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30 bighas of land allotted to IHM in Sonapur area, informs minister IHM campus demolished to free Silsako

GUWAHATI, July 21: The Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) was demolished on Monday to free Silsako Beel (lake) in Guwahati city, officials said.

The administration is eyeing to clear the natural waterbody from various structures, both private and government, to mitigate flood problems in the state capital, said Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah.

"This is a difficult yet necessary decision. While IHM has served the city in the education sector, the pressing need to safeguard Guwahati from devastating floods demands urgent action. We are acting for the greater good of the city's future," he told reporters here.

The IHM, a central government institute and spread over 15 bighas (almost five acres), is being relocated to a temporary building on GS Road, Baruah said.

"We have allotted 30 bighas (almost 10 acres) to IHM in Sonapur



area. We will construct their infrastructure and hand it over to the institute," he added.

Baruah said that eviction and clearance work at IHM marks an important development in making the 800-bigha reservoir project at Silsako, envisioned to address the city's chronic urban flooding.

Demolition of the IHM campus started with classroom blocks. Hostel structures and other ancillary facilities will be dismantled in the coming days, he added.

"This is the largest single institutional demolition within the reservoir zone. We aim to complete the process within 15 days, carry-

ing out shifting and demolition simultaneously," he said.

Earlier, the government had evicted the Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISC) and Institute of Cooperative Management (ICM) from Silsako Beel.

"The remaining two facilities -- one tennis court and Ginger hotel -- will also be evicted from the location. We are in discussion with them right now," the minister said.

He said the reservoir site, spread across approximately 800 bighas (over 264 acres), is expected to be excavated during the upcoming dry season.

The government in 2008 had declared Silsako Beel, surrounded by Chachal, Hengerabari, Pathar Quarry and Satgaon areas, a protected waterbody in Guwahati through an Act and prohibited any construction or settlement in around 1,800 bighas (over 595 acres) of lake area. (PTI)

Bangladesh training aircraft tragedy claims 20

171 more injured as plane crashes into school building

DHAKA, July 21: A Bangladesh Air Force training fighter jet crashed into a school building in Dhaka shortly after takeoff on Monday, killing at least 20 people, mostly children, and injuring 171, in one of the deadliest aviation accidents in the country's recent history.

The F-7 BGI aircraft, a training fighter jet manufactured in China, crashed into the two-storey building of Milestone School and College at Diabari in Dhaka's Uttara area. The pilot, Flight Lieutenant Mohammad Towkir Islam, was killed in the crash.

According to an updated statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations Directorate (ISPR), 20 people, including the pilot, have died and 171 others injured. The pilot attempted to steer the aircraft away from densely populated areas. However, despite his efforts, the aircraft tragically crashed into the two-storey building of the school, said the ISPR - the media wing of the military.

"All injured individuals are being promptly transported to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) and nearby hospitals for necessary treatment, with assistance from Air Force helicopters and ambulances," it said.



The aircraft crashed due to a mechanical fault (the details of which will be informed after investigation) after taking off from the Bangladesh Air Force Base AK Khandaker in Kurmitola at 01:06 pm as part of a regular training, the statement said. It said that the chief of army staff and senior military officers rushed to the crash site where rescuers, including firefighters, army troops, police and elite Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Justice Ashutosh Kumar sworn in as CJ of Gauhati HC



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 21: Justice Ashutosh Kumar was sworn in as the Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court at a formal ceremony held at the Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra International Auditorium on Monday.

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office in the presence of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta not worried of China dam on Brahmaputra

'Centre is a better judge on this topic and it will take a call on this'

GUWAHATI, July 21: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday tried to alleviate fears on China's move to construct the world's largest dam on Brahmaputra and said he does not foresee any immediate cause of worry as the river gets most of its waters from Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a function here, Sarma said the exact impact of the massive dam, the construction of which began last week, is not properly known as different theories are being floated, and he hoped that the Centre must be in touch with China on the matter.

China on Saturday formally started the construction of a USD 167.8 billion dam over the Brahmaputra River in Tibet, close to the border with India in Arunachal Pradesh.

"I am not immediately worried because Brahmaputra is a mighty river and it is not dependent on a single source (of water)," Sarma told reporters here.



When asked about the possible downstream impact of the dam on Assam, he said it is not yet known whether it will be good or bad.

"Brahmaputra gets most of its waters from Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh, and the rainwater and other forms of water from our state itself," he added.

The CM further said that there are two scientific views floated regarding the dam by China.

"First -- if Brahmaputra's flow is disturbed by China, then there may be less water and consequently biodiversity will be affected. But there is also a counter view that if less water comes, it will also act as a flood cushioning. So, I don't know which one is correct," he added. Sarma opined that the Centre is a better judge on this topic, and it will take a call on this.

"I am sure that they (Centre) must already be having a discussion with China or will have a discussion with the neighbouring country," he added.

The dam is being built at a massive gorge in the Himalayan reaches, where the Brahmaputra makes a huge U-turn to flow into Arunachal Pradesh, and then to Assam and Bangladesh.

According to reports, the size of the project would dwarf any other single infrastructure project on the planet, including China's (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India becomes Malaysia's top oil palm seed buyer as domestic cultivation expands

KUALA LUMPUR, July 21: India has emerged as Malaysia's largest importer of germinated oil palm seeds, with demand surging as the country accelerates efforts to boost domestic palm oil production and reduce import dependency.

India imported 3.03 million tonnes of palm oil from Malaysia in 2024, representing 17.9 per cent of Malaysia's total palm oil exports and making it the top destination for Malaysian palm oil.

