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Himanta reviews implementation of key schemes in Udalguri

Faster execution, broader outreach stressed

Eviction drive launched to clear 78 acres of public land

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 3: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday undertook a detailed review of the progress and implementation of several key government welfare schemes in Udalguri district and directed officials to ensure their speedy execution and wider public outreach.

According to an official statement, the Chief Minister chaired a review meeting at the District Commissioner's office and assessed the implementation status of flagship initiatives including 'Orunodoi 3.0', 'Mukhya Mantri Mahila Udyamita Abhijan', 'Mukhya Mantri Atmanirbhar Asom Abhijan', and 'Eti Koli Duti Paat'.

Sarma urged district officials to harness the potential of these schemes to raise the standard of living across all sections of society.

He specifically directed the Deputy Commissioner and concerned departments to intensify

implementation efforts and ensure last-mile connectivity so that every deserving beneficiary is covered.

He further advised the administration to promote mass awareness about the schemes to enable wider participation and benefits.

Reviewing 'Orunodoi 3.0', the Chief Minister noted that the number of beneficiaries in Udalguri has increased from 58,000 to 1.17 lakh under the third phase of the scheme.

He asked the DC to ensure all eligible individuals are brought under the ambit of this vital social security initiative.

He also stressed the need for the administrative machinery to ensure a smooth and effective rollout.

In his review of the 'Mukhya Mantri Mahila Udyamita Abhijan', Sarma emphasised the role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in economic empowerment.

He reiterated that each selected SHG member would receive phased financial support — ₹



10,000 as seed capital in the first year, ₹ 25,000 in the second year (split equally between interest-free loan and government subsidy), and ₹ 50,000 in the third year to scale up business activities.

The Chief Minister instructed

the DC to ensure all preparatory steps are completed in time, as 1.7 lakh women will be supported under the scheme.

He also reviewed the 'Mukhya Mantri Atmanirbhar Asom Abhijan', under which approximately

2,500 youth from Udalguri are expected to benefit with financial assistance of ₹ 2 lakh each.

He directed district officials to make all necessary arrangements to ensure timely disbursement and effective utilisation of funds.

Addressing the 'Eti Koli Duti Paat scheme', launched to coincide with the bicentennial celebrations of Assam's tea industry, Sarma said that the government will provide a one-time payment of ₹ 5,000 to all permanent and temporary Class III and IV workers of tea gardens.

He instructed the DC to prepare a comprehensive database of tea garden workers in the district and to oversee the proportional distribution of beneficiaries across Udalguri, Bhergaon, Tangla, and Majbat subdivisions.

He also reviewed the functioning of the district-level implementation committee to ensure effective execution.

The meeting was attended by several senior leaders and officials,

including Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly Biswajit Daimary, Minister for Water Resources Pijush Hazarika, Mangaldoi MP Dilip Saikia, Deputy CEM of BTC Gobindo Basumatary, Udalguri MLA Charan Boro, and Principal Secretary of BTR Akashdeep.

Later in the day, the Chief Minister also met with representatives of various organisations, including the All Koch Rajbongshi Students' Union (AKRSU), All Assam Koch Rajbongshi Sammilani, All Bathou Mahasabha, All Adivasi Students' Association, and the Assam Rabha Students' Union at the Circuit House in Udalguri.

During the interaction, he listened to their concerns and assured appropriate solutions in a time-bound manner.

The official statement concluded by reiterating the government's commitment to accelerating grassroots development and inclusive progress across the district.



NORTH LAKHIMPUR, July 3: Around 220 families have been affected in an eviction drive, which was carried out in Lakhimpur district of Assam on Thursday to clear 235 bighas (almost 78 acres) of land from alleged encroachment, officials said.

Lakhimpur District Commissioner Pronab Jit Kakoty said the administration is carrying out the eviction drive at four locations, including three Village Grazing Reserve (VGR), since morning after following due protocol. "We had served the families notices on June 29 and asked them to produce supporting documents for their occupied (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Traders from Bihar shoot and injure Assam youth

TEZPUR, July 3: A person was injured in a firing by two traders, who hailed from Bihar and were on a business tour, in Biswanath district of Assam, officials said on Thursday.

The incident took place in the Joypara area of Gohpur on Wednesday night, according to Biswanath Additional Superintendent of Police Amit Kumar Hojai.

"As per information, two traders from Bihar had come here for business purposes. They had an argument over some issues in the market and then fired," he added.

One person, who is a local chilly trader, sustained a bullet injury in the incident and has been admitted to a hospital, Hojai said.

The locals immediately captured one person, while the other fled from the scene. They handed him over to the police later.

"The investigation is on to nab the other person. We are also trying to find other possible angles in the case," the ASP said. (PTI)

72-yr-old woman murdered by caretaker, wife

GUWAHATI, July 3: City police has arrested a man and his wife for allegedly killing a 72-year-old woman here, officials said on Thursday.

Addressing a press conference, Guwahati Police DCP (Central) Amitabh Basumatary said the incident took place on Wednesday in Kharghuli area, where the deceased used to stay along with the caretaker's family.

"During investigation, we found the involvement of the caretaker and his wife in the murder. We apprehended both of them, who stay in the same campus," he added.

The deceased has been identified as Bandana Das, who was staying alone after the demise of her husband. Her brother's family stays nearby.

Basumatary said following intense interrogation, the caretaker confessed to the crime in collusion with his wife. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Man stabs wife to death in front of children

RANGIA, July 3: A man allegedly stabbed his wife to death in front of their children in Assam's Kamrup district on Thursday, a police officer said.

The accused, a station master of Northeast Frontier Railway, fled after the incident that took place in Rangia town.

According to Rangia Police Station Officer-in-Charge Nabajyoti Nath, neighbours informed the force of the incident.

"The deceased has been identified as Anjali Singh, wife of Rahul Kumar Singh, who is the station master of Kendukona Railway Station. They have two children. They told us that their father stabbed mother," he added.

The police have launched a manhunt to nab the accused, the OC said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Tripura no longer 'safe zone' for infiltrators: CM Manik Saha

AGARTALA, July 3: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday said the northeastern state is no longer a "safe zone" for infiltrators because of proactive action taken by security agencies.

His remark comes in the wake of the BJP's ally, the Tipra Motha Party (TMP), launching a widespread anti-infiltration campaign across the state.

"The day Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina left her country following the student uprising and violence, I met security agencies and instructed them to prevent any infiltration across the border," Saha told reporters at the Raj Bhavan.

He added, "Tripura is no longer a 'safe zone' for infiltrators. The security agencies have carried out extensive operations against infiltration. A strong message has already been sent to Bangladesh — it is not possible to enter Tripura and stay back using forged Aadhaar cards."

Responding to TMP's campaign, the CM said the state government is already taking action to curb infiltration.

"If they (TMP) still have concerns, we are open to sitting together and discussing them," he said.

Asked about a viral video in which a cabinet minister from Tipra Motha Party was allegedly heard urging party workers to "drive away infiltrators by caning," Saha responded, "The truth is the truth... no one can twist the truth."

At a party programme in Sabroom, South Tripura, Forest Minister Animesh Debbarma was heard telling party workers to "drive away Bangladeshis back to their country by caning."

Meanwhile, another TMP legislator, Ranjit Debbarma, has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, seeking the Centre's intervention to identify and deport illegal infiltrators from the state. (PTI)

Bairabi-Sairang line: Railways sourced construction material, workforce from across country



AIZAWL, July 3: To connect Mizoram's capital Aizawl to the railway network, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) sourced construction material and labour force from across the country.

The 52-km Bairabi-Sairang (near Aizawl) rail line, built at a cost of approximately ₹ 8,000 crore, is ready and will soon be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Vinod Kumar, chief engineer of the project, said his team ordered almost all construction material from other states.

"Crushed stones were brought from Assam, West Bengal and Jharkhand. We purchased sand from Silchar and Guwahati. We sourced reinforcement rods from Kolkata and bent them near the highway as carrying them to the construction site was not possible due to their length. Then, we straightened them for use at the site," he said.

"Small vehicles cannot carry 12-ft-long rods and big vehicles cannot ply on these roads," he added.

According to Kumar, steel girders used for the project were manufactured in Raipur in Chhattisgarh, Kolkata in West Bengal, and Wardha and Ahmednagar in Maharashtra.

NFR officials said that carrying girders to the construction site posed a huge logistical challenge

and several special arrangements had to be made.

"There are two approach roads to Guwahati from Aizawl and both often get closed due to landslides or poor conditions. So, we carried the girders up to Bairabi using the rail network and then took them to the site by making special transportation arrangements," Kumar elaborated.

"Cranes were dismantled to take them to the site to place these girders on the bridge. A day's work took more than a month to complete due to all these reasons," he said. Both skilled and unskilled labourers who worked on the project were from West Bengal, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand, he added.

According to the officials, with the completion of the Bairabi-Sairang line, Mizoram will be the fourth northeastern state to have its capital city linked to the national railway network.

According to the NFR, the line has 48 tunnels covering a distance of 12.853 km, 55 major and 87 minor bridges, five road over-bridges and nine road under-bridges. One of the bridges, numbered 196, stands 104 metres tall — 42 metres taller than the Qutub Minar. The railway line was commissioned in four phases — Bairabi-Hortoki (16.72 km) commissioned (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Dalai Lama's reincarnation to follow tradition, not China's wish: Rijiju

NEW DELHI, July 3: In a snub to China, Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday asserted that the decision on the Incarnation of the Dalai Lama would be taken by the established institution and the leader of Tibetan Buddhist himself and not one else.

This is the first reaction by a senior government functionary on the comments of the Dalai Lama on his successor. On Wednesday, Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama said that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue and only the Gaden Phodrang Trust will have the authority to recognise his future reincarnation.

Talking to reporters here, Rijiju said the Dalai Lama is the "most important and defining institution" for the Buddhists.

"And all those who follow the Dalai Lama feel that the Incarna-



tion is to be decided by the established convention and as per the wish of the Dalai Lama himself. Nobody else has the right to decide it except him and the conventions in place," Rijiju said.

The minister's remarks came after China rejected the Nobel Peace laureate's succession plan, insisting that any future heir must receive its seal of approval. Rijiju, a practising Buddhist, and Rajiv Ranjan Singh, a fellow Union minister, are (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

ISRO has a flourishing repository of R&D in space technologies

ISRO transfers 10 technologies to industry to boost self reliance

NEW DELHI, July 3: The ISRO transferred 10 technologies, including two inertial sensors to reduce import dependence, to six Indian industries for commercial use in space and other sectors, India's space sector promoter said on Thursday.

The transfer of technology was facilitated by the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe).

Technologies of two advanced inertial sensors — the Laser Gyroscope and the Ceramic Servo Accelerometer — developed by the ISRO's Inertial Systems Unit were transferred to Hyderabad-based Zetatek Technologies Pvt. Ltd, making it the first company to get the niche technology.

Zetatek, a company with over 25 years of expertise in Inertial Navigation System (INS) testing, calibration and QA/QT equipment, will manufacture the sensors in the country which may help reduce import dependence.

"The transfer of these technolo-



gies marks yet another significant step towards empowering the private sector to harness and commercialize space technologies," IN-SPACe Chairman Pawan Goenka said in a statement.

In the midstream segment, three technologies related to ground station operations — S/X/Ka tri-band dual circular polarised monopulse feed, tri-axis antenna control servo system, and Ku/C/L and S Band

Police attempt to rescue couple held captive in Assam, face mob attack

NORTH LAKHIMPUR, July 3: At least four people were injured in Lakhimpur district of Assam on Thursday when a police team went to rescue a couple, who were held captive by a mob for allegedly being in an illicit relationship, an officer said.

Of the injured people, four are police personnel. According to Ghilamora Police Station Officer-in-Charge Gakul Chetia, information was received that a couple was held captive by villagers of Baliyani Kumbang after they returned from outside the state.

"The woman is already married, and she is alleged to be in a relationship with the man. They had fled from here and were staying outside Assam. When they returned, the villagers kept them captive," he added.

Once police reached the spot and rescued the couple, the villagers got unruly and pulled them out of the vehicle and started to thrash them, Chetia said.

"When our team members tried to free the two, the mob attacked them also. In the process, one lady constable sustained injuries and started bleeding. Another constable was also injured," he added. The mob tore the clothes of the woman of the couple and badly hit the man.

"After a lot of effort, our team could rescue both of them and reach the police station. We have taken them for medical treatment and they are out of danger," Chetia said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

give private players an opportunity to access the developed technologies available with the ISRO, enabling them to use space-related technology for commercial applications in space as well as other sectors, a statement from IN-SPACe said.

The tripartite Technology Transfer Agreements (TTAs) were signed between NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), the recipient industries, and IN-SPACe at the IN-SPACe headquarters in Ahmedabad.

"ISRO has a flourishing repository of R&D in space technologies and it is time we leverage that to the optimum to strengthen India's space industrial ecosystem, and in that, industry-led innovation will play a key role," Goenka said.

"These technologies are vital and currently sourced from foreign suppliers. With this transfer, we are taking a pivotal step toward building indigenous capabilities within India," said Rajeev Jyoti, Director, Technical (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

The technology transfers aim to

Minister briefs Governor on NEP-aligned reforms, outlines vision to transform Assam into a higher education hub

Education minister calls on Governor

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 3: Education Minister Ranaj Pegu called on Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya at Raj Bhavan on Thursday and apprised him of the Higher Education Department's ongoing initiatives, projects, and a detailed roadmap for transforming Assam's academic landscape.

The meeting was part of the government's continuing efforts to align the State's higher education ecosystem with the provisions of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

According to an official statement, Pegu briefed the Governor on the significant steps already undertaken to bring all universities under the framework of NEP 2020.

These include curriculum restructuring to support multidisciplinary learning, digital enablement of educational institutions, and upskilling of faculty members to meet national benchmarks.



The Minister also laid out the department's forward-looking strategy aimed at enhancing the overall quality, inclusivity, and

global competitiveness of higher education in the State. Governor Acharya, while expressing his appreciation for the department's efforts, remarked

that with focused and timely initiatives, Assam has the potential to emerge as a prominent hub for higher education in the country.

He noted that strengthening the academic ecosystem is essential not only for the intellectual growth of the youth but also as a catalyst for the State's broader development goals.

The Governor reiterated Raj Bhavan's commitment to fully supporting the implementation of NEP 2020 in both letter and spirit.

He stressed the importance of creating a robust academic environment that empowers students, equips educators with necessary tools and resources, and places Assam firmly on the national and global education map.

The meeting, the statement added, reflected the government's strong resolve to usher in a new era of academic excellence driven by innovation, collaboration, and equity in learning opportunities.

Dhubri's Alomganj residents vow to resist eviction of Patta Land

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, July 3: Thousands of families in Dhubri's Alomganj area are gripped by a deep sense of despair following the impending news of a massive eviction drive, reportedly targeting approximately 4,000 bighas of land.

While a significant portion, an estimated 2,200 bighas, is designated as "khas land" (government land), reports also indicate that around 900 bighas of patta land (privately owned land with title deeds) are also slated for acquisition.

In response to the administration's move, the district committee of the Garia Maria Desi Jatiya Parishad convened a meeting on Thursday at Chitalkatti in Alomganj.

During this crucial gathering, a firm decision was made, "The land of all the sons of the soil and pattadars will never be given up."

Afzalur Rahman, Dhubri District President of the Garia Maria Desi Jatiya Parishad, stated, "We don't mind evicting people living on government land, taking away the khas land. But villages in Panbari and Alomganj areas of the indigenous Deshi communities will not be allowed to be wiped out."

The Dhubri district administration, represented by the District Commissioner, Additional Commissioner, and Gauripur Circle Officer, held discussions with Alomganj pattadars on Wednesday regarding the acquisition of vast tracts of land for projects under "Advantage Assam 2.0."

However, a division among the pattadars themselves has emerged.



While some are firmly refusing to surrender their patta land, others, facing the prospect of losing their homes and ancestral "bheta land" (homestead land), are reportedly being compelled to consider relinquishing their plots.

Adding to the complexity, thousands of families who have been living on government land for generations are also experiencing sleepless nights, consumed by the fear of imminent eviction, highlighting the widespread impact of the impending drive.

The coming days are expected to witness further developments as the affected communities and the district administration navigate this contentious issue, balancing developmental aspirations with the rights and livelihoods of the local population.

MAC Johny Timung distributes fish fingerlings to farmers in Lumbajong

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 3: In a bid to boost the rural economy and encourage self-reliant livelihood practices, Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) Johny Timung of Lumbajong constituency on Thursday distributed fish seeds (fingerlings) to fish farmers of the area.

