed a clinical cross-court drop that left Hooda stranded, and followed it up

with a precise smash to push the contest into a decider at 21-19. However, the final game saw a noticeable dip in Sindhu's consistency. Hooda capitalised on a string of unforced errors from the former world No. 2, including mistimed smashes and poor judgement at the net.

The youngster raced to an 11-6 lead at the mid-game interval, helped by a couple of powerful forehand smashes and sharp angles that kept Sindhu on the defensive. Sindhu narrowed down the gap

to 12-15 with some crisp winners, but Hooda stayed composed, maintaining a steady four-point cushion with strong cross-court placements.

At 20-13, she earned seven match points and needed just one to close it out, finishing with a forehand winner and celebrating with a fist pump.

This marked a significant step in Hooda's upward trajectory. Now ranked world No. 35, she's consistently challenged higher-ranked opponents, including semifinal runs in Taipei and strong performances at the German Open earlier this season.

Earlier, the duo of Satwik and Chirag prevailed in the key junctures to overcome the challenge posed by the Indonesian pair.

The opening game saw the Indonesians leading 14-12, but Satwik-Chirag surged ahead with a five-point streak to take control.

The second game was similarly close. Trailing 10-14 at one point, the Indians clawed back to 18-all and managed to go past their opponents and seal a straight-game win. "It was quite a topsy-turvy match — just back and forth the whole time. We didn't really have a big lead at any point. Eventually, around 16-something, we got 3-4 points in a row and managed to close it," Chirag said.

"We're definitely feeling better.

There's still a long way to go — I wouldn't say we're at our best just yet. We haven't played that many tournaments over the past year, so that's one of the reasons we've entered Macau." (PTI)

## IOA ends feud over CEO, sets up anti-doping panel after IOC flags high cases



**NEW DELHI, July 24:** Ending a lengthy feud, the Indian Olympic Association's Executive Council on Thursday ratified the appointment of CEO Raghuram Iyer and set up a panel to tackle doping after India's poor record was flagged by the IOC during a national delegation's visit to push for the 2036 Olympic bid.

The EC members had refused to ratify Iyer's appointment made by President PT Usha in January 2024, the bone of contention being his Rs 20 lakh per month salary along with other perks.

However, the differences on this matter were resolved following Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya's intervention, paving the way for Iyer's formal appointment.

"Everything is sorted out, that is why the CEO (Iyer) is sitting with me. Otherwise he would not have been sitting with me here," Usha said at a press conference at the IOA headquarters with Iyer at her side. "It will now be very smooth functioning going ahead. Otherwise also, there was no break in IOA functioning. We did very well in the Paris Olympics and the Asian Games. We also conducted two National Games," said Usha, who had a bitter and frosty relationship with 12 EC members in the last more than two years.

IOA joint secretary Kalyan Chaubey informed that executive council meeting on Thursday ratified Iyer's appointment.

"There were some differences. We won't say there were nothing. There had been letters exchanged. But in democracy, when there are two people, two opinions, there are always differences of opinions out there. No house, no organization can completely be flawless."

"Rather, we are very happy that IOA is a house having difference of opinions. But right now, we want to look forward, look forward in the interest of nation."

Iyer said "the fact that all of us are here and I am also here means that everything is sorted out."

However, it is learnt that the salary package of Iyer is likely to be negotiated.

"He should not get too less but also not this high. His salary is a bit high by Indian standards, as compared to officials of CEO level in NSFs," an official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Treasurer Sahdev Yadav sought to downplay the bitter feud that marred the functioning of the IOA shortly after the elections of the office bearers in December 2022.

"There was a little bit of dispute, minor differences, but it was not a big issue. And we have sorted it out, there is no problem now, we are all together. We are looking ahead to the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and our 2036 Olympic bid and 2030 CWG bid," he said. All the other executive council members, except for Bhupinder Singh

Bajwa, Rajlaxmi Deo and Mary Kom, were present.

The seven-member anti-doping panel will be headed by non-playing Davis Cup captain Rohit Rajpal and includes Aparna Popat and sports medicine expert PSM Chandran among others.

"The IOC (International Olympic Committee) mentioned high doping cases in India when IOA (delegation) visited Lausanne," said Iyer, who was present during a joint press conference by the IOA EC members and Usha.