"There has been a noticeable increase in demand for Malaysian oil palm seeds, particularly from India," Malaysian Palm Oil Board Director General Ahmad Parveez Ghulam Kadir told PTI, citing India's push to expand domestic production.

India aims to rapidly expand palm oil cultivation to 1 million hectares by 2025-26 and achieve nearly 2.8 million tonnes of crude palm oil production by 2029-30 under its National Mission on Edible Oils-Oil Palm scheme.

The country currently has about 370,000 hectares under palm oil cultivation as of mid-2025, focusing particularly on northeastern states and island regions.

The seed trade, however, remains largely informal, with supplies conducted on an ad hoc basis through one-off consignments without formal contracts or long-term agreements, Kadir noted.

Most transactions happen through business-to-business arrangements where Malaysian exporters provide quality planting materials and technical expertise.

"Malaysia welcomes this development as it reflects confidence in the quality of our seeds and our longstanding partnership with India," he said.

The development comes even as Malaysia's palm oil exports to India have moderated following New Delhi's recent reduction in tariffs on crude palm oil.

Kadir said India's tariff adjustments are part of broader policy measures to manage domestic sup-

ply and keep cooking oil prices affordable for consumers.

"While Malaysia has seen some moderation in export volumes to India, we remain a key and reliable supplier, and the Indian market continues to be a priority," he said.

Malaysia is engaging stakeholders to strengthen its position in food manufacturing and hospitality segments where demand remains strong, while promoting sustainable palm oil certified under the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil standard.

The Malaysian Palm Oil Board has developed new high-yield varieties through breeding programs that can potentially produce over 30 tonnes of fresh fruit bunches per hectare annually, nearly double Malaysia's national average of 15.47-16.73 tonnes recorded between 2020-2023. The improved varieties also have slower height growth, extending economic lifespan from 25 years to over 30 years while facilitating harvesting operations. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

10 lakh acres of land encroached by illegal B'deshis, doubtful citizens: CM

GURUKHUTI, July 21: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma alleged on Monday that around 29 lakh bighas (10 lakh acres) of land were under encroachment of "illegal Bangladeshis and doubtful citizens" in the state.

He also claimed that his government came under "international pressure" to put a stop to eviction drives after the operation at Gurukhuti in Darrang district soon after assuming power in 2021, but people were not dissuaded.

The CM was speaking at a programme to mark the fourth foundation day of the Gurukhuti Multipurpose Agriculture Project here.

The project was set up after a massive eviction drive was carried out in 2021 to clear 77,420 bighas (25,500 acres) of land from alleged encroachers, mostly Bengali-speaking Muslims, in which two persons, including a 12-year-old boy, were killed in police firing.

"The successful eviction drive here emboldened us and made us

take stronger steps in Borsolla, Lumding, Burhapahar, Pabha, Batadrava, Chapar and Paikan. We have cleared 1.29 lakh bighas (nearly 43,000 acres) in four years, and this land is being used for the public good now," Sarma said.

He said plantations were being done in the cleared land and in forest areas which have been freed from encroachers, and animals such as elephants, rhinos and tigers are returning to their natural habitats.

"We have taken the pledge to clear every inch of land from encroachers, suspected Bangladeshis... 29 lakh bighas (10 lakh acres) are still encroached by illegal Bangladeshis and doubtful citizens," the chief minister said.

The government cleared only a small portion, Sarma said, adding that he is confident that he will be able to make other land encroachment-free, as the Assamese people have rediscovered the zeal within them. "If someone thinks that we will stop after two to three eviction drives, fear their red eyes and bow

down to them, they are mistaken. The martyrs of Assam Agitation will be avenged," he added, referring to the six-year-long movement against illegal migrants from Bangladesh that ended with signing of the Assam Accord in August 1985.

Sarma said a sense of defeat had seeped in among a section of people between 1983 to 1985 during the Agitation, many had 'surrendered' to the Congress and the political trend had changed in the state. "We accepted at some level that we have to coexist. In place of Sankar-Madhav, we started saying Sankar-Azan... Azan Peer will remain in his own place, but Madhab (Madhabdeb) has his own place. Only then our 'jati' (community) can survive," he added.

Srimanta Sankardev and Sri Sri Madhabdev are revered Vaishnavite saints of the state, while Azan Peer (Faqr) was a Muslim preacher and saint who had travelled to Assam from Iraq in the 17th century. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Monsoon session like 'Vijay Utsav', Constitution winning over violence: PM Modi

PM underscores unity, military strength, and India's transformation from conflict to progress

NEW DELHI, July 21: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday set the ruling alliance's tone for an expected discussion in Parliament's Monsoon session on Operation Sindoor, describing this sitting of parliamentarians as a "Vijay Utsav" and expressing confidence that MPs will articulate this sentiment in one voice.

In his customary remarks in Parliament complex before the session's start, Modi lauded a number of positive developments for the country and asserted that the Constitution is prevailing over bombs and guns.

As naxalism's footprint shrinks fast, red zone is turning into green growth zone, he added.

"This Monsoon session is a very proud session for the country. It is like a 'Vijay Utsav' (celebration of victory) for the nation. The world witnessed the capability of armed forces. They achieved their targets 100 per cent," he said.

He also noted that the Indian flag was unfurled recently at the

International Space Station, a reference to Shubhanshu Shukla becoming the first Indian to set foot on the facility.

The prime minister said economy was getting a boost from bountiful rains, while peace and progress have marked this decade amid low inflation and high growth. The water reservoir level has tripled compared to the past ten years, which will significantly benefit economy, he added.

