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## KAAC asked to prioritise public welfare

Governor reviews flagship schemes during Karbi Anglong visit



HT Bureau

**DIPHU, July 10:** Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Thursday undertook a comprehensive review of development initiatives in Karbi Anglong district during his official visit, reiterating the state's commitment to inclusive progress and grassroots empowerment.

The visit included interactions with distinguished citizens, council authorities, and departmental officials, and concluded with a strong message emphasising timely and effective implementation of welfare schemes across the district.

According to an official statement, the Governor's first engagement was an interaction with Padma Shri awardees, noted sportspersons, social activists, and freedom fighters at the Conference Hall of Kajir Ronghangpi Guest House.

Recognising their contributions to society, Governor Acharya hailed them as torchbearers of the district's unique cultural and social heritage.

"True development lies not only in infrastructural progress but also in the preservation and promotion of one's own heritage," he said, adding that meaningful development occurs when cultural identity and tradition are integrated into broader progress.

He expressed gratitude to these personalities for

safeguarding Karbi Anglong's traditions and contributing to the overall strength and growth of Assam.

Later, the Governor chaired a high-level meeting with Chief Executive Member (CEM) Tuliram Ronghang and Executive Members of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).

He urged the Council to intensify efforts toward addressing developmental challenges and prioritise public welfare. "Making Assam one of the best-performing states in the country must be our collective mission," he added.

The Governor reviewed the implementation status of major Central and State schemes under the jurisdiction of the KAAC. He called for stronger delivery mechanisms to enhance the success rate of initiatives aimed at inclusive development.

Special attention was given to the agriculture and fishery sectors, which Governor Acharya described as critical to the district's economic sustainability.

He encouraged a focused and coordinated approach to revitalise these sectors, turning them into key drivers of both district-level and state-wide growth. The review covered flagship schemes including the Amrit Sarovar project, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, PM Fasal Bima Yojana, and PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

80 more model schools to be inaugurated by January 2026: CM

## Major reforms in tea garden and adarsha schools on anvil



HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, July 10:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday interacted with Headmasters of Tea Garden Model Schools and Adarsha Vidyalayas at a programme held at the GMCH Auditorium, where he unveiled a series of key policy decisions aimed at improving infrastructure, academic quality, and student welfare in these institutions.

The interaction was part of a broader initiative by the state government to transform education in remote and underprivileged areas, particularly among tea garden communities.

According to an official statement, Sarma announced that the Assam government will operationalise 80 more Tea Garden Model Schools in January 2026.

This will be in addition to the 118 schools that were inaugurated following the laying of foundation stones in November 2022.

The Chief Minister stated that the expansion is a result of the positive outcomes observed in existing model schools, which have played a crucial role in delivering quality education to children in tea garden areas. The Tea Garden Model School initiative was launched with the goal of establishing 200 schools across 800 tea gardens in the state, providing accessible and holistic education to one of Assam's most underserved communities.

munities.

"Our objective is not just to open schools, but to enhance the academic and infrastructural standards so that students receive the best possible environment to learn and grow," said Sarma.

Highlighting further reforms, the Chief Minister said the government is actively considering the introduction of a mid-day meal programme for students of Class IX and X, expanding on the existing programme for students up to Class VIII.

He noted that this would help reduce dropout rates and incentivise older students to stay in school.

Additionally, the government is also exploring the launch of a School Breakfast Programme along with mandatory health check-ups to promote students' physical well-being and attendance.

He added that efforts are underway to equip schools with smart classrooms and interactive boards, particularly in model schools, to bring digital learning to rural students.

To address mobility issues faced by children in remote tea garden areas, bicycles will be distributed to students from Class VI onwards, Sarma announced. This is expected to help students travel longer distances to reach schools, especially in regions with limited public transport. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Govt approves ₹1,066 cr to 6 disaster-hit states: Shah

**NEW DELHI, July 10:** The Centre has approved ₹1,066.80 crore for flood and landslide affected states of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Kerala and Uttarakhand as part of the central share under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Thursday.

Shah also said that the Narendra Modi government stands resolutely beside the states in all situations like flood, landslide and cloudburst. "Today the central government has approved ₹1,066.80 crore for flood and landslide affected states of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Kerala and Uttarakhand as part of the central share under SDRF," he wrote on 'X'.

The home minister said apart from the financial aid, providing all logistic assistance, including deployment of requisite National Disaster Response Force, Army and Air Force, has been the priority of the government.

Among the six flood affected states, Assam received ₹375.60 crore, ₹29.20 crore was given to Manipur, ₹30.40 crore to Meghalaya, ₹22.80 crore to Mizoram, ₹153.20 crore to Kerala and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Gaja Mitra scheme sealed, Gaon Pradhan pay hiked

Cabinet okays SOPs aimed at curbing unethical conduct by private hospitals and nursing homes

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, July 10:** The Assam Cabinet, in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday, approved a series of decisions aimed at strengthening public welfare, education, traditional institutions, and healthcare accountability in the state.

According to an official statement, the Cabinet gave its nod to the implementation of the Gaja Mitra Scheme in eight districts identified as highly prone to human-elephant conflict—Goalpara, Udalguri, Nagaon, Baksa, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Jorhat, and Biswanath.

As part of the scheme, community-based voluntary monitoring and rapid response teams will be formed in 80 locations.

Each team will comprise eight members drawn from local communities and operate for a six-month period, coinciding with the peak human-elephant conflict season, which aligns with the paddy cultivation cycle.



The initiative aims to establish a proactive, trained, and community-based support system that will assist the Forest Department in mitigating conflict, preserving lives and livelihoods, and ensuring safe corridors for elephant movement.

The Cabinet also approved a proposal to

enhance the monthly remuneration of Gaon Pradhans from the existing ₹9,000 to ₹14,000 with effect from October 1, 2025.

This increase, aligned with the state's 2025-26 budget announcement, will also extend to Gaon Pradhans in forest villages.

In another administrative decision, the Cabinet de-notified two villages—Mornoi Bebeja and Bebeja—from the Subansiri Tribal Block under Subansiri Revenue Circle in Lakhimpur district, citing that the population of protected persons in these villages was below five percent.

In a move to support spiritual and cultural institutions, the Cabinet decided to offer a monthly stipend of ₹1,500 to celibate monks (Udasin Bhakats) residing in Satras across Assam. The financial assistance is intended as both a gesture of respect and a means to support the wellbeing of these traditional custodians.

To address concerns over coercive practices in private healthcare, the Cabinet approved a draft (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Army constable among three held for running opium racket

**NEW DELHI, July 10:** An army constable, his girlfriend and an accomplice of his were arrested in Delhi's Kalindi Kunj area for smuggling opium worth ₹1 crore in an SUV on Thursday, an official said.

The arrested constable, Godhu Ram (31), had allegedly been on the run from the Indian Army for the past nine months and had been using his leave period to facilitate the smuggling of opium from Manipur to Rajasthan and Delhi-NCR, he said.

The trio was arrested near Kalindi Kunj area on July 7 when they were intercepted in the SUV car. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Aalap Patel said, adding that a concealed consignment of 18 kg opium was recovered from their possession. "The gang had modified the vehicle by creating secret compartments beneath the floor mats to discreetly transport the contraband," Patel added.

During the search, the police team also recovered a licensed pistol of 0.32 bore along with six live cartridges from the vehicle. The SUV and the weapon were registered in Ram's name, he said.

The arrests were made on a tip-off received by Delhi Police's Special Cell (Southern Range). Acting on the information, a trap was laid near Agra Canal Road in the Kalindi Kunj area on July 7.

"On spotting the vehicle, the team swiftly



cordoned it off and apprehended all three occupants. Upon checking, 18 packets of high-grade opium were recovered, hidden beneath the floor mats of the car," the DCP added.

A case under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act was registered at the Special Cell Police Station, New Delhi.

According to investigators, the seized consignment was procured from a supplier based in Manipur and was intended for distribution across Delhi-NCR, Haryana, and Rajasthan.

Initial interrogation revealed that the accused had been part of a well-organised supply chain and used the cover of personal travel to avoid detection. Police said that none of the three accused have any prior criminal records. Further investigation is underway to identify the larger network and the source of procurement. (PTI)

## FLOOD IN NE Indian Army activates relief ops, over 3,800 rescued

**GUWAHATI, July 10:** The Indian Army has launched extensive humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations (HADR), following heavy rain and flood in several states of North East, according to an official release issued on Thursday.

The army has so far deployed 40 relief columns across the region and rescued a total of 3,820 people, it said. The military force has launched the exercise under Operation Jal Rahat-2 with coordinated deployment across Nagaland, Assam and Manipur.

"These efforts are being led by Headquarters Inspector General Assam Rifles (North) in collaboration with local civil administration," the statement said.

The army has also distributed 1,361 food packets, supplied 15,421 water bottles and provided medical aid to 2,095 people, it said.

In Assam, the Indian Army activated its HADR operations in the upper districts with the Dhansiri river in Golaghat breaching the danger levels.

"Although water levels are now receding, the Indian Army continues to monitor the situation closely and is ready to intervene, should the need arise," it added.

Talking about Nagaland, it said that the deputy commissioner of Dimapur on Thursday requisitioned assistance from the Indian Army to provide immediate flood relief in Singrijan Colony, one of the worst-hit areas.

"The army swiftly responded with the deployment of an Engineer Task Force (ETF) team. While a verbal de-requisition was received later in the day, the army remains on standby with (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Two arrested in Jorhat for illegally practising as doctors

Clinics shut down following CID complaint

HT Correspondent

**JORHAT, July 10:** Police in Jorhat on Thursday arrested two individuals for allegedly practising medicine without the requisite qualifications or registration, following a complaint filed by the Assam Council of Medical Registration.

The arrests were made in two separate cases under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The accused, Ashok Kumar Gogoi (46), a resident of Jail Road, Samannay Path, and Amar Jyoti Nath (38) of Bahona Tinali, were booked under Sections 319(2), 316(2), 336(2), 125, and 271 of the BNS.

The cases have been registered as Jorhat Police Station case numbers 345/2025 and 346/2025.

Jorhat Additional Superintendent of Police (Headquarters) Luna Sonowal informed reporters that the arrests followed a complaint submitted to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) by Dr Abhijit Neog, Nodal Officer of the Anti-Quackery Cell, Assam Council of Medical Registration.

The complaint alleged that the two individuals had been impersonating qualified medical practitioners.

Preliminary investigation revealed that Gogoi had been running a practice from his chamber on Old Circuit House Road for the past eight years, while Nath was operating from Khojuriguri, Borigaon for the last three years.

During questioning, Gogoi claimed to have undertaken a course in homeopathy, and Nath claimed to



(Ashok Kumar Gogoi) (Amar Jyoti Nath)

hold a qualification in naturopathy.

However, neither had registration with any recognised medical body to practice as licensed doctors.

Police have seized their educational documents, which are being sent to the respective institutions for verification.

Prescription pads falsely identifying them as MDs were also recovered from their chambers.

In a related development, the Joint Director of Health Services, Jorhat, issued an official order on Wednesday directing the immediate closure of Gogoi's clinic, Hahnemann Homeo Clinic.

The registration previously issued to him was also terminated.

The order stated that the action was based on the findings of a medical inquiry team led by a Sub-Divisional Medical and Health Officer, which was constituted after a complaint (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Flood risk in 21 locations; 4 sites under severe condition, says govt water body

**NEW DELHI, July 10:** The Central Water Commission (CWC) flagged flood concerns in 21 river monitoring sites across India, including four under severe flood conditions, according to its daily flood bulletin issued Thursday.

While no rivers have breached their highest flood levels (HFL), so far, four locations in Assam and Bihar are witnessing water levels that have crossed the danger mark. The Dhansiri River in Assam's Golaghat district, and the Bagmati and Gandak Rivers in Bihar are among the key rivers where levels remain critical, with rising or steady trends.

Seventeen additional sites are experiencing "above normal" flood situations, with water levels hovering between the warning and danger thresholds. These include

river stretches across Assam, Bihar, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

The situation in Assam remains a cause for concern, as the Barak, Kushiara, and Katakhal rivers are showing rising trends in the Cachar, Karimganj, and Hailakandi districts, respectively. Meanwhile, in Bihar, the Bagmati River at Runisaidpur and the Kosi River at Basua are also rising, though still below danger levels.

In Uttar Pradesh, multiple Ganga monitoring stations, including Fatehgarh, Garhmukteshwar, and Kachhla Bridge, reported levels above warning thresholds. The Ghagra River at Elginbridge and the Gandak at Khadda are also under close watch. The bulletin also said that 25 reservoir sites across 13 states (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Survey underscores Nongsaya Lake's potential as key biodiversity zone and eco-tourism hub in eastern Arunachal

## 89 bird species recorded in survey in Arunachal's Namsai



biodiversity, with immense potential for bird and butterfly conservation.

In addition to acting as a natural habitat, the area could serve as

an ideal location for environmental education and recreational activities," Mama said.

Highlighting the ecological significance of the lake, he stated that the area could contribute meaningfully to sustainable development and community engagement in ecosystem protection.

The team also recorded several butterfly species, including the rare Assam Pasa, underlining the area's ecological richness, he said.

With its lush green forest cover and potential as a sanctuary for migratory water birds, Nongsaya Lake holds promise as a future global bird-watching destination, the conservationist said.

Mama stressed that the creation of suitable infrastructure, particularly carefully designed trekking routes that avoid disturbing

wildlife, could open the area to responsible ecotourism.

He emphasised that the lake's ecosystem plays a crucial role in preserving major watersheds and sustaining biodiversity.

"With a proper development strategy, the lake can serve multiple purposes, such as conservation, sustainable fishing, recreation, and as a sanctuary for migratory birds," Mama added.

Migratory birds, in particular, play a vital role in maintaining ecological balance, serving as indicators of environmental health and aiding in long-term conservation planning. Mama believes that the development of Nongsaya Lake as a green biodiversity zone could substantially enhance both environmental and economic sustainability in Namsai district. (PTI)



## Markets wilt under selling pressure; Sensex drops 345 points on weakness in IT stocks

**MUMBAI, July 10:** Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure on Thursday due to weakness in IT and telecom stocks as investors turned cautious ahead of the start of earnings season, with tech major TCS scheduled to announce its Q1 numbers later in the day.

Tariff-related uncertainty also dampened investor sentiment in the market, traders said.

Sliding for the second straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 345.80 points or 0.41 per cent to settle at 83,190.28. During the day, it declined 401.11 points or 0.48 per cent to 83,134.97.

As many as 2,064 stocks declined, while 1,959 advanced and 138 remained unchanged on the BSE. On similar lines, the 50-share NSE Nifty declined 120.85 points or 0.47 per cent to 25,355.25.

A positive momentum in global equities, however, restricted the loss in the domestic markets.

"Indian equities concluded the day in the red, weighed down by weakness in IT stocks ahead of TCS' Q1 results. Investor sentiment remains cautious ahead of the Q1 results in anticipation of a muted start to the season from the IT and finance sectors. However, the recent consolidation in the IT stocks largely factors in the muted outlook, limiting further worries,"



Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

From the Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel, Asian Paints, Infosys, Bharat Electronics, Tech Mahindra and Eternal were major laggards.

However, Maruti, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Trent and Tata Consultancy Services were among the gainers.

"Dalal Street ended in the red on Thursday, as investors remained cautious ahead of two key events - US President Donald Trump's upcoming tariff announcement and the start of India's Q1FY26 earnings season, with TCS scheduled to report results post market hours," Gaurav Garg, Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

The BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.28 per cent while the smallcap index inched higher by 0.12 per cent. Among BSE sectoral indices, tech dropped 1.17 per cent, telecommunication (1.11 per cent), BSE Focused IT (0.77 per cent), IT (0.71 per cent) and consumer durables (0.44 per cent).

Realty, metal, oil & gas and utilities were the gainers.

"On the sectoral front, profit booking in IT majors ahead of TCS results weighed on the index, followed closely by weakness in FMCG and pharma stocks. However, the realty and metal sectors bucked the trend and closed in the green. The broader indices also ended with modest losses, contin-

uing their profit-taking phase," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

An Indian commerce ministry team will soon visit Washington for another round of talks on the proposed trade agreement with the US to iron out differences in sectors, like agriculture and automobiles, a government official said on Thursday.

This visit is significant as the US has further extended the imposition of additional import duties (in the case of India, it is 26 per cent) till August 1. India is seeking the removal of this additional tariff.

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

European markets were trading mostly higher.

The US markets ended in positive territory on Wednesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 77 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.27 per cent to USD 70 a barrel.

On Wednesday, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 176.43 points or 0.21 per cent to settle at 83,536.08. The Nifty declined 46.40 points or 0.18 per cent to end at 25,476.10. (PTI)

## India now makes faster payments than any other country, courtesy UPI: IMF note

**NEW DELHI, July 10:** India now makes faster payments than any other country with the quick growth of UPI, and the usage of other instruments, including debit and credit cards, is on the decline, according to an IMF note. Unified Payments Interface is an instant and real-time payment system developed by NPCI to facilitate inter-bank transactions through mobile phones. IMF's Fintech Note titled 'Growing Retail Digital Payments: The Value of Interoperability' said that since its launch in 2016, UPI has grown quickly, while some proxies for cash usage have begun to decline.

UPI now processes more than 18 billion transactions per month and dominates other electronic retail payments in India. "India now makes faster payments than any other country. At the same time, proxies for cash usage have fallen," the note said.

The note presents evidence consistent with this framework using granular data covering the universe of transactions on India's UPI, an interoperable plat-

form that has become the world's largest retail fast payment system by volume.

"Since its launch in 2016, UPI has grown quickly, while some proxies for cash usage have begun to decline. UPI now processes more than 18 billion transactions per month and dominates other electronic retail payments in India," the fintech note said.

Fintech Notes offer practical advice from IMF staff members to policymakers on important issues.

It said that interoperable payment systems, such as UPI, are alternatives to closed-loop systems that could also foster the adoption of digital payments. Such systems allow for seamless payments between users of different payment providers. "Importantly, total digital payments also rise relative to a proxy for cash usage," it said. The note further said that estimating cash usage is difficult because cash transactions can occur anonymously and may not be recorded in any ledger, especially in the informal sector. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## KAAC asked to prioritise

The Governor urged officials to extend the benefits of the National Social Assistance Programme to more eligible individuals, ensuring wider social protection.

He also took note of progress under the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM) and called for capacity-building and financial support to empower women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

He emphasised the importance of creating sustainable livelihoods through training and linkages.

Governor Acharya further reviewed the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission, PM POSHAN (Mid-Day Meal), and Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY, reiterating the need for effective monitoring and last-mile delivery. On the health front, he sought detailed updates on the TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan and the Nikshay Mitra initiative, emphasising early detection and community support as key to success.

Appraising the Public Works Department (PWD) for its efforts in improving road connectivity, the Governor highlighted the strategic importance of infrastructure in facilitating development and service delivery.

In his concluding remarks, Governor Acharya urged all officials and stakeholders to work in synergy with dedication and service-mindedness. "The true success of any scheme lies in its reach to the last beneficiary. Let us commit ourselves to this goal and work together for a stronger and more developed Assam," he said. The visit underscored the importance of accountability, coordination, and inclusive governance in realising the vision of Viksit Assam and Viksit Bharat.

## Major reforms in tea garden

Another key measure proposed by the government includes skill development training for students of Class IX and X in both Tea Garden Model Schools and Adarsha Vidyalayas. Sarma emphasised the importance of equipping students with employable skills alongside formal education.

During the session, the Chief Minister reviewed pass percentages, teacher vacancies, and student attendance, and instructed education officials to continue improving the quality of teaching.

He also stated that one-year mandatory apprenticeship training for B.Ed students will be formalised in these schools, giving aspiring teachers hands-on experience while supporting the staffing needs of rural institutions.

Sarma further instructed authorities to build boundary walls around schools that lack them, in response to requests raised by headmasters. The state government also encouraged enrolment from all communities in the Tea Garden Model Schools to foster social integration. Another key measure proposed by the government includes skill development training for students of Class IX and X in both Tea Garden Model Schools and Adarsha Vidyalayas. Sarma emphasised the importance of equipping students with employable skills alongside formal education. During the session, the Chief Minister reviewed pass percentages, teacher vacancies, and student attendance, and instructed education officials to continue improving the quality of teaching.

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Sarma further instructed authorities to build boundary walls around schools that lack them, in response to requests raised by headmasters. The state government also encouraged enrolment from all communities in the Tea Garden Model Schools to foster social integration (CONTD. ON PAGE-2) and communal harmony. In reference to Adarsha Vidyalayas—currently 57 in number across the state—Sarma reiterated the state's vision of nurturing talent and creativity in remote areas through high-quality education.

He encouraged headmasters to strive for academic excellence and to continue upholding the values for which the schools were founded. The interactive session was attended by Education Minister Ranajit Pegu, Labour Welfare Minister Rupesh Gowala, Additional Chief Secretary for Tea Tribes Welfare J B Ekka, and Mission Director of Samagra Shiksha Assam Om Prakash, along with other senior education and administrative officials.

The announcements reflect the Assam government's continued push towards educational equity and reform, particularly in tea garden areas that have historically faced barriers to quality schooling. The state's focus now shifts to effective implementation of these measures, with the aim of transforming Tea Garden Model Schools and Adarsha Vidyalayas into centres of academic excellence and inclusive development.

## Govt approves ` 1,066 cr to 6

₹ 455.60 crore to Uttarakhand as the central share from SDRF, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs. These states have been affected due to extremely heavy rainfall, floods and landslides during the southwest monsoon this year.

The Modi government has provided more than ₹ 8,000 crore from SDRF/National Disaster Response Fund to various states this year, the statement said. It has already released ₹ 6,166.00 crore from the SDRF to 14 states and ₹ 1,988.91 crore from the NDRF to 12 states.

In addition, ₹ 726.20 crore was released from the State Disaster Mitigation Fund to five states and ₹ 17.55 crore from the National Disaster Mitigation Fund was also released to two states, the statement said. During the ongoing monsoon, 104 teams of the NDRF were deployed in 21 states/UTs for rescue and relief operations. (PTI)

## Gaja Mitra scheme sealed

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and regulatory guidelines aimed at curbing unethical conduct by private hospitals and nursing homes. Key provisions of the guidelines include mandatory handover of deceased patients within two hours of death certification, irrespective of payment status, with violations attracting penal action.

All such incidents must be reported to the police and district health authority within four hours. A 24x7 toll-free government helpline (104) will be set up for families to report coercive practices, with mandated escalation to relevant authorities. Immediate action will be taken to release wrongfully withheld bodies and initiate legal proceedings. Penalties for offending hospitals may include license suspension, monetary fines up to ₹ 5 lakh, blacklisting, or permanent deregistration for repeat offences.

Further, the Cabinet approved the "Assam Goods and Services Tax (Reimbursement for Indigenous Bell Metal Industries) Scheme, 2025," which aims to reimburse State GST paid by bell metal manufacturers.

The scheme is designed to ease the financial burden on traditional artisans and support the survival of the indigenous craft. In the education sector, the Cabinet greenlit the "Prerona Aasoni" scheme, which will provide financial assistance of ₹ 300 per month to all Class X students studying in schools affiliated with the Assam State Secondary Education Board (ASSEB Div-I) and appearing in the HSLC Examination 2026.

The scheme will be implemented from November 1, 2025, and funds will be transferred via Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). Additionally, the Cabinet approved an increase in state incentives for Anganwadi Workers and Helpers by ₹ 1,500 and ₹ 750 respectively, effective from October 1, 2025. Following this revision, Anganwadi Workers will receive a total monthly remuneration of ₹ 8,000 and Helpers will receive ₹ 4,000. Lastly, the Cabinet approved the proposal to change the name of Rabindranath Tagore University to Rabindranath Thakur Vishwavidyalaya.