The IOA delegation to Lausanne last month included sports secretary Hari Ranjan Rao, Usha and Gujarat Sports Minister Harsh Sanghavi among others. India is bidding to host the 2036 Games in Ahmedabad.

India had last month topped the World Anti-Doping Agency's 2023 testing figures among countries which analysed 5,000 or more samples with a high positivity rate of 3.8 per cent for banned substances.

"IOA is launching a dedicated anti-doping education programme with immediate effect. At the core of this initiative will be a seven member IOA committee consisting of seasoned administrators and experts in athlete welfare and Olympic education," Rajpal said.

"The committee will be responsible for designing and rolling out a sustained anti-doping education and awareness campaign targeting athletes at all levels from grassroots to elite, coaches and support staff, federation administrators and sports officials and most importantly parents and guardians of young athletes."

"There are labs that are being at the moment looked into and analysed. When they can come, more and more testing can happen and those labs can be accredited for this programme."

He said drug paddlers who are pushing and selling supplements or performance enhancing drugs in open market will be dealt with strongly.

After opposing it for a considerable time, the new sports bill, which was tabled in Parliament on Wednesday, was finally welcomed by the IOA.

"The IOC was concerned about two-three issues but the ministry consulted the world body and other international federations and then the bill was cleared," Usha said.

The bill, once it becomes an act, will lead to the institution of a National Sports Board that will be authorised to grant recognition to national federations and regulate their funding as well.

"New National Sports Bill should not be construed as intervention from Sports ministry but as cooperation and coordination with the stakeholders including IOA and NSFs (National Sports Federations)," said Chaubey. (PTI)

## Chopra-Nadeem's face-off in Poland unlikely, says Pakistani javelin thrower's coach

**KARACHI, July 24:** The much-anticipated duel between double Olympic medalist Neeraj Chopra and reigning champion Arshad Nadeem at the Diamond League in Poland lies in uncertainty after the Pakistani javelin thrower underwent a surgery on his calf muscle in England recently.

Chopra and Nadeem were scheduled to face each other for the first time next month, one year after the mouth-watering men's javelin competition at the 2024 Paris Olympics, where the Pakistani came out on top, beating his Indian counterpart for the gold medal with a stunning 92.97m throw.

The 27-year-old Chopra, who had won gold in Tokyo

Olympics in 2021, had to settle for a silver in Paris with a best throw of 89.45m.

The duo were set to compete against each other in the Diamond League in Silesia, Poland on August 16 and then in Switzerland next month.

Nadeem's coach Salman Butt, who is with him in England, informed that the reigning Olympic champion is unsure for both the events as he was more focussed on making his comeback at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo in September.

"He (Nadeem) is more focussed on preparing for the World Championships in Tokyo in September which is why he decided to have the surgery on



his calf muscle which had been bothering for a while now," Butt said.

"I don't think they will compete against each other until the World event," he added.

## Goodwill of the EFI is being chipped away at global stage: Observer Quraishi

**NEW DELHI, July 24:** The endless bickering among the executive committee members of Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) is eroding the goodwill of the sports body, court-appointed observer SY Quraishi has said in a scathing assessment of the functioning of the NSF while seeking fresh elections.

The Delhi High Court had entrusted former Chief Election Commissioner Quraishi with the task of overseeing the functioning of EFI while responding to a petition from the Rajasthan Equestrian Association in November 2019.

The high court on May 29, 2024 had revived the executive committee elected in November 2019 as an interim arrangement.

However, Quraishi is not impressed with the way the EC members have been behaving in recent past and sought immediate elec-

tions to the sports body.

"The EC, after its revival has not been effective in dispensing with the responsibilities bestowed upon it and has unfortunately, resorted to endless quarrelling and expressions of aggression against each other. "Instead of holding necessary discussions on the developmental issues plaguing the sport or the workings of Respondent 1 (EFI), the members have resorted to settling existing grudges against one another," Quraishi wrote in his highly critical report.

The former election commissioner also highlighted how warring factions recognise separate 'acting presidents', leading to conflict as they have been communicating with relevant authorities like the Sports Ministry, Indian Olympic Association and equestrian's world governing body FEI

separately.

He also mentioned how a new email ID, and an entirely new website has been created and separate annual calendars issued, leading to confusion among riders.