With the INDIA bloc uniting to demand a debate on the Pahalgam terror attack and Operation Sindoor and seizing on US President Donald Trump's claims of mediating a "ceasefire" between India and Pakistan to corner his government, Modi hailed the armed forces for meeting 100 per cent objectives of the military operation.

He also lauded the multi-party delegations, which comprised MPs from different parties, that visited various parts of the world to convey India's position post-Operation Sindoor for their efforts in



removing the veil from the face of the master of terrorists - Pakistan.

"I want to praise all these MPs and parties for this work done in national interest," he said.

Different political parties may have different agendas, Modi said, stressing that there must be unity of mind in matters of national interest.

The Monsoon session is a 'Vijay

Utsav' (victory celebration) as the might of India's military power and capability were manifested in Operation Sindoor, he said.

"In Operation Sindoor, the Indian armed forces achieved their objectives 100 per cent. The armed forces under 22 minutes pulverised the masters of terrorism in their homes and reduced their hideouts to rubble," Modi said.

The military conflict with Pakistan also displayed the capability of "Made in India" weapons and has drawn the world's attention to them, he added.

Modi expressed confidence that during the session MPs in one voice and with a victorious spirit will articulate these feelings that will strengthen India's military capability, inspire people, and will also give a boost to the Made in India defence capabilities.

The prime minister noted that the brutal massacre in Pahalgam, which had left 26 civilians dead, had shocked the entire world and drew global attention to terrorism and its epicentre.

Amid intensified operation against left wing ultras, Modi said the red corridors are turning into green growth zones.

"The country has been suffering from violent incidents from the start, be it terrorism or naxalism. But today naxalism and Maoism are shrinking at a fast rate in a big time. With the objective of uproot-

ing naxalism, security forces are moving ahead with a new enthusiasm," he said.

"I can say with pride that in the country, numerous districts have come out of the grip of naxalism and are breathing freely. Our Constitution is winning," Modi said.

He also hailed the economic transformation in the last 11 years, saying that when his government took office India was part of the fragile five but was now moving forward towards becoming the third biggest global economy.

Peace and development have moved ahead shoulder to shoulder in the last decade, Modi said.

Before 2014, the prime minister said India grappled with double-digit inflation. The inflation rate is now hovering around 2 per cent, and citizens are experiencing relief and improved ease of living.

The low inflation coupled with high growth reflects a strong and steady development journey, he said. Modi took office following the 10-year (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Process for removal of Justice Varma set rolling

NEW DELHI, July 21: The process for the removal of Justice Yashwant Varma was set in motion on Monday with parliamentarians submitting notices to the presiding officers of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, and Chairman of the Upper House Jagdeep Dhankhar taking note of the move.

While the notice submitted to the Rajya Sabha Chairman had signatures of 63 opposition members, the one submitted to the Lok Sabha Speaker was a bipartisan effort with 152 members, including Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, supporting the move.

Justice Varma was repatriated from the Delhi High Court to the Allahabad High Court after burnt wads of currency notes were found at his official residence here on March 14. Dhankar mentioned in the House that he has received a notice of motion for setting up a statutory committee for the removal of Justice Varma of the Allahabad High Court. "It is signed by more than 50 members of the Council of States and thus, it meets the numerical requirement of signing by members of Parliament for setting in motion a process for removal of a high court judge," he said. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X that 63 opposition members had submitted the notice to the Rajya Sabha chairman for removal of Justice Varma.

BJP leaders said they were also gathering signatures of its party MPs and those of its allies for the removal of Justice Varma. Dhankar asked Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal whether a similar notice has been submitted in the Lok Sabha. The Law Minister said 152 Lok Sabha members have submitted (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

7 arrested with arms, ammunition in Assam

TEZPUR, July 21: Seven people were arrested after arms and ammunition were recovered from their possession during an operation to thwart an attempt to form a criminal gang for carrying out illegal activities in Assam's Sonitpur district on Monday, a top police official said.

A camp of the criminals at Tharabail on the foothills bordering Arunachal Pradesh was also destroyed, he said.

Sonitpur Senior Superintendent of Police Barun Purkayastha said that the operation was conducted by a special team led by the Dhekiali police.

"It was a crackdown on the criminals who were trying to form themselves into a gang to carry out activities such as dacoity and extortion," he said.

He said raids were conducted at two places since Sunday night, leading to the recovery of a cache of arms and ammunition, including two 7.65 mm pistols, 16 rounds of live ammunition, two country-made rifles and two 'khukris' (knives).

While five people were apprehended in the raids, two others who had escaped were arrested during the day with the help of police from neighbouring districts, the SSP said. (PTI)

Par panel for tax exemptions on anonymous donations to NPOs, TDS refund without penalty

NEW DELHI, July 21: A Parliamentary panel, headed by BJP leader Baijayant Panda, has favoured continuing tax exemption on anonymous donations made to religious-cum-charitable trusts in the new Income Tax Bill, saying any removal would have an adverse impact on not-for-profit organisations.

The 31-member Select Committee of the Lok Sabha that examined the new Income Tax Bill, 2025, also suggested allowing taxpayers to claim TDS refund even after the ITR filing due date without paying any penal charges. The Committee has recommended changes in the Income Tax Bill, 2025, which will replace the six-decade-old Income Tax Act, 1961.

The 4,575 page report, which was tabled in the Lok Sabha on Monday, also made suggestions for sweeping changes in the way the new Income Tax bill, 2025, was to treat income of non-profit organisations (NPOs), while commending tax department's move of replacing the dual concepts of "previous year" and "assessment year" with a single, unified term: "tax year".