The initiative was made possible through funds personally arranged by the MAC.

The distribution event was held with the aim of supporting local farmers in enhancing fish production, which is considered a sustainable and profitable avenue in the region's agrarian landscape.

Addressing the gathering, Timung expressed his gratitude and said he was "truly humbled" to be able to contribute to the livelihoods of the local farmers. He underlined the significance of fish farming as a promising tool for rural upliftment.

"Fish farming holds great potential in boosting income and ensuring nutritional security in our rural belts. I am hopeful this contribution will help our farmers achieve a bountiful harvest in the coming seasons," he stated. Several fish farmers from across Lumbajong constituency were present to receive the fingerlings. They expressed appreciation for the gesture and pledged to scale up aquaculture efforts in the region. The initiative has been widely welcomed by the community as a timely step towards rural empowerment, sustainable farming, and economic resilience in Karbi Anglong.

Tax department conducts raid over suspected GST evasion in Dhubri

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, July 3: The tax department under the Dhubri zone carried out a raid at a business premises in New Ghat area of Dhubri on Wednesday night in connection with alleged evasion of Goods and Services Tax (GST).

The raid was conducted at a dump owned by one Marfat Ali, who is suspected of operating his business while evading GST payments.

The operation lasted several hours, during which a significant volume of documents related to the business were seized for examination. Officials said the exact quantum of the suspected tax evasion is yet to be ascertained. However, the volume of documents seized and the nature of the investigation point to a serious probe into financial irregularities. The raid forms part of the Assam government's ongoing campaign to ensure tax compliance and detect revenue loss due to suppression or evasion. The department is currently scrutinising the seized documents and has stated that further action will be taken based on findings of the investigation.

Tinsukia reviews beneficiary selection under Arunodoi 3.0

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, July 3: A district-level monitoring committee meeting on the implementation of the state government's Arunodoi 3.0 scheme was held on Thursday at the conference hall of the Tinsukia District Commissioner's office. The meeting was chaired by Tinsukia Deputy Commissioner Swapneel Paul and attended by Tinsukia MLA Sanjay Kishan, who is also the district's guardian minister. Bimal Borah and Digboi MLA Suren Phukan participated virtually. Representatives of other MLAs and MPs from the district were also present. The meeting conducted a detailed review of the beneficiary selection process under the Arunodoi 3.0 scheme. Co-deputy commissioners, additional commissioners, revenue circle officers, and the deputy director in charge of the Food and Civil Supplies Department of Tinsukia district also took part in the proceedings.

AJYCP submits memo over deforestation, illegal mining



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 3: Thirteen Anchalik units under the Nagaon district committee of Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) on Thursday submitted separate memorandums to the District Commissioner through the respective Revenue Circle Officers, demanding an immediate halt to large-scale deforestation and illegal stone quarrying in the district.

In the memorandums, the organisation urged the administration to take prompt action against the ongoing environmental destruction caused by multiple stone quarries operating in the region.

It also called for an investigation into the cutting of 18 mature trees for the road-widening project from Senchowta to Bebejia and demanded that the findings be made public.

The AJYCP further demanded immediate steps against environmental degradation allegedly being caused by a stone crusher unit owned by one Gandhi at Udmari near Samaguri.

It criticised the forest department for its failure to protect the forests and warned that the organisation would be compelled to initiate a mass movement if timely action was not taken.

Training held for CMPOs in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 3: The District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Kokrajhar, in collaboration with the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), conducted a training programme for Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) at the Kokrajhar and Dotma Revenue Circle Offices on Thursday.

The training focused primarily on Lot Mandals designated as CMPOs, equipping them with detailed knowledge of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The sessions also clarified their roles and responsibilities in addressing and preventing child marriages.

Officials from the DCPU and legal experts from the DLSA led



the interactive sessions, offering practical guidance and encouraging active participation.

The initiative aimed to reinforce grassroots enforcement mechanisms and enable prompt responses to offences involving children.

The training forms part of a

wider campaign to bolster child protection systems and foster a child-friendly, law-abiding environment across the district.

Participants expressed their appreciation for the programme, noting its relevance in enhancing public awareness of child protection.

71 join BPF in Simultapu ahead of BTC polls

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, July 3: With the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) elections drawing near, political activities in the region have intensified, with the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) gaining momentum in the 3 No. Srirampur BTC constituency.

In a significant development, 71 members from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) formally joined the BPF at a public meeting held in Simultapu.

The event was organised by the Minority Cell of the Srirampur Block BPF under the leadership of its president, Mujahidul Ahmed.

The meeting was addressed by Rafiqul Islam, BPF Central Organisational Secretary, who criticised the current UPPL-led BTR administration and accused Srirampur MLA Sajal Kumar Singha of financial mismanagement and failing to meet public expectations.

He alleged that ahead of the polls, the MLA may attempt to influence voters through financial inducements. Rafiqul Islam asserted that the BPF would return to power in the BTC before Durga Puja and resume developmental work.

Speaking on the occasion, advocate Mafizur Rahman criticised the government's inaction on critical issues in Simultapu, including erosion caused by the Sonkosh River and the poor condition of roads and bridges. Srirampur Block BPF President and advocate Mokhesur Rahman added that addressing river erosion would be a priority for the BPF if voted back to power.

The meeting was attended by BPF leaders including Rafiqul Islam Bhuiya, Secretary of the Gossaigaon District BPF Committee, and Akhtar Hussain, President of the Simultapu Primary Committee, along with a large number of supporters and local residents.

Book on Bihu launched at ICOMOS India meet

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 3: The academic volume Bihu: The Agricultural Festival of Assam was officially launched on June 29 at the Annual General Meeting of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), India. The book has been prepared under the aegis of the North East Zone of ICOMOS India.

The volume, comprising 25 articles, was unveiled by Dr Rima Hooja, President of ICOMOS India, who lauded the field-based and intellectual contributions of the authors. Cultural experts GSVSN Murthy, Bikramjit Chakraborty, and Madhu Vottery highlighted the North East Zone's role in bringing the volume to fruition.

Editor Dr Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti presented an overview of the book's structure and content.

The project was conceived and led by Dilip Changkakoty, Zonal Representative of the North East Zone of ICOMOS India.

The research journey began in 2020 with the organisation of the first webinar on Bihu, followed by an international essay competition in 2021. The book draws from field research, oral histories, ethnography, and socio-economic analysis, covering both rural rituals and urban celebrations of Bihu.

It documents interactions with performers, artisans, food vendors, and cultural officials, and also explores the connections between Bihu and the Sattriya tradition.

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Man stabbed by son in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, July 3: A man identified as Madhab Bhuyan (48) of Gharphalia in Jorhat district was critically injured after being stabbed by his son on Wednesday night following a domestic altercation.

According to an official source, the incident occurred when Bhuyan allegedly returned home in an inebriated state and engaged in a brawl.

In a fit of rage, his 23-year-old son, Guddu Bhuyan, reportedly took a knife and stabbed him.

The injured father was rushed to hospital, where doctors performed surgery to remove the knife.

His condition was stated to be critical.

The accused has been arrested and is currently in police custody.

BHB College marks 55th Foundation Day with academic, cultural events

HT Correspondent

BAJALI, July 3: BHB College celebrated its 55th Foundation Day on Thursday with a day-long programme at the college campus, reflecting its legacy of academic excellence and community engagement.

The celebration began with a plantation drive, followed by a floral tribute to departed members associated with the college since its inception.

The highlight of the day was an open session chaired by Principal Dr Nayan Jyoti Das.

Among the dignitaries present were Dr Achyut Chandra Das, Chairman of the Governing Body, and Dr Kaushik Kumar Dekha, Principal of Nirmal Haloi College, who attended as the Chief Guest.

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This is for the information for the public that Guidelines for the Central Nomination to BAMS, BUMS, BSMS, BSMS and BHMS Courses for the academic session 2025-2026 has been uploaded in the official website of Directorate of Ayush, Assam i.e. <https://ayush.assam.gov.in/>.

Sd/-
Director of Ayush
Dispur, Guwahati- 781 006

DIPR /D/HLT/54/4-Jul-25

UNEP recognises Dhing College; principal wins Best Principal Award

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 3: Dhing College has received recognition from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for the second time for its sustained efforts to promote greenery in and around the college campus.

The recognition was announced on the occasion of World Environment Day 2025.

The Department of Botany and the college's Eco-Club have covered 10 bighas of land under greenery initiatives, including a fruit garden, orchard, and patches of old and new plantations.

The college campus, spread across 75 bighas, also includes a 2.5 bigha water body.

College Principal Dr Biman Hazarika expressed gratitude to UNEP for the recognition and reiterated the institution's commitment to making the campus plastic-free.

NTPC Bongaigaon launches Girl Empowerment Mission 2025

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 3: NTPC Bongaigaon at Salakati launched the 2025 edition of the Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM) on July 1 with a ceremonial inauguration held at its premises.

The programme commenced in the presence of Kokrajhar Deputy Commissioner Masanda Partin, IAS, Head of Project Arnab Maitra, and Kasturi Maitra, President of Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club.

Now in its fourth year, the GEM initiative is designed to promote the holistic development of rural girls aged 10 to 12.

This year, 40 girls from 12 schools located near the NTPC Bongaigaon project site have been selected to take part in the month-long programme.

The initiative aims to build self-confidence, leadership, and a sense of social responsibility among young girls through structured modules and creative engagement.

The inaugural programme began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp and the NTPC theme song, followed by a short film on GEM 2025 activities, cultural performances by students from Bal Bhawan and Notre Dame Academy, and an impactful stage act on the theme of educating the girl child.

Testimonials from GEM alumni were also featured, offering insights into the transformation experienced by past participants.

Senior officials of NTPC and dignitaries including Debarata Kar, CGM (O&M); Soumya Kar, Vice President of



No. SLRC-IV/Assam/Advertisement for Analogous Posts-IV/2023-24/01/139

ADDENDUM

In continuation of the earlier notice no. SLRC-IV/Assam/Advertisement for Analogous Posts-IV/2023-24/01/138 dated 02-07-2025, this is to inform all candidates from Dima-Hasao and Barak Valley districts, who were unable to attend the interviews from 24th June to 30th June 2025 for Class-IV posts, that fresh Admit cards are now available for download in the official website of ASSEB (erstwhile SEBA) i.e. www.site.sebaonline.org. If any candidate is unable to download the Admit card or their fresh admit card is not available, such candidate may contact the phone number (+91) 95823-90056 or send mail with details to slrc-iv@assam.gov.in or sebaprinicipalcontroller@gmail.com latest by **5th July 2025**.

For appearing in the interview on the rescheduled date, the candidates, in addition to the fresh Admit cards issued, shall also have to bring the original Admit cards issued for the date on which he/she could not appear in the interview.

Sd/-
Secretary,
State Level Recruitment Commission
For Class-IV posts

DIPR /D/HLT/55/4-Jul-25

The impact of illegal drugs on young society

By: Satyabrata Borah

The issue of illegal drug trade and its devastating effects on society, particularly on the youth, has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges of the modern era. The youth, often regarded as the backbone of a nation's future, are increasingly falling prey to the allure of illicit drugs, which not only jeopardize their health and well-being but also threaten the social and economic fabric of communities. In regions like Assam, India, this problem has taken on alarming proportions, with a significant portion of young individuals succumbing to the grip of drug addiction. The illegal drug trade, fueled by a complex interplay of social, economic, and psychological factors, has far-reaching consequences that demand urgent attention. This article explores the causes, effects, and potential solutions to this growing menace, with a focus on its impact on the youth.

The illegal drug trade encompasses the production, distribution, and consumption of substances such as marijuana, heroin, cocaine, synthetic drugs like methamphetamine, and the misuse of prescription medications. These substances, often consumed for non-medical purposes, create a cycle of dependency that traps users in a vicious spiral. In Assam, the rise in drug abuse among young people is particularly concerning. The state's geographical location, bordering several northeastern states and countries like Myanmar, makes it a transit point for illegal drug trafficking, increasing the availability of these substances. This accessibility, combined with various socio-economic factors, has contributed to the growing prevalence of drug use among the youth.

One of the primary drivers of drug abuse among young people is social influence, particularly peer pressure. Adolescents and young adults are often drawn to drugs due to the desire to fit in or appear "cool" within their social circles. In urban areas, where party culture and nightlife are gaining popularity, the use of recreational drugs is sometimes glamorized, creating a false perception that they enhance social experiences. Social media further exacerbates this issue by promoting lifestyles that associate drug use with excitement or rebellion. Young individuals, eager to emulate these trends, may experiment with drugs without fully understanding the consequences. This is particularly true in Assam's urban centers, where exposure to such influences is on the rise.

Economic factors also play a significant role in the spread of the illegal drug trade. In Assam, where unemployment rates are high and economic opportunities for young

people are often limited, many turn to drugs as a means of escaping their frustrations. The lack of stable employment and financial insecurity can lead to feelings of hopelessness, pushing individuals toward substances that offer temporary relief. However, this fleeting sense of escape comes at a steep cost, as addiction often leads to further economic ruin, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and dependency. Moreover, the lucrative nature of the drug trade itself attracts some young individuals to become involved in trafficking or distribution, lured by the promise of quick money. This involvement not only puts them at risk of legal consequences but also deepens their entanglement in the world of drugs.

Psychological factors are another critical contributor to drug abuse among the youth. The pressures of modern life, including academic

stress, career uncertainties, and strained family relationships, often lead to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. For many young people, drugs appear to offer a quick solution to these problems, providing temporary euphoria or relief from emotional pain. However, this is a dangerous misconception, as drug use often worsens mental health conditions, leading to severe psychological disorders, including psychosis and memory impairment. In Assam, where mental health resources and awareness are still limited, young people struggling with these issues may have little access to proper support, making

them more vulnerable to drug addiction. The consequences of drug abuse on the youth are profound and multifaceted. Physically, prolonged drug use can lead to serious health issues, including heart disease, liver damage, respiratory problems, and neurological disorders. For instance, substances like heroin and methamphetamine can cause irreversible damage to the body's vital organs, significantly reducing life expectancy. In Assam, reports of young individuals succumbing to drug overdoses or related health complications have become increasingly common, underscoring the severity of the crisis. Mentally, drug addiction erodes cognitive functions, leading to difficulties in concentration, memory loss, and impaired decision-making. These effects hinder academic and professional performance, further limiting

the rise in drug-related crimes has raised concerns about public safety and the erosion of social cohesion.

The state's unique geographical and socio-political context exacerbates the problem. Assam's proximity to the Golden Triangle, a notorious hub for drug production and trafficking in Southeast Asia, makes it a key route for the illegal drug trade. Smugglers exploit porous borders to transport drugs like heroin and synthetic substances into the state, making them readily available to young people. The lack of stringent border surveillance and limited resources for law enforcement further compounds the issue. Additionally, Assam's diverse population and socio-economic disparities create an environment where marginalized youth are particularly susceptible to drug abuse, as they often face greater economic and social challenges.



opportunities for personal growth. Beyond individual health, the social consequences of drug abuse are equally devastating. Addiction often strains family relationships, as young people may withdraw from loved ones or engage in deceitful behavior to sustain their habits. This can lead to broken families and a loss of trust within communities. Moreover, drug addiction is closely linked to criminal activities, as users may resort to theft, robbery, or even violence to fund their addiction. In some cases, young individuals become entangled in the drug trade itself, either as low-level dealers or couriers, exposing them to a dangerous underworld. In Assam,

Addressing the issue of illegal drug trade and its impact on youth requires a comprehensive and multi-pronged approach. First and foremost, raising awareness about the dangers of drug abuse is critical. Educational institutions, community organizations, and the media must work together to inform young people about the physical, mental, and social consequences of drug use. Awareness campaigns should not only focus on providing information but also on promoting healthy coping mechanisms and lifestyles. Schools and colleges in Assam could incorporate drug education into their curricula, emphasizing the importance of making informed

The fight against the illegal drug trade is not just a matter of law enforcement but a collective responsibility that requires the participation of all sectors of society. The youth of Assam, with their potential to drive progress and innovation, must be protected from the destructive grip of drugs. By addressing the root causes such as social pressures, economic challenges, and psychological stressors and implementing targeted solutions, it is possible to create a future where young people can thrive. The battle against drugs is a battle for the soul of society, and it is one that we must win together.