"Certain section of EC members consider Mr. Harish Khokhar (vice president, finance) to be the legally appointed acting president whereas another section of EC members consider Col. Jagat Singh, Retd. (vice president tech) to be the legally appointed acting president of Respondent No. 1."

Quraishi also brought to the notice of the court how the conflict among the members escalated during the AGM held on August 18, 2024 when Khokhar was nominated to serve as the acting president.

"Distressingly, at the 62nd AGM, the acrimonious nature of

the relationship between the members of the executive committee escalated to the extent of fisticuffs, with an attempt being made to hit Lt Gen MK Yadav, Retd and Maj Gen Sameer Lamba, a serving army officer.

"It is humbly submitted that in the experience of the undersigned, such an incident has not been witnessed in any NSF."

Quraishi further wrote that an EC meeting was held on April 11 this year and suspended secretary general Col Jaiveer Singh without court approval.

"Given that the entire EC, including the Secretary General, was reinstated by the order of this Hon'ble Court dated 29.05.2024, the undersigned advised the EC to obtain necessary approvals from this Hon'ble Court before implementing the resolution." (PTI)

## Chicharito faces backlash in Mexico for 'very sexist' remarks on gender roles

**MEXICO CITY, July 24:** Soccer star Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez is facing a backlash from Mexico President Claudia Sheinbaum and others for remarks posted on his social media accounts about gender roles.

"Chicharito is a very good soccer player," Sheinbaum said at a news conference Wednesday. "But when it comes to his opinion on women ... he still has a lot to learn." She described the former Mexico international's ideas as "very sexist."

The former Manchester United and Real Madrid striker, who plays for Chivas, is injured and missed the first two matches of Mexico's Apertura tournament.

Over the weekend, he posted several reels and videos, mainly on Instagram.

"Don't be afraid to be women, to allow yourselves to be led by a man," the 37-year-old Hernandez said. "Women, you are failing, you are eradicating masculinity, making society hypersensitive."

Hernandez, the all-time leading scorer for the Mexican national team with 52 goals, returned to Mexico last year on a two-year deal with Chivas, the team where he began his professional career in 2006. "You women need to learn to accept and honor masculinity," he said in another one of his posts.

In another, he said to the camera: "You want a man to provide, but for you, cleaning is patriarchal oppression... interesting."

Sheinbaum, a 63-year-old scientist, was elected last year as the first female president in the country's 200-year history. (AP)

## Shiv Kapur wants to see more hunger in young Indian golfers; pins hopes on IGPL to boost sport

**NEW DELHI, July 24:** The seasoned Shiv Kapur believes the younger crop of Indian professionals must show greater hunger and work ethic to succeed on the Asian Tour, and feels the upcoming Indian Golf Premier League (IGPL) could be a game-changer for the sport.

The IGPL, a city-based franchise league featuring six mixed-gender teams, is slated to be held over four weeks in January-February next year. The format will combine professional men and women golfers, along with top amateurs, in an innovative competition model.

Kapur, a three-time winner on the Asian Tour, and SSP Chawrasia were announced as icon players of the league during a virtual

media interaction, which was also attended by veteran Gaurav Ghei.

Addressing the media, Kapur pointed to a dip in Indian success on the Asian Tour and attributed it partly to a generational transition and a lack of drive.

"Having played in Europe for over a decade, I think the biggest thing is the conditions — weather, travel, grass types — which play a major role in adapting to the game," Kapur said.

"We grew up playing in warmer, less windy conditions, with different grasses. It's like cricket — we do better on slow, turning wickets than on green seamers in England. That's the trend," Kapur said India has always had a presence on the Asian Tour through players like Ghei,

Jeev Milkha Singh, and Jyoti Randhawa, but that momentum seems to have slowed.

"Over the last two or three decades, Indian golfers have dominated on the Asian Tour. But recently, we haven't seen many winners. It's probably a transitional phase. There's no reason we shouldn't be winning," he said.

"The Asian Tour suits us, the coaching and exposure in India have improved, but maybe the players just aren't hungry enough. There are some promising teenagers — 16- or 17-year-olds — who I think will break through soon," Kapur also addressed the limitations of the Official World Golf Ranking (OWGR) system, especially for Indian players who win frequently on the domestic

PGTI circuit but gain little recognition globally due to the lower strength-of-field ratings.