"The adoption of a single, consistent 'tax year' streamlines tax period references throughout the legislation, making the law more accessible and easier to understand," the report said.

With regard to NPOs, the government in the new bill has exempted from tax anonymous donations received by purely religious trusts. However, such donations received by a religious trust that may also have other charitable functions, like running hospitals, and educational institutions, will be taxed as per law. Clause 337 of the Income Tax Bill, 2025, proposed a flat 30 per cent tax on anonymous do-



nations received by all registered NPOs, with a narrow exemption extended only to those established wholly for religious purposes -- a "significant divergence" from the existing I-T Act.

The existing law under Section 115BBC of the Income-tax Act, 1961, provided a more comprehensive exemption: anonymous donations were not taxed if received by any trust or institution created or established wholly for religious and charitable purposes, unless such a donation was specifically directed towards a university, educational institution, hospital, or medical institution run by that same trust or institution.

"The committee strongly urge the reintroduction of a provision analogous to the explanation found in Section 115BBC of the 1961 Act," the report said.

While the Bill's stated aim is textual simplification, the committee observe a critical omission concerning religious-cum-charitable trusts, which could have substantial adverse impacts

on a large segment of India's NPO sector, it noted.

Further, the Committee also opposed taxing 'receipts' of NPOs as it contravenes the principle of real income taxation under the Income Tax Act. It recommended reintroducing the term 'income' to ensure only net income of NPOs is taxed.

The Committee expressed "strong concern" and said that taxing "receipts" would mean including capital recoveries or gross inflows, which do not necessarily represent net income of an NPO. For the purposes of taxation and accumulation, the Committee firmly believe that rules should ideally apply to net income, not gross receipts and suggested modification in Clause 335 of the proposed Bill.

With regard to refund of TDS refund claims by individuals who are otherwise not required to file tax returns, the committee suggested removal of the provision in the Income Tax Bill that makes it mandatory for an assessee to file I-T returns within the due date.

The committee observe that the cur-

rent mandatory requirement to file a return solely for the purpose of claiming a refund could inadvertently lead to prosecution, particularly for small taxpayers whose income falls below the taxable threshold but from whom tax has been deducted at source.

"In such scenarios, the law should not compel a return merely to avoid penal provisions for non-filing. The committee, therefore, recommend to remove sub-clause (1)(ix) from Clause 263 to provide flexibility for allowing refund claims in cases where the return is not filed in due time," it noted.

The Committee has made 32 important recommendations on the I-T Bill, as per a statement issued by the panel. Parliamentary committee reports are recommendatory in nature and the government may choose to accept them in part or in full. Commenting on the report, BDO India Partner, Tax and Regulatory Services, Preeti Sharma said the report suggests a total of 566 observations / recommendations for change. Now the Lok Sabha has to debate the recommendations and identify the changes that are required in the current Bill to make it futuristic and relevant for common taxpayers.

Nangia Andersen LLP, M&A Tax Partner, Sandeep Jhunjhunwala said the Committee has suggested modernising definitions such as "capital asset" and "infrastructure capital company", clarifying property-related deductions, and reinforcing the "actual payment" rule for business expenses. It has also recommended procedural safeguards such as making penalties for non-maintenance of books discretionary and permitting refund claims even where returns are not filed on time. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Bangladesh training aircraft

continued their rescue operations. A high-level investigation committee has been formed by the Bangladesh Air Force to determine the cause of the accident, the statement added. Brigadier General Zahed Kamal, Director General of Fire Service and Civil Defence, earlier told reporters that the crash and the subsequent fire killed 19 people. At least 50 others were critically injured, he added. He said that rescuers recovered 19 bodies from the school compound alone while the rescue operation was underway.

Earlier, Md Sayedur Rahman, the special assistant to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus for the Health Ministry, said that injured people, mostly students, were being treated at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH), Dhaka Medical College Hospital, and the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery (NIBPS). According to doctors, eight of the injured were in critical condition. "The number of injured people being brought to our facility is rising," a doctor at NIBPS told reporters. Fire service officials earlier said the jet crashed atop a four-storey building of the school with a big bang and immediately caught fire.

According to police, firefighting units, ambulances, and air force helicopters rushed to the scene soon after the crash. A teacher of the school, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that security personnel were putting bodies in body bags to be taken to Dhaka's combined military hospital from the damaged building, which housed classes from one to seven.

"Dozens of ambulances were carrying the wounded to nearby hospitals," she said. The National Burn Institute in the capital said they were treating 18 people, mostly students, some with critical conditions. The interim government has declared a one-day state mourning on July 22 when the national flag will be flown at half-mast across Bangladesh and its missions abroad. Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus expressed shock and sorrow over the casualties caused by the crash.

"I am deeply saddened by the casualties caused by the heartbreaking accident involving a Bangladesh Air Force jet at the Milestone School and College campus," he said in a statement. Fahim Hossain, an eleventh-grade student, said that the jet crashed right in front of his eyes -- just 10 feet ahead of him.

"It hit the ground floor of a two-storey building around 1:15 pm, where classes for the primary section were taking place," Fahim told The Daily Star.

The plane crashed in front of the classrooms used by class 3 and class 4 students. Recounting the experience, a teacher who was injured in the incident said students were lining up to leave the school just as the final bell rang when the flames erupted.

"There was no warning. Before we even understood what was happening, there were flames all around. Visibility dropped instantly. All I could see was fire, then smoke," the teacher said. "Both of my hands were burnt. I'm also experiencing breathing difficulties, and my face and ears are scorched."