Half the population, incomplete participation: India's falling credibility in the Global Gender Gap Index



By: Priyanka Saurabh

One of the biggest revolutions of the 21st century is the increase in women's participation. Yet, when the World Economic Forum released the Global Gender Gap Index 2025, India's 131st position indicates that despite all claims of development, women empowerment has remained confined to slogans only. There has been a slight improvement in the field of education and health, but India's situation in political representation and economic participation is worrying.

The Global Gender Gap Index is released every year by the World Economic Forum and evaluates gender equality in four key areas: economic participation and opportunity, educational achievements, health and life expectancy, and political empowerment. In the 2025 report, India is ranked 131st out of 146 countries, while in 2024 it was ranked 129th. That is, we have fallen two more places.

India has certainly made some progress in the field of education. The enrollment rate of girls at the primary level has almost equalized, but participation in higher education is still unequal. The school drop-out rate is higher among girls in rural areas, especially after adolescence. Education is not limited to just going to school, it also provides opportunities, self-reliance and decision-making ability - which is still not available to the majority of girls.

The picture is even more worrying in terms of economic participation. The female labour force participation rate in India is only around 25%, while the global average is 47%. Despite India's large population, the limited economic contribution of women hinders the country's productivity and inclusive growth. Women do not get equal pay for equal work. They work in the informal sector where they do not get any facilities like pension, maternity benefit or social security.

India's position is even weaker in the field of political representation. This is the reason why India has received the lowest marks in political empowerment in the Global Index. The number of women MPs in Parliament is still less than 15%. The picture of state assemblies is no different. Even though there is 33% reservation at the Panchayat level, there too the name of women is mentioned, but the power is in the hands of their husband or father-in-law - that is, words like "Sarpanch pati" have now become a part of our political culture.

India's position becomes even more worrying when we compare it with our neighbouring countries. Countries like Bangladesh (99th), Nepal (117th), and Sri Lanka (123rd) are ahead of India, while Pakistan (148th) is at the bottom. Bangladesh has strengthened women's leadership politically and has also improved women's labour participation. This shows that willpower and change in social thinking is more important than resources.

Politics is not just a centre of power, but a platform for guiding social discourse. Only when there are women in Parliament, Assembly and Cabinet, will their issues—women's safety, maternal health, education, gender justice—become a real priority. But, in India, the mindset of considering women leaders as "someone's wife" or "someone's daughter" still prevails. Lineage and male patrons are seen more than the quality of leadership.

The real situation of women in villages and small towns is even more complex. Even today, incidents like child marriage, dowry, domestic violence and honour killing are a blot on women empowerment. There are so many women who do not know about bank accounts, property rights or legal protection. Government schemes like Ujjwala or Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao are visible, but their ground impact is not visible in the statistics.

However, there are some rays of light amidst all this darkness. Through campaigns like Startup India and Digital India, many women have started small online businesses. Many women are making India proud on international platforms in the field of sports, science, and technology. Names like PV Sindhu, Avani Lekhara, and ISRO's female scientist Ritu Karidhal are examples that if given opportunity and confidence, women can change not just their homes but the world.

Now the question is—what to do next? First of all, a law to provide 33% reservation to women in Parliament and Assembly should be passed as soon as possible. This is not just a question of representation, but a question related to the soul of democracy. Flexible work policies like maternity leave, crèche facility, and gender safety at workplace are necessary to increase women's labor participation. There should be special scholarships, hostels and security arrangements for higher education of girls. And most importantly, society will have to change its thinking. Daughters will have to be considered an opportunity, not a burden.

India dreams of becoming a global power in the 21st century, but this dream is incomplete by marginalizing half of the population. Women need not just corrective policies but a mental revolution based on equality. The Global Gender Gap Index is not a foreign conspiracy but a mirror that shows us our reality. Now we have to decide whether to just celebrate or bring about change. (The author is a poet, columnist and social thinker. She writes vocally on rural women's issues)

The future of news media in AI era



By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The news media landscape has always been a dynamic realm, constantly evolving with technological advances and shifts in audience behavior. From the printing press to radio, television, and the internet, each technological leap has transformed how news is produced, distributed, and consumed. Today, we stand at the cusp of another profound transformation brought about by artificial intelligence (AI). The AI era promises to redefine journalism, news dissemination, and media consumption in ways both exciting and challenging. As we peer into the future, it is crucial to understand how AI is reshaping the news media and what this means for the core values of journalism—accuracy, fairness, and public trust.

Artificial intelligence refers to computer systems designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as understanding language, recognizing patterns, and making decisions. Over the last decade, AI technologies have matured rapidly, finding applications across diverse industries, including news media. From automated content generation to personalized news feeds and advanced data analysis, AI tools are already deeply embedded in many facets of journalism. However, the full impact of AI on news media is still unfolding, and it carries the potential to revolutionize every stage of the journalistic process.

One of the most visible effects of AI in news media is in the production of news content. Automated journalism, sometimes called robot journalism, uses AI algorithms to generate news stories based on data inputs. For instance, AI systems can rapidly analyze financial reports, sports scores, or election results and produce readable news summaries without human intervention. This technology has allowed news organizations to cover routine, data-heavy stories more efficiently, freeing journalists to focus on in-depth reporting and investigative work. However, the rise of AI-generated content also raises questions about authenticity and editorial oversight. While machines can quickly create reports, they lack the contextual understanding and ethical judgment that human reporters bring to storytelling.

Beyond content creation, AI is transforming how news is curated and delivered to readers. With the overwhelming volume of information available online, AI-powered algorithms help personalize news feeds based on individual preferences and browsing habits. Platforms like Google News, Facebook, and Twitter use AI to tailor content, aiming to increase user engagement and satisfaction. This personalization enhances user experience but also carries the risk of creating echo chambers, where individuals are exposed primarily to viewpoints that reinforce their existing beliefs. Such algorithm-driven news bubbles may contribute to social polarization and reduce the diversity of information, undermining the democratic role of the press.

In addition to personalization, AI enables sophisticated fact-checking tools that assist journalists and readers in verifying the accuracy of information. By scanning vast datasets, detecting inconsistencies, and cross-referencing sources, AI can help combat the spread of misinformation and fake news, which have become major concerns in the digital age. While these tools offer hope for improving news integrity, they are not foolproof. AI systems rely on the data they are trained on, which can sometimes be biased or incomplete, leading to errors or misjudgments. Hence, human editorial judgment remains indispensable to ensure reliability and ethical standards.

The influence of AI on news media extends to new forms of storytelling and immersive experiences. Technologies like natural language processing, computer vision, and virtual reality can create interactive news formats that engage audiences more deeply. For example, AI-powered chatbots can serve as personalized news assistants, answering questions and guiding readers through complex issues. Virtual reality can transport users to the heart of breaking news scenes, providing a sense of presence and emotional connection previously unimaginable. These innovations may attract younger, tech-savvy audiences and reinvigorate interest in news consumption, which has declined among certain demographic groups.

However, the AI-driven future of news media is not without ethical and practical challenges. One pressing concern is the potential job displacement of journalists and media workers due to automation. While AI can handle routine tasks, journalism involves creativity, critical thinking, and empathy—qualities difficult to replicate with machines. The news industry must therefore balance technological adoption with preserving meaningful employment and nurturing human talent. Furthermore, the use of AI raises privacy issues, as personalized news feeds require collecting and analyzing user data, which may be vulnerable to misuse or breaches.

The question of accountability also looms large. When AI systems generate or curate news content, who is responsible for errors, bias, or harmful impacts? The opacity of some AI algorithms complicates transparency, making it difficult for audiences to understand how information is selected or presented. This lack of clarity can erode public trust, a vital asset for any news organization. To address these challenges, there is a growing call for ethical frameworks and regulatory oversight that ensure AI in news media operates fairly, transparently, and respects democratic principles.

Looking ahead, the future of news media in the AI era will likely be characterized by a hybrid approach where human journalists and AI tools collaborate to enhance reporting quality and reach. AI can handle repetitive and data-intensive tasks, enabling journalists to focus on analysis, investigation, and storytelling that require human insight. Newsrooms of the future may integrate AI not just for efficiency but as a creative partner that expands the boundaries of journalism. For example, AI could assist in identifying emerging trends, suggesting story angles, or even simulating scenarios to inform decision-making.

Moreover, as AI continues to evolve, there will be opportunities to democratize news production by lowering barriers to entry. Independent journalists and smaller media outlets might leverage AI tools to compete with large organizations, fostering a more diverse media ecosystem. However, this will also depend on equitable access to technology and digital literacy, underscoring the need for investment in skills development and infrastructure.

In conclusion, the AI era heralds both promise and peril for the future of news media. It offers unprecedented tools for efficiency, personalization, and innovation, but also challenges in ethics, accountability, and social impact. Navigating this complex landscape requires a thoughtful approach that places human values and public interest at the center. Journalism has always been a cornerstone of democracy, and as AI reshapes the industry, the commitment to truth, fairness, and inclusivity must remain unwavering. Only by embracing AI responsibly can the news media secure its vital role in informing, educating, and empowering society in the years to come. (The writer can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)

Strong India will contribute to more stable and prosperous world: PM Modi

ACCRA, July 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said a strong India will contribute to a more stable and prosperous world as he pushed for credible and effective reforms in global governance in the wake of changing circumstances.

In his address to the Parliament in Ghana, Modi also said that progress cannot come without giving voice to the Global South.

"In these times of global uncertainty, India's democratic stability shines as a ray of hope. India's rapid progress is a catalyst for global growth. As the world's largest democracy, India is a pillar of strength for the world. A strong India will contribute to a more stable and prosperous world," the prime minister said.

Noting that India is the fastest-growing emerging economy, Modi said that on the foundations of stable polity and governance, India will soon become the third-largest economy.

"We already contribute nearly 16% to global growth. Our demography is paying its dividend. India now has the world's third-largest start-up ecosystem. India is an innovation and technology hub, where global companies want to converge," he said.

The Prime Minister underlined that the world order created after World War II is changing fast. "The revolution in tech-

nology, the rise of the Global South, and the shifting demographics are contributing to its pace and scale," he said.

"The world is also facing new and complex crises such as climate change, pandemics, terrorism, and cybersecurity. Institutions created in the last century are struggling to respond. The changing circumstances demand credible and effective reforms in global governance," he added.

He said progress cannot come without giving voice to the Global South. "We need more than slogans. We need action. That is why, during India's G20 Presidency, we worked with the vision - One Earth, One Family, One Future," he added.

"We put emphasis on Africa's rightful place at the global high table. We are proud that the African Union became a permanent member of the G20 during our Presidency," he said.

The Prime Minister said India "remains a committed partner" in Africa's development journey. "We support Africa's Development Framework, Agenda 2063, to secure a bright and sustainable future for its people."

"Africa's goals are our priorities. Our approach is to grow together as equals. Our development partnership with Africa is demand-driven. It is focused on building local capacities and creating local op-



portunities. Our objective is not just to invest, but to empower," he said.

In his address, Modi said it was a privilege to be in Ghana - a land that radiates the spirit of democracy, dignity, and resilience.

"When we look at Ghana, we see a nation that shines with courage, that rises above history, that meets every challenge with dignity and grace. Your commitment to democratic ideals and inclusive

progress truly makes Ghana a beacon of inspiration for the entire African continent," he said.

Modi, who was conferred with 'The Officer of the Order of the Star of Ghana', the country's national honour, said it was a deeply moving experience and he will always cherish it. "I dedicate it to the enduring friendship and shared values that bind India and Ghana," he said.

"India is the mother of Democracy. For us, democracy is not merely a system. It is a part of our fundamental values. From thousands of years ago, we have examples of centres like Vaishali," he said.

Noting that the histories of India and Ghana bear the scars of colonial rule, Modi said, "But our spirits have always remained free and fearless. We draw strength and inspiration from our rich heritage. We take pride in our social, cultural and linguistic diversity."

"We built nations rooted in freedom, unity, and dignity. Our relationship knows no bounds. And with your permission, may I say, our friendship is sweeter than your famous 'Sugarloaf' pineapple. With President Mahama, we have decided to elevate our ties to a comprehensive partnership," he said.

Modi said India shared vaccines and medicines with over 150 countries, including Ghana, during the pandemic. He said India launched Mission LiFE - Lifestyle For Environment, to address climate change and promote sustainable living. This inclusive spirit powers our global initiatives like: One World, One Sun, One Grid; One World One Health; for a healthier planet; International Solar Alliance; International Big Cats Alliance and the Global Biofuels Alliance; to advance clean biofuels and cut carbon emissions, he said.

Modi said India has seen a major transformation in the past decade. "The people of India have reposed their faith in peace, security, and development," he said.

"We are recognised as the Pharmacy of the world. Indian women today lead in science, space, aviation and sports. India landed on the Moon. And, today an Indian is in orbit giving wings to our human space flight mission," he said.

Modi said the people of India have resolved to make India a developed nation by 2047.

He said free and fair elections are the soul of any democracy. "It is encouraging to see our Electoral Commissions working closely together," he said.

Modi welcomed the establishment of the Ghana-India Parliamentary Friendship Society in Ghana's Parliament.

He said Ghana holds great potential to become an IT and innovation hub in the region. "Together, we will shape a future, full of promise and progress," he said.

"India and Ghana share a dream. A dream where every child gets opportunities. Where every voice is heard. Where nations rise together, not apart," Modi said. He said India carries Africa in its heart. "Let us build a partnership not only for today but for generations to come," he added. This is the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Ghana in over three decades. (PTI)

Message conveyed with great clarity: Jaishankar

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, July 3: Operation Sindoor conveyed to the world with great clarity that India will act against terrorism, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said in a statement in line with the UN Security Council calling for those responsible for the Pahalgam attacks to be brought to justice.

"What is important for us in the Quad statement, as also the statement that the Security Council had issued on April 25, is that the perpetrators of terrorism must be held accountable. They must be brought to justice," Jaishankar said during a press conference in Washington on Wednesday.

"And that's important because we then have to communicate to the world what we did. On May 7, the objective of Operation Sindoor is that if there are terrorist attacks, we will act against the perpetrators, the supporters, the financiers, and the enablers. So that message, I think, was conveyed with great clarity," he said.

A joint statement issued by Quad Foreign Ministers -- Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Foreign Minister of Australia Penny Wong, and Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya -- unequivocally condemned all acts of terrorism and violent extremism in all their forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism.

The Quad foreign ministers condemned in the "strongest terms" the April 22 terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, which left 26 people dead.

"We call for the perpetrators, organisers, and financiers of this reprehensible act to be brought to justice without any delay and urge all UN member states, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant UNSCRs (UN Security Council resolutions), to cooperate actively with all relevant authorities in this regard," the joint statement said.

The UN Security Council press statement condemned the Pahalgam attack, with members of the Security Council underlining the need to hold perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of this reprehensible act of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice. (PTI)

House GOP clears key hurdle on Trump's big bill, pushing it closer to vote

WASHINGTON, July 3: Up all night, House Republicans voted before dawn on Thursday to advance President Donald Trump's tax and spending cuts package after GOP leaders worked almost around the clock trying to persuade sceptical holdouts as they race to send the bill to his desk by the Fourth of July deadline.

A roll call that started late Wednesday finally closed almost six hours later, a highly unusual stall on a procedural step.

Trump, who had hosted lawmakers at the White House earlier, lashed out at the delay. Once the gavel struck, 219-213, the bill advanced to a last round of debates toward a final vote, which is expected later Thursday morning.

"Our way is to plow through and get it done," House Speaker Mike Johnson said, emerging in the middle of the night from a series of closed-door meetings. "We will meet our July 4th deadline."

The idea of quickly convening to for a vote on the more than 800-page bill after it passed the day before in the Senate was a risky gambit, one designed to meet Trump's demand for a holiday finish. Republicans have struggled mightily with the bill nearly every step of the way, often succeeding by the narrowest of margins -- just one vote. Their slim 220-212 majority leaves little room for defections.

Several Republicans are balking at being asked to rubber-stamp the Senate version less than 24 hours after passage. A number of moderate Republicans from competitive districts have objected to the Senate bill's cuts to Medicaid, while conservatives have lambasted the legislation as straying from their fiscal goals. "What are the Republicans waiting for??? What are you trying to prove???" Trump railed in a post-midnight vote. He also warned starkly of political fallout from the delay "COSTING YOU VOTES!!!"

It fell to Johnson and his team to convince them that the time for negotiations is over. They needed assistance from Trump to close the deal, and lawmakers headed to the White House for a two-hour session Wednesday to talk to the president about their concerns. Trump also worked the phones. "The president's message was, 'We're on a roll,'" said Rep. Ralph Norman, R-SC. "He wants to see this."