"Today, even if someone wins every single tournament on the PGTI, statistically he won't break into the top 500. But just a few years ago, that could qualify a player for the Olympics," he said.

"The world ranking system has become defunct. It needs a complete overhaul. I used to check my world ranking religiously every week. But in the last two or three years, hardly anyone pays attention to it. Even Jon Rahm recently called for a new model."

Asked about the potential conflict between IGPL and the PGTI calendar, Kapur said world ranking points would not deter players from choosing one over the other.

"This debate between PGTI and IGPL over points doesn't influence the players anymore. It's more about the opportunity and platform."

Apart from Kapur, Chawrasia, and Ghei, the IGPL will also feature icons like Gaganjeet Bhullar, Jyoti Randhawa, and Jeev Milkha Singh. Each team will comprise 10 players drawn from professional circuit, women golfers from the WGAI Tour, and top amateurs from the IGU.

"Everyone talks about the IPL, but not enough about what it did for Indian cricket. The hope is that IGPL can do the same for golf — inspire the next generation while also giving them a stage to perform alongside icons," Kapur said.

The IGPL will feature a no-cut, three-day stroke play format for the tour, while the league itself will include two formats: a morning "Turf Wars" nine-hole match play and an evening "X-Golf" relay format where four players take turns hitting different types of shots.

"I think the format is exciting — fast-paced and team-based. Golf needs something like this," Kapur said.

"Look at the Ryder Cup or Presidents Cup — people watch because it's a team event. And with the X-Golf relay, where you don't hit two shots in a row, it's like speed golf. That's what younger audiences want — quicker formats, more content in less time." (PTI)



# Pant comes out to bat with fractured toe, Jagadeesan set to be added as cover

**MANCHESTER, July 24:** Rishabh Pant was on Thursday ruled out of wicket-keeping duties in the ongoing fourth Test against England after fracturing his toe but he came out to bat, even as Tamil Nadu stumper N Jagadeesan got ready to join the Indian team as cover for the injured star.

The BCCI stated that Pant is "available" in the role of a batter as per team requirements during the crunch game at Old Trafford.

The 27-year-old Pant retired hurt at 37 on the opening day and went for scans after copping a blow on his right foot while attempting a reverse sweep off England pacer Chris Woakes on Wednesday.

"Rishabh Pant, who sustained an injury to his right foot on Day 1 of the Manchester Test, will not be performing wicket-keeping duties for the remainder of the match. Dhruv Jurel will assume the role of wicket-keeper," the BCCI posted on X.

"Despite his injury, Rishabh Pant has joined the team on Day 2 and will be available to bat as per team requirements," it added.

This was after early inputs from the Board indicated that Pant has been ruled



out of the series and Ishan Kishan would be called in as cover for him. However, it later emerged that Jagadeesan is travelling to the UK to join the squad as a replacement for the injured Pant ahead of the fifth Test.

Jagadeesan is expected to fill in as wicketkeeper-batter in the absence of Pant, who received a standing ovation from the

crowd at Old Trafford after he walked out to bat with a fractured foot.

Pant came out to bat after the fall of Shardul Thakur's wicket with India at 314/6 on the overcast day.

With his ability to change the momentum with audacious stroke-play, Pant is a game-changer for India. After undergoing additional scans, Pant arrived at the sta-

dium wearing a moon boot (a protective orthopaedic boot) to support his injured foot.

"His metatarsal bones (a group of five long bones located between the ankle and toe) seem to be shattered. It doesn't look good at all," a BCCI source told PTI.

The severity of the injury was apparent given the blood that was seen seeping off Pant's right foot on Wednesday. The affected area had considerable swelling as well.

On day one, Pant was the only one to take the attack to Jofra Archer and Co. while the other batters struck at three runs per over.

Before getting hit on his right foot, Pant had perfected an outrageous sweep off Archer before smashing Brydon Carse down the ground as if he was a spinner.

India have already lost all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy to a knee problem, while pacers Akash Deep and Arshdeep Singh are missing the ongoing game because of a groin niggle and a finger injury respectively.

Pant's injury adds to the problems for

the team which is trailing 1-2 right now.

The think tank also had KL Rahul as option to keep wickets, but he has not performed that role since the tour of South Africa in the 2023-24 season.

"He hardly put his foot on the ground (after the impact). The immediate swelling was a worry for me. I have had a metatarsal injury myself and they are small fragile bones.