## Indian Army activates relief

resources mobilised through the Flood Relief Control Centre at HQ IGAR (N)," the release said.

In Manipur, the Nambol river flowing through Imphal West and Bishnupur districts has also surpassed danger levels. "While floodwaters are beginning to recede, the army remains actively engaged in relief operations in coordination with civil authorities," it added. (PTI)

## Two arrested in Jorhat for

from a local doctors' association. The team reportedly found evidence of malpractice, misinformation, and fraudulent activity at the clinic. Police said legal proceedings are underway, and further investigations are being conducted to determine the full extent of the accused's practice and the number of patients treated.

## Flood risk in 21 locations;

have reported inflows equal to or exceeding threshold limits. These include major reservoirs such as Srisailem in Andhra Pradesh, Almatti in Karnataka, Hirakud in Odisha, and the Indira Sagar and Bargi dams in Madhya Pradesh. Telangana's Laxmi Barrage on the Godavari River saw one of the highest inflows with 18,000 cumecs, while the Indira Sagar Reservoir in Madhya Pradesh received an inflow of 11,000 cumecs.

Other affected states with active inflow forecasts include Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal, with water levels being closely monitored at sites like Maithon, Panchat, Gosikhurd, Mettur, and Kangsabati. (PTI)

## Small tea growers urges Centre for fair price discovery mechanism

**KOLKATA, July 10:** Small tea growers, who contribute more than 50 per cent to the crop production of the country, have urged the Centre to set up a fair and transparent price discovery mechanism so that they can realise a proper value by selling leaves to factories. In a letter to Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, the Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Associations (CISTA) suggested a price protection scheme modelled on the lines of the minimum support price (MSP). It said the Tea Board should undertake a detailed study to determine an equitable price-sharing ratio between small growers and factories. Small growers are facing the persistent challenge of poor price realisation, which is undermining the sector's sustainability, CISTA president Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty said. Small growers contribute more than 52 per cent to the country's tea production, and a proper price realisation mechanism should be identified so that livelihoods are sustained, he said.(PTI)

### NAME CORRECTION

I am Sarbong Teron, S/o Benjamin Teron, resident of Lobang, PO & PS Umrangso, Dist.- Dima Hasao, Assam PIN 788931. My actual and correct name and date of birth is Sarbong Teron and 15/04/1964. My name and date of birth were wrongly recorded as Samson Rongpi and 30/03/1975 in Aadhaar Card (No. 2643 6681 8076). So, for all intent and purposes my correct name is Sarbong Teron and date of birth is 15/04/1964.

Sarbong Teron, S/o - Benjamin Teron, Vill.- Lobang, PO & PS Umrangso, Dist.- Dima Hasao, Assam PIN- 788931

### NAME CORRECTION

My correct name is Harilal Mirdha, son of Jayeh Mirdha, resident of Lobang, PO & PS Umrangso, Dist.- Dima Hasao, Assam, PIN- 788931 and my correct date of birth is 11/10/1959 and the name recorded in my Aadhaar Card (No. 9410 6640 6386) has been erroneously recorded as Welson Hanse and date of birth as 22/08/1970. And, for all intent and purposes my correct and actual name Harilal Mirdha be used and my correct date of birth is 11/10/1959. Harilal Mirdha, S/o- Jayeh Mirdha, Vill.- Lobang, PO & PS- Umrangso, Dist.- Dima Hasao, Assam PIN- 788931

### NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from Piara Begum Chowdhury to Piara Begum by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar Hojai (Assam)

## Indian entrepreneurs turn to smarter tools for online growth: GoDaddy survey

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, July 10:** Nearly half of India's small businesses now operate primarily online, using websites, social media, and marketplaces to drive customer engagement and sales, according to the GoDaddy 2025 Global Entrepreneurship Survey.

The findings, shared in an official statement, highlight a clear digital shift as Indian entrepreneurs increasingly adopt technology to expand their reach and stay competitive.

The survey reveals that while 36 percent of small businesses still operate mainly from physical locations, 17 percent now run their operations through their own websites and 21 percent rely primarily on social media platforms.

In terms of sales channels, 37 percent continue to sell in person, while 19 percent use online marketplaces and 29 percent transact directly through social media.

This growing mix of physical and digital methods reflects how small business owners in India are innovating to meet changing customer expectations.

Social media has emerged as a key platform for both learning and business growth.

The survey found that 83 percent of small business owners consider social media important to their sales strategy, with nearly half saying it is very important.

It also plays a dominant role in how entrepreneurs gain knowledge about running a business, with 62 percent turning to social media for insights, ahead of books and blogs, and even artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT. Despite the reliance on social media, many entrepreneurs face hurdles.

Thirty percent said they struggle to come up with ideas for posts, while 39 percent reported lacking time to create content regularly.

Among those who do manage to post, 56 percent said they found it difficult to reach the right audience, and 46 percent cited challenges in converting engage-

ment into sales.

These difficulties point to a growing need for practical, time-saving tools that can help entrepreneurs bridge the gap between visibility and actual revenue.

As small business owners move deeper into the digital space, many are seeking support that can streamline their online marketing efforts.

Sixty-three percent said they want more effective ways to target the right audience, while nearly half are looking for simpler tools to create and schedule content.

Artificial intelligence is beginning to play a more significant role in addressing these needs.

The survey shows that AI users are more likely to want performance insights and content templates compared to non-users, indicating a growing demand for focused and result-driven solutions.

Apurva Palnitkar, Senior Director of Marketing at GoDaddy India, stated that Indian entrepreneurs are becoming increasingly tech-savvy.

He said that while social media already helps them reach customers, the next wave of growth will depend on smart AI tools that simplify marketing and improve outcomes.

He added that GoDaddy is focused on providing easy-to-use, AI-powered solutions such as Show In Bio that help small businesses save time and drive meaningful results.

According to the official statement, GoDaddy aims to support India's entrepreneurial ecosystem through tools like Show In Bio, GoDaddy Studio, and GoDaddy Airo.

These platforms are designed to simplify digital marketing and help entrepreneurs convert online engagement into measurable business outcomes.

As more small businesses in India go online, the need for accessible and efficient digital tools will continue to grow, and GoDaddy reaffirmed its commitment to meeting that demand.

## Gargya Institute of Professional Studies launched in Guwahati

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, July 10:** In a significant move towards enhancing the skill development ecosystem in Northeast India, the Gargya Institute of Professional Studies was formally launched at a special event held at the Gargya Toyota dealership premises in Betkuchi, Guwahati. According to an official statement, the institute has been established as a standalone skilling and training institution aimed at preparing the next generation of professionals across various industries.

The event also marked the inauguration of a Dealer Centralised Training Centre by Mr. Arun G Nair, Vice President of Toyota Kirloskar Motors Pvt Ltd (TKM). This training facility, affiliated with Toyota's national skill-building initiatives, now forms the foundational pillar of the newly created Gargya Institute.

Accredited by the Automotive Skills Development Council (ASDC) under the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), the Gargya Institute of Professional Studies represents an institutional evolution of Gargya Group's existing in-house training centre. Over the past six years, the centre has trained more than 3,000 individuals, gaining recognition as a Platinum-level Training Center of Toyota Kirloskar Motors Pvt Ltd. It has consistently conducted Toyota-certified training programs for dealer employees across India, equating its delivery standards with Toyota's own institutional training centres.

Announcing the launch, Rahul Dev Sharma, Managing Director of the Gargya Group of Companies, said that the institute was envisioned as a response to the region's growing need for indus-



try-aligned, quality training platforms. "The vision of Gargya Institute of Professional Studies is to help the youth of the Northeast by mapping industry skill demands with training programs that enhance employability and unlock potential," Sharma said. "We also want to ensure that the youth are future-ready, especially in light of rapidly evolving technologies like artificial intelligence."

The institute will not be limited to the automobile sector. As per the statement, Gargya Institute of Professional Studies aims to diversify its course offerings to include training in food and beverage (F&B), nursing, maritime trades, and other high-demand sectors. It will also provide career counselling, soft skills training, and placement support through partnerships with both domestic and international employers. In a forward-looking development, Rahul Dev Sharma revealed that the institute is in advanced talks with two Singapore-based organizations and one South India-based entity to create pathways for training and international placements. The institute's roadmap includes the introduction of AI- and tech-based programs, underscoring its intent

to stay at the cutting edge of vocational and technical education.

Significantly, under a recent Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with ASDC, the Gargya Institute has been mandated to train 110 female candidates within the next three months. These candidates will be trained free of cost, with the full cost of the program covered by ASDC as part of its effort to promote gender inclusion in skilled trades. The launch event was attended by senior executives from Toyota Kirloskar Motors, skilling industry stakeholders, educationists, and corporate partners. Mr. Arun G Nair, while inaugurating the new facility, commended the initiative for its "strong industry linkage and focus on real employability outcomes."

With this new venture, the Gargya Group has expanded its footprint from automobile dealership and service excellence to full-fledged professional education and skill development. The Gargya Institute of Professional Studies is expected to emerge as a key player in Assam's and the Northeast's vocational training landscape, aligning with national missions like Skill India, Make in India, and Viksit Bharat.



*Eviction carried out for strategic power project; officials say due process followed, rehabilitation under consideration*

## AIUDF leaders detained amid protests over eviction drive in Dhubri; released later

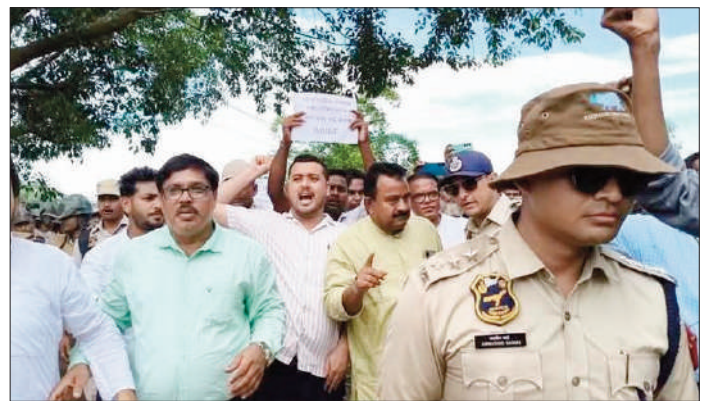
**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 10:** Tensions flared in Assam's Dhubri district on Thursday as the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) staged widespread protests against an ongoing eviction drive that has displaced over a thousand families in the Chapar revenue circle.

The demonstrations, held in villages such as Charuwa Bakra, Santoshpur, and Chirakuti Part I and II, were led by senior AIUDF leaders, including nine sitting MLAs. Among them were Mankachar MLA Aminul Islam and Karimganj South MLA Karim Uddin Barbhuiyan. The protestors blocked National Highway 17, disrupting traffic and daily life in the region.

The police detained several AIUDF leaders and party workers at Bilasipara, taking them to Chapar Police Station, from where they were released later in the day. Security has since been tightened in the affected areas.

The protest follows a large-scale eviction carried out on Tuesday, in



which nearly 3,500 bighas (approximately 1,160 acres) of land across the three villages were cleared by the administration to make way for a proposed 3,400 MW thermal power plant by the Adani Group.

According to official estimates, the eviction affected around 1,100 families.

During Tuesday's eviction, tensions reportedly escalated into violence as alleged encroachers clashed with police, damaged exca-

vators, and attempted to obstruct the operation.

Security personnel were forced to resort to a baton-charge to bring the situation under control.

Speaking to reporters, MLA Aminul Islam termed the eviction "inhuman and unjustified," stating, "Thousands of people were made homeless and such injustice is not acceptable."

He accused the BJP-led government of targeting vulnerable com-

munities without providing adequate rehabilitation.

Islam further alleged that the police were attempting to silence the AIUDF leadership: "The AIUDF has always worked for the people and will continue to raise its voice against injustice." The party reiterated its commitment to fighting for the rights of the displaced.

The state government, on the other hand, maintains that the land was encroached upon and the eviction was necessary to facilitate public infrastructure development. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had visited the site last month and announced plans to set up the power plant, saying that a tender for the project would be floated soon.

As the standoff continues, the political fallout from the eviction drive is likely to intensify, with opposition parties rallying around the displaced families and calling for a review of the government's land acquisition and rehabilitation policies. (With inputs from PTI)

## First phase of Rabindranath Tagore University Campus in Hojai handed over by PWD

**HT Correspondent**

**HOJAI, July 10:** The newly constructed first phase of the Rabindranath Tagore University campus at Sagarbasti, near Hojai town, was formally handed over to the university authorities by the Building Division of the Public Works Department (PWD), Hojai district, on Wednesday. This was stated in an official press release issued by Rabindranath Tagore University.

A brief handover ceremony was organised on the occasion, attended by officials from both the PWD and the university.

According to the release, the construction project received administrative approval under AA/PWB\_2022-23(I)\_1573, dated November 15, 2022.

The sanctioned project cost was approx ₹5891.6 lakh, while the tendered amount stood at approx ₹5640.4 lakh.

The work order, numbered CE/TB-VI/46/2022/27, was issued on December 30, 2022, with construction commencing on the same day and completed within the stipulated timeframe.

The project was executed under the supervision of contractor firm M/s M P Khaitan.

It included a double-storied academic building measuring 8,366 square meters, an administrative building of 2,848 square meters, internal and external electrification, sub-station, EPABX and LAN connectivity, water supply and sanitary systems, fire safety installations, road construction, site development, boundary wall, gate, landscaping, installation of furniture, and other finishing works.

During the handover, the Assistant Engineer, Assis-



tant Executive Engineer, and Executive Engineer from the Hojai and Binakandi Territorial Building Sub-Division were present.

On behalf of the university, the campus was received by Dr Shekhar Kanti Sarkar, Acting Registrar of Rabindranath Tagore University.

Prior to the formal acceptance, the university's Engineering Division, Registrar's Branch, and other relevant departments inspected and verified the infrastructure.

The release stated that the new campus at Sagarbasti would enhance the university's academic environment and infrastructural capacity, ensuring a modern and student-friendly atmosphere.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr Manabendra Dutta Choudhury expressed his sincere gratitude to PWD officials, engineers, and the construction firm for completing the project on time with commitment.

He noted that the handover marks the beginning of a new and promising chapter in the educational and institutional development of Rabindranath Tagore University, Hojai.

## Assam Police constable plants 1,100 saplings along NH 15 as part of Green Mission

**HT Correspondent**

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, July 10:** Assam Police constable Raj Kumar Sarma, posted at the 12th AP Battalion in Kusumtola, Jamugurihat, has undertaken a significant afforestation initiative by planting 1,100 medicinal saplings along both sides of National Highway 15.

According to information received, the green mission was formally launched on June 19 in front of the 12th AP Battalion headquarters.

Naduar MLA Padma Hazarika inaugurated the initiative in the presence of officials and staff of the 12th AP Battalion, 5 Commando Battalion, and members of the general public.

As part of the first phase of the project, constable Sarma selected the 15-kilometre stretch between the historic Nagsankar Temple and the Chowkighat bridge on the Jyia Bharali river.

He planted medicinal species including Mahaneem and Arjun along this segment of the highway.

Speaking to this correspondent, Sarma expressed his long-term goal of planting 5,000 saplings along a 100-kilometre stretch from Chowkighat bridge to Gohpur town.

Having completed 1,100 plantations this year over 15 kilometres, he plans to plant the remaining 3,900 saplings along the next 85 kilometres in the following year.

Explaining the motivation behind his environmental initiative, Sarma said that rampant deforestation in the name of industrialisation and urbanisation has led to environmental imbalances, including drought-like conditions and extreme temperatures.

Through this mission, he aims to raise awareness about nature conservation and set an example for others.

Sarma also stated that he would personally look after each planted sapling to ensure its growth and survival.

Notably, the constable has so far spent ₹1.23 lakh on the initiative, which included expenses for green plastic netting, bamboo posts, and labour charges.

## MP Parimal Suklabaidya urges teamwork and timely execution at DISHA review meeting in Cachar

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 10:** Silchar Lok Sabha Member of Parliament (SC) Parimal Suklabaidya chaired a review meeting of the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) at the Conference Hall of the Cachar District Commissioner's office on Thursday, calling upon officials, elected representatives, and ground-level functionaries to work together in delivering timely, high-quality public services.

The meeting, convened to monitor and review the implementation of key central and state government schemes in the district, saw the participation of Rajya Sabha MP Kanad Purkayastha, Silchar MLA Dipayan Chakraborty, Udharbond MLA Mihir Kanti Shome, Dholai MLA Nihar Ranjan Das, Borkhola MLA Misbahul Islam Laskar, District Commissioner Mridul Yadav, CEO Zilla Parishad Pranab Kumar Bora, members of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Municipal Committees (MCs), DISHA committee members, and officials from various departments.

According to an official statement, Suklabaidya began the proceedings by reviewing the Action Taken Report on the decisions of the previous DISHA meeting.

While expressing satisfaction with the progress achieved, he urged officials to sustain momentum and resolve any pending issues swiftly.

On infrastructure, the MP emphasised accelerating road construction under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), stating that connecting every unlinked habitation with quality roads must remain a top priority.

He directed PWD engineers to expedite all ongoing works in every Legislative Assembly Constituency under his parliamentary jurisdiction and to complete pending surveys in uncovered areas

without delay.

Turning to the Jal Jeevan Mission, Suklabaidya highlighted the importance of achieving universal access to clean and safe drinking water.

He stressed the need for strict quality control in execution to ensure sustainability.

Reviewing the status of healthcare infrastructure, he discussed staffing and equipment availability at the District Hospital and other health facilities, stressing the need for better preparedness and uninterrupted public service delivery. He also reviewed progress under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) in both rural and urban areas and asked officials to stick to timelines so that all eligible beneficiaries receive their allotted housing assistance without delay.

Addressing the issue of infrastructure damage due to overlapping projects, Suklabaidya directed the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) to immediately repair roads impacted by AMRUT pipeline work, Jal Jeevan Mission activities, and PWD operations, stating that prompt action was crucial for restoring connectivity and effective service delivery.

In his remarks, Rajya Sabha MP Kanad Purkayastha appreciated the district's developmental pace and called for stronger emphasis on the education sector—from Anganwadi centres to higher education institutions—and on welfare schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Nijut Moina.

He called for transparency and greater awareness generation so that beneficiaries clearly understand and access available schemes.

Silchar MLA Dipayan Chakraborty echoed these sentiments and praised the administration's proactive approach.

He called for reduced proce-

dural delays, balanced attention to both urban and rural areas, and improved civic amenities in municipal wards.

He urged PRI and MC members to play an active role in monitoring and implementation.

Earlier in the meeting, a detailed PowerPoint presentation showcased the district's progress under flagship schemes such as MGN-REGA, PMGSY, Amrit Sarovar, MPLADS, Ayushman Bharat, Swachh Bharat Mission, Jal Jeevan Mission, and others.

Developments in rural electrification, installation of smart meters, and road projects in Udharbond, Sonai, Lakhipur, and Katigorah were also reviewed.

The meeting also examined departmental performances across sectors including Food and Civil Supplies, Forest, Health, Education, Social Welfare, Public Health Engineering, Agriculture, Sports, Irrigation, and Labour.

Departmental officials and field staff provided updates and responded to queries raised by the MPs and MLAs. In his concluding remarks, Suklabaidya lauded the district administration's dedication but reminded all present of their duty to the public.

"Government schemes are meant to serve the people. Every rupee spent must translate into real benefits," he said. "Officials must utilise resources optimally, monitor progress regularly, and ensure that no deserving citizen is left behind."

The meeting was also attended by Neihat Haolai, ACS, Assistant Commissioner and in-charge Deputy CEO, Cachar Zilla Parishad; Bonnykha Chetia, ACS, Assistant Commissioner and District Mission Coordinator; Deepa Das, ACS, Assistant Commissioner and in-charge DDIPR, Barak Valley Zone; Anjali Kumari, ACS, Assistant Commissioner and in-charge District Social Welfare, among other senior officials.

## Statewide Diarrhoea Prevention Programme launched



**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, July 10:** The 'Diarrhoea Prevention Programme' was officially launched across Assam, including Kamrup Metropolitan District, on Thursday. The initiative, which will run from July 10 to August 25, was inaugurated at the State Ayushman Arogya Mandir in Satgaon, Guwahati, by Dr Monoj Chaudhury, Director of the National Health Mission (NHM), Assam.

The programme aims to prevent diarrhoea outbreaks, particularly during the monsoon months of June and July, and to ensure zero child mortality due to diarrhoea.

As part of the campaign, children at Anganwadi centres and schools will be educated on the importance of using toilets, washing hands with soap, and drinking clean water. The programme will cover all children aged 0-5 years across the district.

Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) packets and zinc tablets will be distributed to them.

Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers will conduct door-to-door awareness drives and distribute ORS and zinc tablets to families.

The inaugural event was attended by NHM Assam Special Duty Officer Lakhim Dutta, Joint Director of Health Services for the Metropolitan District Dr Apurba Krishna Sharma, Mayor-in-Council Asim Saikia, Medical Officer of the Capital Zone Dr Parashree Chowdhury, Medical Officer of the Mandir Dr Dhruv Rajbanshi, and other officials.

## ONGC distributes health items to 200 women

**HT Correspondent**

**SIVASAGAR, July 10:** The CSR wing of ONGC Assam Asset organised a Health Awareness and Wellbeing meeting at Bhatipara on Wednesday in collaboration with 'Nari Unnati', a women-centric organisation. The programme focused on promoting women's health and hygiene in the region.

Moderated by entrepreneur Shehnaz Begum and youth leader Abhinav Dutta, the awareness session saw the participation of ONGC Executive Officer Punam Dutta, Sivasagar District Sahitya Sabha Secretary Manoj Kumar Gogoi, journalist Enamuddin Ahmed, social worker Saroj Kumar Barua, Asomiya Yuva Mancha Secretary Bishnu Saikia, Anup Chetia, and Bornali Gogoi.

Special guests Rinkraj Sharma and Smriti Rekha Sharma addressed the gathering, delivering informative speeches on menstrual health and its impact on women's overall well-being.

As part of the event, health items were distributed to 200 women.

Organisers also distributed saplings and dustbins to promote environmental awareness and hygiene.

Manoj Kumar Gogoi expressed gratitude to ONGC for conducting welfare initiatives in the area, which recently gained attention due to a gas leakage incident at an ONGC workout rig.

## Police recover 22 stolen bicycles, 2 arrested

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, July 10:** In a significant breakthrough, the Gabharupathar Outpost team under Dibrugarh Police recovered 22 stolen bicycles on Tuesday.

The operation was conducted under the supervision of Officer-in-Charge Raju Chetri of Dibrugarh Police Station.

Two habitual offenders—Bikash Robidas and Rutil Pradhan—were arrested during the operation. Both individuals are reportedly involved in multiple bicycle thefts in the area.

The Dibrugarh Police have intensified efforts to curb property-related crimes across the district, and the latest recovery marks a major success in their ongoing campaign against repeat offenders.

Further investigation is underway.

## NTPC Bongaigaon conducts awareness session on child mental health for GEM students



**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, July 10:** NTPC Bongaigaon, Salakati, under its flagship Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM) 2025, recently conducted a comprehensive awareness session on child mental health aimed at fostering emotional well-being and promoting positive mental health among young participants.

The interactive session focused on key aspects such as understand-

ing emotional intelligence, where students were guided on the importance of recognising and managing emotions.

Experts introduced effective coping mechanisms to help participants deal with stress and anxiety, equipping them with practical tools to navigate everyday challenges.

The session was conducted by Udangshri Basumatary, clinical psychologist at KMCH, Kokrajhar,

in association with the Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club and the Medical Cell of the power station.

Kasturi Maitra, President of the Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, along with other club members, was present on the occasion to encourage and support the students.

Emphasis was laid on the significance of positive self-talk and affirmations to help the children build self-esteem and confidence.