Republicans are relying on their majority hold of Congress to push the package over a wall of unified Democratic opposition. No Democrats voted for bill in the Senate and none were expected to do so in the House. "Hell no!" said House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, flanked by fellow Democrats outside the Capitol.

In an early warning sign of Republican resistance, during a first procedural vote that also stalled out as GOP leadership waited for lawmakers who were delayed coming back to Washington and conducted closed-door negotiations with holdouts.

By nightfall, as pizzas and other dinners were arriving at the Capitol, the next steps were uncertain. Trump pushes Republicans to do the right thing.

The bill would extend and make permanent various individual and business tax breaks from Trump's first term, plus temporarily add new ones he promised during the 2024 campaign. This includes allowing workers to deduct tips and overtime pay, and a USD 6,000 deduction for most older adults earning less than USD 75,000 a year.

In all, the legislation contains about USD 4.5 trillion in tax cuts over 10 years. The bill also provides about USD 350 billion for defense and Trump's immigration crackdown.

Republicans partially pay for it all through less spending on Medicaid and food assistance. The Congressional Budget Office projects the bill will add about USD 3.3 trillion to the federal debt over the coming decade.

The House passed its version of the bill in May by a single vote, despite worries about spending cuts and the overall price tag. Now it's being asked to give final passage to a version that, in many respects, exacerbates those concerns. The Senate bill's projected impact on the nation's debt, for example, is significantly higher. (AP)

US employers added surprising 147,000 jobs last month despite uncertainty over economic policy

WASHINGTON, July 3: US employers added 147,000 jobs in June as the American labour market continues to show surprising resilience despite uncertainty over President Donald Trump's economic policies.

The unemployment rate ticked down 4.1 per cent from 4.2 per cent in May, the Labour Department said Thursday. Hiring rose modestly from a revised 144,000 in May and beat economists expectations of fewer than 118,000 new jobs and a rise in the unemployment rate.

The US job market has cooled considerably from red-hot days of 2021-2023 when the economy bounced back with unexpected strength from COVID-19 lockdowns and companies were desperate for workers. So far this year employers have added an average 124,000 jobs a month, down from 168,000 in 2024 and an average 400,000 from 2021 through 2023.

Hiring decelerated after the Federal Reserve raised its benchmark interest rate 11 times in 2022 and 2023. But the economy did not collapse, defying widespread predictions that the higher borrowing costs would cause a recession. Companies kept hiring, just at a more modest pace.

But the job market increasingly looks under strain. A survey released Wednesday by the payroll processor ADP found that private companies cut 33,000 jobs last month. "Though layoffs continue to be rare, a hesitancy to hire and a reluctance to replace departing workers led to job losses last month," said ADP chief economist Nela Richardson. (The ADP numbers frequently differ from the Labor Department's official job count.)

Employers are now contending with fallout from Trump's policies, especially his aggressive use of import taxes -- tariffs.

Mainstream economists say that tariffs raise prices for businesses and consumers alike and make the economy less efficient by reducing competition. They also invite retaliatory tariffs

94 Palestinians killed in Gaza, including 45 people waiting for aid: Authorities

TEL AVIV, July 3: Airstrikes and shootings killed 94 Palestinians in Gaza overnight, including 45 who were attempting to get much-needed humanitarian aid, hospitals and the Health Ministry said on Thursday.

Israel's military did not immediately comment on the strikes. Five people were killed while outside sites associated with the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, the newly-created, secretive American organisation backed by Israel to feed the Gaza Strip's population, while 40 others were killed waiting for aid in other locations across the Gaza Strip.

Dozens of people were killed in airstrikes that pounded the Strip Wednesday night and Thursday morning, including 15 people killed in strikes that hit tents in the sprawling Muwasi zone, where many displaced Palestinians are sheltering.

A separate strike on a school in Gaza City sheltering displaced people also killed 15 people.

Gaza's Health Ministry said the number of Palestinians killed in Gaza has passed 57,000, including 223 missing people who have been declared dead, since the war began on October 7, 2023.

The ministry doesn't differentiate between civilians



and combatants in its death count but says that more than half of the dead are women and children. The deaths come as Israel and Hamas inch closer to a possible ceasefire that would end the 21-month war.

Trump said on Tuesday that Israel had agreed on terms for a 60-day ceasefire in Gaza and urged Hamas to accept the deal before conditions worsen. But Hamas' response, which emphasised its demand that the war end, raised questions about whether the latest offer could materialize into an actual pause in fighting. The Israeli military blames Hamas for the civilian casualties because it operates from populated areas. The military said it targeted Hamas militants and rocket launchers in northern Gaza that launched rockets toward Israel on Wednesday.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel, killing 1,200 people and taking roughly 250 hostages. The war has left the coastal Palestinian territory in ruins, with much of the urban landscape flattened in the fighting. More than 90 per cent of Gaza's 2.3 million population has been displaced, often multiple times. And the war has sparked a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, leaving hundreds of thousands of people hungry. (AP)

from other countries, hurting US exporters.

The erratic way that Trump has rolled out his tariffs -- announcing and then suspending them, then coming up with new ones -- has left businesses bewildered.

Manufacturers responding to a survey released this week by the Institute for Supply Management complained that they and their customers were reluctant to make decisions until they understood where Trump's tariffs would end up. "That whiplash has to stop and it has to stay stopped," said Susan Spence, chair of the ISM's manufacturing survey committee.

Trump's assault on the federal bureaucracy could also show up in June's job report. Nancy Vanden Houten, lead US economist at Oxford Economics, expects federal jobs dropped by 20,000 last month, "reflecting a hiring freeze, voluntary quits and retirements." For now, she wrote in a commentary Wednesday, court rulings "have put massive federal layoffs on hold."

The president's deportations -- and the threat of them -- also are likely to start having an impact on the job market by driving immigrants out of the job market. In May, the US labour force -- those working and looking for work -- fell by 625,000, the biggest drop in a year and a half. (AP)

Pak Air Force Chief undertakes US visit

ISLAMABAD, July 3: Pakistan's Chief of the Air Staff Zaeef Ahmed Baber Sidhu paid an official visit to the US to further enhance bilateral defence cooperation after Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir recently undertook a similar tour.

This was the first visit by a serving Pakistan Air Force (PAF) chief in over a decade, an indication of stepping up military engagements between Pakistan and the US.

"The Chief of the Air Staff of Pakistan Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Zaeef Ahmed Baber Sidhu, paid an official visit to the US, the first visit by any serving Air Chief of the Pakistan Air Force in over a decade, which will further enhance bilateral defence cooperation and mutual interests," a PAF statement said on Wednesday.

"This high-level visit is a strategic milestone in the Pak-US defence partnership. The visit will play a significant role in addressing key regional and global security issues as well as building institutional ties," it said.

It further said Sidhu held several important meetings with the top military and political leadership of the country during the visit to the US.

At the Pentagon, he met US Secretary of the Air Force for International Affairs Kelly L. Seybolt and Air Force Chief of Staff General David W. Elton, where the two sides agreed to forge new avenues for bilateral military cooperation, mutual affairs, joint training and technology exchange.

The PAF chief highlighted the historical and multi-faceted relations between Pakistan and the US, particularly in the defence sector. Sidhu reiterated Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening the existing relations between the air forces of the two countries in the areas of military cooperation and training.

During the detailed discussions, the two sides also agreed to establish high-level military relations in the future.

They reiterated their commitment to forge new avenues for cooperation between the two countries in various fields, including joint training, operational exercises and exchange programmes, and to intensify efforts for this purpose, the statement said. (PTI)

Amnesty accuses Israel, aid system of using starvation to commit Gaza genocide

CAIRO, July 3: Amnesty International accused a controversial Israeli- and US-backed system to distribute aid in Gaza of using starvation tactics against Palestinians to continue to commit genocide in the Gaza Strip during Israel's war with Hamas.

The UK-based human rights group released a report Thursday condemning Israel and the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which the US and Israel have backed to take over aid distribution in Gaza from a network led by the United Nations.

Gaza's Health Ministry says more than 500 Palestinians have been killed at or near GHF distribution centres over the past month. The centres are guarded by private security contractors and located near Israeli military positions. Palestinian officials and witnesses have accused Israeli forces of opening fire at crowds of people moving near the sites.

The Amnesty report said Israel has "turned aid-seeking into a booby trap for desperate starved Palestinians" through GHF's militarised hubs. The conditions have created "a deadly mix of hunger

and disease pushing the population past breaking point."

"This devastating daily loss of life as desperate Palestinians try to collect aid is the consequence of their deliberate targeting by Israeli forces and the foreseeable consequence of irresponsible and lethal methods of distribution," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty's secretary general.

Israel denies accusations
Israel's foreign minister denounced the Amnesty report, saying the organization has "joined forces with Hamas and fully adopted all of its propaganda lies."

The Israeli army says it has fired warning shots to control crowds and only fires at people it says are acting suspiciously.

The Foreign Ministry and COGAT, the Israeli defense body in charge of coordinating aid to Gaza, said Israel has facilitated the entry of over 3,000 aid trucks into the Gaza Strip since May 19 and GHF has delivered boxes of food with the equivalent of 56 million meals.

Humanitarian organizations say that amount is not nearly enough to meet overwhelming need in



Gaza. GHF did not immediately return requests for comment.

The World Food Programme says despite the new Israel-backed initiative, food consumption reached a critical low last month, with food diversity reaching its worst level since the conflict began. "The continued closure of crossings, intensified violence since March, soaring food prices, and extremely limited humanitarian and commercial supplies have severely restricted access to even basic food items," the WFP said in a June report.

GHF hubs are close to Israeli military positions

Amnesty's report follows a statement earlier this week from more than 165 major international charities and non-governmental organizations calling for an immediate end to the foundation. They say the new mechanism allows Israel to use food as a weapon, violates humanitarian principles and is ineffective.

It's the latest sign of trouble for the GHF, a secretive initiative headed by an evangelical leader who is a close ally of President

Donald Trump. Last month, the US government pledged USD 30 million for the group to continue operation, the first known US donation to the group, whose other funding sources remain opaque.

GHF started distributing aid May 26 following a nearly three-month Israeli blockade that pushed Gaza's population of more than 2 million to the brink of famine.

Palestinian witnesses have describe scenes of chaos around the distribution sites, and two contractors in the operation have told The Associated Press that colleagues fired live ammunition and stun grenades toward crowds of people. Palestinians often must travel long distances to reach the sites.

In a statement Tuesday, GHF rejected criticism of its operations and claimed it has delivered more than 52 million meals to hungry Palestinians.

"Instead of bickering and throwing insults from the sidelines, we would welcome other humanitarian groups to join us and feed the people in Gaza," GHF said.

GHF has called for Israel's military to investigate the allegations from Gaza's Health Ministry, but

last month the organization said there has been no violence in or around its centres and its personnel have not opened fire.

Israel demanded the alternative plan because it accuses Hamas of siphoning off aid. The UN and aid groups deny there is significant diversion.

Amnesty's allegations of genocide
Amnesty accused Israel last year of committing genocide in the Gaza Strip during its war with Hamas, saying it has sought to deliberately destroy Palestinians by mounting deadly attacks, demolishing vital infrastructure, and preventing the delivery of food, medicine and other aid.

Israel, which was founded in the aftermath of the Holocaust, has adamantly rejected genocide allegations against it as an antisemitic "blood libel." It is challenging such allegations filed by South Africa at the International Court of Justice and has rejected the International Criminal Court's accusations that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defense minister committed war crimes in Gaza. (AP)

Golden jubilee celebrations of Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly begins

Governor calls Assembly a beacon of hope as Arunachal celebrates 50 years of democratic progress

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, July 3: Arunachal Pradesh marked a historic milestone on Thursday as Governor Lt General KT Pamaik (Retd), PVSM, UYSM, YSM, inaugurated the golden jubilee celebrations of the State Legislative Assembly at DK Auditorium in Itanagar.

According to an official statement, the Governor unveiled the Golden Jubilee Commemorative Plaque, formally launching a 45-day series of events commemorating 50 years of legislative excellence and democratic development in the State. The ceremony witnessed the presence of Chief Minister Pema Khandu, who released the official theme song for the golden jubilee, while Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein launched the commemorative badge symbolising the occasion.

In his address, the Governor extended his congratulations to all past and present Members of the Legislative Assembly and to the people of Arunachal Pradesh.

He remarked that the celebration is a tribute to the State's democratic journey, the strength of its institutions, and the vibrant spirit of its people.

Describing the Assembly as the "sacred temple of democracy," he said it has become a beacon of hope, unity, and in-

clusive progress.

Paying tribute to visionary leaders, Speakers, Deputy Speakers, and Assembly officials, both past and present, the Governor emphasised their role in nurturing the institution with wisdom and commitment.

He described the Legislative Assembly as a proud symbol of transparency and representative governance.

Reflecting on the journey since 1975, the Governor noted the challenges faced in building the State from the ground up, amidst difficult terrain and scattered populations.

He said that through vision, perseverance, and people-centric legislation, the State has steered clear of the instability and insurgency seen in some neighbouring states, choosing instead a path of peace, inclusivity, and unity in diversity.

He added that Arunachal Pradesh is now undergoing a transformative phase, marked by better administrative outreach, improved service delivery, and more responsive and citizen-centric governance.

He commended the Assembly's role in this transformation, noting that the passing of laws has been guided by a broader vision of good governance rooted in transparency, financial probity, and ac-



countability.

Highlighting the successful implementation of the e-Vidhan system, the Governor underscored the importance of integrating technology at all levels of

governance.

He called for decisive action toward achieving Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on environmental sustainability, poverty alleviation, gender

equality, and the empowerment of all communities.

The Governor urged legislators to prioritise key areas such as land reforms, solid waste management, hygiene, and

sanitation.

He also stressed the need to formulate policies that empower women by upholding their rights, enhancing their public participation, and unlocking their leadership potential.

In a moving appeal to the House, the Governor reminded legislators of their moral responsibility toward the most vulnerable sections of society.

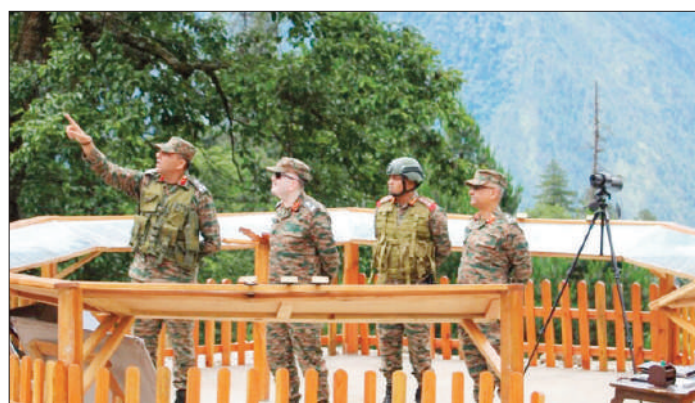
He urged them to frame legislation that protects and uplifts the marginalised, including the differently-abled and special children, stating that the soul of a State is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable citizens.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, Speaker Tesam Pongte, and Deputy Speaker Kardo Nyigyor also addressed the gathering.

They shared reflections on the Legislative Assembly's journey over the past five decades and articulated their aspirations for its future.

The inclusive spirit of the celebration was further reinforced by the participation of students from the Donyi Polo Mission School for Hearing and Visually Impaired, Chimpur, whose presence added a deeply meaningful touch to the inaugural event.

Spear Corps GOC reviews combat readiness along India-China border in Arunachal



ITANAGAR, July 3: The General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Indian Army's Spear Corps, Lieutenant General Abhijit S Pendharkar, conducted a high-level assessment of operational preparedness at forward locations in Arunachal Pradesh, a defence spokesman said on Thursday.

The Corps Commander on Wednesday reviewed the deployment of combat enablers and niche equipment in the high-altitude border areas, with a special focus on

advanced technologies including drone systems for reconnaissance operations, defence spokesman Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said.

Lt Gen Pendharkar lauded the troops for their professionalism, high morale, and unwavering dedication in facing the region's harsh terrain and climatic challenges.

The visit comes as part of the Army's continued efforts to modernise infrastructure and strengthen surveillance along the strategically sensitive Line of Ac-

tual Control (LAC) with China.

The inspection also evaluated the integration and effectiveness of specialised systems aimed at improving operational capabilities in remote and rugged locations.

Having assumed command of the Spear Corps in August 2024, Lt Gen Pendharkar, a veteran with over three decades of experience, particularly in counter-insurgency operations, has placed emphasis on technological adaptation and force modernisation.