Witnesses said many wounded people were carried away by spontaneous volunteers and army troops from the crash site, even in rickshaws and tricycle vans.

"We transported some of the injured with burns onto rickshaws and vans. Their clothes were ripped apart, torn, and some even were walking towards rescue vehicles with burn injuries on their bodies," said Nuruzzaman Mridha, a teacher of the school.

The crash was one of the deadliest aviation accidents in Bangladesh in several decades, Bangla-language daily Prothom Alo reported.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Asif Nazrul said that today's crash was "a great tragedy in our national life on an unprecedented scale".

Three platoons of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) have been deployed at the crash site to assist the law enforcement and rescue operations, according to a BGB press release. (PTI)

Justice Ashutosh Kumar sworn

According to an official statement, the event marked a significant moment in the judicial history of the region, with senior members of the legal and administrative community in attendance. The swearing-in ceremony was witnessed by Advocate General of Assam, Devajit Saikia, Judges of the Gauhati High Court, and prominent members of the legal fraternity.

Also present on the occasion were Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, Dr Ravi Kota, Director General of Police Harmeet Singh, Special Chief Secretary Syedina Abbasi, and other senior officials from the state government. Justice Ashutosh Kumar assumes office as the Chief Justice of one of the oldest and most prominent High Courts in the Northeast. His appointment is expected to add further impetus to the administration of justice in the region.

Himanta not worried China dam

own Three Gorges Dam, regarded as the largest in the world so far. The mammoth dam will be built in one of the rainiest parts and the project site is located along a tectonic plate boundary where earthquakes occur. Brahmaputra flows across the Tibetan plateau, carving out the deepest canyon on Earth.

The Tibetan plateau, regarded as the roof of the world, frequently experiences earthquakes as it is located over the tectonic plates. The hydropower project, regarded as the biggest infrastructure project in the world, raised concerns in the lower riparian countries -- India and Bangladesh.

The dam, besides empowering China to control the water flow, could also enable Beijing to release large amounts of water, flooding border areas in times of hostilities. India, too, is building a dam over the Brahmaputra in Arunachal Pradesh.

On July 19, Chinese Premier Li Qiang announced the start of the construction of the dam at a groundbreaking ceremony in the lower reaches of the Brahmaputra River, locally known as Yarlung Zangbo, at Nyingchi City.

The project will consist of five cascade hydropower stations, with a total investment estimated at around 1.2 trillion Yuan (about USD 167.8 billion). According to a 2023 report, the hydropower station is expected to generate more than 300 billion kWh of electricity each year, enough to meet the annual needs of over 300 million people. India and China established the Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) in 2006 to discuss various issues related to trans-border rivers, under which China provides India with hydrological information on the Brahmaputra and Sutlej rivers during the flood seasons.

Data sharing of trans-border rivers figured in the talks between Indian and Chinese Special Representatives (SRs) for the border question -- NSA Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, respectively -- held here on December 18 last year. (PTI)

India becomes Malaysia's

Current Malaysian commercial seeds are suitable for cultivation in India with proper farming practices and adequate irrigation, Kadir said, noting the materials have performed well under tropical conditions similar to many Indian regions with sufficient rainfall.

Research efforts are underway to develop climate-resilient varieties with improved drought tolerance, though none have been commercially released yet, he added. (PTI)

10 lakh acres of land encroached

Sarma maintained that the Gorukhuti eviction was an important one, which even led to "international pressure" on the government to stop such drives. "But our people were not dissuaded. We have learnt how to win this struggle, and the situation is such now that if we say that the land of Assamese people is being encroached, the illegal settlers themselves leave that place," he said. Sarma maintained that the Gorukhuti project is not about profit or loss, but it is about reclaiming the land for the indigenous people.

Highlighting the progress of the project, Sarma said it has generated approximately Rs 5.05 crore in revenue in its fourth year and currently holds deposits of around Rs 7.64 crore.

He described it as laying the foundation for a new model of self-sufficiency, built on cattle and pig farming, handloom production, and other activities. He added that the government is considering the establishment of an agricultural science institute at Gorukhuti to equip the youth with training in modern organic farming techniques.

He announced that under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, the Department of Fisheries has launched a scheme to develop an integrated aqua park in the project area. He also said that the monthly honorarium paid to the Krishi Sainiks involved in the project will be increased by ₹ 2000 per month. (PTI)

Monsoon session like 'Vijay Utsav'

rule of the Congress-led UPA. That 25 crore people have grown out of poverty is widely recognised by global institutions, while initiatives like Digital India and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) are showcasing the country's emerging capabilities as global interest in its digital ecosystem is rapidly increasing, he said.

He also hailed the International Labour Organisation's report that over 90 crore Indians are now covered under social security as a landmark accomplishment in social welfare, and also flagged the World Health Organisation declaring India free of trachoma, an eye disease, as a significant milestone in public health efforts. (PTI)

Process for removal of Justice

a similar notice to the Speaker. The Rajya Sabha Chairman said according to the Judges (Inquiry) Act, when notices of a motion are submitted on the same day in both the Houses of Parliament, a committee to examine the charges levelled against the judge will be constituted by the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman. "The secretary general will take the necessary steps in this direction," the Rajya Sabha Chairman announced.

The Act states that no inquiry committee shall be constituted unless the motion has been admitted in both Houses.

The committee comprising a senior judge of the Supreme Court, a sitting chief justice of a high court and a distinguished jurist will then probe the charges levelled against Justice Varma. It will be asked to come out with a report in three months.