"The fact that he could not put any weight on it, it doesn't look good at all," Ricky Ponting, who is commenting on the game, had said on 'Sky Sports' after the incident.

The fifth and final Test of the series is scheduled to be held at London's Kennington Oval from July 31.

This was the second injury for Pant in this series as he had bruised his finger while keeping during the third Test at the Lord's, which prevented him from guarding the stumps in England's second innings.

The flamboyant player made his comeback to international cricket only last year after surviving a life-threatening car crash in 2022. (PTI)

**India reach 321 for six at lunch as Pant makes courageous return to middle**



**MANCHESTER, July 24:** Rishabh Pant remarkably came out to bat with a fractured foot while Shardul Thakur showed plenty of resolve to take India to 321 for six at lunch on day two of the fourth Test against England here on Thursday.

Resuming the day at 264 for four, India did well to cross the 300-run mark in overcast conditions that offered plenty of seam and swing to the England pacers especially Jofra Archer, who was effectively unplayable for majority of his opening spell. England skipper Ben Stokes got the odd ball to jump from length, creating more challenges for the Indian batters.

Considering the pitch behaviour, India would be content with a first innings score of 350.

Chris Woakes took the new ball immediately but it was in following over from Archer that England got the early breakthrough.

The in-form Ravindra Jadeja (20 off 40) could not do much off an Archer beauty that shaped away after landing on the leg-stump to take the outside edge with Harry Brook holding on to a low catch at second slip.

With the ball doing all sorts of tricks, Shardul (41 off 88 balls) looked to attack and dispatched Woakes off the backfoot in the cover region for a fine boundary. Minutes later, Shardul creamed a full ball from Stokes through the cover a ball after getting a snorter from the England captain that almost kissed his glove.

Stokes managed to get rid of the Indian bowling all-rounder eventually by luring him into a drive and getting him caught at gully by Ben Duckett, who pounced the flying ball.

Much to the shock of everyone present at the ground, Pant limped out to bat after Shardul's dismissal, and a standing ovation followed.

Despite a broken right foot, Pant made a courageous call to face the England pacers. He could barely complete his singles but the fact that he was in the centre said a lot about his grit and character.

Lunch was taken slightly ahead of the scheduled time as light rain returned to Old Trafford in fading light. (PTI)

## BCCI set to host Asia Cup in UAE, India-Pakistan match likely



**NEW DELHI/DHAKA, July 24:**

The Indian cricket board is all set to host the upcoming Asia Cup T20 tournament in the United Arab Emirates with the formal announcement expected in a few days' time, sources in the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) said on Thursday.

This was after an ACC meeting that all 25 member nations attended to discuss the venue for the event. BCCI was represented by its vice-president Rajeev Shukla virtually.

"The BCCI will host the Asia Cup in the UAE. India is likely to play all its matches in Dubai. There are still deliberations on scheduling," an ACC source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

The tournament will be held for a little over fortnight in September. It has to end before the final week of the month as India's Test series against West Indies is scheduled

from that point.

"Our vice-president Rajeev Shukla ji attended the ACC meeting. He will brief the members. I don't believe in speculations so you will get to know officially in a few days time," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI.

In Dhaka, ACC chairman and Pakistan Cricket Board head Mohsin Naqvi also kept cards close to his chest when asked about a possible Indo-Pak match at the continental event.

"We will announce it shortly. We have had discussions with the BCCI and there are a few issues that we will resolve shortly. All 25 members attended the meet either physically or virtually. We are all on same page," Naqvi told reporters.

It is also learnt that due to BCCI's pressure, only two out of 10 items on the agenda, were discussed. (PTI)

## Indian men's team to play 5 T20s, 30ODIs in England in 2026; women to feature in 3 T20Is, one Test

**MANCHESTER, July 24:** India will travel to England next year for a white-ball tour, including five T20Is and three ODIs, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced on Thursday.

India's tour will begin with a T20 on July 1 in Durham, followed by matches in Manchester (July 4), Nottingham (July 7), Bristol (July 9) and Southampton (July 11).

The three-match ODI series between the two sides will start at Birmingham from July 14, followed by matches at Cardiff, on July 16 and Lord's at July 19.