During his visit, the GOC also paid homage to fallen soldiers by laying a wreath at a local war memorial, reaffirming the Army's commitment to honouring its martyrs.

The Spear Corps plays a critical role in safeguarding India's north-eastern frontier.

Amid evolving military and geopolitical challenges, including the ongoing ethnic unrest in Manipur, the Corps is steadily balancing traditional defence frameworks with emerging security imperatives. (PTI)

Metedene CLF from Arunachal wins Atmanirbhar Sangathan Award 2024



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, July 3: In a moment of pride for Arunachal Pradesh, the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, has conferred the Atmanirbhar Sangathan Award 2024 on Metedene Cluster-Level Federation (CLF) from Sagalee Block, Papumpare District.

The recognition, announced in an official statement, places Metedene CLF in the third position in the "Less than 5 Years" category for the North-East region.

Metedene CLF functions under the Arunachal State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ArSRLM) and has been selected as one of 22 outstanding Self-Help Group Federations from across the country.

The award acknowledges the CLF's significant contribution to promoting economic resilience among rural women through financial inclusion, skill development, and community mobilisation.

The award is part of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), which aims to support rural communities in building sustainable livelihoods.

The recognition serves as a testament to the CLF's grassroots efforts in transforming the economic landscape of Sagalee and empowering women through collective leadership and entrepreneurship.

According to the official statement, two office bearers from Met-

edene CLF will represent Arunachal Pradesh at the Independence Day Celebration in New Delhi, where they will be felicitated by the Union Minister of Rural Development.

During the event, selected representatives will also participate in a dialogue session with the Minister, highlighting their experiences and achievements on a national platform.

Special emphasis will be placed on including articulate leaders, particularly "Lakhpati Didis" — women who have attained financial self-reliance through the mission's initiatives.

The Arunachal State Rural Livelihoods Mission has lauded the CLF's efforts, applauding the innovation, resilience, and determination shown by its members.

The Mission reiterated its commitment to nurturing grassroots institutions that not only empower women but also catalyse broader community transformation across the state.

NDDB to form milk unions in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, July 3: The National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) will establish 'Milk Unions' and 'Milk Federations' in Arunachal Pradesh to promote the dairy sector, an official said.

Five milk unions corresponding to five river basins of the state has been planned to start initially with Lohit, Namsai and Lower Dibang Valley districts of the Lohit River basin, NDDB Kolkata regional head S Roy said on Wednesday during a training for enumerators and supervisors at Chowkhim circle in Namsai.

He said similar efforts will be made to form milk unions in Siang, Subansiri, Kameng and Tirap basins. At the apex level, these milk unions will form a 'milk federation' of the state, he said, adding that it will open up new opportunities in the dairy sector as well as other allied activities.

State Animal Husbandry Veterinary and Dairy Development director D Longri emphasised on timely completion of the survey work and fixed the deadline for Lohit basin on July 31, 2025.

He lamented that few districts despite having huge dairy potential have not made any effort to establish dairy cooperative societies.

It has left Arunachal behind under the White Revolution 2.0, the official said.

As the formation of a milk union covering Lohit, Namsai and Lower Dibang Valley would be a guide for other unions, Longri directed district veterinary officers to attach top priority to the survey and ensure timely completion. (PTI)

Training equips farmers with scientific skills to boost aquaculture in Arunachal and Northeast

Three-Day training on induced breeding and carp seed production concludes in Namsai

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, July 3: A three-day residential training programme on Induced Breeding and Seed Production of Carps, jointly organised by the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), North East Regional Centre, and the Department of Fisheries, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, concluded successfully on Thursday at the Deputy Commissioner's Conference Hall in Namsai district.

According to an official statement, the training, held from July 1 to 3, brought together 25 participants from various parts of Arunachal Pradesh and neighbouring states.

The programme focused on both theoretical and practical aspects of freshwater aquaculture, including scientific induced breeding techniques, fish seed production, disease management, water quality control, nutritional interventions, and emerging trends in aquaculture practices. The inaugural session was attended by Deputy Commissioner of Namsai CR Khampia, who stressed the importance of adopting multi-species aquaculture systems.

In his address, he encouraged stakeholders to consider aquaculture not only as a viable livelihood opportunity but also as a pathway to boost rural economies and promote fish production self-sufficiency in the district.

Namsai District Planning Officer Keshab Sharma also addressed the participants, highlighting the wide range of economic prospects available through scientific aquaculture.

He urged participants to understand and integrate the entire value chain—from hatchery operations to marketing—towards achieving sustainable income and growth.

Assistant Director of Fisheries Joram Rupa provided detailed



training on scientific methods of fish rearing.

His session covered key aspects such as water quality monitoring, appropriate stocking densities, and efficient feed strategies, equipping the participants with essential foundational knowledge for improved aquaculture practices.

On the second day, local MLA Chau Zingnu Namchoom graced the training with his presence. He underlined the potential of aquaculture as a transformative tool for the rural economy and advocated for the involvement of young farmers in modern practices.

He specifically emphasized the scope of prawn farming and encouraged farmers to explore such diversified ventures for increased profitability.

Ashim Borah, Officer-in-Charge of NFDB-NERC, elaborated on the various central schemes and financial support mechanisms available under NFDB.

He explained how the board is

actively working at the grassroots level to empower fish farmers through training, technical support, and infrastructure development. His sessions also covered pond construction, scientific culture practices, and the long-term economic advantages of technology-driven aquaculture.

Further enriching the programme, Chow Biman Pangyok, Fisheries Development Officer, led practical sessions including hands-on demonstrations in induced breeding and seed production.

Participants were trained in hormone administration, especially using synthetic hormone Wova-FH, and received instructions on disease prevention and nutritional enhancement during the fish seed rearing stage.

An exposure visit to the government fish seed farm at Jona-I (Lathao) was organised, where participants observed live breeding processes.

Additional field sessions were

conducted by CP Wailong, FD-cum-in-charge of the Bordumsa Fish Farm, offering participants deeper practical engagement.

Adding an inspirational touch to the event, Leela Kanta Saikia, a successful progressive fish farmer from Dibrugarh, Assam, shared his personal journey of building a thriving hatchery business.

His story of scaling operations through innovation and consistent effort served as motivation for the trainees.

The training programme concluded with a vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to all resource persons, officials, dignitaries, and participants for their active involvement.

According to the official statement, this initiative reflects NFDB-NERC's commitment to promoting scientific aquaculture and empowering farmers across the North East through knowledge-sharing and technological innovation.

Machete attack in Naharlagun: Police nab accused after swift chase

HT Correspondent

NAHARLAGUN, July 3: Panic gripped residents of C-Sector, Naharlagun, on Thursday afternoon when a 19-year-old man allegedly went on a violent spree, attacking bystanders with a machete.

The incident occurred around 1:15 PM, and according to an official statement issued by Naharlagun Police, the accused was apprehended following prompt and coordinated action by law enforcement.

As soon as verbal information about the attack was received, a police team led by Inspector K. Dev, Officer-in-Charge of Naharlagun Police Station, swung into action.

The accused attempted to flee the area but was captured after a brief chase on Pachin Road. A formal complaint was filed, and two separate cases under the relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita have been registered against him.

The accused was identified as Daman Nima, aged 19, son of the

late Tada Nima and a resident of Village Nima under Daporijo Police Station in Upper Subansiri district.

He is currently in police custody and undergoing interrogation as part of the investigation.

Two individuals were injured in the unprovoked attack. They have been identified as Nehru Murtem, 57, son of the late Tagam Murtem, and Hage Anku, 54, daughter of the late Hage Babing.

Both victims are residents of C-Sector, Naharlagun, and were reportedly assaulted without warning. They were rushed to a medical facility for treatment, and further updates on their condition are awaited.

In its official communication, Naharlagun Police confirmed that all legal procedures are being followed and that a thorough investigation is underway to ascertain the motive behind the attack.

The swift response by the police has drawn appreciation from local residents for effectively neutralising a potentially deadly situation.

Udyami Panjikaran Mela concludes successfully

The event served as a platform to motivate SHG-based enterprises to explore formal avenues of business registration and sustainability

HT Correspondent

PASIGHAT, July 3: The Udyami Panjikaran Mela, organised by the Block Mission Management Unit of Rukhsin under the Arunachal State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ArSRLM), concluded successfully at the Rukhsin Multipurpose Auditorium Hall.

According to an official statement, the event witnessed an enthusiastic participation of over 200 attendees, including self-help group (SHG) members and local community leaders.

The mela was aimed at encouraging SHG members to register their products and enhance their participation in grassroots entrepreneurship.

Chief Guest Nanang Borang, Circle Officer of Rukhsin, inaugu-

rated the programme in the presence of several dignitaries, including ZPM Rukhsin Anung Gammeng, Agriculture Development Officer Topu Nyodu, Director of RSETI Pasighat Miton Sutradhar, as well as GPCs and Gaon Buras.

Speaking on the occasion, the dignitaries expressed their appreciation for the large turnout and lauded the efforts of SHG members, especially women entrepreneurs, for showcasing their drive towards financial independence.

The event served as a platform to motivate SHG-based enterprises to explore formal avenues of business registration and sustainability.

A total of 130 offline product registrations were collected during the mela, reflecting strong engagement

from the participating SHGs.

Although product sales were not mandatory, many SHG members brought along items for display and sale, resulting in earnings of approximately ₹35,000.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Ms Miti Paron, an active SHG member, who expressed gratitude on behalf of the participants and organisers.

The dignitaries praised ArSRLM's role in promoting entrepreneurship and creating economic opportunities for women at the grassroots level. The successful conduct of the Udyami Panjikaran Mela reinforced the commitment of ArSRLM and local administrative units in fostering inclusive development through SHG-led enterprises and community empowerment.

Centre committed to overhaul Jharkhand's infra; will implement ₹ 2 lakh cr-projects: Gadkari

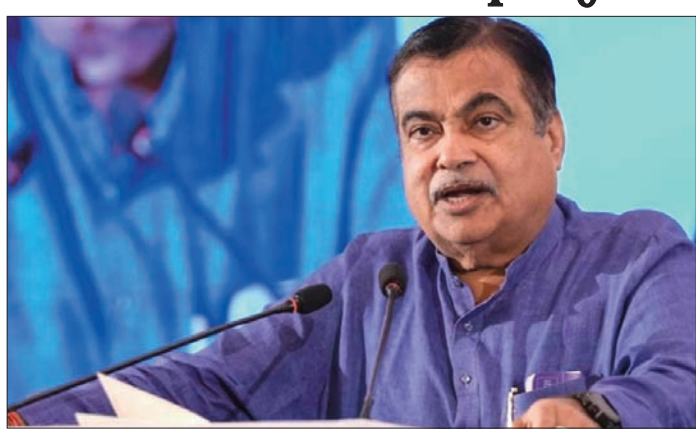
GARHWA (JHARKHAND), July 3: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said the Centre is committed to augment Jharkhand's infrastructure and would implement projects worth ₹ 2 lakh crore in the state.

The Union Road Transport and Highways Minister asserted that Jharkhand, which is rich in mineral resources, would see unprecedented growth in the highways sector. "I am committed to bolster Jharkhand's infrastructure. I assure the people of implementing ₹ 2 lakh crore-worth national highway projects in the state," he said, while addressing a public meeting here.

"We have completed ₹ 40,000-crore national highway projects in the state. At present, we are implementing highway projects worth ₹ 70,000 crore, while projects worth ₹ 75,000 crore are in the pipeline," Gadkari added.

He said the ₹ 36,000-crore Varanasi-Ranchi-Kolkata greenfield corridor will be completed by March 2028, while the ₹ 12,800-crore Ranchi-Varanasi economic corridor will be built by January 2028.

Besides, the Delhi-Kolkata ₹ 31,700-crore six-lane corridor will be completed by June 2026, he said, adding the Ranchi-Patna



four-lane economic corridor, being built at a cost of ₹ 8,900 crore, will be completed by December 2029.

Also, the ₹16,500-crore Raipur-Dhanbad four-lane economic corridor will be completed by January 2028, he added.

Gadkari said till elections, there should be politics but after the polls, there should be "development politics", hinting at populist measures by Jharkhand's JMM-led government.

He also urged the Jharkhand government to address bottlenecks pertaining to land acquisition, clearance from the forest department and other issues in the state.

"We will ensure better connectivity between Jharkhand and

other states, including Bihar," the minister said.

Comparing the water crisis in parts of Jharkhand with Maharashtra, Gadkari said there is a small mantra to change the scenario.

"We have changed the situation. NHAI built 1,000 ponds free of cost in Maharashtra. We utilised earth excavated from ponds in building roads and it also led to water conservation. I urge the Jharkhand government to issue a similar order for constructing ponds and we will do it free of cost," he said.

A strong infrastructure here will boost employment for the local masses, he added.

Gadkari said the state, which

had a national highway network of 2,600 km in 2014, now has 4,470-km network. Nineteen aspirational districts of the state are linked with the national highway network now, he said.

In Garhwa, the minister inaugurated a 23-km four-lane highway from Shankha to Khajoori, built at a cost of ₹ 1,130 crore.

He also laid the foundation stone of a ₹1,330-crore project for four-laning of a 32-km stretch of NH 39 from the Chhattisgarh-Jharkhand inter-state boundary to Gumla.

Gadkari, who arrived in Ranchi in a special flight, went to Garhwa in a helicopter and addressed a public rally there.

He was scheduled to arrive in Ranchi from Garhwa on a helicopter, however it was diverted to Gayaji in Bihar due to inclement weather, an official said.

Meanwhile, a special aircraft was sent to Gayaji and Gadkari is scheduled to inaugurate Ranchi projects on his arrival, the official added.

In Ranchi, the minister is scheduled to inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of multiple national highway projects worth ₹6,350 crore, including a ₹ 560-crore elevated corridor in Jharkhand state capital. (PTI)

J&K will emerge as key growth engine in India's journey: Jitendra Singh

NEW DELHI, July 3: Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Thursday said Jammu and Kashmir will emerge as a key growth engine in India's journey.

Highlighting Jammu and Kashmir's continued importance in national priorities, he said the recent milestone projects like the Chenab bridge, the Lithium discovery and the purple revolution of lavender farming is empowering youth entrepreneurs in the region.

"J&K will emerge as a key growth engine in India's journey from the 4th largest to the 1st largest global economy," said Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel.

His remark came during an informal luncheon hosted here for Delhi-based Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Forest Service (IFS) officers of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir cadre, now merged with Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram and Union Territory cadre (AGMUT).

He also recalled the turbulent times of peak militancy in the 1990s and early 2000s, acknowledging the courage of officers, who served in extremely challenging circumstances.

The minister encouraged officers to break rigid hierarchies, sharing that he maintains personal contact with many officers and



often reaches out directly. "It saves time and gets the job done faster, especially when the outcome affects people's welfare," he said. The gathering saw officers from diverse batches and services reminiscing about their days of service in Jammu and Kashmir and appreciating the opportunity to reconnect.

Singh, in his address, reflected on the careers of several officers — from their first postings in Jammu and Kashmir to their rise through the ranks into senior leadership roles.

He recalled a pioneering initiative started soon after the Modi government assumed office in 2014 — where senior officers were asked to revisit their first posting districts to assess developmental progress over the years and file re-

ports. "It brought a sense of continuity and personal connection to public service," said the minister, who is also a Lok Sabha member from Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur constituency.

During the interaction, officers openly shared experiences, feedback and concerns, according to a Personnel Ministry statement.

From the IAS, senior-most officer Navin Kumar Choudhary (1994 batch) was present, followed by Manoj Kumar Dwivedi (1997), Hirdesh Kumar (1999), and Sarita Chauhan (1999).

Ajeet Kumar Sahu (2003), Pandurang Kondbarao Pole (2004), Simrandeep Singh (2008), Sushma Chauhan (2009), Shah Faesal (2010) and Sheikh Arshad Ayub (2013) were also present. (PTI)

Minor rape survivor agrees to continue with pregnancy post AIIMS opinion in HC

NEW DELHI, July 3: A minor rape survivor, who sought termination of her 27-week foetus, on Thursday agreed to continue with her pregnancy after AIIMS doctors opined in the Delhi High Court that aborting the pregnancy at this stage would amount to foeticide.

The doctors, who were part of the medical board of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) which examined the minor, stressed that it would be in the best interest of the child to be born and his mother if the pregnancy is continued for another 4-6 weeks.

A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Anish Dayal then modified a single judge's order, which allowed the 16-year-old girl to terminate the pregnancy, considering the medical board's opinion.