The role of strong support systems—comprising family, peers, and educators—was also highlighted as crucial to fostering emotional growth and resilience.

To further engage the students, various team exercises were conducted during the session, aimed at building confidence and encouraging collaborative learning.

Through initiatives like this, NTPC Bongaigaon reaffirms its commitment to the holistic development of GEM students, empowering them to face the future with confidence and optimism.



**HT Correspondent**

**MARGHERITA, July 10:** In response to a call by the Central Executive Committee of the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS), the Margherita branch of the organisation staged demonstrations on Wednesday across multiple tea gardens in the region.

Tea garden workers held dharmas in front of the managers' offices at 38 tea estates under the Margherita branch of the ACMS, pressing for a series of demands aimed at improving their working and living conditions.

Key demands included raising the daily wages of workers in large tea estates to ₹351 and increasing the minimum daily wages of workers in small tea gardens to ₹250, as per existing government notifications.

Other demands included revision of salaries for sub-

staff, enhancement of leave and travel allowances, amendment of the Tea Garden Labour Act to eliminate anti-worker provisions, a halt to arbitrary uprooting of tea bushes and sale of tea garden land for industrial purposes, and ensuring that if the 15 tea estates owned by Andrew Yule Tea Company in Assam are to be sold, they be handed over only to reputed tea companies capable of paying workers their rightful dues.

The protesters submitted a memorandum listing these demands, with copies forwarded to the Chief Minister of Assam, the Labour Minister, and the Labour Welfare Department.

The Margherita branch of the ACMS, along with its affiliated units, warned that failure to address these issues would lead to a large-scale democratic movement by tea garden workers in the near future.



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*He is happiest, be he king or peasant, who finds peace in his home. -Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

## Has GST achieved its goals?

**G**ST was launched on July 1, 2017 with the promise that it would transform the Indian economy. It was characterized as a second freedom since it would unify the nation. Eight years later, it is time to assess its performance. While the Prime Minister has lauded the tax, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, has criticised it since it marginalises the marginals. GST supposedly subsumed seventeen different taxes, thereby simplifying indirect taxation. Further, with a common tax rate applicable across the country, India was to become one unified market, leading to ease of doing business. The cascading effect of taxes was expected to be eliminated, resulting in lower incidence of taxes and reducing inflation. Black income generation was expected to decline, leading to additional tax collection which could help social development. So, growth was expected to accelerate leading to creation of more jobs. It was slated to reduce inequality by benefiting the poorer states. GST is collected at the last point of sale even though it is applicable at every stage of production and distribution. The consumer pays the entire amount when the final sale occurs. Since the poorer states produce proportionately less than the better off states, their share of consumption in their state GDP ('GSDP') is higher, so they were expected to collect proportionately more of GST, thereby causing inter-state disparities to decline.

This expected benefit to the consuming states became a stumbling block for introduction of GST. The producing states, like Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, feared losing tax revenue and opposed GST. To bring them on board, they were promised a 14 percent increase in tax revenue over the base year, 2015-16. Further, the cash cows of petroleum goods and liquor for human consumption were kept out of GST to allow flexibility to the States. The Centre and the States could levy their own excise on these items and collect extra taxes as per their needs. This came in handy during the pandemic when tax collections plummeted. In brief, the promise was that GDP would rise, inflation would decline, black economy would be checked, inter-state inequality would decline and social sector spending would rise thereby benefiting the marginalised sections. It seemed like a win-win. Did it turn out as promised? Going by official data, did growth accelerate? Three complications arise in assessing this. First, the pandemic changed the basic parameters of the economy as it experienced its biggest downturn in 2020-21, three years after GST's introduction. In 2021-22, the economy started recovering but it has remained below the level it should have achieved if the pandemic had not stuck. Second, GST was initiated 7 months after demonetisation which had damaged the economy.

So, the GDP base was already low. Third, the three years of pre-pandemic functioning of GST can be termed as transitional for such a complex tax. Similarly, the three post pandemic years are also transitional. So, given these and other complications, both global and local, is it fair to assess the impact of GST on GDP?

## Palestinians have been given no rights in Trump-Netanyahu Gaza deal



By: John Wojcik

**I**sraeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Donald Trump were closer together on key issues more than ever at their White House meeting on Gaza this Monday, as the Israeli warmaker nominated the American warmaker for the Nobel Peace Prize.

After the meeting, they discussed how, among other things, there were talks going on that could result in the removal of Palestinians from Gaza to surrounding countries. "The Palestinian people should have a choice," Netanyahu declared, "about whether to stay or to move out." Not included in the choice he or Trump is offering them, of course, was the right to form an independent Palestinian state and remain in what has been their homeland for thousands of years.

No credible journalists or lawmakers anywhere in the world report even a scintilla of evidence that other countries in the region are even willing to take in Palestinians. The choice Trump and Netanyahu, his accomplice in war crimes in the region, are offering Palestinians is to either stay in a devastated country facing starvation and death at the hands of military occupiers or a massive transfer of an entire people out to surrounding countries that have no interest in taking them in.

In explaining his call for Trump to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, Netanyahu cited the "unmitigated success" of the recent joint U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities. The two leaders sat down with their top aides for a dinner in the White House Blue Room to mark the Iran operation and allegedly to discuss efforts to push forward with a 60-day ceasefire proposal to pause the 21-month conflict in Gaza.

"He's forging peace as we speak, one country and one region after the other," Netanyahu said as he presented Trump with a nominating letter he said he sent to the

Nobel committee.

In a move that, instead, endangered peace in the region and the world, Trump ordered U.S. forces to drop "bunker-buster" bombs and fire a barrage of Tomahawk missiles on three key Iranian nuclear sites.

"Coming from you in particular, this is very meaningful," Trump told Netanyahu as the prime minister handed him the nomination letter for the peace prize.

Other than being a meeting enabling Netanyahu and Trump to celebrate a supposed "victory" this week, the session at the White House yielded nothing when it comes to concrete plans for Israel to end its genocidal war against Palestinians. It also left the widespread perception around the world that Trump is not at all seriously pushing for an end to the conflict but instead orchestrating, from behind the scenes, its continuation. Nothing was done to change the fact, for example, that continued pumping in of armaments to Israel by Washington enables the war against the Palestinians to continue.

Trump is also claiming that Iranian officials have reached out to the U.S. to schedule talks about Iran's nuclear program. Negotiations had started in April but were scuttled after Israel and then the U.S. began bombings last month.

Contrary to Trump's assurances, Tehran has yet to confirm that it has agreed to restart talks with the U.S. But Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, in an interview published Monday, said the U.S. airstrikes so badly damaged his country's nuclear facilities that Iranian authorities still have not been able to access them to survey the destruction.

Pezeshkian added in the interview with right-wing journalist Tucker Carlson that Iran would be willing to resume cooperation with the U.N. nuclear watchdog but cannot yet commit to allowing its inspectors unfettered access to monitor the sites. (IPA Service)

# 11th July: World Population Day; Issues to address



**W**orld Population Day, observed annually on July 11, highlights the urgency and importance of population issues. It aims to raise awareness about the consequences of population growth, including its impact on development, the environment, and social structures. The day also emphasizes the need for family planning, gender equality, and access to reproductive health services. World Population Day, marked annually on 11th July, seeks to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues. It was established by the then-Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme in 1989, and was first marked on 11th July, 1990 in more than 90 countries.

✓ Raising Awareness : World Population Day serves as a platform to educate the public about the challenges and opportunities arising from global population trends.

✓ Addressing Population Issues : It focuses attention on critical issues like family planning, gender equality, poverty, maternal health, and human rights.

✓ Promoting Action : The day encourages governments, organizations, and individuals to take action on population-related matters, promoting sustainable development and improved quality of life.

✓ Highlighting Resource Strain : With a growing population, there's increased demand for resources like food, water, energy, and shelter, leading to potential scarcity and environmental degradation.

✓ Addressing Environmental Concerns : Population growth contributes to deforestation, biodiversity loss, and increased greenhouse gas emissions, impacting the environment negatively.

✓ Economic and Social Challenges : Rapid population growth can strain economies, leading to difficulties in providing adequate healthcare, education, and social services.

✓ Importance of Reproductive Health : The day underscores the importance of reproductive health, particularly for women and young people, and advocates for access to family planning services.

✓ Encouraging International Cooperation : World Population Day promotes collaboration and partnerships to address the complexities of population growth and its implications for global development.

A Growing World Population : Over 200 years ago, in 1804, the world population first reached 1 billion people. It took 123 years to double to 2 billion (1927) and a quarter of that time (33 years) to reach 3 billion (1960). Fifteen years later (1975), the world population climbed to 4 billion, and another 12 years (1987) brought the number of people in the world to 5 billion. Six billion came just before the new millennium (1999), and the 7 billion milestone was passed in 2012. The world population currently stands at 7.6 billion people (mid-2017) and is projected to reach 8.6 billion in 2030. It is increasing by approximately 83 million people each year (1.1 percent), and current estimates expect the world to contain more than 11 billion people by the turn of the century.

World Population Facts By the Numbers : ✓ 7.8 billion – the current population of the world. ✓ 1,442,857,138 – the highest population rate of a country in the

world — China. ✓ 1,388,712,570 – the second-highest population rate of a country in the world — India. ✓ 5 million – the estimated population of the world at the dawn of agriculture in 8000 B.C. ✓ 1800 – the year when the world population hit one billion. ✓ 200 –

## DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Diganta Barooah

the projected number of years it will take for the population to double again. ✓ 2057 – the year The United Nations projects the world population to reach 10 billion. ✓ 31% – the percentage of the world population who are Christians. ✓ 23% – the percentage of the world population who are Muslims. ✓ 90 billion tons – the number of resources extracted from Earth every year.

Amazing Population Facts : ✓ The rate at which population grows : The world population increases by about 83 million people every year. ✓ A change in pattern : The population in Africa is growing, whereas the European population is shrinking. ✓ Monaco has the most dense population in the world : While it is the second smallest independent state in the world, its population is a staggering 39,500, which is about 68,212 people per square mile. ✓ Life expectancy is unexpectedly increasing : In 2000, the average global life expectancy was 67 years old. Fast forward 20 years, and it increased to 72. ✓ Millennials make up 27% of the world's population : About two billion people all over the world are part of this generation. World Population Day serves to highlight the growing problems that come with a growing global population. Overpopulation is a crucial issue, especially considering that world resources are depleting at an unsustainable rate. Awareness about the effects of overpopulation on development and nature is emphasized. The increasing population also sheds light on health problems faced by women during pregnancy and childbirth, making the need for family planning, gender equality, and maternal health more important than ever.

The World Health Organization (WHO) plays a critical role in addressing various aspects of population health globally, including reproductive health, non-communicable diseases, health equity, women's health and more. In our South-East Asia region, the WHO's initiatives are particularly significant due to the diverse health challenges faced by the population. As the Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, reminds us, "It is outrageous that well into the 21st century, around 800 women die needlessly every day in pregnancy and childbirth – the vast majority in developing countries.

And in some places, legislative advances in tackling vital issues such as female genital mutilation risk going into reverse." Women form the backbone of societies by nurturing families, driving economies, and shaping the future. By empowering women with access to education, healthcare, and economic resources,

we pave the way for a brighter future for all. Reproductive health and rights stand as the foundation of women's empowerment. Access to comprehensive reproductive health services safeguards individual health and contributes to broader societal well-being. When women can make informed choices about their bodies and reproduction, they are better positioned to pursue education, careers, and fulfill their aspirations. Empowering the health and wellbeing of women is a strategic imperative for sustainable development, and a matter of morality. By investing in women's health, from the girl child to the elderly, we invest in the prosperity of nations. The wellbeing of our children reflects the society we have built and the values we uphold. Each child deserves a childhood free from fear, abuse, and neglect. Violence against children knows no borders, affecting urban and rural areas alike, and cutting across socio-economic divides. Preventing violence against children, especially girls, is an urgent call towards a safer and more equitable world. WHO efforts to promote the prevention of violence include health sector responsiveness to recognize the causes of injuries, protection of victims of domestic violence, as well as ensuring that schools and communities are safe places to grow, live, and learn. A safe environment, in communities, schools, and urban spaces for children, especially the girl child, are important enabling factors for children to engage in physical activities. By promoting safe spaces and ensuring access to healthcare, we can empower our youth to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. We should prioritize creating safe and healthy urban spaces that promote physical activities and foster a sense of community. Those who traditionally suffer from health inequality, such as girls and women, adolescents and vulnerable populations, are the drivers of sustainable development, and powerful agents of change. Strategic investments in the health of women and girls yield multiplicative and multi-generational benefits beyond health. Meanwhile investments in adolescent health are essential for promoting healthy socio-economic development, and preventing health risks and problems before their onset. This supports the wellbeing of the youth of today - who are the human capital of tomorrow.

Over the past three decades, societies around the world have made remarkable progress in improving population data gathering, analysis, and use. New population figures, disaggregated by age, ethnicity, gender, and other factors, now reflect the diversity of our societies more accurately. These advancements have significantly enhanced the delivery of health care globally, leading to substantial improvements in sexual and reproductive health and the ability to exercise rights and choices. Increasingly, new technologies are enabling more detailed and timely measurement of people's experiences than ever before. However, the most marginalized communities remain underrepresented in data, profoundly affecting their lives and well-being. World Population Day is a moment to ask who is still going uncounted and why – and what this costs individuals, societies, and our global efforts to leave no one behind. It is also a moment for all of us to commit to doing more to ensure that our data systems capture the full range of human diversity so that everyone is seen, can exercise their human rights and can reach their full potential. To realize the rights and choices of those on the margins of our societies, we must count them – because everyone counts. Our rich human tapestry is only as strong as its weakest thread. When data and other systems work for those on the margins, they work for everyone. This is how we accelerate progress for all.

## World Population Trends :

It took hundreds of thousands of years for the world population to grow to 1 billion – then in just another 200 years or so, it grew sevenfold. In 2011, the global population reached the 7 billion mark, it stands at almost 7.9 billion in 2021, and it's expected to grow to around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050, and 10.9 billion in 2100. This dramatic growth has been driven largely by increasing numbers of people surviving to reproductive age, and has been accompanied by major changes in fertility rates, increasing urbanization and accelerating migration. These trends will have far-reaching implications for generations to come. The recent past has seen enormous changes in fertility rates and life expectancy. In the early 1970s, women had on average 4.5 children each; by 2015, total fertility for the world had fallen to below 2.5 children per woman. Meanwhile, average global lifespans have risen, from 64.6 years in the early 1990s to 72.6 years in 2019. In addition, the world is seeing high levels of urbanization and accelerating migration. 2007 was the first year in which more people lived in urban areas than in rural areas, and by 2050 about 66 per cent of the world population will be living in

cities. These megatrends have far-reaching implications. They affect economic development, employment, income distribution, poverty and social protections. They also affect efforts to ensure universal access to health care, education, housing, sanitation, water, food and energy. To more sustainably address the needs of individuals, policymakers must understand how many people are living on the planet, where they are, how old they are, and how many people will come after them.

## Facts To Ponder Over :

✓ More than 40 per cent of women around the world cannot make decisions on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. ✓ As few as one in four women across low- and middle income countries are realizing their desired fertility. ✓ A woman dies every two minutes due to pregnancy or childbirth (and in conflict settings, the number of deaths is twice as high). ✓ Nearly one third of women have experienced intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence or both. ✓ Just six countries have 50 per cent or more women in parliament. ✓ More than two thirds of the 800 million people globally who cannot read are women. (Source : United Nations Population Fund UNFPA)

Global Issues of Population: The dramatic growth of world's population has been driven largely by increasing numbers of people surviving to reproductive age, and has been accompanied by major changes in fertility rates, increasing urbanization and accelerating migration. These trends will have far-reaching implications for generations to come. The United Nations system has long been involved in addressing these complex and interrelated issues – notably, through the work of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Titled "Interwoven Lives, Threads of Hope: Ending inequalities in sexual and reproductive health and rights", the 2024 edition of United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) flagship report "The State of World Population" underscores the ongoing impact of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination in obstructing significant progress in sexual and reproductive health for women and girls. The data are damning. Women and girls who are poor, belong to ethnic, racial, and indigenous minority groups, or are trapped in conflict settings, are more likely to die due to lack of access to timely health care. The report calls for global action to dismantle unjust and discriminatory structures that prevent millions from realizing their full rights and potential. If a person lives a comfortable lifestyle in a first-world country like the United States, he/she probably doesn't think of population issues having that much of an effect on his/her life.

However, the more people are added to the population, the more power and food is needed to sustain all of them. It's hard to keep up that food and power production at the rate that the population is growing, and efforts to do so are contributing greatly to climate change, which affects a person no matter where he/she lives. This World Population Day, let us remind ourselves of the task ahead, and recommit to achieving health equity for vulnerable populations, including women, children, the elderly, and marginalized communities through a participatory approach addressing health determinants.

## The Burden of numbers: How rising population threatens our future

By: Vinod Chandrashekar Dixit

**W**orld Population Day as the name suggests is an annual day observed around the world on 11th July to bring awareness about Population growth and related issues. It is a day set aside to increase awareness about global population issues and the strain it creates on the environment. To gauge the mammoth rise of the Indian population, the most ideal places to visit are Metro stations, airports, malls, railway stations and bus stands. This great awareness event is to bring a population revolution globally as well as breaking sleep of all the deeply slept people to pay their full attention and help in combating this population issue. As the world's population continues to grow, reaching 7.9 billion in 2021 and projected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050, it's essential to address the challenges and opportunities arising from this demographic shift. World Population Day serves as a reminder of the complex issues surrounding global population trends.

Much of population increase is among the poorest socio-economic strata. It would be ideal for a country like India to be more progressive in outlook and shed inhibitions when it comes to free distribution of contraceptives and condoms among the poor. The growth of population reached nearly one billion in 1830 and second billion in

the next 100 years. Thereafter the growth was tremendous for within a span of 30 years it reach 3 billion, the fourth billion in 15 years and the fifth billion in only 12 years. It is predicted to exceed the population at 9 billion by 2050. More than one billion people do not have access to clean drinking water. A total of 2.7 billion find water scarce for at least one month of the year. A world of 7 billion is both a challenge and an opportunity with implications on sustainability, urbanization, access to health services and youth empowerment. Rapid population growth puts a strain on the environment, resources, and infrastructure. The increasing demand for food, water, and energy leads to deforestation, pollution, and climate change. Urbanization and migration can result in social and economic disparities, straining local resources and infrastructure. Moreover, population growth can exacerbate issues like poverty, inequality, and lack of access to education and healthcare.

If we continue to grow in numbers relentlessly, we would be hard-pressed for resources. Land, housing, water, and food would be scarce. Forests and greenery would be history by then. Our quality of life would be poor. So we have to tackle the population growth right now. It is the responsibility of everyone of us collectively and not just a decision to be made by individuals. Women have the ability and

capacity to change the society. Ensuring that they get good education is very important for the society.

The campaign of the World Population Day every year increases the knowledge and skills of the people worldwide towards their reproductive health and family planning. Through this great awareness celebration, people are to make aware to know about population issues like importance of family planning towards the increasing population, gender equality, maternal and baby health, poverty, human rights, right to health, sexuality education, use of contraceptives and safety measures like condoms, reproductive health, adolescent pregnancy, girl child education, child marriage, sexually transmitted infections and so many. World Population has witnessed a rapid growth in the last 200 years. Countries like China and India together constitutes 37% of the total world population. Population increase is taking away all the developmental results of our nation.

As we observe World Population Day, it's essential to recognize the need for collective action. Let this day encourage governments, organizations, and individuals to work together to create a more equitable, sustainable, and healthy world for all. A mission mode strategy will have to be thought of for population stabilization in critical states.



# FICTION: When the enigmatic artist Mira dies suddenly, her nurse, Sona, comes under suspicion

By: Alka Joshi

At the start of my shift the next evening, my first task was to change Mira's sheets. I walked into her room to find Dr Mishra pressing on her abdomen. Mira's face was pinched. Her breathing was labored. When the doctor saw me, he said, "Nurse, could you help me for a moment?" "Of course," I set the sheets down on the only chair in the room. As soon as Mira saw me, she said, "Sona! Please..." She held out her hand for me to hold. She looked frightened. Her forehead was shiny with sweat. I clasped her hand. "Just here." He placed my free hand just below Mira's navel. Surprised that he would ask me to do something nurses generally didn't, and even more surprised that he touched my hand, I pressed lightly on Mira's belly. She let out a yelp

that made my stomach cramp. I tried not to grimace. The doctor handed me his stethoscope. His body was so close I could hear him breathe, smell his lime aftershave. I moved the chest piece of the stethoscope to the area where my hand had been, keeping my expression neutral so as not to alarm Mira. I looked at Dr Mishra as I handed back the stethoscope and tipped my head down slightly. Yes, I hear it too. A gurgling that indicated inflammation. He took a deep breath. "What is it?" she asked now, staring at us. Dr Mishra smiled reassuringly. "Probably nothing. When you came to us, you were in the early months of pregnancy, and your body underwent significant trauma with the miscarriage. Dr Holbrook took care of you in the operating theatre. Sometimes, there's residual swelling afterward, which may be the cause of your pain." I noticed that