The Indian women team will also engage with England women in a three-match T20I series and a one-off Test. The T20 series will begin at Chelmsford on May 28, followed by games at Bristol on May 30 and Taunton on June 2. (PTI)

## Gill's aggression is not new, he did nothing wrong at Lord's: Parthiv Patel



**NEW DELHI, July 24:** Shubman Gill's aggressive approach has sparked a debate but former India wicketkeeper-batter Parthiv Patel says it's not new and lauded the young captain for his assertiveness and clarity in executing plans during the ongoing England series.

Gill had fired a verbal salvo at Zak Crawley during the Lord's Test after he and his opening partner Ben Duckett arrived 90 seconds late to the crease towards the end of the third day of the Test.

India had managed to equal England's first innings total of 387, and wanted to squeeze in two overs in the remaining six minutes of play. However, that wasn't possible as the English openers took their time to get ready, and Gill exchanged words with England openers.

The India skipper later called the delay "not in the spirit of the game."

Asked if Gill's aggressive stance was surprising, Patel, who served as assistant coach of Gill-led Gujarat Titans in the IPL, said, "No, it's not. We've seen him do this in the IPL too. This sport is about expressing emotions as long as you don't cross the line, and I don't think Shubman crossed the line at all."

"It was clear how slowly the English batsmen were walking in. Teams like England, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa often use the term 'spirit of the game' conveniently.

"So, there was nothing wrong with Gill asking the English media if it's okay to come to bat 90 seconds late. That was a deliberate attempt. I don't think Shubman did anything wrong," Patel told reporters during a JioHotstar virtual interaction.

On Gill's India captaincy, he said, "This is new to him and he's improving. With Gujarat Titans, whatever I've observed about him, he's been very assertive. He knows what he wants. He's very clear with his plans and ideas. I'm sure with the time, you will see very much improvement in his captaincy also."

Under Gill's captaincy, India won the second Test at Birmingham and were in a strong position in the third before losing the game by 22 runs.

"I thought he was very good compared to the first Test. He lacks experience leading Test or four-day games, but no one is born a captain.

"It's good to see that Shubman's been very good. He doesn't look confused on the field as a captain, opposed to what he was in first Test match. But it's good to see that he is on the right path," said Patel.

Sai Sudharsan, dropped after the opening Test, scored his maiden Test half-century — a patient 61 — as India posted 264 for four on day one of the fourth Test. He was replaced by experienced Karun Nair in the second and third Tests before returning to the XI in the fourth.

"Despite good domestic seasons, Nair couldn't convert starts into big scores. Now India is backing a youngster, which is fine. After eight years away, you don't usually get many chances. Sai made the most of his opportunity with a fifty. Knowing him, he'd be disappointed not to have converted it into a hundred," said Patel.

Asked if Sai has the potential to become a regular all-format batter, Parthiv said, "The potential is immense. We've seen him bat with conviction in the IPL, winning the Orange Cap and striking at a high rate. He's shown promise in Test cricket too."

Patel also expressed support for Kuldeep Yadav's inclusion in the playing XI.

"I personally feel India should play Kuldeep Yadav. The team seems to prefer an extra batter, which is why Kuldeep isn't finding a place. But I believe India should find room for him to have four attacking bowlers," he said. (PTI)

## KAMSFC set to kick off Durand Cup campaign against ITBP FT on July 27

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, July 24:** Karbi Anglong Morning Star FC (KAMSFC), a professional club from Karbi Anglong that has earned promotion to I-League 2 for the 2025-2026 season, is currently in Kokrajhar to compete in the 134th edition of the Durand Cup 2025, Asia's oldest football tournament. The tournament, which kicked off on July 23, is being held across multiple venues including Kolkata, Shillong, Jamshepur, Kokrajhar, and Imphal.

KAMSFC is the second club from Assam, after Bodoland FC, to participate in this prestigious tournament. The Durand Cup 2025 features 24 teams from the Indian Super League (ISL), I-League, and the Armed Forces. These teams have been divided into six groups of four teams each. Every team will face the others in their group once in a single round-robin format during the pool stage.

KAMSFC is placed in Group D, alongside ISL team Punjab FC, Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force Football Team (ITBP FT), and Bodoland FC. All Group D league matches will be played at the SAI Stadium, Kokrajhar. KAMSFC will begin their campaign on July 27 against ITBP FT, followed by a match on July 30 against the host team Bodoland FC, and finally on August 3 against ISL team Punjab FC.