The court told the counsel appearing for the survivor and her mother to make them understand that it would be in the interest of the survivor and her child to continue with the pregnancy and after the delivery if they wish, the infant could be given for adoption.

Post discussions with the survivor and her mother, the counsel informed the bench that the survivor had agreed to continue with the pregnancy.

The bench termed the situation to be "very unfortunate, unpleasant and precarious" in which the court had to ensure the welfare of both the minor girl and her unborn child.

Two doctors comprising the medical board appeared before the court and said if the procedure was performed right now, it would be a pre-term delivery with the child being alive and not the termination of pregnancy.

The doctor said it would amount to foeticide which was only permissible in case of medical issues.

Terminating the pregnancy would hamper her future reproductive health and it would be much safer to perform the procedure at 34 weeks gestation period,

she added. The doctor said if this pregnancy was allowed to be terminated, it would open floodgates and others who did not want to continue with the pregnancy would demand termination.

The bench then said, "It will be a foeticide which is only permissible in cases with medical issues. It amounts to an offence under the criminal law and please don't ask us to be party to that."

The court while modifying the single judge's June 30 order said the girl should remain admitted to AIIMS for the entire gestation period and till her delivery.

She should also be allowed to stay in AIIMS till she feels fit after delivering the child, it added.

The court directed AIIMS to provide free medical treatment to the girl and the child for the next five years.

"The facts and circumstances of this case presents a very unfortunate, unpleasant and precarious situation where this court has to ensure the welfare of both the minor girl as well as the child to be born," the court said.

The bench continued, "The care of both these lives does not merely require medical attention but also having regard to the socio-economic cultural situation of our society, they will constantly be needing other forms of support such as psychiatric or psychological treatment or counselling and some financial support as well."

The court asked the Delhi government's Department of Women and Child Development to file an affidavit giving details of the mode of help to the girl and the child and posted the matter on October 15.

In the day earlier, the court said that "advising a rape victim to prolong her pregnancy will entail anxiety" which could have a grave impact on her mental health. (PTI)

Mamata writes to Shah, seeks action against provocative social media content, cybercrime

KOLKATA, July 3: Expressing concern over the rising impact of provocative social media content and cybercrime, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and stressed the need for stringent legislative and policy interventions.

The two-page letter refers to recent "incendiary narratives, misleading stories and fake videos" on social media, which have "significantly contributed to aggravation of criminal tendencies among certain sections of society".

"Such content not only spreads misinformation but also has the potential to inflame communal sentiments, incite violence, disrupt societal harmony and indulge in crime against women," Banerjee wrote and added, "The instantaneous and wide-reaching nature of misuse of digital platforms amplifies these effects manifold."

In April this year, the Muslim-majority district of Murshidabad witnessed large-scale violence, which began as a protest against the passed Waqf (Amendment) Act and quickly spiralled out of control into communal riots, resulting in multiple deaths and widespread damage to public and private property.

More recently, in June, violence of communal nature broke out at Maheshatala under the Diamond Harbour police district in the outskirts of Kolkata. The clashes left about a dozen police personnel, including the deputy commissioner of the Port area, injured.

The state has also witnessed communal violence in districts like Howrah and Hooghly in the recent past over Ram Navami celebrations.

In the aftermath of almost all these incidents, Banerjee has remained vocal about the spread of lies and misinformation on social media which, she maintained, added fuel to the fire.

In her letter to the Union home minister, Banerjee also highlighted the menace of an alarming surge in cybercrime which, she said, is "growing both in complexity and in its detrimental impact".

"From financial frauds and identity theft to online harassment and defamation, cybercrimes are exacting a severe toll on individuals and institutions alike," the chief minister wrote.

Observing that both provocative social media posts and cybercrimes disproportionately affect vulnerable sections of society — women, children, the elderly and the economically weak — Banerjee urged the introduction of stringent legislative measures to serve as an effective deterrent to the two crime formats.

"The current legal framework and its enforcement require further strengthening to keep pace with the rapidly evolving digital ecosystem and the sophisticated methods employed by malicious actors," she said. The chief minister also urged the home minister on the necessity to launch large-scale awareness campaigns to promote responsible digital behaviour alongside sensitisation programmes, digital literacy campaigns and community engagement initiatives.

"This is a collective challenge requiring urgent and coordinated action to safeguard public order, national unity, and the integrity of our democracy," the Trinamool Congress posted on X, quoting Banerjee's letter. (PTI)

CISF trains 380 firefighters across 150 cities in national fire safety initiative

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 3: In a significant national initiative aimed at enhancing fire safety and disaster response, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has successfully trained 380 fire service personnel from 150 cities across 22 States and Union Territories.

According to an official statement issued by the force, the CISF, India's only Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) with a dedicated fire wing, has been at the forefront of implementing a specialised training programme following a directive issued by the Union Home Minister during the CISF Raising Day in 2023.

The minister had tasked the force with upskilling firefighters from 100 Indian cities to strengthen national fire safety capabilities.

In response, the CISF's Fire Service Training Institute (FSTI) in Hyderabad developed a tailor-made curriculum focused on modern firefighting techniques, rescue operations, and disaster management strategies.

The institute conducted 11 training batches during the 2023-24 period, training 274 firefighters from 113 cities.

Building on this momentum, the CISF continued the initiative in 2025, adding five more training batches. Four of these have already concluded, benefiting 106 participants from 46 cities across 10 states. The fifth batch is scheduled to begin on August 25, 2025.

The CISF has indicated its readiness to organise additional training sessions during the current calendar year if states continue to nominate their personnel.

inate their personnel.

The curriculum has been specially designed to tackle the challenges posed by densely populated urban areas and hazardous industrial zones.

Trainees are instructed in advanced firefighting technologies and protocols, as well as in responding to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) emergencies and potential chemical warfare scenarios.

A CISF spokesperson underlined the importance of the programme, stating that as the only CAPF with a dedicated fire service, the force is committed to enhancing the technical skills of fire personnel and fostering a proactive culture of fire safety and disaster preparedness.

The training modules are routinely updated to reflect advancements in fire science and to ensure readiness for both emergency response and preventive action.

The Fire Service Training Institute in Hyderabad, a state-of-the-art centre of excellence, plays a central role in this effort.

It not only caters to CISF personnel but also extends training services to members of other national and international organisations, reinforcing India's capacity in fire and disaster management.

As the initiative continues through 2025, the CISF aims to deepen its collaboration with state fire services, contributing to the broader vision of a disaster-resilient India. The training drive stands as a testament to the CISF's enduring commitment to protecting lives, infrastructure, and property across the nation.

Party loyalist with RSS roots, Samik Bhattacharya picked to revive Bengal BJP ahead of 2026 polls

KOLKATA, July 3: A dyed-in-the-wool party loyalist and articulate communicator with deep roots in the RSS, Samik Bhattacharya's election as the West Bengal BJP president signals the central leadership's calibrated move to steer the state unit through internal churn and retol it into a winning machine ahead of the 2026 assembly elections.

At 61, Bhattacharya's rise to the state's top organisational post is being seen as a reward for decades of silent perseverance, ideological fidelity, and personal discipline, traits that have kept him at the core of the party machinery even when he wasn't in the limelight.

A Rajya Sabha MP, he was elected unopposed as the new president of the Bengal unit.

A bachelor, Bhattacharya's political journey

began in the mid-1970s when, as a schoolboy, he first attended RSS shakhas in Howrah's Mandirtala area.

Immersed early in Sangh values, he joined the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), which marked the beginning of his full-time political life as a foot soldier of the Sangh Parivar.

He has been part of BJP since its marginal years in West Bengal, staying committed even when the party had little organisational presence or electoral relevance, long before its breakthrough post-2018.

Gradually, he rose through the ranks: from ABVP to BJYM during Tapan Sikdar era in the 1990s, and over the next three decades held every major organisational post: state general

secretary, vice-president, and chief spokesperson, except the presidency.

It was during his days in BJYM that he forged a camaraderie with his contemporary Rahul Sinha, who would later head the state BJP in 2009. His prominence grew under Tathagata Roy's presidency, when he was appointed state general secretary. Though he did not wield much organisational power under Dilip Ghosh, he was made chief spokesperson—a position that showcased his clarity, calmness, and command over facts.

Despite serving under nine state presidents, Bhattacharya remained a go-to man within the organisation, trusted for ideological clarity and internal coordination, even as others leaptfrogged into power or drifted away. (PTI)

Doubling of Aluabari Road–Thakurganj rail section sanctioned under NFR

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 3: In a move aimed at enhancing rail infrastructure in Eastern India, the Ministry of Railways has sanctioned the doubling of the Aluabari Road–Thakurganj railway section under the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR).

According to an official statement issued by the NFR, the sanctioned project covers a total length of 19.95 kilometres and will be implemented at an estimated cost of approximately ₹326.67 crore.

The work falls under the broader railway initiative for multi-tracking and flyover or bypass development, aimed at capacity augmentation during the financial year 2024-25.

According to the statement, the doubling of this section will deliver significant benefits to the

people of Eastern Bihar and North Bengal. The enhanced rail infrastructure is expected to improve regional mobility, reduce travel time, and increase the punctuality of passenger trains.

Furthermore, it will streamline the movement of freight trains carrying agricultural produce, consumer goods, and essential commodities.

This, in turn, will bolster local economies by ensuring better market access for farmers, small traders, and transport-dependent industries.

The Aluabari Road–Thakurganj route lies on a High-Density Network (HDN) corridor connecting Aluabari to New Jalpaiguri.

The current utilisation rate of this section is already 94 percent, and projections estimate that it could reach as high as 200 percent



by the year 2027-28. With demand for rail services on the rise, the doubling project is seen as a crucial intervention to boost line capacity, reduce train detention, and offer improved operational flexibility. The strategic importance of

the section is further underscored by its integration with other infrastructure works in the region.

Once completed, the line will complement parallel initiatives such as the proposed new railway link between Araria and Galgalia,

enhancing connectivity within Bihar and West Bengal and providing vital logistical support for the Northeast.

In its official statement, NFR highlighted that the project is part of a long-term vision to decongest key railway corridors and create a more seamless transportation network across India's eastern and northeastern states.

It also reaffirmed its commitment to executing the work efficiently, with a focus on long-term regional development and connectivity enhancement.

As the Northeast continues to gain attention in national infrastructure plans, the doubling of the Aluabari Road–Thakurganj section represents a significant step towards realising faster, safer, and more efficient railway services for passengers and businesses alike.

'RAMAYANA' MAKERS UNVEIL FIRST LOOK FROM RANBIR KAPOOR-YASH STARRER



NEW DELHI, July 3: The makers of "Ramayana", billed as an ambitious cinematic event, on Thursday unveiled the first glimpse of the upcoming mythological epic, featuring Ranbir Kapoor, Yash and Sai Pallavi in the lead roles. Directed by Nitesh Tiwari and produced by Namit Malhotra's Prime Focus Studios and DNEG, in association with Yash's Monster Mind Creations, the film is a two-part live-action saga set 5,000 years ago and rooted in one of Indian mythology's most enduring epics, a press release said.

"Ramayana" features Ranbir as Lord Rama, "KGF" star Yash as Ravana and Sai Pallavi as Goddess Sita as Sunny Deol as Lord Hanuman and Ravie Dubey as Lord Lakshman. Tiwari said he hopes "Ramayana" evokes pride in the hearts of every Indian.

"For me, the most important aspect is the emotions and the pride of the great culture heritage that we have in our country. If we

can evoke that and show it to the whole world I think that would be an achievement," the director said at the teaser launch of the movie. Malhotra said they are leaving no stone unturned to make "Ramayana" in the best possible way.

"It has been a very, very long dream that we have been collaborating to put our hearts, soul and life into this so that we can do justice to this epic. My only aspiration is with pride how we take our greatest culture, our greatest part of our history and share it with the world.

"I want all of us Indians to stand there proud, not just celebrating this for ourselves, but also be able to share this at the greatest level when we take it to the world. We are working incredibly hard and we will leave no stone unturned to make sure that we deliver the very best that anybody in the world can try," he said.

The film's crew includes renowned international artists, including Oscar-winning composers Hans Zimmer and A R Rahman, who are collaborating on the score.

The action sequences are choreographed by Hollywood stunt veterans Terry Notary and Guy Norris, and the film's visual world is being shaped by production designers Ravi Bansal of "Dune 2" fame and Ramsey Avery as "Captain America".

As part of the global reveal, titled "Ramayana: The Introduction", fan screenings were held across nine Indian cities, alongside a striking billboard takeover in New York's Times Square. The first part is slated to release worldwide in IMAX during Diwali 2026, with part two following in Diwali 2027. (PTI)

DEEPIKA PADUKONE TO GET STAR ON HOLLYWOOD WALK OF FAME, FIRST INDIAN ACTOR TO RECEIVE HONOUR

LOS ANGELES, July 3: Deepika Padukone will receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, making her the first Indian actor to be felicitated with the coveted honour.

Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, the official organisation which administers the Hollywood Walk of Fame, shared the news on its official Instagram page on Wednesday night.

"A new group of entertainment professionals in the categories of Motion Pictures, Television, Live Theatre/Live Performance, Radio, Recording, and Sports Entertainment have been selected to receive stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame by the Walk of Fame Selection Panel of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce," the post read.

"We are honoured to welcome you to the Walk of Fame Class of 2026!" it added.

Padukone will receive the star along with a host of popular Hollywood actors including Emily Blunt, Timothee Chalamet, Marion Cotillard, Stanley Tucci, Rami Malek, Rachel McAdams, Demi Moore, film-makers Chris Columbus and Tony Scott.

From the television industry, "The Office" creator Greg

Daniels, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Chef Gordon Ramsay, Bradley Whitford, and Noah Wyle will be honoured.

The Hollywood Walk of Fame celebrates achievements in the entertainment industry with over 2,700 brass stars embedded along the sidewalks of Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street in Los Angeles, making it a major tourist attraction for visitors from around the world.

Each star honours artists from the worlds of film, television, music, radio, and live performance for their impact on popular culture.

In 2011, renowned Indian conductor Zubin Mehta received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. His was the 2,434th star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and Hollywood legend Kirk Douglas spoke at a ceremony to honour him.

Before Mehta, Indian-origin American actor Sabu Dastagir, known his work in films during the 1940s, received a star Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Padukone has emerged as one of the top stars of India since she made her Bollywood debut with 2007's "Om Shanti Om". She has starred in critically-acclaimed movies such as "Love Aaj Kal", "Piku", "Bajirao Mastani", "Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela", "Padmaavat", "Chhapaak" and "Gehraiyaan".

In Hollywood, she made her debut with the 2017 action movie "XXX: Return of Xander Cage", co-starring Vin Diesel. She was also named one of TIME magazine's 100 most influential people in 2018 and received the TIME100 Impact Award.

Padukone also served in the main competition jury of the prestigious Cannes Film Festival in 2022.

The actor is currently working on a number of projects, including an untitled film directed by Atlee, co-starring Allu Arjun. (PTI)



Aamir Khan to be chief guest at Indian Film Festival of Melbourne 2025

MUMBAI, July 3: The Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM) has announced that superstar Aamir Khan will be the chief guest for the 16th edition of the film gala.

The festival, which is scheduled from August 14 to 24, will include a special retrospective to celebrate Aamir's extraordinary contribution to Indian cinema.

There will also be a spotlight event surrounding Khan's latest release "Sitaare Zameen Par", which features the actor as a basketball

coach who mentors a team of neurodivergent adults for community service.

IFFM 2025 will honour Khan's artistic impact with a specially curated selection of films that reflect his bold, socially conscious storytelling, a press release said.

The screening of "Sitaare Zameen Par" at the festival will be followed by a conversation with Aamir, director RS Prasanna, and Aparna Purohit, CEO of Aamir Khan Films.

"I'm humbled and thrilled to be a part of the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne. It's a festival that truly celebrates the spirit of Indian cinema in all its diversity and richness. I look forward to engaging with audiences, sharing some of my most cherished work, and being part of conversations that celebrate the power of film," Aamir said.

With "Sitaare Zameen Par", the film's team has tried to tell a story that embraces inclusivity and neurodivergence with sensitivity and

heart, he added.

"I'm grateful that the film has resonated with so many. I'm excited to share this journey with Melbourne and shine a light on the stories that matter," he said.