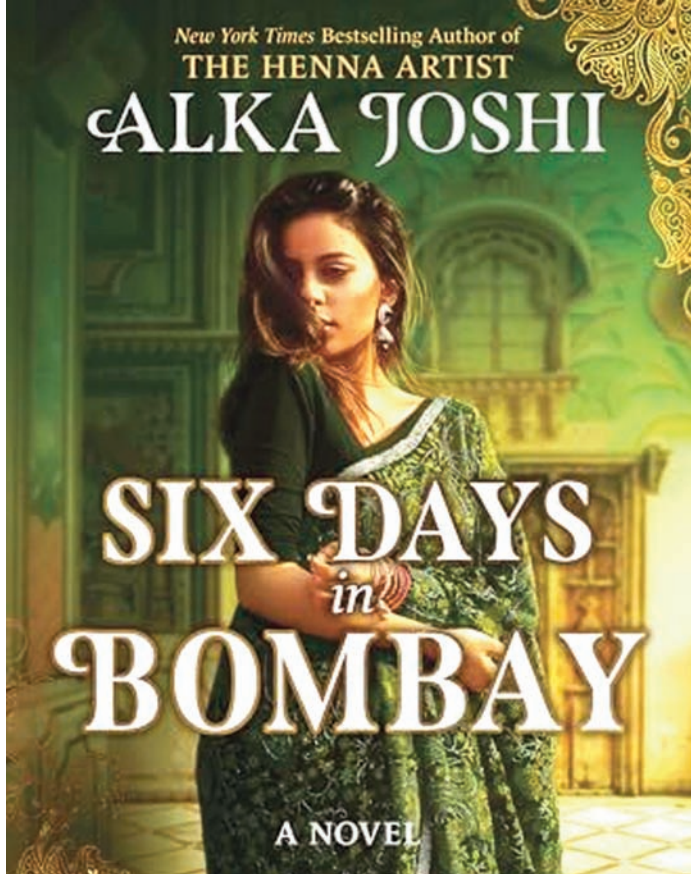
when he talked to patients, he lost much of his shyness. Mira let out the breath she'd been holding and nodded. "We should check you out more thoroughly in a few hours when the house surgeon returns." He patted her shoulder. "Rest now." He made notes on her chart, looked vaguely in my direction to thank me and left the room. "Take a deep breath, Miss Novak. I'm going to turn you on your side now." As I did, she let out a cry. The stitches, no doubt. The surgeon had repaired her from the outside but her insides still needed healing. Delicately, I pulled up her gown and removed the blood-soaked underwear and the wet menstrual cloths, taking care to place them in a container underneath the bed, out of sight. I picked up the rubbing alcohol and a small towel. With a light hand, I wiped her, changed the cloths and dressed her in a fresh gown. I scooted her to the far side of the bed so I could change the sheets on the side closest to me. She grimaced and clutched my hand to stop me. "My mother was the one who discovered Paolo at the Venice Biennale in 1924," she continued as if we hadn't taken a break from the day before. "She fell so hard for him! Fol-

lowed him back to Florence, dragging me along with her. When I finally met him, I could see what she saw in him. He's beautiful." She sighed. "Of course, Mama was always falling in love. Which is probably why I can't. She was so messy with it. Tantrums and fainting spells and screaming matches. Father stayed out of her way as much as possible when she was innamorata." I eased my hand from her grip and continued making the bed. A mother who had love affairs and didn't hide them from her husband? What did he think of her dalliances? Did he have affairs of his own? I'd heard of such marriages among film stars here in Bombay and rumors of unusual arrangements between wealthy couples. "When I was little," she was now saying, "my father took loads of pictures of me. Dressed me up in costumes. Mama did not like that. When I began painting, she told him to stop and took over. I'd started being noticed, you see. She began showing me off. Like a prize she'd won at the mela..." I'd craved her attention for so long, but...why did I have to paint for her to see me?" Tears were rolling down her temples as I helped her lay on her back again. I

wiped them for her with a clean cloth. Were those tears of pain or memory? Mira sniffled. "Father, of course, has his own passions." She changed subjects as often as a woodpecker attacks a coconut palm. "Did you know he's building a synagogue right here in Bombay? There's a lot of money to be raised. He's good at that." I went to the corner sink in the room to wash my hands and thought back to what I'd read about Jews like her father who had settled in Bombay. India was a refuge for them, safer than it was for the colonised Indians who had lived here for 65 millennia. Mira was saying, "He's awfully busy with the planning. I'm sure he doesn't know I'm in the hospital." My eyebrows shot up. As busy as he was building his synagogue, couldn't Mira's father find time to visit his only child after she had lost his only grandchild? His absence seemed almost intentional. Cruel, even. A reminder of my father. I felt the need for fresh air. I opened the window in the room and leaned out. The delicate fragrance of the orchid tree outside her window entered the room, hesitantly at first, then settled in for the night. I listened for the mourn-

ful hoots of owls, the skittering night animals hunting for their dinner. Behind me, Mira said, "It's like music, don't you think? Night music." I made to close the window, hastily, but she stopped me. She held out a hand for me to take. By now, I was getting used to this request from her. "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik," she said. "A music of courtship. Supposed to be played at night. I imagine the animals being serenaded. The deer in the forest. Moths fluttering around the lights. The field mice." She'd worked her fingers between my own and was swinging our hands lightly as she hummed the piece. Like the animals of the night, I felt as if she was courting me. She began talking about her childhood friend Petra in Prague. "She was my first. We were just schoolgirls trying out something. She fell in love. Followed me around like sheep. It wasn't like that for me. I told you before I can't fall in love. I don't think I'm capable of it." I tried not to show it, but a Ping-Pong ball was bouncing inside my chest. She had slept with another girl? Did women have sex with other women? Mira, who'd been watching me, laughed and offered me a wry smile. "You're more Pip than Estella. I like that about you." I pictured Great Expectations on my bookshelf at home. Mira, of course, was Estella. As the more shockable, chaste Pip, I marvelled at how Mira could talk so openly about things most of us knew to keep to ourselves? Did she not care what other people thought of her or her family the way I obsessed about what they thought of my English father leaving my family? In that way, I was like most Indians, consumed by the judgment of others, so wary of the repercussions. I'd only known Mira for two days and I knew more about her life than the hundreds of patients I'd served over the years. "You will love, Sona. Be sure of it." Mira

kissed my hand and let go of it. She sighed, lost in the music only she could hear and memories only she was privy to. Was that a prediction? Or a demand? I clasped my hands together to contain the warmth and the free spirit of Mira Novak a little while longer. There was a commotion in Mrs Mehta's room. I'd been looking for Indira, whom I hadn't seen today, when I passed the open door. Mr Mehta was standing at the end of her bed, his hands clasped in front of his suit coat, a gesture of supplication. "You must come back, Rani. Bippi is threatening to quit. I like her biryani. I don't want her to leave." Mrs. Mehta's face darkened, not a good sign. She had high blood pressure. "You like her biryani better than mine? Is that what you're telling me?" Quietly, I stepped into the room and poured her a glass of water from the pitcher at her bedside. "No, Rani, no!" Mr. Mehta decided to appeal to me. "Nurse Sona, you must know how dire the situation is. I know Rani confides in you. My father can be...demanding. Bippi won't stand for it." His wife's nostrils flared. "I won't stand for it either. But you never hear me when I say it. Bippi says it and you come running to me." Her husband looked as if he was on the verge of tears. The window was ajar. I pushed it open farther and looked out at the night sky. "Is that a lovebird I hear, Mr Mehta? You're the expert birder. What do you think?" I didn't know one bird-song from another, but I'd heard Mrs Mehta mention their pet lovebirds. His curiosity aroused, Mr Mehta joined me at the window. He turned to his wife, excited. "Rani, come listen! It sounds just like our Dasya and Taara." To me, he said, "Dasya is the blue lovebird. Taara is green." I helped Mrs Mehta climb out of bed (although she didn't need it, she just liked the special attention). (Courtesy: scroll.in.)

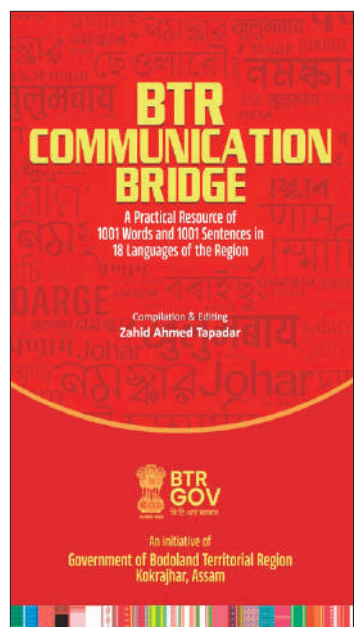


## BTR Communication Bridge: A Landmark of Linguistic Harmony and Visionary Leadership

By: Bwhwithi Basumatary

The BTR Communication Bridge is a groundbreaking publication that marks a new chapter in the journey of unity and inclusion in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). Released on 6th July 2025 by Chief Minister of Assam Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma at the "Bodoland Speaks: From Vision to Action" programme, the book is a bold and visionary step towards building bridges between communities through the power of language. In a region known for its cultural richness and diversity, this initiative stands as a dignified response to the call for mutual respect, shared identity, and peaceful coexistence. This landmark volume presents 1001 essential English words and 1001 commonly used English sentences, translated into 18 regional languages spoken across BTR: Bodo, Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, Rabha, Garo, Hajong, Rajbanshi, Madahi, Mundari, Kurukh, Khortha, Deshi, Nepali, Sadhri, Barman Kachari, Odia, and Santali. Some of these languages are spoken by small and scattered communities and are considered endangered or vulnerable. By including them alongside more dominant tongues, the book not only promotes practical communication but also contributes to the preservation and revival of precious linguistic traditions that are at risk of being lost. What sets BTR Communication Bridge apart is its scale, intent, and inclusivity. To our knowledge, no other government, autonomous council, or literary organisation in the country has undertaken such a comprehensive multilingual initiative. While searching, we did not come across any publication of this kind—information compiled in one volume by any government, autonomous council, or literary organisation in the country. This makes the book not only a first of its kind in BTR, but also a rare and pioneering effort where language becomes both a medium and a message for unity.

Credit for this historic accomplishment goes to the visionary leadership of BTC Chief Executive Member Shri Pramod Boro, whose firm belief in unity through cultural respect and communication laid the foundation for this remarkable work. His commitment to inclusive governance and community empowerment finds powerful expression in this book. Sincere gratitude is due to him for imagining and enabling an initiative that no one else in the country had dared to pursue. The book has been compiled and edited by Zahid Ahmed Tapadar, a seasoned author, compiler and editor with earlier experience of bringing out a multilingual word book in Dima Hasao. Building on that foundation, he led the current effort with unmatched dedication—compiling the English content, translating it into Bengali, and guiding a team of 51 language experts who worked tirelessly to transcribe the words and sentences into their respective languages. The entire project—from concept to print—was executed in just 40 days, an achievement that speaks of remarkable teamwork, vision, and efficiency. The content is contextually relevant and also deeply rooted in everyday life—covering common situations in homes, markets, schools, hospitals, offices, and public spaces. Equally praiseworthy is the book's design and production quality. The layout is clear and user-friendly. The cover design is visually compelling and symbolically powerful. The print is of high quality, and the aesthetic appeal of the book reflects both professionalism and cultural sensitivity. Many readers have noted that this is perhaps the most finely produced book ever published in BTR in terms of both content and appearance. But the BTR Communication Bridge goes far beyond being a language tool. It begins with a well-written introduction to the Bodoland Territorial Region, followed by a brief account of its historical and political evolution. It



offers insights into the etymology and identity of Bodoland, provides a concise overview of the Bodoland Peace Accord and its resolution model, and reflects on the languages, traditions, and communities that make the region unique. It also includes glimpses of BTR's heritage, culture, and tourism potential, making the book informative, engaging, and meaningful beyond its immediate purpose. This is not merely a guide to languages—it is a reflection of Bodoland's transformation from conflict to peace, from isolation to connection, and from aspiration to action. It stands as a powerful symbol of what is possible when leadership, language, and collective goodwill come together. In every respect, BTR Communication Bridge is a landmark achievement. It sets a new benchmark for multilingual inclusion, community engagement, and cultural preservation in the country. More importantly, it gives voice to the many tongues of Bodoland—reminding us that when we speak to each other with respect, we build more than just communication. We build understanding. We build peace. We build a future, together.

## Regenerative agriculture: A path to resilience, equity and hope

By: Suresh Motwani

The world today is confronting an unprecedented climate crisis, and at the centre of this challenge lies carbon. Carbon, the building block of life, has become a critical marker of our environmental health and our failure to safeguard it. Excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, primarily from burning fossil fuels and large-scale industrial agriculture, is driving global warming, extreme weather, and biodiversity loss. Yet the story of carbon need not be only one of crisis—it can also be one of hope. Regenerative agriculture offers a powerful, practical, and inclusive pathway to manage carbon sustainably while building climate resilience, economic equity, and social well-being. What Is Regenerative Agriculture? Regenerative agriculture is not merely a set of farming techniques; it is a holistic philosophy rooted in restoring the natural balance between soil, water, plants, animals, and people. At its core, it seeks to rebuild and maintain soil health. Healthy soils are teeming with life—bacteria, fungi, insects, and plant roots work together to cycle nutrients and store carbon in organic matter. This process, known as soil carbon sequestration, is one of our most effective natural strategies to draw carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and lock it safely underground. The Cost of Industrial Agriculture Industrial agriculture, with its reliance on intensive tillage, monocultures, synthetic fertilisers, and pesticides, has contributed significantly to the climate crisis by degrading soils and releasing vast stores of carbon. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that agriculture, forestry, and other land use changes contribute about a third of global greenhouse gas emissions. This damage is not theoretical: vast areas of fertile land have been stripped of organic matter, leading to erosion, desertification, and falling yields. In many regions, farmers are caught in a cycle of declining soil fertility and rising input costs, pushing them further into poverty. How Regenerative Practices Work In contrast, regenerative farming practices aim to heal the soil and break this destructive cycle. Techniques include cover cropping, no-till or reduced-till farming, composting, crop rotation, agroforestry, and managed grazing.

Each of these methods is designed to increase organic matter in the soil, boost biodiversity, improve water retention, and strengthen the resilience of farms to droughts and floods. For example, cover crops prevent erosion and add biomass to the soil, while agroforestry integrates trees into farmland, providing shade, windbreaks, and additional income sources. A Lifeline for Small Farmers Beyond its environmental benefits, regenerative agriculture is vital for social and economic reasons. Smallholder farmers, who produce a large share of the world's food, are on the frontlines of climate change. They face increasing uncertainty due to erratic rainfall, shifting growing seasons, and extreme weather events. Regenerative practices can help these farmers build resilience by reducing dependence on expensive inputs and by improving yields over time. Healthier soils retain more water and nutrients, offering protection against both drought and flooding. Empowerment Through the Soil Equity is at the heart of regenerative agriculture's promise. By valuing local knowledge and traditional practices, it empowers farming communities—especially women and indigenous people—who often play central roles in land stewardship but are marginalised in decision-making and markets. Restoring degraded lands can create opportunities for local employment, support food security, and enhance livelihoods. The shift to regenerative models also recognises the need for fair access to land, finance, and markets so that all farmers, not just large corporate operations, can participate in the transition to a more sustainable food system. A Global Climate Imperative There is also an urgent global imperative to scale up regenerative practices. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), land-based solutions, including soil carbon sequestration, could sequester up to 23 gigatonnes of CO2 by 2050. This is not a silver bullet that replaces cutting fossil fuel emissions, but it is an essential part of a comprehensive climate strategy. The world cannot meet the Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C without transforming agriculture and land use. Momentum and the Risk of Co-option Many Governments, businesses, and civil society groups are recognising this

potential. Large companies in the food and beverage industry have begun investing in regenerative supply chains. Initiatives such as the OP2B coalition have mobilised billions of dollars to promote regenerative practices among farmers. Monitoring and verification technologies are improving, enabling better measurement of carbon sequestration and other ecosystem services on farms. Financial incentives, certification schemes, and policy support can help make regenerative farming economically viable at scale. Yet these efforts must be carefully designed to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. A just transition to regenerative agriculture must prioritise the needs and rights of farmers, especially smallholders. Solutions must be adapted to local contexts rather than imposed from above. Land rights, tenure security, and inclusive decision-making are essential to ensure that the benefits of regenerative agriculture are widely shared. Without this focus on equity, the promise of regenerative agriculture risks being co-opted or limited to wealthy markets. India's Regenerative Opportunity India, with its vast and diverse agricultural landscape, is particularly well placed to champion regenerative agriculture. Many traditional farming systems in India already embody regenerative principles, such as mixed cropping, composting, and agroforestry. Revitalising and modernising these practices can help address soil degradation, water scarcity, and rural poverty while contributing to India's climate goals. Government support, research institutions, civil society, and farmer producer organisations can all play critical roles in scaling these solutions. A New Carbon Story Ultimately, regenerative agriculture offers not only a response to the carbon and climate crisis but a vision for a healthier, fairer, and more resilient world. It reframes carbon from a pollutant to be feared into a vital building block to be stewarded with care. By working with nature rather than against it, we can repair broken ecosystems, secure livelihoods, and leave a more hopeful legacy for future generations. In a time when climate news often feels overwhelming and despairing, regenerative agriculture stands out as a genuine source of optimism—a practical, science-backed pathway to resilience, equity, and hope. (Courtesy: thepioneer)



## Rubio says US and Russia have exchanged new ideas for Ukraine peace talks

**KUALA LUMPUR, July 10:** US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Thursday that the US and Russia have exchanged new ideas for Ukraine peace talks after he met with his Russian counterpart in Malaysia Thursday.

"I think it's a new and a different approach," Rubio told reporters after talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. "I wouldn't characterise it as something that guarantees a peace, but it's a concept that, you know, that I'll take back to the president." He didn't elaborate. Rubio added that President Donald Trump has been "disappointed and frustrated that there's not been more flexibility on the Russian side" to bring about an end to the conflict. "We need to see a roadmap moving forward about how this conflict can conclude. And then we shared some ideas about what that might look like," he said of the 50-minute meeting. "We're going to continue to stay involved where we see opportunities to make a difference."

The two men held talks in Kuala Lumpur on the sidelines of the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum, which brings together 10 ASEAN members and their most important diplomatic partners including Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, European nations and the US.

The meeting was their second encounter since Rubio took office, although they have spoken by phone several times. Their first meeting took place in February in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, as the Trump administration sought to test Russia and Ukraine on their



willingness to make peace.

Thursday's meeting occurred shortly after the US resumed some shipments of defensive weapons to Ukraine following a pause, ostensibly for the Pentagon to review domestic munitions stocks, that was cheered in Moscow.

The resumption comes as Russia fires escalating air attacks on Ukraine and as Trump has become increasingly frustrated with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

**US diplomatic push could be overshadowed by tariff threats**

Rubio was also seeing other foreign ministers, including many whose countries face tariffs set to be imposed August 1.

Rubio sought to assuage concerns as he held group talks with ASEAN foreign ministers.

"The Indo Pacific, the region, remains a focal point of US foreign policy," he told them. "When I hear in the news that perhaps the United States or the world might be distracted by events in other

parts of the planet, I would say distraction is impossible, because it is our strong view and the reality that this century and the story of next 50 years will largely be written here in this region."

"These are relationships and partnerships that we intend to continue to build on without seeking the approval or the permission of any other actor in the region of the world," Rubio said in an apparent reference to China. Trump notified several countries on Monday and Wednesday that they will face higher tariffs if they don't make trade deals with the US. Among them are eight of ASEAN's 10 members.

US State Department officials said tariffs and trade won't be Rubio's focus during the meetings, which Trump's Republican administration hopes will prioritise maritime safety and security in the South China Sea, where China has become increasingly aggressive toward its small neighbours, as well

as combating transnational crime.

But Rubio may be hard-pressed to avoid the tariff issue that has vexed some of Washington's closest allies and partners in Asia, including Japan and South Korea and most members of ASEAN, which Trump says would face 25 per cent tariffs if there is no deal.

Rubio met earlier Thursday with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who has warned global trade is being weaponised to coerce weaker nations. Anwar urged the bloc Wednesday to strengthen regional trade and reduce reliance on external powers.

Rubio's "talking points on the China threat will not resonate with officials whose industries are being battered by 30-40 per cent tariffs," said Danny Russel, vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute and a former assistant secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific during the Obama administration.

When Anwar said "ASEAN will approach challenges as a united bloc" he wasn't talking about Chinese coercion but about US tariffs," Russel noted.

**Majority of ASEAN members face major tariff hikes**

Among ASEAN states, Trump has announced tariffs on almost all of the bloc's 10 members. Trump sent tariff letters to two more ASEAN members Wednesday: Brunei, whose imports would be taxed at 25 per cent, and the Philippines at 20 per cent. Others hit this week include Cambodia at 36 per cent, Indonesia at 32 per cent, Laos at 40 per cent, Malaysia at 25 per cent, Myanmar at 40 per cent and Thailand at 36 per cent. (AP)

## Bangladesh's tribunal indicts deposed PM Hasina over killing of protesters

**DHAKA, July 10:** A special tribunal in Bangladesh on Thursday indicted deposed premier Sheikh Hasina in absentia on charges of crimes against humanity in connection with a deadly crackdown on protesters during the July-August uprising last year.

The International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh (ICT-BD) has set August 3 as the date for the trial.

The tribunal has "framed the charge against her (Hasina) alongside the home minister of her regime Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and (the then) inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun," a prosecution lawyer told reporters.

The ICT bench, headed by Justice Md Golam Morzu Mozumder, passed the order after rejecting a defence plea to dismiss the charges. The other two members of the tribunal are Justices Md Shofiqul Alam Mahmood and Md Mohitul Haq Enam Chowdhury.

The prosecutors said Hasina along with the co-accused was indicted on five charges, including mass killings, murder, and torture to tame the protesters during last year's July-August uprising.

If proven guilty, the accused could face the death penalty.

According to a UN rights office report, up to 1,400 people were killed between July 15 and August 15 last year as Hasina's government ordered a security crackdown on protesters.

With Thursday's order, the formal trial against 72-year-old Hasina and other defendants in the case for crimes against humanity has begun for the first time.

Hasina's Awami League condemned the indictment against her and other leaders by, what it called, "kangaroo court" and said this step "marks another testament to the ongoing witch hunt against our party and weaponisation of judiciary by Yunus regime".

"In eleven months, people have lost their faith over the judicial system as Yunus regime has reduced this key state organ into a means to prosecute dissenters," the party said in a statement on X.

"While we reiterate our commitment for a fair trial for July August victims, we repeatedly express no confidence on the current trial process," it added.

Hasina faces multiple cases in Bangladesh after being ousted on August 5 last year following a mass student-led agitation in the country, which forced her to flee Dhaka.



Mamun, the only accused appearing in person, pleaded guilty when produced before the tribunal from custody, prosecutors added.

During the indictment hearing, the former police chief expressed his willingness to make a statement in the prosecution's favour at a later stage. The presiding judge said the tribunal would later decide whether to treat him as an "approver".

Mamun's lawyer told journalists that the ex-police chief agreed to become a state witness, confessing his role during the violent movement.

The ICT-BD's investigation agency on May 12 filed its report in the case, bringing five charges against the trio. The prosecution said the charges include the delivery of a provocative speech by Hasina at a press briefing on July 14, 2024, issuing a directive to eliminate the July Movement protesters with the use of helicopters, drones, and lethal weapons by law enforcement agencies.

The three were also accused of issuing directives to law enforcers, collaborating with the Awami League and plotting to kill innocent students and people on August 5 last year in Dhaka's Chankharupur and Ashulia areas as part of a broader plan to eliminate the protesters to suppress the movement.

The ICT-BD was originally formed during the Awami League regime in 2010 to try the hardened collaborators of Pakistani troops during Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War on charges of crimes against humanity. Muhammad Yunus' interim government decided to try Hasina in the same court on identical charges. (PTI)

## Bangladesh witnessed 2,442 communal violence incidents in 330 days: Minority body

**DHAKA, July 10:** Bangladesh witnessed 2,442 incidents of communal violence over a span of 330 days from August 4 last year, when political unrest peaked, leading to the ouster of prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government, a minority advocacy group in the country said on Thursday.

"Most of these violent incidents happened between August 4 and August 20 last year," the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council said in a statement released at a press conference at the National Press Club here.

The minority communities faced 2,442 incidents of communal violence over a span of 330 days from August 4, 2024, it said.

The nature of violence ranged from murders and sexual assaults, including gang rapes, to attacks on places of worship, seizing homes and businesses, arrests on charges of alleged defamation of religion, and forced removals of minorities from organisations, the statement said.

Victims included men, women, and adoles-

cents belonging to minority groups.

The perpetrators have largely evaded justice, with the interim government "refusing to acknowledge" the incidents and "dismissing them as politically motivated," the statement said.

A senior Council leader, Narmal Rosario, said the ongoing reform initiatives by the interim government have repeatedly excluded minority communities, "which is the most frustrating factor for us".

"We want to walk together with all," he emphasised.

Another leader, Nimchandra Bhounik, said, "The division (within the society) was not a pleasant matter for anyone."

"The government, in fact, ignores the incidents of repression of minorities. We demand proper justice," acting general secretary of the council, Manindra Kumar Nath, said.

As per the 2022 census, Hindus are the largest minority community in Bangladesh at 7.95 per cent of the total population, followed by Buddhists (0.61 per cent), Christians (0.30 per cent), and others (0.12 per cent). (PTI)

## Student pilot from India among two killed in mid-air crash in Canada

**OTTAWA, July 10:** An Indian student pilot was killed in a mid-air crash in Manitoba province of Canada, according to the Consulate General of India in Toronto.

The Indian pilot, identified as Sreehari Sukesh, was killed when his single-engine plane collided mid-air with another similar aircraft piloted by a Canadian youth, who was also killed in the accident on Tuesday.