The inquiry report will be tabled in Parliament, followed by a discussion in both Houses after which there will be voting on the motion for the removal of Justice Varma. Though Justice Varma has denied any wrongdoing, the inquiry panel constituted by the then Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna concluded that the judge and his family members had covert or active control over the storeroom where the cash was found, proving his misconduct serious enough to seek his removal. (PTI)

Rate cuts by RBI not magic bullet to propel investments: Raghuram Rajan

NEW DELHI, July 21: Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan has said repo rate cuts by the Reserve Bank in recent times are not a "magic bullet" that will necessarily propel investments, as several other factors play a part in boosting the economy.

Rajan further said interest rates, at this point, are not overly high and the impact of rate cuts announced by the RBI will take time to play out.

"And as you correctly point out, (high) interest rates were an argument (earlier), but I do not think that can any longer be an argument."

"I do not think that necessarily this (rate cuts by RBI) will be a magic bullet to propel investments," Rajan told PTI Videos.

On June 6, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra-headed six-member monetary policy committee reduced the benchmark short-term lending rate by 50 basis points, taking the total reduction to 100 bps in quick succession, besides a change in the policy stance to neutral from accommodative and liquidity infusion measures.

Rajan was asked whether repo rate cuts announced by the RBI in recent times will finally nudge corporates to increase their investment plans.

The eminent economist said: "Some of the other factors, including creating more of a transparent sort of playing field and creating more competition in a number of sectors, will urge industry to be less complacent and more focused on investing to preserve their advantage and their lead."

"So, I do not think it is just interest rates. I think it is a combination of factors...But I hope that more corporate investment is forthcoming."

He said that Indian industries have not seemed to be investing after the massive investment expansion before the global financial crisis.

"They (Indian industries) have become much more circumspect, and they can not keep saying this is the condition of the domestic economy -- earlier, they were saying the lower middle class is not spending, rural areas are not spending."

"Now it is flipped over. It is the upper middle class which is not spending," Rajan, currently a professor of finance at Chicago Booth, said.

Recent data from the Ministry of Statistics indicated that the share of private sector investment in India has dropped to 11-year lows.

"And as you correctly point out, interest rates were an argument, but I do not think that can any longer be an argument," he said.

In FY24, the private sector's share in gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) -- a key measure of investment in physical assets -- dropped to 32.4 per cent.

Asked if there is any room for the RBI for further rate cuts as CPI inflation has fallen to 2.1 per cent in June, Rajan said he does not like to comment on the central bank's policy.

"Let me just say that we are in a very comfortable situation as far as inflation goes, and to some extent, the tariffs on imports in industrial countries, which may sort of propagate from the US to other countries, tend to be disinflationary for countries that export," he said.

Rajan said he would not pay as much attention to headline inflation, even though the headline inflation is what the RBI is targeting.

"But I would also take a look at core inflation at such times, just to satisfy myself that the disinflationary impulse is across the board."

"And if you look at core inflation, it is somewhat higher than the headline number," he noted. (PTI)

Range Rover Velar autobiography launched

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 21: Range Rover has launched its latest luxury SUV offering in India -- the Range Rover Velar Autobiography -- showcasing a compelling combination of modern design, intelligent technology, and refined luxury. The launch was announced through an official statement by the company. Positioned at the heart of the Range Rover family, the Velar Autobiography features the brand's distinctive reductive design language and premium finishes.

According to the company, this latest addition promises an enhanced driving experience tailored for Indian road conditions, with two advanced powertrain options. Customers can choose between the P250 petrol variant delivering 183.9 kW and 365 Nm torque, or the D200 diesel mild hybrid, which produces 150 kW and 430 Nm torque. Both variants are engineered to provide effortless performance across a range of driving environments.

Ryan Miller, Global Product and Services Director at Range Rover, said the Velar has played a pivotal role in the company's success in India.

"It has emotionally charged DNA and unquestionable pedigree, and we are excited to now introduce Autobiography on Range Rover Velar."

Autobiography is an unmistakable expression of refinement and luxury. From the Suedecloth headlining and Full Extended Windsor Leather to the immersive Meridian™ 3D Surround Sound System, every detail is designed to create a sanctuary on wheels," he said. The Velar Autobiography's exterior highlights include the brand's signature floating roof, flush-fitting door handles, and Pixel LED headlights with signature Daytime Running Lights.

HDFC Bank posts 12.2% rise in Q1 net profit, PAT at ₹181.6 billion

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 21: HDFC Bank Limited recently announced its financial results for the quarter ended June 30, 2025, reporting a 12.2% year-on-year growth in profit after tax (PAT) to ₹181.6 billion. The bank's profit before tax (PBT) for the quarter stood at ₹212.9 billion.

According to an official statement, the total balance sheet size as of June 30, 2025, reached ₹39,541 billion, compared to ₹35,672 billion on the same date last year. The average deposits for the quarter were ₹26,576 billion, registering a 16.4% increase from ₹22,831 billion in the June 2024 quarter and a 5.1% rise from ₹25,280 billion in the March 2025 quarter. HDFC Bank's net revenue during the quarter was ₹531.7 billion. This includes transaction gains of ₹91.3 billion from a partial divestment through an offer for sale in the recent IPO of its subsidiary, HDB Financial Services Ltd.