Festival director Mitu Bhowmick Lange hailed Aamir as a cinematic legend whose work has always reflected sensitivity, depth, and a fearless commitment to storytelling. "We are truly honoured to welcome him as our Chief Guest. His presence will undoubtedly ele-

vate the festival experience for audiences and filmmakers alike. He is an artist who has consistently used cinema as a force for social change, and his journey continues to inspire generations. "His work on 'Sitaare Zameen Par' is a beautiful example of inclusive storytelling — filled with empathy, joy, and honesty," she added. (PTI)

'The Last Of Us' co-creator Neil Druckmann announces exit from HBO series

LOS ANGELES, July 3: Neil Druckmann, the co-creator and co-showrunner of the critically-acclaimed HBO series "The Last Of Us", has decided to take a step back from the show's upcoming third season.

"The Last Of Us", which features Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsay, is based on the video game franchise of the same name, which was created by Druckmann and produced by Naughty Dog. He served as the creator, showrunner, writer and director alongside Craig Mazin. Druckmann announced his exit from the series in a statement posted on the official Instagram account of Naughty Dog. "I've made the difficult decision to step away from my creative involvement in 'The Last Of Us' on HBO. With work completed on season two and before any meaningful work starts on season three, now is the right time for me to transition my complete focus to Naughty Dog and its future projects, including writing and directing our exciting next game, 'InterGalactic: The Heretic Prophet', along with my responsibilities at Studio Head and Head of Creative," he said. Druckmann further said that creating "The Last Of Us" series has been a "career highlight" for him.

"It's been an honor to work alongside Craig Mazin to executive produce, direct and write on the last two seasons. I'm deeply thankful for the thoughtful approach and dedication the talented cast and crew took to adapting 'The Last Of Us Part I' and the continued adaptation of 'The Last Of Us Part II'," he added.

Besides Druckmann, co-writer and executive producer Halley Gross is also exiting the series, she announced on social media. "The Last Of Us" started in 2022 with its first season, which took place 20 years after modern civilization was destroyed by a deadly virus. It featured Pascal as Joel, a hardened survivor, who is hired to smuggle Ellie (Ramsay), a 14-year-old girl, out of an oppressive quarantine zone to the Fireflies, a cure-searching organization. The second season, which came out earlier this year, picks up five years after the events of the first season. Joel and Ellie are drawn into conflict with each other and a world even more dangerous and unpredictable than the one they left behind. (PTI)

Living together is a great killer of romance: Konkana Sen Sharma on navigating love in life

MUMBAI, July 3: Actor Konkana Sen Sharma says she could relate to the journey of her character in the upcoming movie "Metro... In Dino" as it captures a real and often unspoken shift that occurs in most long-term relationships.

Anurag Basu's latest directorial, a follow-up to the filmmaker's critically-acclaimed 2007 movie "Life... in a Metro", chronicles the bittersweet relationships of four couples in a contemporary setting.

In the movie, Sen Sharma and Pankaj Tripathi play Kajol and Monty, a middle-aged couple, whose marriage is going through a turbulent phase. "Anybody who has been in a long-term relationship, however good your relationship is, and you are genuinely in love, that magic changes. I wouldn't say it necessarily fades, but something changes in the dynamic, especially in domesticity.

"Like, living together is a great killer of romance, you are constantly worrying about the menu or the AC, children, the EMIs and the school fees. So, that is a challenge in long-term relationships. So, I can relate to that a little," Sen Sharma told PTI.

Besides Sen Sharma and Tripathi, "Metro... In Dino" also features Anupam Kher, Neena Gupta, Ali Fazal, Fatima Sana Shaikh, Aditya Roy Kapur, and Sara Ali Khan.

Roy Kapur plays Parth, a commitment-phobic man, and he said the character's issues are yet another honest portrayal of emotions that the film encapsulates.

"He seems to be a commitment-phobic man-child, maybe I do not relate too much to that aspect. If the writing is good, it draws you in, and it makes you connect with it.

"Dada is great, he puts you in situations that are so fun to play out, they are such interesting, insightful things. It was a joy to play this role for me," Roy Kapur, who is paired opposite Sara Ali Khan in the movie, added.

Sana Shaikh, who is seen romancing Ali Fazal, said the movie captures raw emotions of relationships.

"If you come into such a situation, then you react in a guttural way, at least, I am reacting the same way with my character. So, the emotions are honest. It doesn't matter what the situation is or what the complication is," she added. Roy Kapur and Sana Shaikh also expressed excitement over the resurgence of romantic films.

"Romantic films are a lot of fun to watch. We haven't seen them in a long time. I'm very excited for 'Metro...' and all the other films coming out," Sana Shaikh said, adding that "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" and "Aashiqui" are her all-time favourite romantic movies.

Roy Kapur said, "When a love story is done right ... it's a great genre. It's lovely to watch romantic films. It's nice that it's back." Sen Sharma fondly recalled the experience of working with the late Irrfan Khan in "Life in a... Metro".

"It was such a fantastic experience to work with Irrfan. I was so lucky to get to explore that with him. In this film, it's a new character. But there are one or two scenes which have a certain kind of parallel with the first part.

"So, in the middle of shooting those scenes, suddenly it hit me when we were doing a similar scene. I also shared it with Anurag." "Metro... In Dino" is produced by Bhushan Kumar of T-Series and Anurag Basu Productions Pvt Ltd. It is scheduled to release on July 4. (PTI)



Wimbledon: No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka is the last top-five women's seed left; Carlos Alcaraz wins

LONDON, July 3: Aryna Sabalenka joked that she'd love it if the upsets at Wimbledon would stop, which makes sense, given that she is ranked No. 1.

She's also the only one of the five top-seeded women still in the bracket after No. 4 Jasmine Paolini, last year's runner-up, followed No. 2 Coco Gauff, No. 3 Jessica Pegula and No. 5 Zheng Qinwen on the way out. Sabalenka was two points from dropping the opening set of her second-round match three times on Wednesday before asserting herself for a 7-6 (4), 6-4 victory over Marie Bouzkova.

In all, a record-tying 23 seeded players — 10 women, 13 men — were gone by the end of Day 2, equaling the most at any Grand Slam event in the past 25 years. Five more women joined them by losing Wednesday: Paolini, No. 12 Diana Shnaider, No. 21 Beatriz Haddad Maia, No. 22 Donna Vekic and No. 29 Leylah Fernandez.

"Of course you're going to know the overall picture," Sabalenka said, then added with a chuckle: "I hope



it's no upsets anymore in this tournament, if you know what I mean."

She is a three-time Grand Slam champion, with all of those titles coming on hard courts at the Australian Open or U.S. Open. She also was the runner-up to Gauff at the clay-court French Open last month — drawing criticism from some over her post-match comments, a flap she and Gauff set aside via social media videos last week — but hasn't been past the semifinals on the grass of the All England Club.

A year ago, Sabalenka was forced to miss Wimbledon because of an injured shoulder. On Wednesday, the record-breaking heat of the first two days gave way to rain that delayed the start of play on smaller courts for about two hours, along with temperatures that dropped from above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius) to below 68 F (20 C). At Centre Court, the 48th-ranked Bouzkova went ahead 6-5 in the first set with the match's initial service break thanks to a double-fault by Sabalenka. Bouzkova served for that set, and was two

points away from it at 30-15 in that game, again at 30-all, then once more at deuce. But on the last such occasion, Sabalenka came through with a forehand volley winner she punctuated with a yell, followed by a down-the-line backhand winner that was accompanied by another shout. "That was a tough moment," said Sabalenka, who will face 2021 U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu next. "Until that point, (my) return wasn't great enough to break her serve. I'm really glad ... everything clicked together and I was able to break her back. I kind of like felt a little bit better."

That sent them to a tiebreaker, and from 4-all there, Sabalenka took the next three points, ending the set with a powerful forehand return winner off a 67 mph second serve. In the second set, the only break arrived for a 3-2 lead for Sabalenka, and that was basically that.

Sabalenka compiled a 41-17 edge in winners while making only 18 unforced errors in a match that lasted a little more than 1 1/2 hours. (AP)

Pochettino says pro-visitor crowd in St. Louis was 'like to play in Guatemala'

ST LOUIS (USA), July 3: Mauricio Pochettino got a feel for what the U.S. men's national team still faces at times during home games: a crowd rooting for the opposition.

"It was like to play in Guatemala," the coach said after his team got two early goals from Diego Luna and hung on for a 2-1 win Wednesday night that advanced the Americans to the CONCACAF Gold Cup final. "That was good for our players because it was an atmosphere that we didn't expect."

The U.S. will play Mexico or Honduras on Sunday in Houston, the Americans' last competitive match before next year's World Cup.

A sellout crowd of 22,423 at Energizer Park energized Los Chapines, who outshot the U.S. 20-12 and got an 80th-minute goal from Olger Escobar.

"That is football," Pochettino said. "When we say the connection in between the fans and the team, that is the connection that we'd like to see in the World Cup. That connection that makes you fly, because (of) the energy that translates."

U.S. players are used to some home matches where the support is overwhelmingly for the opponent.

"We're a country full of immigrants, so it was kind of expected for tonight," defender Chris Richards said. "It was good for some of the younger guys to kind of experience that tonight, but for us experienced guys, we went through World Cup qualifiers with the exact same stuff, so I think that was a good lesson that the team needed to learn."

An Argentine who played for his nation 20 times, Pochettino comes from a culture where soccer dominates life.

"I saw player of the Guatemala crying," he said. "That is the way that we need to feel, and our fans need to feel the same. It's not to come here and to enjoy the spectacle and if you lose, nothing happens. Yes, it happens a lot. Things happen because you play for your pride, you play for many, many things that I think I cannot tell you tonight. But I think it's good for our players I came from Argentina and in Argentina it's not the same win or lose. The consequences are massive."

"The rest of the opponents and the different countries," he added, "you play for survival, you play for food, you play for pride, you play for many things. It's not to go and enjoy and go home and laugh and that's it."

Luna has showed the hunger Pochettino wants. The 21-year-old impressed the coach when he continued playing with a broken nose during a January friendly against Costa Rica in which the Americans used a B team after training sessions with mostly Major League Soccer players that some fans nicknamed Camp Cupcake. He's become a regular in the Gold Cup and has three goals in his last two games. "Diego was the example from January, how he is desperate to play for this shirt, for the national team and that is why now he is in the level that he showed," Pochettino said.

Striker Patrick Aggemang also has emerged from January camp to gain a starting berth at the Gold Cup, where many regulars are absent. (AP)

'Frustrated' Woakes rues missed chances as close calls go India's way on day 1



BIRMINGHAM, July 3: Seasoned England pacer Chris Woakes admitted to feeling "frustrated" after a couple of tight umpiring calls went in India's favour against his bowling on the opening day of the second Test here.

Woakes, with his immaculate line and length, turned out to be the standout bowler for the hosts as he ended day one with figures of 2 for 59 from 18 overs.

However, two key reviews off his bowling — both ruled umpire's call — did not go England's way.

"It was a pretty frustrating morning, really," Woakes told reporters after stumps on the opening day on Wednesday.

"Obviously emotions run high when you are desperate to do well for the team, do well for yourself and it would have been nice... had those decisions gone our way, the day looks completely different, but that is Test cricket and we move on," he added. Both decisions involved India's top order.

The first came in the seventh over, with India at 14 without loss, when Yashasvi Jaiswal was struck on the pads. The second was in the 11th over, with India 21 for one, and Karun Nair survived a similar review. On both occasions, DRS showed the delivery clipping the stumps, but not enough to overturn the not out on-field call by Bangladeshi umpire Sharfuddoula.

"We could have easily had them 30 for 3. A couple of decisions go

our way early doors and we're looking at a completely different day ahead -- at 30 for three you're into the middle order when the ball is still hard and new.

"They're decisions which can obviously go your way or not. That's the game we play."

Jaiswal went on to score 87, and Nair made 31, before India captain Shubman Gill anchored the innings with a composed, unbeaten 114 to take his side to 310 for five at stumps.

While Woakes acknowledged that DRS has generally improved decision-making in cricket, he called for one particular tweak.

"I need to be careful: I've had some (decisions) go my way over the years. In general, DRS has been good for the game. A lot more right decisions are given (than before)."

"The only thing I would like to come in is that if a batsman decides to leave the ball and it's still hitting the stumps, I think that should be out — regardless if it's clipping or not," he added.

Woakes' first wicket came in between the two referrals when he got opener KL Rahul and the pacer celebrated by looking up at the sky, remembering his late father, who died last year.

"He's always on my mind, that's for sure. There are moments where you certainly think about him. He loved his cricket; he would've loved this week," he said. (PTI)

Euro 2025: Kosola's goal secures Finland's 1-0 win over Iceland in tournament opener

THUN (SWITZERLAND), July 3: After missing three earlier chances, Katriina Kosola scored in the 70th minute to give Finland a 1-0 victory over Iceland in the opening game of the Women's European Championship on Wednesday. Kosola cut in from the left flank to curl a rising right-footed shot into the net and fully take advantage of Iceland having a player sent off 12 minutes earlier. In the first half, the 24-year-old Kosola forced Iceland goalkeeper Cecilia Rinarsdottir into a diving save and fired two more shots just over the crossbar.

Iceland's own left winger Sveindís Jónsdóttir, who will join Angel City in the United States after the tournament, missed with a clear chance to level the game in the 75th. Jónsdóttir also went close deep into stoppage time.

Iceland went down to 10 players in the 58th when midfielder Hildur Antonsdóttir was shown a second yellow card for a dangerous tackle.



Finland's 16-year waitBoth teams had failed to win a game at each of their previous two Euros tournaments. "The result is important for our confidence," Kosola said after Finland ended a winless run that stretched to Euro 2009. "It was the kind of goal I have been practicing a lot. I had a couple of chances in the first half."

Finland's win is a strong move in Group A, which has no clear

standout team and is widely seen as the most finely balanced at the 16-nation tournament.

Norway later joined Finland on three points, beating host Switzerland 2-1 in Basel after the official on-field opening ceremony for what was the second of 31 games in total. Basel hosts the final on July 27. Iceland's frustration "It's terrible to lose and we feel frustrated," Iceland coach Thorsteinn Halldórsson said in comments re-

Assam's Pratitee Bordoloi shines at FIDE World Cup, becomes Under-12 Girl's champion

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, July 3: Assam girl Pratitee Bordoloi has brought laurels to Assam and the entire North East by becoming the champion at the recently concluded Under-12 Girls FIDE World Cup Chess Tournament held in Batumi, Georgia.

In its second edition, the FIDE World Cup is a unique and prestigious chess tournament where top players from over 30 countries are divided into two groups for an initial stage consisting of seven matches. The group toppers then face off in a final showdown of two classical matches. In case of a tie, the format moves to two rapid matches, followed by two blitz matches until a winner is determined.

Starting as the second-seeded player in Group B of the Under-12 Girls category, Pratitee remained unbeaten throughout the group stage, scoring an impressive 6.5/7, defeating the top-seeded Nwankwo Michelle Chiamaka of

Nigeria, along with players from India, Russia, Georgia, and Mongolia.

In the final showdown, Pratitee faced the Group A leader and won both classical matches to decisively clinch the gold medal.

Notably, Pratitee was the runner-up at the FIDE World Cup 2024, which earned her the position of India's official representative in the 2025 tournament. For her outstanding performance, she received a trophy, certificate, and a MacBook.

Pratitee, who currently holds a FIDE rating of 1972, is also India's top-ranked player in the Under-12 Girls category. She is set to represent India next at the World Cadet Chess Championship to be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, this September.

Though she currently resides in Bengaluru, Pratitee hails from Assam. She is the daughter of Pritom Bordoloi (Sonari Gaon, Jorhat) and Dr. Pranti Dutta Bordoloi (Kushal Nagar, Jorhat).



At Wimbledon, a player's lament about loneliness revives a conversation about mental health

LONDON, July 3: When Naomi Osaka opened up about her anxiety and depression at the 2021 French Open, it sparked a conversation in sports — and society at large — about mental health and the importance of addressing such issues.

In the time since, more and more players have spoken about the topic and seeking help, and whatever taboos there were seem to have faded. Still, the way three-time Grand Slam finalist Alexander Zverev discussed his state of mind after a first-round exit at Wimbledon this week revived the conversation. "I feel very alone out there at times. I struggle mentally. ... I'm trying to find ways to kind of get out of this hole. I keep kind of finding myself back in it in a way," said Zverev, who was the runner-up at the Australian Open in January but then went through a rough

stretch of results this season when he had a chance to overtake Jannik Sinner at No. 1 in the rankings.

Alexander Zverev says at Wimbledon he feels quite alone in life.