The Consulate General of India on Wednesday said it was "in contact with the bereaved family, the pilot training school and local police to provide all necessary assistance." "The bodies of the two student pilots were recovered in the wreckage of their single-engine planes after both crashed mid-air on Tuesday morning near Steinbach, roughly 50 kilometres south-east of Winnipeg," a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) news report said. The students collided when approaching a landing strip while practising takeoffs and landings, the CBC report said, quoting Adam Penner, president of Harv's Air, the flying school where both pilots had been training. The Transportation Safety Board, the agency responsible for investigating aviation incidents in Canada, said it is gathering information and assessing the fatal crash. Sreehari Sukesh's age was not mentioned. The CBC said the Canadian victim was 20-year-old Savanna May Royes, who, it said, "had always dreamed of becoming a pilot, following in the footsteps of her father." A Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) statement said after its Steinbach unit was notified of the mid-air collision, the personnel from the RCMP, fire department and Emergency medical services attended and located the wreckage of two small, single-engine aircraft, south of Steinbach. (PTI)

## TikTok faces fresh European privacy investigation over China data transfers

**LONDON, July 10:** TikTok is facing a fresh European Union privacy investigation into user data sent to China, regulators said Thursday.

The Data Protection Commission opened the inquiry as a follow up to a previous investigation that ended earlier this year with a 530 million Euro (USD 620 million) fine after it found the video sharing app put users at risk of spying by allowing remote access their data from China.

The Irish national watchdog serves as TikTok's lead data privacy regulator in the 27-nation EU because the company's European headquarters is based in Dublin.

During an earlier investigation, TikTok initially told the regulator it didn't store European user data in China, and that data was only accessed remotely by staff in China. However, it later backtracked and said that some data had in fact been stored on Chinese servers. The watchdog responded at the time by saying it would consider further regulatory action. (AP)

## UN says if US funding for HIV programmes not replaced, millions more will die by 2029

**LONDON, July 10:** Years of American-led investment into AIDS programmes has reduced the number of people killed by the disease to the lowest levels seen in more than three decades, and provided life-saving medicines for some of the world's most vulnerable.

But in the last six months, the sudden withdrawal of US money has caused a "systemic shock," UN officials warned, adding that if the funding isn't replaced, it could lead to more than 4 million AIDS-related deaths and 6 million more HIV infections by 2029.

"The current wave of funding losses has already destabilised supply chains, led to the closure of health facilities, left thousands of health clinics without staff, set back prevention programmes, disrupted HIV testing efforts and forced many community organisations to reduce or halt their HIV activities," UNAIDS said in a report released Thursday. UNAIDS also said that it feared other major donors might also scale back their support, reversing decades of progress against AIDS worldwide — and that the strong multilateral cooperation is in jeopardy because of wars, geopolitical shifts and climate change.

The USD 4 billion that the United States pledged for the global HIV response for 2025 disappeared virtually overnight in January when US President Donald Trump ordered that all foreign aid be suspended and later moved to shutter the US AID agency.

Andrew Hill, an HIV expert at the University of Liverpool who is not connected to the United Nations, said that while Trump is entitled to spend US money as he sees fit, "any responsible government would have given advance warning so countries could plan," instead of stranding patients in

**DUBAI, July 10:** A Liberian-flagged cargo ship attacked by Yemen's Houthi rebels sank on Wednesday in the Red Sea, and a European naval force in the Mideast said only six of the 25 people who were on board have been rescued.

The attack on the Eternity C, which also killed at least three of the crew, represents the most serious assault carried out by the Houthis in the crucial maritime trade route where USD 1 trillion in cargo once passed through annually.

From November 2023 to December 2024, the Houthis targeted more than 100 ships with missiles and drones in a campaign the rebels describe as supporting Palestinians in the Gaza Strip during the Israel-Hamas war. The Iranian-backed rebels stopped their attacks during a brief ceasefire in the war. They later became the target of an intense weeklong campaign of airstrikes ordered by US President Donald Trump.

The attack on the Eternity C, as well as the sinking of the bulk carrier Magic Seas in another attack Sunday, raise new questions about the Red Sea's safety as ships had slowly begun returning to its waters. Meanwhile, a new possible ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war — as well as the future of talks between the US and Iran over Tehran's battered nuclear program — remain in the balance.

"We are now with grave concern seeing an escalation in the Red Sea with attacks on two commercial ships earlier this week by Ansar Allah, resulting in civilian loss of life and casualties as well as the potential for environmental damage," warned United Nations special envoy Hans Grundberg, using another name for the rebels.

Six of 25 on board have been rescued. A statement from the European Union naval mission in the Red Sea said the crew of the ship included 22 sailors, among them 21 Filipinos and one Russian, as well as a three-member security team. Those rescued were five Filipinos and one Indian.

Three people also were killed during the hours-long attack on the ship, the EU force said, and their nationalities were not immediately known.

The armed rebels had attacked the ship with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms, later using two drones and two drone boats carrying bombs to strike the vessel, the EU force said. The Eternity C sank at 7.50 am on Wednesday, it added.

The ship, flagged out of Liberia but owned by a Greek firm, likely had been targeted like the Magic Seas over its firm doing business with Israel. Neither vessel apparently requested an escort from the EU force.

The US military has two aircraft carriers in the Mideast, the USS Nimitz and the USS Carl Vinson, but both likely are in the Arabian Sea, far from the site of the attacks. There are two American destroyers believed to be operating in the Red Sea. However, the ships attacked had no US ties and a ceasefire between the Houthis and America announced after the bombing campaign earlier this year still appears to be holding.

Brigadier General Yahya Saree, a Houthi military spokesman, claimed the attack in a prerecorded message Wednesday night as the EU force acknowledged it was still searching for those onboard with private industry rescuers.

The Houthis later released footage of them launching missiles at the Eternity C. The bridge appeared heavily damaged by the attack and oil leaked from the vessel. The ship took on water from holes along its waterline before sinking beneath the waves, the rebels chanting: "God is the greatest; death to America; death to Israel; curse the Jews; victory to Islam."

The Houthis released a similar video after their attack on the tanker Souin in August 2024 and on Tuesday from their attack on the Magic Seas.

Attacks draw condemnation and support for sailors

In the Philippines, Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Cadac said he has been leading an effort to reach out to the families of the missing Filipino sailors to update them on the search and rescue efforts.

"It's human nature that one should be terribly worried and distraught about the situation," Cadac told The Associated Press by telephone. "It's our role in government to be there for them in their utmost hour of need to ensure that not just government services but throughout this hand-holding process, we will provide the necessary support."

The attacks on the ships drew international condemnation.

"These attacks demonstrate the ongoing threat that Iran-backed Houthi rebels pose to freedom of navigation and to regional economic and maritime security," US State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said. "The United States has been clear: We will continue to take necessary action to protect freedom of navigation and commercial shipping from Houthi terrorist attacks."

The EU force earlier said one of the wounded crew lost his leg.

Grundberg, the UN envoy, also decried the targeting of civilian infrastructure after Israel bombed three Houthi-controlled ports in Yemen over the weekend and hit a power station.

"Yemen must not be drawn deeper into regional crises that threaten to unravel the already extremely fragile situation in the country," he warned during an address to the Security Council.

Satellite photos show damage from an Israeli strike.

Satellite images analysed by The Associated Press showed new damage at Yemen's rebel-controlled port at Hodeida after it was targeted by the Israeli airstrikes. The images from Planet Labs PBC showed new portions of the pier at the port torn away by Israeli bombing, likely to affect the unloading of cargo there. (AP)



Africa when clinics were closed overnight.

The US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, was launched in 2003 by US President George W Bush, the biggest-ever commitment by any country focused on a single disease. UNAIDS called the programme a "lifeline" for countries with high HIV rates, and said that it supported testing for 84.1 million people, treatment for 20.6 million, among other initiatives. According to data from Nigeria, PEPFAR also funded 99.9 per cent of the country's budget for medicines taken to prevent HIV. In 2024, there were about 6,30,000 AIDS-related deaths worldwide, per a UNAIDS estimate — the figure has remained about the same since 2022 after peaking at about 2 million deaths in 2004. Even before the US funding cuts, progress against curbing HIV was uneven. UNAIDS said that half of all new infections are in sub-Saharan Africa.

Tom Ellman, of the charity Doctors Without Borders, said that while some poorer countries were now moving to fund more of their own HIV programmes, it would be impossible to fill the gap left by the US. "There's nothing we can do that will protect these countries from the sudden, vicious withdrawal of support from the US," said Ellman, director of Doctors Without Borders' South Africa Medical Unit.

Experts also fear another loss: data. The US paid for most HIV surveillance in African countries, including hospital, patient and electronic records, all of which has now abruptly ceased, according to Dr Chris Beyrer, director of the Global Health Institute at Duke University.

"Without reliable data about how HIV is spreading, it will be incredibly hard to stop it," he said.

The uncertainty comes as a twice-yearly injectable could end HIV, as studies published last year showed that the drug from pharmaceutical maker Gilead was 100 per cent effective in preventing the virus. At a launch event Thursday, South Africa's health minister Aaron Motsoaledi said the country would "move mountains and rivers to make sure every adolescent girl who needs it will get it," saying that the continent's past dependence upon US aid was "scary."

Last month, the US Food and Drug Administration approved the drug, called Yeztugo, a move that should have been a "threshold moment" for stopping the AIDS epidemic, said Peter Maybarduk of the advocacy group Public Citizen.

But activists like Maybarduk said Gilead's pricing will put it out of reach of many countries that need it. Gilead has agreed to sell generic versions of the drug in 120 poor countries with high HIV rates but has excluded nearly all of Latin America, where rates are far lower but increasing. (AP)

## Taiwan's president watches live-fire drills with new US-made tanks

**HSINCHU (TAIWAN), July 10:** Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te watched live-fire drills with US-made Abrams M1A2T tanks Thursday, as part of major annual exercises aimed at boosting the island's ability to fend off threats from China.

Four of the tanks fired individually, in pairs and as a group at a testing ground south of Taipei on the second day of the Han Kuang exercises that this year are the longest ever at 10 days.

The tanks fire both while on the move and in a stationary position and at both stationary and moving targets, achieving 100 per cent accuracy, according to the army. Taiwan has contracted to buy 108 of the latest-model tanks from the US for USD 1.45 billion, allowing it to retire its aged tanks and significantly boosting defences, especially for the northern part of the island, where most of its high-tech industries are based. They are part of far-reaching upgrades to Taiwan's arsenal and training practices, with F-16V jet fighters, HIMARS missile defences and stealthy unmanned vehicles now entering use. Lai said this year's Han Kuang exercises were being conducted on the basis of "large-scale, realistic combat drills." "When our military has greater strength, the nation, society, and people will be safer. Once our country becomes secure, the Indo-Pacific region will be more peaceful and stable," the president told troops and reporters at the base in Hsinchu county.

China considers Taiwan a renegade province and threatens to use force to bring it under control. The ruling Communist Party's military branch, the People's Liberation Army, sends ships, balloons and military ships into waters near Taiwan on a near-daily basis.

The US is Taiwan's largest supplier of imported defensive weaponry and is bound by law to consider threats to the island a matter of "major concern," although it remains deliberately unclear as to whether it would deploy forces to counter a Chinese attack.

Taiwan is also stepping up civilian participation in national defence and Thursday evacuated a food mart and moved customers to a bomb shelter equipped with medical and other facilities.

Tanks were also dispatched to one of Taiwan's international airports in the centre of the capital Taipei to guard against an imaginary Chinese air landing operation.

In its unusual fashion, Beijing has derided the war exercises as a farce that will have no effect on its determination to take over the island, whose population overwhelmingly rejects unification with China. Taiwan earlier in the week accused China's coast guard and maritime militia of harassing Taiwanese boats near Taiwan-held islands off the Chinese coast and on Wednesday sanctioned eight Taiwanese companies it said were aiding Taiwan's defence industry. (AP)



## BJP Arunachal Pradesh observes Guru Purnima

Party leaders visit social and spiritual institutions in capital, highlight values of compassion and cultural pride



**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, July 10:** The Arunachal Pradesh unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) observed Guru Purnima with solemn devotion and a spirit of service, undertaking a series of spiritual and social outreach activities across the state.

The observance was led by State BJP President Kaling Moyong, accompanied by State Vice Presidents Tarh Soping and Dunggoli Libang.

According to an official statement, the state-level commemoration began with a visit to the Deepak Nabam Living Home at Senki Park in Itanagar.

The BJP delegation met with

Deepak Nabam, founder of the home, and lauded his life-long dedication to the service of the underprivileged and destitute.

Nabam, referred to by many as a living embodiment of compassion, was respectfully honoured by the visiting team, who described him as a "true Guru" in the service of humanity.

Following this, the team visited Nyedar Namlo, a significant spiritual and cultural centre representing the indigenous faiths of the region.

There, the BJP leaders offered prayers and interacted with spiritual guides and community elders, seeking blessings for the collective well-being of the people and the

inclusive development of Arunachal Pradesh.

Guru Purnima, celebrated across Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh traditions, honours the birth anniversary of Sage Veda Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedas and author of the Mahabharata.

The day signifies deep respect for teachers, mentors, and spiritual guides who impart knowledge and uphold moral values.

Extending the celebrations beyond Itanagar, various BJP leaders and karyakartas participated in spiritual programs at the Mandal, District, and State levels.

These were conducted under the supervision of Dunggoli Libang, Vice President of the State BJP and

convenor of the Guru Purnima programme.

As part of the state-wide observance, BJP State Vice President and MLA Zingnu Namchoom visited the Thupten Gatselling Monastery in Itanagar, where he offered prayers and interacted with the monastic community.

In another outreach effort, BJP leader Miss Junty Singhpoo visited and held discussions with indigenous priest Tatung Heri, exchanging views on preserving traditional values and the importance of inter-generational knowledge transfer.

The party's state unit emphasised its commitment to preserving Arunachal Pradesh's diverse spiritual and cultural traditions.

In its statement, the BJP reiterated the enduring relevance of Guru Purnima as a day not only of prayer but also of reflection on the values of humility, wisdom, and selfless service that Gurus impart to society.

The Arunachal Pradesh BJP's Guru Purnima observance served as a blend of homage and public service, reinforcing the party's pledge to uphold the spiritual and cultural heritage of the region while engaging meaningfully with communities across the state.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of Arunachal Pradesh indigenous affairs council held in Itanagar



**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, July 10:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Arunachal Pradesh Indigenous Affairs Council (APIAC) was convened in Itanagar on Thursday under the chairmanship of Home Minister and Minister of Indigenous Affairs, Mama Natung.

The meeting, which brought together newly inducted council members, focused on critical issues concerning the Department of Indigenous Affairs and outlined a roadmap for the promotion and protection of indigenous practices and institutions in the state.

According to an official statement issued by the Department of Indigenous Affairs, the meeting marked a major step toward strengthening institutional mechanisms, streamlining administrative functions, and reviewing action points discussed during earlier APIAC meetings.

Addressing the media after the session, Minister Natung stated that the council took stock of the Action Taken Report from the previous (1st and 2nd) meetings and discussed a range of new proposals and updates.

"This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> APIAC meeting, and we had detailed discussions on important issues relating to the de-

partment, including administrative reforms, education, religious freedom, and institutional development," he said.

Among the key issues deliberated were the functioning and future expansion of Gurukul Schools in the state, the draft Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Rules, 2024, the proposal to rename the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) as the Department of Indigenous Faith Affairs (DIFA), and matters concerning the various priest associations and societies active in the state.

The Minister informed that the Cabinet Note for the smooth functioning of Gurukul Schools was reviewed.

"Several new Gurukul Schools are in the pipeline this year, with financial support already committed by the state government," Natung added, reaffirming the government's support for traditional systems of value-based education.

The renaming of the Department of Indigenous Affairs to the Department of Indigenous Faith Affairs (DIFA) also came up for discussion.

Minister Natung clarified that the issue had been raised in previous meetings and would be further

deliberated to ensure it reflects the spirit and scope of the department's mission.

Addressing the concerns surrounding the growing number of indigenous priests and associated bodies, the Minister stressed the importance of unity and coordinated efforts.

"There are more than 3,000 priests in Arunachal Pradesh. My vision is clear—I want them to remain united. Different teams and associations have approached me, but they must work collectively for the welfare of our indigenous communities and the overall development of the state," he said.

The meeting underscored the government's commitment to preserving and promoting Arunachal Pradesh's diverse indigenous heritage while ensuring institutional clarity and inclusiveness in policy implementation.

Minister Natung further reiterated that the Department of Indigenous Affairs would continue to serve as a vital channel to uphold cultural values and traditions and to empower native faith practitioners across the state.

The official statement noted that the APIAC will continue to meet regularly to monitor progress and ensure timely implementation of the decisions taken.

## Second phase of clean and green Yopo stream campaign concludes in Itanagar



**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, July 10:** The second phase of the awareness programme and campaign focused on promoting environmental cleanliness and sustainability along the Yopo stream concluded in Itanagar on Thursday.

The initiative, aimed at advancing the vision of a plastic-free Itanagar and fostering green consciousness among residents, was led by Senior Scientist R K Taj of the State Forest Research Institute (SFRI) under the Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

According to an official statement, the campaign was organised by the Soil and Water Conservation (S&WC) Division of the SFRI and was launched in June 2025.

The programme witnessed active participation from various segments of civil society, including

forestry internship students from multiple universities and members of non-governmental organisations such as the United Pare Club.

Throughout the campaign, several activities were undertaken to promote environmental responsibility and collective action for ecological restoration.

Addressing the media during the culmination event, Senior Scientist R K Taj urged citizens to adopt sustainable practices in daily life.

"Let us not pluck or damage trees. The trees we plant today are for a better tomorrow—let's save them," he said.

He further encouraged the public to reduce their use of plastic and to plant trees in and around their homes to contribute to the state's environmental goals.

A major highlight of the campaign's final phase was the plantation of over 500 edible fruit-bearing saplings along the

Yopo stream.

The plantation drive covered the stretch between Legi Complex and IG Park in Itanagar.

The choice of fruit-bearing species was aimed at reinforcing the dual objectives of ecological restoration and local nutritional support. The statement noted that the campaign served not only as an awareness drive but also as a call to action for safeguarding Arunachal Pradesh's natural heritage.

It underscored the importance of collaboration among government institutions, community-based organisations, students, and citizens in building a resilient and greener future.

Officials at SFRI expressed hope that the campaign would inspire more long-term, community-driven initiatives dedicated to environmental preservation and sustainability across the state.

## Multiple violations detected during joint surprise market inspection in Namsai

**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAL, July 10:** A joint surprise market inspection was conducted across Namsai township on Thursday, July 10, by a multi-departmental team as part of a coordinated effort to ensure strict enforcement of commercial, health, and safety regulations.

The inspection was led by officials from the Department of Trade and Commerce, Legal Metrology, Health and Family Welfare, Tax and Excise, Veterinary, Police, and the District Administration.

According to an official statement, the joint team inspected various business establishments and marketplaces to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

As a result of the operation, penalties were imposed on 13 establishments found operating without valid trade licences.

These actions were taken in accordance with the provisions of the notification dated July 29, 2009.

In addition, the Legal Metrology Department booked two cases under Section 18(1) of the Legal Metrology Act, 2009, read with the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011.

The violations involved the sale of packaged goods lacking mandatory declarations, such as Maximum Retail Price (MRP) and the date of manufacturing or packing—both required for consumer protection and transparency in trade.

Furthermore, one establishment was found using unverified weights in commercial transactions, a violation booked under Section 24 of the Legal Metrology Act, 2009.

## Central Government official reviews public distribution system in Namsai



**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAL, July 10:** Prasenjit Deb, a senior officer from the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD), Government of India, concluded a three-day official visit to Namsai, an aspirational district in Arunachal Pradesh, from July 8 to 10.

The purpose of the visit was to assess the functioning and implementation of various central food security schemes and initiatives under the DFPD.

According to an official statement, Deb was accompanied by a team comprising officials from the Department of Food and Civil Supplies and the Food Corporation of India (FCI).

During the course of his visit, he inspected multiple Fair Price Shops (FPS) and food depots in the district.

He was joined by the District Food and Civil Supplies Officer (DFSCO) of Namsai, officers from

the FCI Regional Office in Itanagar, and divisional heads from FCI Divisional Offices in Banderdewa and Pasighat.

The central officer interacted directly with beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) and other stakeholders involved in the Public Distribution System (PDS). During these interactions, he stressed the importance of fortified rice and its nutritional benefits, and explained the measures being taken to improve transparency and efficiency in food distribution.

In particular, Deb highlighted the need for establishing WhatsApp groups at the level of individual Fair Price Shops.

These groups, comprising beneficiaries and vigilance committee members, would serve as a platform to disseminate vital information on schemes, redressal mechanisms, and operational up-

dates, thereby ensuring greater community engagement and accountability.

On the second day of his visit, Deb held a meeting with the Deputy Commissioner of Namsai district to discuss various issues concerning the execution of food security programmes.

They reviewed administrative preparedness, logistical efficiency, and ways to further strengthen the delivery mechanism in the region.

The visit of the senior central government officer to this aspirational district underscores the Centre's commitment to ensuring effective implementation of the Public Distribution System, particularly in remote and underserved areas.

The official statement added that such visits are part of the government's broader strategy to promote good governance, enhance transparency, and ensure food security for all.

## Hindi binding language for Arunachal, no problem in learning it: CM Pema Khandu

**NEW DELHI, July 10:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has said Hindi is the binding language in his state where each tribe speaks its own dialect and language.

Hindi has been in the school curriculum ever since education came to Arunachal Pradesh and there is no problem in learning it, Khandu told PTI Videos in an interview.

There is so much diversity in Arunachal Pradesh that 26 major tribes and over 100 sub-tribes speak their own languages and dialects, the chief minister said.

"If I speak in my own dialect, my own language, people from another tribe will not understand. That's why everyone speaks Hindi. There will certainly be grammatical mistakes... but even if you go to a village, all the villagers will understand and speak Hindi. We speak Hindi in election campaigns and even in the Assembly."

"So definitely, Hindi is a binding language. There's no problem in learning it. It should be learnt," the BJP leader said in comments that come amidst the ongoing row over Hindi in

Maharashtra and some southern states.

He said Arunachal Pradesh is a strategic location where security force personnel come from different states and most speak in Hindi.

"There is also the Border Roads Organisation. So there are various other mediums through which we picked up Hindi quickly," he said.

Asked about the opposition to Hindi in some states, the chief minister said everyone has their own mother tongue, every state has its own language and every tribe has its own too. (PTI)



**NEW DELHI, July 10:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has said the next Dalai Lama will be from a free and democratic country and definitely not from China.

He, however, said the process of selecting the next Dalai Lama starts only after an incumbent passes away and hoped and prayed the 14th Dalai Lama will live for another 40 years.

"In fact, as I said, His Holiness' health is very good. And this time too -- on the occasion of his 90th birthday celebration -- His Holiness said that he will live to be around 130 years old. So we all pray and I am very hopeful that he will live to be 130," Khandu said in an interview with PTI Videos on Tuesday.

The chief minister, who is a follower of the Dalai Lama and a Buddhist, said he doesn't know the

process of how the next Dalai Lama will be selected, how it will happen or the details but there is established procedure.

"The entire rules are set, all procedures are set. There's no point in speculating about it now. There is no point now in speculating where he will be born, in which region, whether it will be in India or Tibet. On this issue, there is only one clarity, which His Holiness has perhaps said in an interview, that the next Dalai Lama will be born in a free world," he said.

Asked whether he was indicating that the next Dalai Lama would not be from China and could be from somewhere else, Khandu said, "Yes, definitely not from China because there is no democracy there."

"So wherever there is democracy... it can be anywhere in the

world where there is democracy," he said.

When pointed out that Tibet is also under Chinese rule, the chief minister responded, "That is why, I am not saying specifically it would be from this country or that country."

"It would be a bit immature for us to say this right now. But this much is certain... where there is democracy, where people have their freedom, can express their views. I think there is clarity on that," he said.

The chief minister said the Gaden Phodrang Trust will carry out the search for the next Dalai Lama.

"The search for the 15th Dalai Lama... the entire process will begin only after the present Dalai Lama passes away. So there is no hurry in this," he said.

On China's objection to the Dalai Lama's succession issue, Khandu said, "I don't know why China is objecting to it. They must have their own policy. There is no Dalai Lama institution in China. The Dalai Lama institution is recognised mainly in the Himalayan belt and by the Tibetan Buddhists. China has no role in it."