NAME CORRECTION

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

No.DD/BTC/SI/2025-26/1194 Dated Kokrajhar, the 18th July, 2025

SHORT-NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Joint Director cum CHD, Fishery Deptt., BTC, Kokrajhar, Invites Separate sealed quotations / tenders affixing a non-refundable Court fee stamp of **Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and twenty five paise)** only are hereby invited from interested Contractors for the following works for the financial year 2025-26 under the SOPD fund, BTC, Kokrajhar.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs.)	Time of completion
1	Supplying & fixing of Precast RCC Boundary Posts for Demarcation & Protection of 60 bighas Damalsara Beel (Fishery) at Kathalguri, Bhotgaon in Kokrajhar under SOPD for the year 2025-26	13,72,300.00	30 days
2	Supplying & fixing of Precast RCC Boundary Posts for Demarcation & Protection of 72 bighas Ramadala Beel (Fishery) at Borokhas, Silgara in Kokrajhar under SOPD for the year 2025-26	16,27,700.00	30 days

Bid Cost : Rs. 500.00 (Rupees Five Hundred) only in the form of Demand Draft (non-refundable) pledge in favour of "The Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar"

Bid Security (Earnest Money)

a) @ 1% of the Tender Amount for ST/SC/OBC and

b) @ 2% of the Tender Amount for General/Firm, in the form of Demand Draft/Fixed Deposit duly pledged in favour of "The Joint Director cum CHD, Fishery Deptt. BTC, Kokrajhar".

The Sealed tenders will be received in the Office of the undersigned up to 1.00 P.M. on **25-07-2025** and will be opened the same day at 1.30 P.M. in the presence of the bidders or their representatives, if present.

Details terms and conditions of the work may be seen in the office of the undersigned during office hour up-to 12 noon of 25-07-2025.

Sd/- CHD,
Dairy Development Deptt.,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/1851

No.DD/BTC/SI/2025-26/1194 Dated Kokrajhar, the 18th July, 2025

SHORT-NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The CHD, Dairy Development Deptt., BTC, Kokrajhar, Invites Separate sealed quotations / tenders affixing a non-refundable Court fee stamp of **Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and twenty five paise)** only are hereby invited from interested Contractors for the following works for the financial year 2025-26" under the SOPD fund, BTC, Kokrajhar.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs.)	Time of completion
1	Repairing & Renovation of CHD office, Dairy Dev. Deptt., BTC, Kokrajhar under SOPD for the year 2025-26.	10,00,000.00	90 days

Bid Cost : Rs. 500.00 (Rupees Five Hundred) only in the form of Demand Draft(non-refundable) pledge in favour of "The Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar"

Bid Security (Earnest Money)

a) @ 1% of the Tender Amount for ST/SC/OBC and

b) @ 2% of the Tender Amount for General/Firm, in the form of Demand Draft/Fixed Deposit duly pledged in favour of "The CHD, Dairy Development Deptt. BTC, Kokrajhar".

The Sealed tenders will be received in the Office of the undersigned up to 1.00 P.M. on **26-07-2025** and will be opened the same day at 1.30 P.M. in the presence of the bidders or their representatives, if present.

Details terms and conditions of the work may be seen in the office of the undersigned during office hour up-to 12 noon of 26-07-2025.

Sd/- CHD,
Dairy Development Deptt.,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/1848

'Peerless Group had inked an agreement during the Advantage Assam 2.0 business summit'

Peerless Hospital enters NE, opens first healthcare unit in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, July 21: Kolkata-based Peerless Hospital on Monday forayed into the northeast with a 300-bed super-specialty facility in Assam's Guwahati on Monday, officials said.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurated the Peerless Group hospital at Ahom Gaon in Garchuk area.

"The Peerless Group is one of India's oldest companies, which began in the financial sector before expanding into healthcare and other domains. With two hospitals already functioning in West Bengal, the establishment of this hospital in Guwahati represents a significant step in the advancement of healthcare services in Assam," he said.

Sarma said the Peerless Group had inked an agreement during the Advantage Assam 2.0 business summit earlier this year.



"Since the signing of the MoU with the Peerless Group, the state government has worked in close coordination with the company to make the hospital operational," he said.

Peerless Hospital Promoter Jayanta Roy said launching the

first healthcare facility in the northeast is a milestone for the group's 30-year legacy.

"With 100 beds to start, and 300 beds by 2026, Peerless Hospital Guwahati will offer advanced specialties like cardiology, neurology, orthopaedics and critical care," he

said.

Roy said that despite significant strides in public and private healthcare infrastructure, large parts of the northeastern region continue to face challenges in accessing tertiary care, especially timely diagnosis and the availability of super-specialty services.

"Every year, thousands of patients from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, North Bengal and even Bangladesh travel to metro cities in search of quality medical treatment, especially for cardiac, neurological, oncological, renal and trauma-related conditions," he said.

"The facility is designed to bring trusted medical care closer to the people of Assam and neighbouring states, reducing the physical and financial stress of long-distance travel," he added. (PTI)

Niranjan Das conferred with 'Sarpa Bandhu' title

HT Bureau

BISWANATH CHARIALI, July 21: Niranjan Das, a noted snake rescuer from the Soota area, has been conferred with the Sarpa Bandhu (Snake Friend) title by eminent environmentalist and snake rescuer Sourabh Barkataky at a function held at the Baliram Lahkar Auditorium in Tezpur recently.

Das received the honour along with a citation, memento, and gamosa in recognition of his dedicated service in rescuing snakes across the greater Soota, Biswanath, and Naduar regions.

He has been actively involved in rescuing and safely releasing numerous snakes from residential areas. During the event, nine other snake rescuers were also conferred with the Sarpa Bandhu title, while four individuals were felicitated for their contributions in rescue operations and saving the lives of snakebite victims.

Organisations and individuals from the Soota area have extended their congratulations to Niranjan Das for the recognition.