"I feel, generally speaking, quite alone in life at the moment, which is a feeling that is not very nice," Zverev said. "It's not a feeling on a tennis court, it's just a life feeling in general."

Players at the All England Club were asked Wednesday about Zverev's words.

They could empathize, some said. Amanda Anisimova was a French Open semifinalist as a teen in 2019, then announced two years ago she was taking time off because of burnout. She's been back for a while now and reached the third round at Wimbledon with a victory Wednesday.

"It's definitely tricky. Each and every one of us goes through something at some point in our lives. We have our bouts of negative times."

"It honestly takes some self-reflecting, figuring out what's going wrong or how can I create a lifestyle that I enjoy. I feel like there are so many factors. For me, personally, it was finding people that I could confide in and I trusted. People that I could talk to," Anisimova said.

"What Alex said about feeling lonely ... a lot of people struggle with being lonely, especially on the pro circuit," she said, adding that taking a break from tour life "really helped me and I'm happy I did that, because I came back with a new perspective, felt refreshed, and I feel like I learned a lot about myself."

Wimbledon athletes talk about turning to therapy for help



Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka, who owns three major trophies, said that she worked with a therapist for five years.

"It's really important to talk openly about whatever you're dealing with. ... It's really important to be open and to talk about what are you experiencing, be-

cause if you're going to keep it inside, it's just going to destroy you. I think that's kind of like something happening to him," Sabalenka said. "I think (Zverev) just needs to open up to whoever is close to him."

At the Australian Open, title winner Madison Keys addressed

her reliance on therapy and the ways in which it both allowed her to be happier, in general, and more successful at tennis — a sport in which losses are frequent and expectations can be a burden.

On-court losses in tennis can affect off-court identities

"Our identity becomes very wrapped up in being a tennis player. That's great, but when you have the tough kind of weeks, months, years on tour, that can really take a toll on how you think about yourself as a person," Keys, a 30-year-old American, said Wednesday.

"So being able to kind of dive into that and figure out how to separate the two and know that you're not just a tennis player, you're a full person that has all of these other really great attributes and other interests and just different things in your life."

When a reporter asked the No. 3-seeded Zverev after his loss to unseeded Arthur Rinderknech on Tuesday whether he might consider trying therapy, the 28-year-old German replied: "For the first time in my life, I'll probably need it."

This is how he described his current mindset: "I've never felt this empty before. Just lacking joy, just lacking joy in everything that I do. It's not necessarily about tennis. Just lacking joy outside of tennis, as well."

Andrey Rublev, a 10-time Slam quarterfinalist from Russia who is seeded 14th at Wimbledon, said after his win Wednesday that life on tour, in and of itself, is not the problem for someone like Zverev.

"Tennis is just the trigger point," Rublev said. "It's something inside of you that you need to face." (AP)

U19 ODI: Record-breaking Suryavanshi helps India colts beat England by 4 wkts

NORTHAMPTON, July 3: Teenage sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi continued his rich vein of form by smashing a record nine sixes as India defeated England by four wickets in the rain-truncated third U19 Youth ODI to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series here.

The 14-year-old Suryavanshi, who had come close to striking half-centuries in the previous two games before getting dismissed in his 40s, finally made his innings count as he clobbered the home team bowling on way to 86 off just 31 deliveries as India chased England's 268/6 in 34.3 overs on Wednesday.

Suryavanshi's knock was studded with six boundaries and nine maximums.

In fact, nine sixes by Suryavanshi is the highest number of maximums hit by an Indian batter in an U-19 ODI eclipsing the previous record of eight sixes by Mandeep Singh.

India suffered a slump in the middle overs with the team reduced to 199 for 6 in the 24th over.

But bowling all-rounder Kanishk Chouhan (3/30), who had taken three England wickets earlier, hit an unbeaten 43 (42 balls) and shared an unbroken 75-run stand with RS Ambrish (31 not out) to guide the team to victory.

Suryavanshi ravaged every single bowler that bowled to him and made his intentions clear when he smacked right-arm pacer Se-



bastian Morgan for two consecutive sixes in the third over.

Morgan came in for some harsh punishment again in his subsequent over when he was hit for two more sixes and a boundary by the 14-year-old batting sensation, who has been on a roll since showing his precocious talent in the IPL for Rajasthan Royals.

England left-arm pacer James Minto bore the brunt of Suryavanshi's fury in the sixth over, going for 23 runs, which included three sixes and a boundary.

When Suryavanshi was finally dismissed, caught by Joseph Moores off right-arm pacer Alexander Wade, India had wiped off 111 runs from the target in only the eighth over.

Suryavanshi's departure saw India struggle a bit in the middle overs before Kanishk and Ambrish played with caution to guide the team home with 33 balls to spare.

Earlier, England skipper Thomas Rew smashed an unbeaten 76 (44 balls) while opener Ben Dawkins struck form with a fine 62 as the hosts scored a competitive 268 for

6 after the match was delayed due to a wet outfield.

Dawkins, a right-handed batter, following two successive below-par scores, gave England the start they needed after they were put in to bat by the visitors on an overcast day.

Dawkins and his left-handed opening partner Isaac Mohammed (41 off 43 balls) displayed immense calm playing the moving ball as they stitched together a 78-run partnership at the top to give the hosts the start they needed.

Isaac's dismissal did not slow the flow of runs as the next batter in Ben Mayes played an almost run-a-ball innings scoring 31 (32) to guide England to 133/2 by the 22nd over.

The 55-run partnership for the second wicket between Dawkins and Mayes really gave the home team the momentum, which was later capitalised by skipper Rew as he launched into the Indian bowling attack by playing some cracking shots that left the visitors searching for ideas.

Brief scores:

England U-19: 174 all out in 42.2 overs (Isaac Mohammed 41, BJ Dawkins 62, Ben Mayes 31, Thomas Rew 76 not out, Ralphie Albert 21; Kanishk Chouhan 3/30) lost to India U-19: 274 for 6 in 34.3 overs (Vaibhav Suryavanshi 86, Vihaan Malhotra 46, Rahul Kumar 27, Kanishk Chouhan 43 not out, RS Ambrish 31 not out; Alexander Wade 2/58). (PTI)

Pakistan gets government nod to be in India for hockey's Asia Cup and Junior World Cup



NEW DELHI, July 3: Pakistan's

hockey teams will not be stopped from competing in next month's Asia Cup and the subsequent junior World Cup in India as any move to block the arch-foes from multi-lateral competitions in the country would be a violation of the Olympic Charter, a sports ministry source said on Thursday.

While the Asia Cup is scheduled to be held in Rajgir, Bihar from August 27 to September 7, the junior World Cup will be organised in Chennai and Madurai from November 28 to December 10.

"We are not against any team competing in India in a multi-national competition. If we try to stop Pakistan it would be seen as a violation of the Olympic Charter. Likewise, we will also show up for any multi-national event that features Pakistan. But bilateral is different and there will be no relaxation on that front," the source said.

The ministry's decision also clears the decks for Pakistani participation in the junior World Cup of shooting, scheduled here in September, and the World Para-Athletics Championships, also in the national capital in September-October.

The Charter is akin to the constitution of the Olympic movement and stresses on sport as a tool for promoting international peace and cooperation.

As a result, any attempt to block a rival country from a multi-national event adversely impacts the host country's prospects of getting future hosting rights.

When asked whether this means India will be allowed to play against Pakistan in the Asia Cup of

cricket in September, the source said, "The BCCI is yet to reach out to the ministry on this. We will address this query when they approach us."

Speculation is rife that India and Pakistan will play each other in a round robin match during the continental tournament, which is set to be held in the UAE or Sri Lanka even though the original host is India.

India and Pakistan have been avoiding bilateral sporting engagements after the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks but even multi-lateral face-offs were in doubt after the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 tourists were gunned down in April.

In May, India retaliated with Operation Sindoor, targeting terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan, leading to a tense military showdown that de-escalated on Pakistan's request for a ceasefire.

"International sports demands that we cannot back out from competing in multi-national competitions. Take for instance, Russia and Ukraine, they are at war but they show up at multi-national events and compete as well. That's the norm and we are respecting these norms," the source said.

"We have informed Hockey India about this decision," he added.

Hockey India (HI) welcomed the ministry's call.

"We welcome government's decision. Our stance from the beginning was that whatever the government decides, we will abide by that. There is no other argument in that," HI secretary general Bhola Nath Singh said. (PTI)

Summer cricket training camp at Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 3: A summer cricket training camp for junior boys and girls will be held at the Nurul Amin Stadium here, starting from July 12.

This special cricket training camp is being organised by the Nagaon Sports Association. According to Mrinal Kumar Hazarika, secretary of the Cricket Wing of the Sports Association, the training will be completely free of cost. Boys and girls interested in taking training can collect registration forms from the Association's office starting from July 4. The camp will conclude on July 26.

Deepti Sharma credits long training period ahead of England tour for positive results

LONDON, July 3: India women's team has benefitted from a nearly month-long preparatory period in Bengaluru and England, which has helped them acclimatise well to the conditions, all-rounder Deepti Sharma said on Friday.

The Indian players underwent a 25-day camp in Bengaluru before arriving in England eight days ahead of their five-match T20I series. They currently lead the series 2-0, having won the first two matches by 97 runs and 24 runs respectively.

"The conditions were somewhat similar during the camp in Bengaluru. It was windy and we got help to adjust to this weather," Deepti told the media on the eve of the third T20I at The Oval.

"We came here one week or so before the series, everyone was able to adapt well and the practice matches also helped in getting used-to to the conditions. The youngsters were benefitted from it.

"Thanks to BCCI that they arranged the camp, we got good practice in windy conditions against the moving ball," she added.

Deepti said getting to bat at different positions was one of the features of the camp.

"All middle-order batters played at different positions during match simulations in Bengaluru. It gave us an idea about flexibility and to avoid any surprises. We all are ready and clear about our positions," she said.

Deepti was full of praise for 20-year-old spinner Shree Charani, who has taken six wickets in the first two games, having made her T20I debut in the series opener.

"It's not easy on debut, but she took four wickets in her first game. She is pretty young; I appreciate that she assessed the conditions and bowled in the right areas because it is not easy," Deepti said.

"She was very confident heading into her first game and even in the second, she took crucial wickets. She is developing herself quickly in these conditions."

On India needing just one more win from the remaining three matches to secure their maiden series win in England, Deepti said the team will stick to the basics and not look too far ahead.

"We will follow our processes and take it one game at a time. We won't try to do anything different," she said.

"We are not looking that far. We are taking it only one game at a time and trying to continue what we are doing," Deepti replied when asked what the series win would mean given the next T20 World Cup is in England in 2026. (PTI)

India eye maiden women's T20I series victory over England

LONDON, July 3: Riding a wave of momentum, India will look to secure their maiden women's T20I series triumph over England when they lock horns with the hosts in the third game of a five-match series here on Friday.

Harmanpreet Kaur and Co. have been in red-hot form, having handed England a record-shattering 97-run defeat in the series-opener before sealing a 24-run win in Bristol, England women's first-ever T20I loss at the venue, to take a commanding 2-0 lead.

In 2006, India had beaten England in a lone match played in Derby. Since then, the Women in Blue have fallen short in every women's T20I series against England, both at home and away.

This dominant performance comes as a timely boost for India as they continue to adapt to English conditions, a crucial exercise in the build-up to next year's ICC Women's T20 World Cup to be held in England.

So far, the Indian unit has functioned like a well-oiled machine. Vice-captain Smriti Mandhana, who scored a century, and Harleen Deol were instrumental with the bat in the opener.

In the second match, Amanjot Kaur and Jemimah Rodrigues rescued the visitors from a precarious position with vital half-centuries, propelling India to a formidable total.

However, the spotlight now turns



to big-hitting opener Shafali Verma, who will be eager to make a statement. Back in the squad, Shafali has struggled to get going with scores of 20 and 3 in the series. She will be desperate for a defining innings.

Skipper Kaur, who missed the opener as a precautionary measure following a head injury sustained during a warm-up match, will also look to spend some time in the middle after her two-ball stay in the second match.

The Indian bowling attack has stepped up admirably in the absence of pace spearheads Renuka Singh and Pooja Vastrakar.

Left-arm spinner Sree Charani has emerged as the breakout star in her debut series. The 20-year-old leads the wicket charts with six scalps and also has the best economy rate in the series -- a frugal 5.11. For the hosts, one of main issues has been the inability of openers Sophia Dunkley and Danni

Wyatt-Hodge to provide a solid start.

While Dunkley has enjoyed some good beginnings, Wyatt-Hodge has made a total of 18 runs across five innings this summer, including three successive ducks. Their bowling too has been sub par.

Squads:

India: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Yastika Bhatia (wk), Harleen Deol, Richa Ghosh (wk), Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Amanjot Kaur, Sneha Rana, Sayali Satghare, Deepti Sharma, Kranti Goud, Arundhati Reddy, Shree Charani, Radha Yadav.

England: Natalie Sciver-Brunt (c), Tammy Beaumont (wk), Sophia Dunkley, Amy Jones (wk), Danni Wyatt-Hodge, Alice Capsey, Charlotte Dean, Paige Scholfield, Em Arlott, Lauren Bell, Sophie Ecclestone, Lauren Filer, Linsey Smith, Issy Wong.

Match starts at 11:05pm IST.(PTI)

DPL: Rishabh Pant to stay with Purani Dilli 6 for coming season

NEW DELHI, July 3: India's Test vice-captain Rishabh Pant will be staying on with Purani Dilli 6 for the upcoming season of Delhi Premier League but whether he would be available for any games considering the national team's schedule is a big question.

Pant, arguably, the biggest attraction among a bevy of young T20 stars lighting up the league, played one game in the inaugural edition last year.

"Purani Dilli 6 has officially announced the retention of star wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant for the upcoming season. Pant has been retained as the marquee player," the franchise stated in a media release.

"Many players from across the country have emerged and developed through the opportunities provided by the DPL, such as Digvesh Rathi, Priyansh Arya, among others. Purani Dilli 6 truly feels like home. Following a promising season last year, we are optimistic about returning even stronger this year," Pant was quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, the DDCA has officially announced the addition of two new men's franchises to the Delhi Premier League.

The Outer Delhi and New Delhi franchises will debut in the 2025 season, expanding the league from six to eight teams. (PTI)

Gill's strategy and body language on Day 1 traits of a world class player: Trott

MUMBAI, July 3: India captain Shubman Gill's clearly thought-out strategy and body language on the opening day of the second Test against England are traits of a world-class player with a bright future, says former cricketer Jonathan Trott.

Gill stood tall with a second consecutive ton in the five-Test series, reaching 114 not out (216 balls, 12 fours) at stumps to take India to a sturdy 310/5 on the opening day of the second Test in Birmingham.

The former England batter and incumbent Afghanistan coach heaped praise on the Indian skipper, who held the innings together on a tricky opening day wherein England threatened to cause more damage than they did.

"What also stood out was his body language and the way he scored his runs. His control against the English bowlers sent a message to the dressing room that he was taking charge (and) leading from the front," Trott said in 'JioHotstar'.

"His intent was clear: 'I'll be there, I'll be not out, and I'll resume tomorrow. I'll make sure we get into a winning position'. (It was) very impressive from such a young man — a world-class player with a bright future."

"Having the confidence to execute a plan that's not necessarily textbook, but gives you an edge over the opposition, is remarkable. As captain, that has a significant impact not just out in the middle, but also for those watching from the team balcony," he added.

Trott pointed out the difference in Gill's approach while facing England



pacers Brydon Carse and Chris Woakes as one of the highlights of his innings.

"Carse has a bit more pace than Chris Woakes, but what's impressive is Gill's understanding of how to counter both," he said.

"He knows Woakes will try to attack the stumps, and without express pace, Gill formulated a plan to handle that — not something he came up with on the day, but a strategy clearly thought out well in advance. This is what separates good players from average ones and world-class players from the rest."

While Gill crossed the triple-figure mark, opener Yashasvi Jaiswal missed his second hundred when he fell for 87 but his performances in England so far have impressed the former batter.

"There was a bit of a contrast — some play and misses, but also some exquisite cricket shots. We've spoken about how he tends to chase the ball outside off at times, but when he plays straight, he times the ball so well."

"He doesn't need to over-hit. We've seen him dismantle bowling attacks before, and he's shown he can hit sixes almost at will. But across these three innings in England, he seems to be in much better control."

Trott added, "He has developed a game plan; he knows where and when to score. England will try to challenge that with tricky field placements, testing his patience and ego. But overall, (he is) very impressive. He is a fantastic player for India." (PTI)



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