The chief minister said the Dalai Lama institution has been continuing for over 600 years, from the first Dalai Lama to the current 14th.

He said there was speculation about whether the Dalai Lama institution would continue and if the next Dalai Lama could be a woman.

"Before the 90th birthday of the 14th Dalai Lama, all heads of Buddhist traditions met and confirmed the institution will continue," he said. (PTI)

## Next Dalai Lama from free democratic country, not from China: Arunachal CM



# Minister, Sena (UBT) MLC engage in verbal clash over 'traitor' jibe

## Zonal councils now 'engines of cooperation' not just discussion forums: Amit Shah

**MUMBAI, July 10:** The Maharashtra legislative council on Thursday witnessed an altercation between minister Shambhuraj Desai and Shiv Sena (UBT) MLC Anil Parab after the former took strong exception to the latter's "traitor" jibe targeted at him, which led to the House getting adjourned for a brief period. The fiery exchange of words unfolded during a discussion on the demand of reserving 50 per cent of the units for Marathi people in the newly-built housing societies.

Deputy Chairperson of the council, Neelam Gorhe, later announced that the remarks made by the two leaders would be expunged from the official records.

During the Question Hour, Milind Narvekar of the Shiv Sena (UBT) asked a question that a social organisation has demanded 50 per cent of the housing units in the city be reserved for Marathi people.

He also sought to know if the present government has taken any decision about it.

In a written response, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, who is also the Housing Minister, said the department has not received any such letter from the organisation.

BJP leader Chitra Wagh, a nominated member of the House, said it was appropriate to reserve 50 per cent houses for Marathi people. She asked whether there was any such proposal when Uddhav Thackeray was the chief minister.

To this, minister Desai, who was replying on behalf of Shinde, said there was no such proposal when the Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government was in power. "No one has the right to deny Marathi manoo a house in Mumbai, its suburbs or Maharashtra. If any builder does this, the government will take strict action," he said.

Shiv Sena leader Hemant Patil, in an apparent dig at Thackeray, said when people are in power, they have an opportunity to do some positive things for the Marathi manoo, but Chaturvedis are sent to the Rajya Sabha instead of Narvekar.

His remark was apparently aimed at Shiv Sena (UBT) Rajya Sabha member Priyanka Chaturvedi.

Sena (UBT) MLC Parab said he had brought a private member's bill in the House to reserve 50 per cent of the houses in redeveloped buildings for Marathi-speaking people. He also asked if the state government would bring such a law.

But Desai said when the MVA was in power during 2019-2022, it did not bring any such law.

"You did not do that and this has come on record.

Your love for Marathi manoo is fake and hollow," he said.

This resulted in a verbal altercation between the two with Parab dubbing Desai a "gaddar" (traitor), a jibe used by Sena (UBT) to attack the MLAs who were part of the group that sided with Eknath Shinde during his rebellion in 2022, leading to a split in the Shiv Sena.

A furious Desai strongly objected to Parab's remark, and challenged him for a confrontation outside the House.

As tempers ran high, Gorhe adjourned the House for 10 minutes. Later, she said the remarks made by Desai and Parab will not be part of the House's record.

After the proceedings of the House resumed, Desai said the government will do whatever was required to give priority to Marathi manoo in housing schemes.

Earlier, Sachin Ahir of Sena (UBT) said if MHADA, a government body that builds affordable houses, has a clause of 15 year domicile certificate, then the government has a scope to look into it.

"(BJP MP Nishikant) Dubey has a flat in Khar. He doesn't stay here but has rented it out. So Marathi manoo has no house but outsiders buy houses here as an investment," he said.

Dubey triggered a controversy recently for his "patak patak ke mareng" (will thrash you) remark targeting MNS chief Raj Thackeray and his cousin Uddhav amid incidents of violence against Hindi-speaking people in Maharashtra.

Later, talking to reporters on the Vidhan Bhavan premises, Desai, who handles the tourism, mining and ex-servicemen welfare portfolios, said the wars of words between him and Parab took place during a debate over protection for native Maharashtrians in housing projects in Mumbai and its surrounding region. "The discussion was about legal provisions to ensure housing for Marathi people. BJP MLC Chitra Wagh asked whether the MVA government had made any such legal provision. I replied that no such step had been taken by that government," he said.

The minister said his reply appeared to have provoked Parab. "Parab called me a 'gaddar' (traitor). I responded in a similar language, and it led to a heated exchange," Desai said.

"I even tried telling him that in the MVA government, I was a minister of state, while Parab was a cabinet minister. He was closer to Uddhav Thackeray," the minister said, adding that he hit back at Parab for calling him a traitor. (PTI)

**RANCHI, July 10:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said zonal councils have transformed from being mere discussion forums into "engines of cooperation," noting that 83 per cent of issues taken up in their meetings have been resolved.

Shah made the remark at the 27th Eastern Zonal Council meeting, attended by representatives from the four eastern states — Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, and West Bengal — including Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren and his Odisha counterpart Mohan Charan Majhi.

"Under the Modi government, regional councils have evolved from mere 'Forum of Discussion' into 'Engines of Cooperation'. The resolution of 83 per cent of issues during regional council meetings underlines the effectiveness and growing importance of these forums," Shah said.

In today's meeting, long-pending complex issues related to Masanjore Dam, Taiyabpur Barrage and Indrapuri Reservoir were discussed in detail in addition to the issues related to division of assets and liabilities of many public sector undertakings (PSUs) between Bihar and Jharkhand states, which were pending since the time of division of Bihar, and decisive steps were taken with mutual consent towards their resolution.

Shah said the number of zonal council meetings rose to 63 between 2014 and 2025 as compared to 25 between 2004 and 2014.

"We have moved forward from an average of 2 to 3 meetings per year to holding on average 6 meetings per year. A total of 1,580 issues were discussed in these meetings out of which 1287, i.e. 83



per cent, issues have been resolved," Shah asserted. He emphasised that the Centre was committed to advancing the development of states with renewed focus and direction, calling for collective efforts to achieve this goal.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has presented the vision of Team Bharat to the country on the basis of cooperative federalism. ...we should all move forward together to achieve the goal of development of India through the development of states and making India a fully developed nation by 2047," Shah said. He said that during 2014 to 2025, the pace of organising these meetings has increased and they have become more productive, a statement from the Home Ministry said.

"The zonal councils were conceived with the objective of making them a strong foundation of cooperative federalism. They have now become an actionable platform from an advisory one and through these we have been successful in resolving issues between the Centre and the states and among the states to a large extent,"

he added. The eastern states should make more efforts towards early implementation of three new criminal laws, Shah said, adding that more work also needs to be done in the matter of narcotics control in these states, for which district level NCORD meetings should be held regularly.

"Due to the unity of all the states and the bravery of the security forces, we have achieved unprecedented success against Naxalism. We will make the country free from Naxalism by March 31, 2026," he added.

The Union Home Minister said that Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha have become free from Naxalism to a large extent, while West Bengal has already been freed from this problem, Shah said.

The Eastern Zonal Council unanimously passed a thanksgiving resolution for the bravery of the India's armed forces.

"During Operation Sindoor, our forces have demonstrated unparalleled valour, precision, and bravery to the entire world," Shah said.

He added, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has shown strong

resolve and sent a clear message of India's firm stand against terrorism to the global community."

The meeting also discussed a wide range of issues of national importance including implementation of Fast Track Special Courts (FTSC) for speedy trial and speedy disposal of rape cases against women and children, brick-and-mortar banking facility within the designated radius of each village, implementation of Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112) and various issues of common interest at the regional level including nutrition, education, health, power, urban planning and strengthening of cooperative systems.

"The entire eastern India has been a land of devotion, knowledge, music, scientific research and revolution. Bihar and eastern India have contributed a lot in establishing the basic ideals of education. Many great personalities including Swami Vivekananda, Birsu Munda Ji, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Babu Jagjivan Ram have led the country in many fields from this land," he said.

During the meeting, Jharkhand CM Soren raised 31 issues concerning the state, including Rs 1.36 lakh-crore in dues from central coal PSUs, and called for improved infrastructure and job creation through MSMEs, officials said. Jharkhand also raised the issue of a separate Sarna religious code for tribals. Soren in a post on X said the demands included priority to local inhabitants in PSUs, safe mines closure and Centre's support for boosting tourism and protecting tribal heritage among others. (PTI)

## Bridge collapse: Gujarat CM suspends four engineers

**AHMEDABAD, July 10:** Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on Thursday suspended four engineers of the state's roads and buildings department in connection with the bridge collapse on Mahisagar river in Vadodra district a day earlier that has resulted in 16 deaths while some persons are missing.

CM Patel, who handles the roads and buildings department, had asked experts to prepare a report on the repairs, inspections and quality checks conducted at the bridge, and the decision to suspend the four engineers was taken on the basis of this report, a government release said. Those suspended with immediate effect are Executive Engineer N. M. Nayakawala, Deputy Executive Engineers U.C. Patel and R.T. Patel as well as Assistant Engineer J.V. Shah, the release informed. The CM has ordered department officials to immediately conduct intensive inspections of other bridges in the state in view of the incident, the release added.

Several vehicles plunged into the Mahisagar river after a portion of the four-decade-old bridge, connecting Anand and Vadodra districts, collapsed near Gambhira village close to Padra town of Vadodra on Wednesday morning.

"So far, 16 bodies have been recovered, while three to four persons are still missing," Vadodra district Superintendent of Police Rohan Anand said during the day. "The search and rescue operation is still on," he said.

Vadodra Collector Anil Dhameliya has said earlier that National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) teams are conducting a search in the river to find out survivors, if any, or bodies of the victims. (PTI)

## SC asks EC to consider Aadhaar, Voter ID, ration cards in Bihar electoral roll revision

**NEW DELHI, July 10:** The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Election Commission to consider Aadhaar, Voter ID and ration cards as valid documents during its ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, set to go to polls later this year.

Calling SIR a "constitutional mandate", Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Joyimalya Bagchi considered the submissions of senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for EC, and permitted the poll panel to continue with the exercise in Bihar with over 7 crore voters. Terming the right to vote as an important right in a democratic country, it said, "We cannot stop a constitutional body from doing what it is supposed to do. Simultaneously, we will not let them do what they are not supposed to do."

The bench in its order further noted, "After hearing both sides, we are of the opinion that three questions are involved in this case. A, the very powers of the EC to undertake the exercise, B, the procedure and the manner in which the exercise is being undertaken, and C, the timing, including the timings given for preparation of draft electoral rolls, asking objections and making the final electoral roll, et cetera, which is very short, considering the fact that Bihar election are due in November 2025." Underlining the need to hear the matter, the bench posted over 10 petitions challenging the drive on July 28.

The poll panel in the meantime was directed to file its response within a week following which the rejoinder from the petitioners could be filed a week thereafter.

The bench took on record the poll panel's statement that the list of 11 documents it had to consider for SIR was not exhaustive.

"Therefore, in our view, since the list is not exhaustive, it would be in the interest of justice if the ECI will also consider the following three documents, such as Aadhaar card, voter ID card, and ration card," the bench ordered.

The poll panel, represented by Dwivedi and senior advocates K K Venugopal and Maninder Singh, however, objected to this part of the order. "We are not saying you have to. It is up to you to consider. We are saying it looks that way. They are genuine. If you have a good reason to discard then discard it. But

give reasons," Justice Dhulia remarked.

The bench did not stay the EC's SIR for the petitioners did not pray for it at the moment.

Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for NGO Association for Democratic Reforms, challenged the legal basis of the EC's decision to undertake a SIR, which, he argued, is not recognized under the RP Act or its rules.

He called the SIR an unprecedented, arbitrary process targeting those enrolled after 2003 and the cut-off being unjustified.

He also questioned the exclusion of widely held documents such as Aadhaar and Voter ID from the EC's list, pointing out these were recognised under existing electoral rules and relied upon in several public service domains.

The bench said the EC's exercise appeared constitutionally valid but acknowledged concerns about its timing and implementation.

It also cited Section 21(3) of the RP Act, which permits the poll panel to carry out a special revision "in such manner as it may think fit", reinforcing the panel's discretionary power.

Senior advocates Kapil Sibal, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Shadan Farasat, Vrinda Grover, and others termed the approach of the poll panel as exclusionary and disproportionate affecting the poor.

Sibal cited Bihar government data indicating that only a small fraction of the population possesses the documents deemed acceptable by the poll panel, with just 2.5 per cent holding passports and under 15 per cent having matriculation certificates. Grover said the process was "exclusionary rather than inclusionary" whereas Singhvi emphasised that disenfranchising even a single eligible voter undermined democratic integrity and violates the basic structure of the Constitution.

"Even the documents you are accepting," the bench told the ECI, "are ultimately based on Aadhaar... The contradiction in excluding a document which is deeply embedded in other accepted forms of identity."

Dwivedi maintained that Aadhaar could not be accepted as proof of citizenship and verifying one's credentials was the poll panel's responsibility under Article 326 of the Constitution. (PTI)

Govt. of Assam					
Office of the District Adult Education Officer					
Karbi Anglong, Diphu.					
No. DAF/KA/Civil works/2025-26/110			Dated: 09-07-2025		
TENDER NOTICE					
In pursuance of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu vide letter No. KAAC/Adult Edu/AA & FS/Non-Exempted/2025-26/05 Pt.11/04 Diphu dated the 27th May, 2025, Sealed tenders affixing non-refundable KAAC Court fee stamp (receipt) Rs. 10.00 (Rupees ten) only eventually to be drawn up are hereby invited from KAAC registered contractor/reputed firms and will be received by the undersigned on or before 31-07-2025 upto 3.00 P.M and will be opened on the same date, place and the hours in presence of the renderers' authorized agent, if any.					
If the day of the opening of tender happens to be any holiday/non-working day, the tender will be opened in the next day. The undersigned has the right to accept, reject any tender without any reason thereof and will not be bound to accept the lowest tender quoted.					
Sl. No.	Name of work	Estimated amount	Earnest Money	Time allowed for completion.	Remarks
1	Construction of RCC Ring Well of 900 mm dia and water staging in the O/o Project Officer, Bokajan SAEF at Nambar Adarsha, Balipathar, Karbi Anglong.	Rs. 4,16,000	ST, SC and OBC @ 1 % & Gen. @ 2%	60 days	Under Esstt. Expenditure of Ceiling Non-Exempted for the FY 2025-26
2	Construction of RCC Ring Well of 900 mm dia and water staging in the O/o Project Officer at Rongkhang SAEF, Dongkamukam, West Karbi Anglong.	Rs. 4,74,186	ST, SC and OBC @ 1 % & Gen. @ 2%	90 days	Under Esstt. Expenditure of Ceiling Non-Exempted for the FY 2025-26

Details tender documents may be obtained from the Dist. Adult Edn. Office, Diphu during working hours.

### Terms & Conditions

- The rate to be quoted as % (percent) above/below/as per schedule rate for building/works etc. under CPWD for the year 2021-22.
- Earnest money should be deposited in favour of the undersigned in the form of Call Deposit/Bank Draft and should be attached with the tender without without which no tender will be accepted.
- The work must be carried out as supervised by the E.E. (W), KAAC, Diphu.
- The following documents should be enclosed with the tender.
  - Caste certificate.
  - PAN Card.
  - Professional Tax clearance certificate.
  - GST registration and up to date returns.
  - Council registration certificate.
  - Call Deposit/Bank Draft.
  - Bank Accounts details.
  - Trading license, if any.
- The undersigned is not bound to accept the lowest quoted rate.

Sd/-  
District Adult Education Officer, i/c.,  
Karbi Anglong, Diphu.

Memo No.: DAE/KA/Construction/2023-24/110-A

Date: 09-07-2025

## First indigenously made diving support vessel 'Nistar' to be inducted into Navy on July 18

**NEW DELHI, July 10:** 'Nistar', the first indigenously constructed diving support vessel that can undertake deep-sea diving and rescue operations, is set to be inducted into the Indian Navy on July 18, officials said on Thursday.

The ship will be commissioned at a ceremony to be held at the Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam, in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, they said.

'Nistar', designed and constructed by Hindustan Shipyard Limited, Visakhapatnam, was delivered to the Indian Navy on July 8 at Visakhapatnam.

The ship will also serve as the 'Mother Ship' for Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel (DSRV) to rescue and evacuate personnel in case of an emergency in a submarine underwater. A Navy spokesperson said on Wednesday. On commissioning, 'Nistar' will join the Eastern Naval Command to support deep-sea diving and submarine rescue operations.

The ship is highly specialised and can

undertake deep-sea diving and rescue operations -- a capability with select navies across the globe, the Navy official earlier said. With a length of approximately 120 metres and a tonnage of nearly 10,000 tonnes, the DSV has the capacity to maintain its position with extreme accuracy, using dynamic positioning system, the officials said.

"The expansive diving complex on-board, which consists of both air and saturation diving systems, along with underwater Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) and side scan sonar, substantially enhances the operational envelope of the vessel," the Navy spokesperson said on Thursday. As the 'Mother Ship' for the DSRV, the induction of this platform would provide a "major capability enhancement" to Indian Navy's submarine rescue preparedness.

The ship is also outfitted with an operation theatre, an intensive care unit, eight-bed hospital and hyperbaric medical

facilities which are critical towards meeting her operational roles, the spokesperson said. With an endurance of "over 60 days at sea, capacity to undertake stage through helicopter operations and a 15-tonne sub-sea crane make the ship a very versatile platform," he said.

The ship is a testament to the government's focus on nation-building through self-reliance in defence production and unwavering focus on 'Aatmanirbharta'. A total of 120 MSMEs have participated in the construction of this ambitious, unique and state-of-the-art vessel, achieving more than 80 per cent indigenous content, the officials said. The project is a step towards realising the Indian Navy's vision of designing and constructing complex indigenous platforms.

"In her earlier avatar ex-Nistar, was a submarine rescue vessel which was acquired by the Indian Navy from the erstwhile USSR in 1969 and commissioned in 1971." (PTI)



CM pitches Nagaland as gateway to ASEAN, showcases investor-friendly policies, vibrant youth and cultural economy at Osaka World Expo 2025

## Nagaland CM Rio highlights investment opportunities at World Expo in Japan



**KOIHIMA, July 10:** Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Thursday said the state government was committed to creating a secure, transparent, and investor-friendly environment, highlighting the state's strategic location as a gateway to the ASEAN region.

Rio was addressing a special session of the World Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan — marking Nagaland's first-ever official participation in the prestigious global event, an official release here said.

Speaking on the topic, 'Investment, Tourism and Human Resource Opportunities in Nagaland', the CM highlighted the state's unique strengths as an emerging destination for sustainable investment and global tourism.

"Nagaland offers first-mover advantage across multiple sectors, from agribusiness and eco-tourism to artisanal crafts, technology and creative industries. We have instituted a strong support system backed

by single-window clearances, best practices, and high implementation standards," he said.

He also underlined Nagaland's high literacy rate, youthful population, and cultural richness as key enablers of growth.

Significantly, the CM assured global partners of Nagaland's record of safety and stability, especially highlighting its reputation for women's security and a peaceful social fabric, making it an ideal destination for both tourists and investors.

The World Expo, first held in 1851, is one of the oldest and most significant international exhibitions, hosted every five years with participation from countries across the globe. It serves as a platform for nations to showcase their culture, innovation, and development vision to an international audience.

The 2025 edition in Osaka, themed 'Designing Future Society for Our Lives', focuses on collaboration, technology, sus-

tainability, and inclusive growth.

Following Rio's keynote address, a presentation titled 'Nagaland – The Land of Festivals: Celebrating Culture, Creating Futures' was delivered by Abu Metha, advisor to the CM and Chairman of Investment and Development Authority of Nagaland (IDAN).

His presentation brought to the fore the state's vibrant ecosystem, youthful energy, and untapped economic potential, the statement added.

Metha highlighted the richness of Nagaland's ethnic mosaic, the dynamism of its youth, and the strategic policies in place to drive investment and innovation.

He spoke of the internationally renowned Hornbill Festival, the state's growing global recognition in music, arts and sports, and the emergence of Nagaland's creative economy from gaming start-ups to film production.

Metha also emphasised the robust tertiary sector, abundant natural resources, and a progressive start-up ecosystem supported by state policies such as the Nagaland Start-Up Policy, Tourism Policy 2024, and UNNATI Scheme 2024.

During the B2B meetings and deliberations with business representatives, Nagaland's advisor for Industries and Commerce, Hekani Jakhalu, highlighted the state's strong potential for industrial development, particularly in sectors such as food processing, agricultural technologies, and the growing start-up ecosystem.

She emphasised the investor-friendly policies of the Nagaland government, a conducive environment for partnerships, and the high skill levels of the state's human resources.

Jakhalu also spoke about the vibrant, energetic, and creative youth of Nagaland, expressing confidence that their talent and innovation can significantly contribute to the strengthening of bilateral collaborations. (PTI)

## Meghalaya Cabinet approves criminal justice reforms, scraps interviews for recruiting Group D staff



**SHILLONG, July 10:** In a major push towards governance reform, judicial efficiency, and cultural promotion, the Meghalaya Cabinet on Wednesday approved three proposals.

Those include a set of criminal justice rules under the new national criminal laws, the Meghalaya Film Tourism Policy 2025, and the discontinuation of interviews for Group D posts in state recruitment.

The key decisions were made during the Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma.

Government spokesperson Paul Lyngdoh said three new criminal justice rules are aimed at aligning the state's legal procedures with the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagariksanksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniam.

The Meghalaya e-Shaksha Management Rules 2025 will enable secure, tamper-proof storage of electronic evidence' such as videos and photographs' through the mobile application e-Shaksha, which integrates with the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) and Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) systems.

Each piece of evidence will be digitally secured and assigned a unique ID, ensuring accessibility to courts and prosecutors during trial.

It also includes the Meghalaya Electronic Processes Issuance Service and Execution Rules 2025, which will allow for the digital issuance of summons, warrants, and other legal processes.

These e-documents will be generated via a centralised case information system, replacing paper-based formats and improving efficiency in court proceedings.

The Meghalaya Guidelines for Community Services 2025 introduce community service as an alternative form of punishment for individuals convicted of petty offences.

Courts can now sentence such offenders to socially constructive activities including assisting in hospital maintenance, organising books in government libraries, cleaning classrooms in public schools, supporting municipal cleaning efforts, or participating in tree planting and weed removal in forest department programmes.

"These reforms modernise our criminal justice system and introduce a more rehabilitative approach, in full conformity with the new national laws. The rules were approved after due consultation with the Meghalaya High Court," Home Commissioner & Secretary Cyril Diengdoh Diengdoh elaborated.

The Cabinet also approved the Meghalaya Film Tourism Policy 2025, aimed at positioning the state as a prime filmmaking destination in the northeast. The policy will attract national and international productions, while providing incentives for local filmmakers and strengthening infrastructure, Tourism Minister Paul Lyngdoh said.

The policy, released three months ago and finalised after integrating over 200 suggestions from industry stakeholders, includes subsidy support of up to 1 crore or 25 per cent of the total production cost for films made in major national and international languages, provided 75 per cent of the shoot takes place outdoors in Meghalaya.

Local films in Khasi, Pnar, and Garo will receive a 50 lakh subsidy, which can be availed of once every two years.

Further support is extended to the production of TV serials, web series, and original shows for the state-run Hello Meghalaya App, the only government-funded OTT platform in India. Grants will also be available for documentaries and short films, alongside the establishment of a much-anticipated state-run film studio.

A dedicated film facilitation cell will be created to coordinate with various departments, including Tourism, Arts & Culture, and the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), to streamline implementation.

"This is a milestone initiative to promote our landscapes, create job opportunities, and support homegrown content," Lyngdoh said.

In another key governance reform, the Cabinet approved the discontinuation of interviews for Group D posts in state recruitment processes.