Ahead of the tournament, the KAMSFC boys had a practice session at Waisong Stadium of Dongkamukam Sports Association (DSA). Before departing for Kokrajhar, they played a friendly match with the DSA boys on Wednesday evening (July 23) at the DSA Waisong Stadium. After the match, the team returned to Diphu and departed for Kokrajhar from Diphu Railway Station at 2 a.m., accompanied by club manager Waisong Bey and other technical staff.

During the friendly match, Manager Waisong Bey spoke to the



crowd about the club's formation, achievements, and preparations for the Durand Cup. He said the club was founded on November 8, 2008, with humble beginnings, participating in local tournaments. The club's founding members were Mukul Kathar (Founding President), George Rongpi (General Secretary), and Miji Kro (Chief Administrator), among others, who sowed the seeds of what has become one of Assam's most promising football outfits.

The club started winning trophies in the Greater Diphu Sports Association (GDSA) club leagues, followed by success in the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) club leagues and the CEM Gold Cup. KAMSFC went on to win the Assam State Premier League (ASPL) titles in 2015 and 2023-2024.

With two ASPL titles under its belt, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) qualified KAMSFC to participate in the I-League 3 during the 2023-2024 season. The club is now set to play in the I-League 2 for the 2025-2026 season. It will be the first club from Assam to play in an AIFF official tournament (I-League), a proud

moment for the people of Karbi Anglong in particular and Assam as a whole. Bey emphasized that the club represents not just a region but the entire state.

KAMSFC is participating in the Durand Cup with great enthusiasm. Bey expressed hope that love and support from the people will strengthen the club even further. The current president of the club is Sengkan Ronghang, and the General Secretary is Bikram Teron. Ronghang, the youngest president in football history, has provided visionary leadership, nurturing the club to gain opportunities to compete in I-League, Durand Cup, and other major competitions.

Bey also thanked the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, for promoting sports culture and developing infrastructure, enabling local youths to excel in sports. He also expressed gratitude to the DSA officials for providing the ground for practice ahead of the mega tournament.

Highlighting the essence of professional football, Bey said, "Professional football means eat football, drink football, sleep foot-

ball. This should be the dream of every professional football player. We need to produce professionals who can play anywhere, domestically or abroad. Professional footballers earn their livelihood by playing football. There are four foreign players with us who have traveled here just to play the game."

"Winning and losing is part of every game and cannot be denied," Bey added. "We had a good practice here at the DSA ground and are confident of doing well in the Durand Cup."

Players like Harbamon Timung, Komolson Rongphar (a club academy product in defense), Mukesh Timung, Malongkiri Tisso (striker), Gojen Timung, Sumon Teron, and Gojen Hanse (ASPL Best Goalkeeper winner) will be seen playing for the club, along with four foreign recruits.

After the friendly match, the club's home and away jerseys were officially released by Dongkamukam Town Municipal Board Chairman Telisram Ronghang, along with Chief Administrator Miji Kro, General Secretary Bikram Teron, Manager Waisong Bey, and others.

## Day 1 was statement to those who think Indian line-up scores only on flat tracks: Manjrekar

**MANCHESTER, July 24:** India's young batting line-up made a strong statement on the opening day of the fourth Test in typical English conditions, proving they don't just score runs on flat pitches or against depleted attacks, today was a statement," Manjrekar said on Jio Hotstar.

"These were typical English conditions with a much-improved bowling attack — Stokes bowled more overs, Liam Dawson was an upgrade over Shoaib Bashir, and Archer added edge

together a 72-run stand to take the visitors to 264 for 4 at stumps.

"For those skeptics who believe this young Indian batting line-up only gets runs on flat pitches or against weakened attacks, today was a statement," Manjrekar said on Jio Hotstar.

Openers Yashasvi Jaiswal (58) and KL Rahul (46) gave India a solid start, before Sai Sudharsan (61) and Rishabh Pant, who retired hurt on 37, stitched

to the line-up.

"For India to finish at 264/4 under those conditions -- that's another solid batting display. Thankfully, Rishabh Pant managed to get some bat on the ball before retiring hurt. Hopefully, he'll return to bat on Day 2," he added.

Sudharsan, playing only his second Test, struck a maiden half-century after returning to the XI, having missed the second and third matches of the series. (PTI)

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