This move, in line with guidelines from the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, aims to ensure greater transparency, fairness, and merit-based selection. (PTI)

## Cong alleges no tender for prefab homes, seeks probe

**IMPHAL, July 10:** The opposition Congress in Manipur on Thursday demanded an investigation into the construction of pre-fabricated houses for displaced people, claiming that no tender was floated for the work. State Congress president Keisham Meghachandra said during a visit to two sites of pre-fabricated houses in Bishnupur district on Wednesday, he learnt constructions were underway without a work order or any tender.

"The constructions were not being done officially. We are demanding a thorough investigation into how pre-fabricated houses were being constructed without floating tenders. This strongly indicates a possible loot of hundreds of crores of rupees," he alleged.

"The government, both in the state and at the Centre, must ensure direct transfer of all the financial benefits meant for the displaced persons to their individual bank accounts, instead of transacting through middlemen," he added.

Meghachandra, the MLA of Wangkhem, said the government must also ensure a fixed timeline for the return of the displaced people to their original homes.

He submitted a memorandum to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla regarding this. (PTI)

## SI, four constables suspended for 'assault' of detainee in police custody in Meghalaya

**SHILLONG, July 10:** A sub-inspector and four constables posted at Sohra Police Station in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district were suspended for allegedly assaulting a detainee and forcing him to drink water from a toilet earlier this month, a senior officer said on Thursday.

They were suspended after a preliminary inquiry into a complaint filed on July 7 by the mother of the detainee who was injured during the alleged assault by the police personnel.

He had been referred from the Sohra CHC to the Civil Hospital here, the officer said.

"An independent inquiry led by SDPO B Wanswet found prima facie evidence of misconduct. Following the inquiry, the five personnel, including a sub-inspector, were placed under suspension, and departmental proceedings were initiated against them," East Khasi Hills District SP Vivek Syiem told PTI.

During the course of the investigation, a separate criminal case has also been



registered against the detainee at the Sohra Police Station, and a probe is being conducted by an officer from another police station, he said.

The case stems from a July 1 FIR filed by a resident of Mawksiyem locality, in which the detainee and his family reside.

The person was accused of assaulting people in the locality, public indecency, and issuing threats.

The police said the accused was brought to the Sohra PS by his mother on July 3, after evading arrest earlier.

He had undergone medical examinations and was re-

leased on bail the same evening, another officer said.

However, his mother later accused the police personnel of assaulting him in custody and subjecting him to inhumane treatment, and forcing her son to drink water from the toilet at the police station, he said.

"Meghalaya Police will not tolerate abuse of any person. Strict action will be taken against those found guilty," the officer said.

The case has triggered concerns over custodial violence and violations of people's rights in Meghalaya, with the state human rights commission closely monitoring the development. (PTI)

## CYMA provides aid assistance to Myanmar refugees, victims of rain

**AIZAWL, July 10:** The central committee of Young Mizo Association (CYMA), Mizoram's largest and most influential civil society organisation, on Thursday extended financial aid of over ₹ 19 lakh to support refugees from Myanmar and locals affected by rains.

According to a press statement issued by the organisation, ₹ 6 lakh was disbursed to YMA branches in East Mizoram's Champhai district to support refugees from Myanmar, who recently fled to the state due to armed conflict between ethnic Chin militias in the Chin hills.

Of the amount, ₹ 3 lakh was provided to the Zokhawthar branch, ₹ 2 lakh to the Vaphai branch and ₹ 1 lakh was provided to Champhai YMA sub-quarters. The CYMA's statement also said that over ₹ 13 lakh was disbursed on Thursday to aid people affected by natural calamities triggered by rains.

Official sources said that more than 4,000

people from Myanmar had fled to Mizoram and took shelter in Zokhawthar and Vaphai villages in Champhai district due to the recent gunfights between two anti-junta forces – Chin National Defence Force (CNDP) and Chinland Defence Force (CDF).

Some refugees were sheltered by their relatives, while others lodged at community halls, and they were provided food by village authorities and NGOs, they said.

According to the State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC) of Mizoram's Disaster Management and Rehabilitation department, a staggering 846 landslides have been reported across the state between May 24 and July 9, severely disrupting infrastructure, mobility, and daily life.

Aizawl district remains the most severely impacted, recording 127 landslides in which 22 houses were destroyed, it said. (PTI)

**SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES**  
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Narakasur Hilltop, Bhangagarh, Guwahati-781032, Assam  
Phone: 06026177313 E-mail: ssuhs\_assam@yahoo.in Website: www.ssuhs.in

SSUHS/159/2025/4821 Date: 10-07-2025

**শৈক্ষিক জাননী**

শ্রীমন্ত শংকরদেব স্বাস্থ্য বিজ্ঞান বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ৰ দ্বাৰা ইতিপূৰ্বে প্রচাৰিত জাননীমৰ্মে শৈক্ষিক বৰ্ষ ২০২৫ ত জি এন এম পাঠ্যক্রমত নামভৰ্তিৰ বাবে প্ৰৱেশিকা পৰীক্ষা অসমৰ গুৱাহাটী, ডিব্ৰুগড়, শিলচৰ, যোৰহাট, বৰপেটা, তেজপুৰ, ডিফু, লখিমপুৰ, নাগাঁও, কোকৰাঝাৰ, নলবাৰী, ধুবুৰী পৰীক্ষা কেন্দ্ৰসমূহত অহা ১৩ জুলাই তাৰিখে অনুষ্ঠিত কৰা হ'ব।

পৰীক্ষাৰ্থীসকলক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ৰ ৱেবছাইটত ([www.ssuhs.in](http://www.ssuhs.in)) উপলব্ধ পৰীক্ষাৰ প্ৰৱেশ পত্ৰসমূহ সংগ্ৰহ কৰিবলৈ তথা প্ৰৱেশ পত্ৰত উল্লেখিত সময়ত নিৰ্ধাৰিত পৰীক্ষা কেন্দ্ৰত উপস্থিত হ'বলৈ আহ্বান জনোৱা হ'ল।

বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ৰ তবফৰ পৰা সমূহ পৰীক্ষাৰ্থীক শুভেচ্ছা জ্ঞাপন কৰাৰ লগতে তেওঁলোকৰ সফলতা কামনা কৰা হ'ল।

পঞ্জীয়ক,  
শ্রীমন্ত শংকরदेव স্বास्वतंत्र विज्ञान विश्वविद्यालय

DIPR /D/HLT/64/11-Jul-25

No. AESRB/67/2025/1025

**RECRUITMENT NOTICE**

In continuation of the Notice of Assam Engineering Service Recruitment Board (AESRB) vide No.AESRB/67/2025/1022 dated 09.07.2025, this is for information of all shortlisted candidates that the schedule for Teaching Proficiency Test (TPT) for recruitment to the posts of Assistant Professor (Technical) and Assistant Professor (Non Technical) in the Government Engineering Colleges of Assam has been published in the official website of AESRB ([www.aesrb.in](http://www.aesrb.in)).

The shortlisted candidates are requested to be present for the Teaching Proficiency Test (TPT) accordingly.

The shortlisted candidates are to attend for the TPT as per the schedule and Instructions made available, failing which the candidature will stand cancelled.

No further communication will be made in this regard separately.

Sd/-  
Member Secretary  
Assam Engineering Service Recruitment Board  
Ambari, Guwahati-01

DIPR /D/HLT/62/11-Jul-25

## Rozgar Melas in Guwahati, Dimapur and Siliguri tomorrow

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 10:** The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) will host Rozgar Melas at Guwahati, Dimapur and Siliguri on July 12 as part of a nationwide employment drive under the Government of India's flagship initiative to boost public sector job opportunities for the youth.

The events, scheduled to begin at 10:30 AM on Saturday, are being organised under the leadership of the Ministry of Railways in coordination with several other Central Government departments.

According to an official statement issued by the NFR, these Melas are intended to distribute appointment letters to newly recruited candidates selected for various Central Government posts.

Rozgar Melas are being conducted simultaneously across 47 locations throughout the country, ranging from major cities to smaller regional hubs.

This large-scale mobilisation reflects the Centre's commitment to expanding employment opportunities, streamlining the recruitment

process and ensuring direct outreach to young aspirants from diverse regions.

The Indian Railways is playing a key organisational role in these events, which will witness the participation of Union Ministers and Members of Parliament.

They will personally hand over appointment letters to successful candidates, marking the formal beginning of their public service careers.

Within the jurisdiction of the Northeast Frontier Railway, a total of 625 appointment letters will be issued during Saturday's programme.

The event in Guwahati will be held at Rang Bhawan, N F Railway Headquarters, Maligaon, where Union Cabinet Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, will preside as the chief guest.

In Dimapur, the Rozgar Mela will take place at the Town Hall, Super Market Lane, Half Nagarjan.

The event will be attended by Kiren Rijiju, Union Cabinet Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of Minority Affairs.

**PROVISION OF RCC BOX CULVERT**

E-Tender Notice No.: TSK/Engg/39 of 2025 Dated: 08-07-2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Brief Description of Item:** At Dibrugarh- Provision of RCC Box culvert (Box size 5x3m, Barrel length = 14m) in connection with Reconstruction of existing culvert at Railway Chainage 6687.5m near Bokel bye pass. **Tender Value:** ₹2,18,55,054/- **Earnest Money:** ₹2,59,300/- **Date & Time of closing of Tender:** 15.00 hrs. of 30-07-2025 & opening at 16.00 hrs. of 30-07-2025. The complete information with the tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15.00 hrs. of 30-07-2025 in the website [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in)

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Narakasur Hilltop, Bhangagarh, Guwahati-781032, Assam  
E-mail: ssuhs\_assam@yahoo.in Website: www.ssuhs.in

No.SSUHS/143/2024/4814

**EDUCATIONAL NOTICE**  
(Eligibility Percentile of M.Sc. Nursing Entrance Examination, 2025)

In pursuance of Assam Govt. Notification No.e.MER.488929/19, dated 26-07-2024, SSUHS is pleased to notify the following minimum eligibility percentile and corresponding marks in the Entrance Examination for admission into M.Sc. Nursing course for the academic session 2025-26.

(1) For all categories of candidates of Govt. seats (Seats in Govt. Institutes):

Category	M.Sc. Nursing
General (UR/EWS)	30 <sup>th</sup> Percentile = 55 marks
SC/ST/OBC(NCL)/MOBC	20 <sup>th</sup> Percentile = 51 marks
Divyang	20 <sup>th</sup> Percentile = 51 marks

(2) For 50% Management Quota Seats in Private Institutes:

Category	M.Sc. Nursing
General (UR/EWS)	20 <sup>th</sup> Percentile = 51 marks
SC/ST/OBC(NCL)/MOBC	18 <sup>th</sup> Percentile = 50 marks
Divyang	15 <sup>th</sup> Percentile = 49 marks

(3) For the rest of the seats of Private Institutes

Category	M.Sc. Nursing
General (UR/EWS)	18 <sup>th</sup> Percentile = 50 marks
SC/ST/OBC(NCL)/MOBC	15 <sup>th</sup> Percentile = 49 marks
Divyang	15 <sup>th</sup> Percentile = 49 marks

All the Institutes/ Colleges of Assam running M.Sc. Nursing course are to admit students for academic session 2025-26 in accordance with the above norms. Non-compliance of the above, if detected at any stage, shall invite serious legal consequences.

Sd/-  
Registrar  
Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health Sciences

DIPR /D/HLT/63/11-Jul-25

No. BTC/04/TSD-TDF/Pt-1/2022-23/55

**SHORT-NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
(e-Procurement)

The Mission Director, Bodoland Pig Mission, BTC, Kokrajhar, Invites bids through e-tendering process for the work "Setting up an Audio Visual, Supply of Furniture & Development work at Existing Training Hall, Deulkuhi in Tamulpur District under Bodoland Pig Mission" from the eligible Contractor possessing requisite Registration Certificate under Veterinary Department, BTC, Kokrajhar and well established, financially sound contractor.

Details particulars may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sl. No.	Work Details	Tender Amount (approx.) (In Rs.)	Bid Security	Cost of Bid Documents (In Rs.)	Time of completion
1	Setting up an Audio Visual, Supply of Furniture & Development work at Existing Training Hall, Deulkuhi in Tamulpur District under Bodoland Pig Mission.	24,00,000.00	Rs. 48,000 for General Category & Rs. 24,000 for reserved category	1000.00	30 days

Sd/-Mission Cell In-charge,  
Bodoland Pig Mission,  
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/1546





**NEW DELHI, July 10:** Producer Ektaa Kapoor on Thursday said she was firmly against the idea of bringing back the popular daily soap "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi" for a second innings on television but eventually decided to go ahead with it as she wanted to make a show that's not afraid to raise important issues. Kapoor had created and produced the Star Plus show, which ran from 2000 to 2008 and amassed a cult following. The hit show, which completed 25 years last month, is now returning with actor-politician Smriti Irani reprising her character of Tulsi Virani, a role that made her popular all over the country. In a statement posted on her Instagram page, Kapoor addressed the question lingering on people's minds -- why she chose to bring the show back after all these years. "When the 25th year of

'Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi' was approaching and the idea of relaunching it surfaced, my first reaction was a firm no! Why would I want to shake up nostalgia? You can never compete with nostalgia. It always remains supreme. How I remember my childhood and how it really was, will always be different. Also, the television space has changed," the producer said. She claimed that one research by an international body showed that the show gave a "voice to women in Indian homes". "Between 2000 and 2005, for the first time, women began participating in family discussions, a shift deeply influenced by Indian television, especially 'Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi' and 'Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki'." "Kyunki' became a global ambassador, carrying forward India's storytelling traditions worldwide. It wasn't just a daily

## Ektaa Kapoor says she was initially against 'Kyunki... 2' but hopes to raise important questions through show

soap, it brought discussions about domestic r\*pe, marital r\*pe, age shaming and euthanasia to the dining tables of Indian homes. That was the true legacy of the story."

During her discussions with executives of "Star Plus" and within her production banner Balaji Telefilms, Kapoor said she pondered over a number of questions and when she got the answers, she decided to go ahead with the new show. "I said, 'Let's do this! Let's create a show that's not afraid to raise important questions, that sparks conver-

sations, and stands out in the time dominated by visual gimmicks," she said, adding that the show will only have "limited episodes".

"Cheers to Kyunki, cheers to the power of storytelling, cheers to less of what happened before and cheers to what will come! We will never win against nostalgia. The fight though, is not about winning. It is about Impact! To the show that's not just ours, but also yours too!"

"Kyunki Saas Abhi Kabhi Bahu Thi" will start airing on Star Plus and Jio Hotstar from July 29. (PTI)



## Chitrangda Singh boards cast of Salman Khan's 'Battle Of Galwan'

**MUMBAI, July 10:** Actor Chitrangda Singh on Thursday joined the cast of "Battle Of Galwan", the upcoming war drama set to be headlined by superstar Salman Khan.

The movie, which is directed by Apoorva Lakhia of "Shootout at Lokhandwala" fame, is based on the 2020 Galwan valley conflict between armed personnel of India and China.

It will mark the maiden collaboration between Chitrangda, known for movies such as "Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi", "Yeh Saali Zindagi" and "Desi Boyz", and Salman.

"I've always wanted to work with Chitrangda since I watched her amazing performance in 'Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi' and then 'Bob Biswas'," Lakhia said in a statement.

"We're thrilled to welcome Chitrangda Singh to the cast of Battle of Galwan. Chitrangda brings a rare blend of strength and sensitivity to the screen as her feminine side will match perfectly with Salman Sir's brooding but quiet

strength," he added.

Salman had officially announced the movie last week in a post on his social media handles.

According to the makers, the film is based on one of India's most brutal battles fought without a single bullet being fired. It was fought over 15,000 feet above sea level, this battle stands as a testament to India's indomitable spirit.

Twenty Indian Army personnel laid down their lives in the Galwan valley clashes in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflicts between India and China in decades. (PTI)



## Dhanush starts shooting for next feature film

**MUMBAI, July 10:** Tamil actor Dhanush has commenced shooting for his 54th feature film, the makers announced on Thursday. The movie is being directed by Vignesh Raja, best known for his critically-acclaimed crime thriller "Por Thozhil". It is backed by Ishari K Ganesh of Vels Film International. The production banner shared the news in a post on Instagram. "Sometimes staying dangerous is the only way to stay alive. #D54 starring @dhanushkraj - On floors from today," Vels Film International wrote alongside a teaser poster of the film.

Celebrated music composer G V Prakash Kumar, who has previously delivered several hit soundtracks for many films of Dhanush, will be scoring the music for the project.

"It's always a pleasure to collaborate with exceptional talent like Dhanush, Vignesh Raja and

GV Prakash. At Vels Film International, we strive to bring meaningful and entertaining cinema to audiences, and this film is truly special. We're excited to see this vision come alive and can't wait to share more with the fans soon," Ganesh said in a statement.

The official title and further details of the film are yet to be announced by the makers.

Dhanush was most recently seen in "Kuberaa", co-starring Rashmika Mandanna, Nagarjuna and Jim Sarbh.

He will next feature in "Tere Ishq Mein", a Hindi romance drama that reunites him with filmmaker Aanand L Rai. The duo earlier collaborated on "Raanjhanaa" (2013) and "Atrangi Re" (2021).

The actor is also set to portray former president and aerospace scientist APJ Abdul Kalam in a biopic from "Tanhaji" director Om Raut. (PTI)

## Vidhu Vinod Chopra's documentary 'Zero Se Restart' premieres on Prime Video

**MUMBAI, July 10:** Streaming platform Prime Video on Wednesday announced the premiere of "Zero Se Restart", a behind-the-scenes documentary on the making of the acclaimed film "12th Fail", directed and produced by Vidhu Vinod Chopra.

Edited and directed by Jaskunwar Singh Kohli, the documentary is produced under the banner of Vinod Chopra Films and is now streaming in India and over 200 countries and territories worldwide on Prime Video, a press release said. "Zero Se Restart" takes viewers deep into the filmmaking process, offering a candid look at the emotional and creative journey behind "12th Fail", which featured Vikrant Massey and Medha Shankr in the lead roles and emerged as a box office success in October 2023. The movie was based on author Anurag Pathak's bestselling novel that chronicled the journey of IPS officer Manoj Kumar Sharma and IRS officer Shradha Joshi. The documentary highlights the challenges, triumphs, and the intense commitment of the cast and crew as they brought the inspiring story to life.

"Zero Se Restart" may initially seem like a behind-the-scenes documentary -- and it certainly is. But when viewed, I hope a more powerful story emerges. I had little idea how to film '12th Fail' when I started -- and yet, here it is," said Chopra.

"A celebration of courage embedded in all artistic processes. It's a perfect example that grit, grace and growth all come when you allow yourself to restart," he added.

Director Jaskunwar Singh Kohli said the documentary was culled from over 18,000 minutes of raw footage shot over three years.

"For any aspiring filmmakers out there, 'Zero Se Restart' is a treat -- a one-stop destination to learn from the hilarious and brilliant VVC himself. I'm thrilled that now, thanks to Prime Video, we can finally share it with the world," Kohli said. (PTI)



## Wanted to make sure I'm not stepping on any toes: Nagesh Kukunoor on new series 'The Hunt'

**NEW DELHI, July 10:** As a filmmaker, anything remotely political is a no-go zone for Nagesh Kukunoor but he says what drew him to "The Hunt - The Rajiv Gandhi Assassination Case" was that it came across as a true crime thriller.

The series, which debuted last week on streaming service SonyLIV and has garnered good reviews, delves into the aftermath of one of India's most tragic historical events -- the assassination of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi on the night of May 21, 1991, at a poll rally in Tamil Nadu's Sriperumbudur.

Adapted from author Anirudhya Mitra's 2022 book "Ninety Days: The True Story of the Hunt for Rajiv Gandhi's Assassins", the show follows the Special Investigation Team of the CBI that cracked the assassination plot, identified the assassins and chased the mastermind, Sivarasan, to his final hideout.

"I had never ventured into the true crime space ever, so it was exciting to actually adapt a book. I had done a little bit of adapting, but it was more articles for 'Modern Love Hyderabad'. But this was a completely different format... an event has happened and you are actually going to now dramatise it," Kukunoor told PTI in an interview.

"The thing that always makes something like this more challenging is because it's a sensitive topic, you want to make sure that you're not stepping on any toes. You're trying to do right by all while telling and engaging in dramatic stories," he added.

The project was brought to Kukunoor, a director who created a space for himself with deeply personal stories like "Hyderabad Blues", "Rockford", "Iqbal" and "Dor", by Sameer Nair, the CEO of production banner Applause Entertainment.

"Sameer and I are good friends. He pitched this book to me because this is anything but political. This is a true crime thriller. It begins with the day of the assassination and then just tells you what happened over the next 90 days, and that's what attracted me to it.

"He already knew my rules. That I don't do anything political or religious. Nothing with those overtones... I was not going to attempt any real life politics because you don't know who can be offended," he said. If he has to tackle anything political, then he will do it in the fictional space, Kukunoor added, giving the example of his JioHotstar show "City of Dreams".

"When I write something, I want to give equal weight to both parties. I don't

mean parties in the political sense. I mean characters. And when you're doing anything political that usually doesn't find favour because someone always takes a side and the other side is going to be offended. So it's like 'Why wade into that?' Even in this, there is no taking sides of anyone. Nothing political happens. It's just the way the events unfolded and they're laid out."

Kukunoor said he doesn't care to be in the public eye despite being a known figure in the world of movies. "I don't have any presence on social media. Someone just told me that my last post was in June of 2019 when I wished Keerthy Suresh on her birthday apparently."

"I have a lot to say in the material that I write because it's the kind of person I am... I don't need to stand on a box and I don't need to spout things and wade into controversies and stuff like that. Not the kind of person I am. The ones who have the interest to do that, by all means they should."

Kukunoor said he handled the story of "The Hunt: The Rajiv Gandhi Assassination Case" with utmost care. "A lot of the special investigation team members are still alive today. So I want to make sure that I did right by them," he added.

Adapting a book is a very subjective yet cumbersome process, said the filmmaker, who collaborated with Rohit G Banawlikar and Sriram Rajan on the project. "It's just subjective and me as a director, I have to just take a call on which incidents I feel can propel the story forward better because the book is always dense with details. You can't take every single one and turn it into a scene."

"And at the same time, sometimes you'll just take two lines of a book and you feel that that could give a huge, powerful scene."

Asked what were his memories of the time when the incident took place, Kukunoor said he was in the US where he was studying for his master's degree in environmental engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology.

"I had just finished getting my master's and obviously the event shocked me. I mean, he was charismatic and dynamic, so everyone knew of him, even in the West... but back in the day, you didn't have information come out every second. So usually living in the States, whatever happened in the investigation was encapsulated maybe in the world news section every week or something like that in the newspaper. (PTI)





# India women register maiden T20 series win against England



**MANCHESTER, July 10:** India scripted a landmark victory, clinching their first-ever Women's T20I series win against England with a dominant six-wicket triumph in the fourth match, led by a stellar performance from their spinners.

With this win, India took an unsailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series, with the final game scheduled to be played in Birmingham on Saturday. India had beaten England

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

Spin played a starring role in India's dominant win on Wednesday as Radha Yadav (2/15), 20-year-old Shree Charani (2/30), and Deepti Sharma (1/29) combined to claim five wickets, restricting the hosts to a modest 126 for 7.

Openers Shafali Verma (32) and Smriti Mandhana (31) then chased with flair, putting on a 56-run stand that laid the foundation for the win. The visitors overhauled the target with 18 balls to spare, capping off a memorable evening.

The victory comes as a timely boost for India, helping them acclimatise to English conditions ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup scheduled to be held here next year.

"We are really grateful that we were able to do this (series win). I'm really proud of my team the way we played this series. It was really important to get that momentum and I'm really happy the way we all contributed," India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur said at the post-match presentation. "We had very good camps back home before coming here. We worked on all our plans, accordingly we have executed

everything here. Everybody knew their role and accordingly we all played," she added.

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. They lost the third T20I by five runs. Electing to bat first, England found themselves under early pressure as Indian spinners Radha and Deepti struck within the power-play, removing both the openers.

Stand-in captain Tammy Beaumont, leading in the absence of the injured Nat Sciver-Brunt, briefly counterattacked with a 16-ball 20 that included three boundaries. But her stay was cut short by Radha, and five balls later, Charani trapped Alice Capsey leg-before, leaving England wobbling at 93 for 5. India's bowlers were backed by a sharp fielding effort that squeezed England during the middle overs, keeping the hosts to a sub-par total.

With the bat, Shafali came out swinging, taking on the short-ball play with confidence and cracking six boundaries. Mandhana too joined the charge, striking five fours of her own. Though both openers fell in quick succession, the platform was well set. Jenimah Rodrigues (24 not out) and Harmanpreet Kaur (26) steered India home through a boundary-less phase between overs 8 to 14 to eventually take India to the win. (PTI)

## Djokovic reaches a record 14<sup>th</sup> Wimbledon semifinal and faces No. 1 Jannik Sinner next



**LONDON, July 10:** At least Novak Djokovic could laugh about it immediately afterward.

Yes, he took what he called a "nasty" and "awkward" fall on his second match point at Wimbledon on Wednesday. Yes, he slid into the splits and ended up face-down on the Centre Court grass. And, yes, those sorts of things aren't ideal for a 38-year-old seeking an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam title.

Still, Djokovic dusted himself off and took the next two points, reaching the semifinals at the All England Club for a men's-record 14th time with a 6-7 (6), 6-2, 7-5, 6-4 victory over No. 22 seed Flavio Cobolli to set up a showdown against No. 1 Jannik Sinner.

"Obviously, (my) body is not the same today like it was before," Djokovic said at his news conference, "so I guess the real impact or effect of what happened. I will feel tomorrow. So let's see. I'm hoping in the next 24, 48 hours, that the severity of ... what happened is not too bad, that I'll be able to play at my best and free of pain in two days." That's when he will take on three-time major champion Sinner, who didn't play like someone dealing with an injured right elbow while using terrific serving and his usual booming forehand to beat 10th-seeded Ben Shelton 7-6 (2), 6-4, 6-4.

"It's going to take the best of me at the moment to beat Jannik. I mean, I know that," said Djokovic, who has lost his last four meetings with Sinner, including in the French Open semifinals last month.

Djokovic is 2-0 against Sinner at Wimbledon, eliminating him in the 2023 semifinals and 2022 quarter-

finals.

Against Cobolli — like Sinner, a 23-year-old from Italy — the late-match tumble was not the only thing that was far from smooth for Djokovic. He served for the opening set at 5-3 but got broken at love. He later was a point from owning that set before first-time major quarterfinalist Cobolli came through.

Djokovic did stretches and breathing exercises at changeovers. He whacked his shoe with his racket after one miss in the fourth set. He seemed bothered at times by the bright sun above Centre Court.

He also showed off all of his considerable skills, accumulating 13 aces, holding in 19 of 21 service games, using a drop-shot-lob-drop-shot combination to take one point and limiting his unforced errors to 22 — half as many as Cobolli.

On Friday, Djokovic will try to reach his seventh consecutive final at the All England Club and get closer to equaling Roger Federer's men's mark of eight trophies there. The other men's semifinal is two-time defending champion Carlos Alcaraz, who defeated Djokovic in the 2023 and 2024 finals, against Taylor Fritz.

The women's semifinals Thursday are Aryna Sabalenka vs. Amanda Anisimova, and Iga Swiatek vs. Belinda Bencic.

Against Shelton at No. 1 Court, Sinner wore a white sleeve on his right arm with strips of tape visible underneath — one above the elbow, one below it — after he was hurt when he fell in the opening game of his fourth-round match against Grigor Dimitrov on Monday. (AP)

## India-England WT20Is: Harmanpreet credits WPL experience for team's improvement

**MANCHESTER, July 10:** India captain Harmanpreet Kaur has credited the Women's Premier League (WPL) for helping her players gather the experience needed to execute strategies at the international level after their series-clinching triumph over England in an ongoing T20 International rubber.

India registered a dominant six-wicket win in the fourth T20I to seal their first-ever women's T20I series victory against England. With the win on Tuesday, the visitors have taken an unsailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series.

"We are really grateful that we were able to do this (series win). I'm really proud of my team the way we played this series. It was really important to get that momentum and I'm really happy with the way we all contributed," Kaur said at the post match presentation.

The WPL concluded its third season earlier this year, with several young Indian talents making a mark and earning national call-ups. Kaur acknowledged the tournament's impact.

"We have now played three seasons of WPL. We've got a lot of experience from that. All of us played

that tournament and we got a lot of positivity. Good sign that we are now able to execute in international cricket also."

India had entered the series after having lost all six of their previous multi-game bilateral T20I series in England. But this time, the 'Women in Blue' set the tone from the opening match itself with a record-breaking 97-run win. They followed it up with another historic performance in Bristol, where a 24-run win marked England's first-ever women's T20I defeat at that venue. We had very good camps back home before coming here. We

worked on all our plans, accordingly we have executed everything here. Everybody knew their role and accordingly we all played," Kaur said.

On Wednesday, India's spinners dominated the proceedings, restricting England to a modest 126 for 7, which the visitors chased down with three overs to spare to seal a memorable win.

Stand-in England skipper Tammy Beaumont, leading the side in the absence of an injured Nat Sciver-Brunt, admitted her side was outplayed.

"Credit to India, they assessed

conditions quickly. It was always going to be tough defending that score," Beaumont said.

"We needed to get around 150 to have a chance. In a chase like that, you've got to get everything right, we just didn't tonight. We weren't ruthless with the bat, myself included absolute soft dismissal, not good enough at this level."

Looking ahead to the fifth and final T20I on July 12, Beaumont said the hosts were keen to bounce back. The two teams will then compete in a three-match ODI series starting July 16 in Southampton. (PTI)

## After routing Real Madrid in Club World Cup, PSG eyes Chelsea and historic quadruple

**EAST RUTHERFORD (USA), July 10:** Wearing their blue, red and white jerseys, Paris Saint-Germain supporters were surrounded by white shirts.

Real Madrid fans were 95% of the crowd at MetLife Stadium for Wednesday's Club World Cup semifinal, the shirts of Los Blancos radiant in the harsh summer sun. Yet, it was PSG fans in a couple sections behind one goal who cheered virtually from start to finish as their team moved within one win of a historic quadruple.

A 4-0 rout of Real Madrid in a Club World Cup semifinal following a 5-0 wipeout of Inter Milan in the Champions League final reinforced that PSG may be the dominant soccer team of the mid-2020s. "We have always said that the collective work by the players is what's helping us," said Fabian Ruiz, who scored twice as PSG built a three-goal lead in the first 24 minutes. "We are a great group, a young group that is working well."

PSG moved on to Sunday's final against Chelsea in the first expanded Club World Cup with a chance to win its fourth major title of the season exactly 100 days after it clinched Ligue 1 on April 5. It added the Coupe de France by beating Reims 3-0 on May 24, then romped over Inter seven days later.

PSG's blue, red and white jerseys don't have glamorous names pressed across the back, and they may not be as ubiquitous as the red shirts of Manchester United, Liverpool and Arsenal. Manchester City's light blue or Chelsea's royal blue, but the team is filling up the trophy display at Parc des Princes, its cramped, outdated stadium not far from Roland-Garros and the Bois de Boulogne. On May 31 at Munich, Achraf Hakimi got the first goal 12 minutes in. Désiré Doué scored the next two and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Senny Mayulu

added one goal each.

This time, Ruiz scored in the sixth minute and Ousmane Dembélé in the ninth following glaring mistakes by defenders Raúl Asencio and Antonio Rüdiger, and Ruiz made it 3-0 to cap a counter. Gonçalo Ramos added a goal in the 87th. Dembélé, this year's Ligue 1 Golden Boot winner with 21 goals, started for the first time since straining his left quadriceps with France on June 5. He missed the Club World Cup group stage and was a substitute in PSG's first two knockout matches, scoring in second-half injury time over Saturday's 2-0 quarterfinal win over Bayern Munich.

"This is the first match in this World Cup that we can use Usman as a normal player," PSG coach Luis Enrique said. "I think he is the best player this season by a long term and I think he deserves to win everything because he gave everything to the team and the team is going to achieve trophies, which is the most important thing for a club."

Real Madrid has 15 European and five world titles, a modern global superpower brand established two decades ago in the Galacticos era of David Beckham, Zinedine Zidane and Luis Figo, then lifted loftier by Cristiano Ronaldo from 2009-18 and the rise of social media.

PSG hadn't won a Ligue 1 title since 1995 when Qatar Sports Investments took over in 2011. Paris has won 11 of 13 French championships since 2013 but until May failed to become Europe's best, despite emulating Madrid's star collection when its lineup included Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappé.

A group achieved more than the star system.

"We've all made history, that is, the players, the staff, the sports director, the managers, the fans, we've all made history," Enrique, hired in July 2023, said through an interpreter. (AP)

## Lauren James shines as England thrashes Netherlands 4-0 to revive Euro title defense

**ZURICH, July 10:** A "proper" England performance saw the Lionesses get the defense of their Women's European Championship title firmly back on track with a 4-0 win over the Netherlands on Wednesday, thanks to a Lauren James double.

James showed precisely why she had been selected despite not having played for more than two months when the squad was announced in June because of injury. The Chelsea forward was at the heart of England's attacks and scored a sumptuous opener in the 22nd minute before netting her side's third on the hour mark.

James has been directly involved in 16 goals in her last 13 starts for England, with eight goals and eight assists.

Georgia Stanway doubled Eng-

land's lead on the stroke of half-time and Ella Toone wrapped up the result in the 67th as the Lionesses, watched by Prince William, gave the perfect response to their 2-1 defeat to France.

"This is about showing who we are," Stanway told the BBC. "We want to go back to proper England. LJ (Lauren James) set the tone with that goal and we all just followed."

Player-of-the-match Alessia Russo elaborated.

"I think proper English to us just means we'll work hard, we'll work until we can't run anymore, we stick together," she said.

"That's our standard and our DNA as a team and we definitely saw that today from the first minute right until the end.

"(We) probably could have scored even more as well ... it was definitely something that we wanted to return to and we know that we're capable of performances like that."

It was a far more positive performance from England than against France, when it became the first titleholder to lose its opening match at a women's Euros. The manner of that defeat was as disappointing as the result, which left England facing possible elimination if it lost to the Netherlands and France avoided a shock defeat against Wales later Wednesday.

England ultimately defeated Wales 4-1 to take charge of Group D with six points from two games, three more than England and the Netherlands.

England plays Wales in their final group match on Sunday, when the Netherlands faces France.

"We have to believe in our chances," Netherlands coach Andries Jonker said. "If not it's better not to show up."

The Netherlands, which beat Wales 3-0 in their opener, had never previously lost a match at a major tournament by more than a single goal — apart from the 2019 World Cup final.

"It is a heavy defeat and we didn't see it coming," Jonker said. "We thought we would be able to compete."

"We wanted to win, we wanted to qualify directly for the quarterfinals. But I really don't care this is the heaviest defeat ever."

The Dutch appeared timid and

toothless against a rampant England side. Sarina Wiegman's team dominated from the start against her native Netherlands and had two good chances in the opening 10 minutes with James and Russo both heading narrowly wide.

England took a deserved lead in stunning fashion.

Russo ran onto a long kick from goalkeeper Hannah Hampton and surged forward before cutting it back to James, who carved out some space on the edge of the area before lashing a fierce strike into the top right corner. It was only James' third appearance since injuring her hamstring in April and the 23-year-old was again involved when England doubled its lead in the second minute of first-half stoppage time. (AP)

## Human rights court rules Olympic champion Semenya did not get fair hearing in sex eligibility case

**GENEVA, July 10:** Two-time Olympic champion runner Caster Semenya won a partial victory at the European Court of Human Rights on Thursday in her seven-year legal fight against track and field's sex eligibility rules.

The court's 17-judge highest chamber said in a 15-2 vote that Semenya had some of her rights to a fair hearing violated at Switzerland's Supreme Court, where she had appealed against a ruling by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in favor of track's World Athletics. Her case should now go back to the Swiss federal court in Lausanne — to be watched closely by other sports which have passed or are reviewing their own rules on eligibility in women's events.

The original case between Semenya and track's governing body based in Monaco was about whether athletes like her — who have specific medical conditions, a typical male chromosome pat-



tern and naturally high testosterone levels — should be allowed to compete freely in women's sports.

Europe's top human rights court in Strasbourg, France, dismissed other aspects of the appeal filed by Semenya, who was in court Thursday to hear the judgment. It awarded her 80,000 euros (\$94,000) "in respect of costs and expenses."

cial review" that was required because Semenya had no choice but to pursue her case through the CAS's "mandatory and exclusive jurisdiction," the Strasbourg judges ruled.

Governing bodies of sports oblige athletes and national federations to take their disputes to the sports court in the International Olympic Committee's home city Lausanne. "The court considered, however, that the Federal Supreme Court's review had fallen short of that requirement," it said in a statement.

In dismissing other elements of the South African runner's case, the court judged she "did not fall within Switzerland's jurisdiction in respect of those complaints."

World Athletics, led by its president Sebastian Coe, has said its rules maintain fairness because Semenya has an unfair, male-like athletic advantage from her higher testosterone. Semenya argues her testosterone is a genetic

gift.

World Athletics and the IOC did not immediately respond to the ruling.

Second legal lap at Strasbourg Thursday's win followed a legal victory from the same court two years ago for Semenya.

That judgment which said she had faced discrimination opened a way for the Swiss supreme court to reconsider its decision to dismiss her appeal against the CAS verdict in favor of World Athletics.

At CAS in 2019, three judges ruled 2-1 that discrimination against Semenya was "necessary, reasonable and proportionate" to maintain fairness in women's track events.

World Athletics drew up its rules in 2018 forcing Semenya and other female athletes with Differences in Sex Development to suppress their testosterone to be eligible for international women's events. (AP)



# Double strike from Nitish Reddy leaves England at 83 for two



**LONDON, July 10:** India all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy struck twice in an eventful over to leave England at 83 for two at lunch on day one of the Lord's Test here on Thursday.

On expected lines, Prasidh Krishna made way for Jasprit Bumrah as the sole change in the Indian

playing eleven. Ben Stokes, only for the second time in the Bazball era, opted to bat in a home game.

The trio of Bumrah, Akash Deep and Mohamed Siraj did ask a few questions but England opening duo of Ben Duckett (23 off 40) and Zak Crawley (18 off 43) survived the first hour of play, reaching 39 for

no loss in 13 overs.

Due to the unique slope, the Indian bowlers understandably took some time to get used to the up and down nature of the ground while running in.

Bumrah bowled from both Pavilion End and Nursery End while Akash Deep, who took a

match haul of 10 at Edgbaston, bowled with the new ball from Nursery End.

Captain Shubman Gill could have brought back Akash Deep after the first hour, instead he gave the ball to Reddy from the Nursery End and he did not disappoint.

The first breakthrough was a rather lucky one with Duckett gloving a short ball on the leg side to wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant.

Ollie Pope could have been dismissed in the very next ball but Gill could not latch on to a tough chance at gully.

The last ball of the over produced the wicket of Crawley. It was a beauty that seamed away from length, inducing an outside edge on the way to the keeper.

Though the crowd capacity at the hallowed ground is little over 30,000, it seemed the whole of London was flocking to the venue with a sea of fans emerging from the St. John's Wood tube station close by.

Test cricket may be struggling for a regular attendance in some nations, but the sell out crowd in this series so far has reaffirmed the fact that the traditional format continues to thrive in this country.

Fans have also flown in from India for the marquee fixture with a family from Bengaluru shelling out as much as 1200 pounds for three tickets bought from touts outside the ground. (PTI)

# Bodoland CEM Cup 2025: Council-level football tournament begins in Kokrajhar



**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, July 10:** The council-level football tournament of the first-ever Bodoland CEM Cup 2025 commenced on Thursday at the DASA playground in Dotma, Kokrajhar district. Initiated by the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) government under the leadership of Chief Executive Member Pramod Boro, the tournament aims to promote a vibrant sporting culture and nurture football talent across the region.

The tournament began on June 14 with matches held at the VCDC level, BTCLA constituency level, and district level, generating widespread enthusiasm among the public. Gossaigaon MLA Jiron Basumatary officially inaugurated the council-level event in the presence of BTR Executive Member Daobaiba Boro, MLA Lawrence Isary, Assam Football Association Secretary Dr. Sangrang Brahma, and other dignitaries.

In the inaugural match, Goreswar (Tamlupur district) defeated Salbari (Baksa district) 4-3 in a penalty shootout after a 2-2 draw during regular play.

Council-level matches are being held at three venues: South Aflagaon playground, Banargaon-Taraguri playground, Salakati, and SAI Stadium, Titaguri. The tournament was initially conducted in all 420 VCDCs across BTR, followed by matches at 40 BTCLA constituencies and five district-level venues, culminating in the ongoing council-level tournament.

An impressive 3,750 teams involving nearly 70,000 players participated in the tournament. The final match is scheduled for July 15 at the SAI Stadium, Titaguri, and is expected to draw a large crowd from across the region.

CEM Pramod Boro extended his warm wishes to the organisers and participating teams, emphasizing the BTR government's commitment to fostering sports among the youth. The event has received widespread appreciation from citizens and even earned mention in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Mann Ki Baat radio program, bringing national attention to the initiative.

## District Level School Football Tournament kicks off in Morigaon

**HT Correspondent**

**MORIGAON, July 10:** District Sports Office, Morigaon organised the District Level School Football Tournament with a two-day programme which kicked off at Morigaon school field on Thursday. A total of 12 teams (boys and girls) participated (Under 17) in the tournament, informed Morigaon District Sports officer Chandan Talukdar.

The games for Under 16 category will be held on Friday.

Earlier, the tournament was inaugurated by District Commissioner Anamika Tewari, on July 10 in Morigaon HS & MV School playground. The instructor Simanta Baisya, Samaj Narzary also accompanied the DC in the tournament.

## Sachin Tendulkar's portrait unveiled in MCC Museum at Lord's

**LONDON, July 10:** A portrait of the legendary Sachin Tendulkar was unveiled in the MCC Museum at Lord's before the start of the third Test between India and England here on Thursday.

The portrait, which has been painted by Stuart Pearson Wright from a photograph taken by the artist at his home 18 years ago, will remain in the MCC Museum until later this year and will then be relocated to the Pavilion.

"As the work progressed, so did Pearson Wright's approach, eventually ending with oil on abraded aluminium. The abstract background illustrates Tendulkar's timelessness, un-

restricted by any era or specific location," a release said. Pearson Wright has previously painted portraits of Kapil Dev, Bishan Singh Bedi, and Dilip Vengsarkar.

Tendulkar was quoted as saying, "It's a huge honour. In 1983, when India won the World Cup, it was my first introduction to Lord's."

"I saw our captain, Kapil Dev, lift the trophy. That moment sparked my cricketing journey. Today, with my portrait going up inside the Pavilion, feels like it's come full circle. When I reflect on my career, it brings a smile to my face. This is truly special."

"Unlike the previous paintings, which were

full-length, the portrait of Tendulkar is a larger-than-life image of his head and shoulders," the release added.

"The Lord's Portrait Programme has been running in its current form for three decades, but MCC has been collecting art and artefacts since the Victorian period, opening a dedicated museum in the 1950s making it the oldest sporting museum in Europe."

"The Long Room Gallery is the oldest and most iconic gallery in sport. The Club currently houses around 3,000 pictures, nearly 300 of which are portraits."

Pearson Wright said: "It was clear that MCC

didn't want this portrait to be in the same format as the previous Indian cricket portraits I made, so a fresh approach was taken with this one."

"I decided on a composition which focused more on Sachin's head and also using a heroic larger-than-life-size scale to give the painting a sense of gravitas and power."

"I have often painted a portrait with an abstract background, often a plain colour, rather than paint a rendition of an interior or exterior space. This is largely to give focus to the subject's features and to minimise a context which might define the subject in some way." (PTI)

## Durand Cup returns to Imphal with a grand trophy tour

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 10:** Imphal welcomed the 134th IndianOil Durand Cup trophies with a grand trophy tour as Asia's oldest football tournament returned to Manipur's capital after a gap of two years. The three trophies of the Durand Cup were showcased here at the City Convention Centre in the presence of Ajay Kumar Bhalla, Governor of Manipur who was the chief guest of the event. Also present, were Prashant Kumar Singh IAS, chief secretary, Government of Manipur and senior military leadership including Lt. Gen. Mohit Malhotra AVSM SM, Chief of Staff, HQ Eastern Command and chairman, Durand Cup Organising Committee, Lt. Gen. Abhijit S. Pendharkar AVSM YSM, General Officer Commanding, 3 Corps, Maj Gen. S.S. Karthikeya YSM SM, General Officer Commanding, 57 Mountain Division, Maj. Gen. Ravroop Singh YSM SM, Inspector General, Assam Rifles (South) and Rajiv Singh IPS - DGP Manipur. The three glittering pieces of sil-

verware, the Durand Cup, the original prize and the rolling Shimla Trophy (presented by residents of Shimla in 1904), as well as the President's Cup which the winners keep permanently were unveiled during the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla said, "Hosting the 134th edition of the Durand Cup tournament once again in Imphal is a testament to our state's deep-rooted passion for football and the collective efforts of both civil and military establishments. I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to the Indian Army, particularly the Eastern Command for bringing this celebrated tournament back to the football-loving land of Manipur. Sports are an integral part of our state's identity. Manipur has always been at the forefront of sporting excellence, producing national heroes and Olympians who have brought immense pride to the nation. I wish the 134th Edition of the Durand Cup great success. I am confident that it will be bigger, better, and more

thrilling than ever before. My heartfelt wishes to all the participating teams. May you play with honour, courage, and passion, inspiring countless young hearts along the way."

Lt. Gen Mohit Malhotra shared his thoughts, "For over 137 years, the Durand Cup has witnessed the evolution of Indian football, producing legends, uniting communities, and igniting passions across generations. In recent years, under the stewardship of Eastern Command, the Durand Cup has experienced remarkable growth in stature, reach and quality. Our efforts, in close partnership with stakeholders across the country, have ensured that the tournament retains its heritage while embracing modern professionalism. I invite the people of this great city, football enthusiasts, and the vibrant youth of Manipur to come forward, be part of history, and experience world-class football at your doorstep. Together, let us celebrate the beautiful game, honour tradition, and inspire the next generation."

## Legends League Cricket returns with season 4 from November 19

**NEW DELHI, July 10:** Legends League Cricket, a franchise-based T20 event featuring retired international stars, will return for its fourth season spread across seven Indian cities from November 19 to December 13.

The organisers of the event are promising a "bolder, bigger, and brighter" version of the competition, which is set to feature more matches as well.

"We are thrilled to announce Season 4 of Legends League Cricket. This year, we're raising the bar - with more matches, expanded venues, and a larger pool of legendary players."

"It's going to be a festival of cricket, and we're ready to light up India again," said League Chairman Vivek Khushalani in a press release here.

The tournament will be held in a multi-city format. The venues and fixtures will be revealed in the coming weeks, along with team compositions and marquee player announcements.

"With the tagline 'Legends are Forever', LLC remains committed to redefining cricket entertainment, blending nostalgia with fierce competition," the release stated.

The event's past seasons have featured players like Shikhar Dhawan, Suresh Raina, Aaron Finch, Martin Gupthill, Gautam Gambhir, Chris Gayle, Hashim Amla, and Ross Taylor among others. (PTI)

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