Pranab Kumar Barman conferred 'Kabya Konwar' title at Tezpur's 'Akou Prayas' event

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 21: Noted Assamese poet Pranab Kumar Barman was conferred the honorary title of "Kabya Konwar" (Prince of Poetry) by socio-cultural organisation Prayas at the "Akou Prayas" programme held at the Baliram Lahkar Hall of Asomiya Club, Tezpur, on Sunday. The title was ceremoniously presented by Prayas president Achyut Sarma, secretary Pritam Bora, reception committee president Pankaj Baruah, and Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rabha.

The event also featured the release of Prem Aru Bidrohar Jui (Flame of Love and Rebellion), a poetry collection by Pritam Bora, which was formally unveiled by Barman, Rabha, retired professor Purneswar Nath, and former principal of Darrang College Dr Abani Kumar Sarma.

A new Assamese modern song sung by Abhipriya Goswami, composed by Sanjay Krishna Gohain Baruah and penned by lyricist Mukut Goswami, was also launched during the programme.

The event commenced with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by Khirada Mahanta, widow of late Sattradhikar Putul Mahanta, followed by a Borgeet performance by Hiramoni Lahkar.

Addressing the audience, MLA Prithiraj Rabha lamented the decline of Tezpur's literary and cultural heritage, stating, "When core values thrive, politics and culture alike can keep a nation alive and vibrant."

In his speech, Pranab Kumar Barman urged the youth to protect their cultural legacy, drawing parallels with poets Federico Garcia Lorca and Pablo Neruda.

He recited his poem Half Lata Mangeshkar, Half Mohammed Rafi and remarked that humanity must rise above its war-loving mindset to create a beautiful world, citing Jewish commitment to language and culture as an example.

Prayas secretary Pritam Bora reflected on the challenges faced by the organisation in recent years, during a session presided over by Achyut Sarma.

3028 landless forest dwellers receive land titles in Chirang under FRA 2006



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 21: A total of 3,028 landless forest dwellers were provided with land entitlement certificates under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, in a ceremonial distribution programme held at Koilamoila under Nichima constituency in Chirang district of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

The event was organised by the Department of Land and Revenue, Government of BTR.

Executive Member of BTR Ranjit Basumatary, Sidli MLA Nirmal Kumar Brahma, and other dignitaries were present at the occasion and handed over the certificates to the beneficiaries.

The BTR administration under the leadership of Chief Executive Member Pramod Boro has so far resolved over three lakh land-related cases since assuming office.

Thousands of people across communities have received land entitlement certificates as part of this ongoing initiative.

Speaking at the event, EM Basumatary reiterated the commitment of the Land and Revenue Department to provide land pattas to landless individuals across the region.

CEM Pramod Boro said the distribution of 3,028 land titles in the 16 No Nichima constituency marked a significant milestone under Mission Bwiswmuthi to ensure land security for the landless.

"I'm delighted to extend heartfelt congratulations to all the beneficiaries and to our Land & Revenue Department for driving this transformative effort with dedication and purpose," he added.

Extortion allegation surfaces at Mangaldai blood bank

HT Correspondent

DALGAON, July 21: A staff member of the Mangaldai Civil Hospital Blood Bank has been accused of extorting ₹1,000 from a rickshaw puller in exchange for O Positive blood that was voluntarily donated, sparking outrage and demands for a formal investigation into the hospital's functioning.

According to an official complaint, local advocate Anwar Hussain of Chakravasti village donated blood for Abida Begum, the wife of a rickshaw puller.

As he had to leave due to work commitments, he asked the patient's husband to collect the blood on his behalf.

Later, Hussain alleged that a female staff member on duty at around 4 PM demanded ₹1,000 from the rickshaw puller for the release of the blood unit.

Expressing disappointment, Hussain said that despite his voluntary donation, the staff member took advantage of a financially weak individual.

The advocate initially brought the matter to the attention of Dr Daud Ali, the in-charge of the blood bank, who advised him to approach the hospital superintendent.

Following a complaint to the Superintendent of Mangaldai Civil Hospital, the accused staff member reportedly returned the money.

Mangaldai teacher sets example by farming

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, July 21: Hitesh Hazarika, an English teacher at Ota Higher Secondary School and resident of Kabikara village under Mangaldai police station, is earning praise for his commitment to hard work and community values by spending his summer vacation working in the fields.

Known for his dedication both as an educator and a socially conscious citizen, Hazarika has chosen to utilise the holiday period by engaging in farming activities.

On Sunday, he was seen tilling his one-bigha plot of land for paddy cultivation, guiding a pair of oxen while cheerfully humming to himself—trading chalk and classroom for plough and field.

Apart from his teaching responsibilities, Hazarika also works as a part-time journalist and remains active in community development.

Assam Cultural Trust concludes summer workshop

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 21: A five-day Summer Workshop organised by the Assam Cultural Trust in collaboration with Pragiyoti Sanskritik Samaj concluded on Saturday at the Pragiyoti Cultural Complex in Machkhowa.

According to an official statement, the workshop, held from July 16 to 20, witnessed enthusiastic participation from 147 students aged between 4 and 18 years.

The workshop featured sessions on Art and Craft, Traditional Song (Vocal), and Yoga and Meditation, providing students an opportunity to explore their creativity and connect with Assamese cultural traditions.

The inaugural ceremony on July 16 was graced by noted folk artist Jina Rajkumari as chief guest. Md Khalid Umar, Chairman of the Socio-Cultural Committee of the Assam Cultural Trust, formally inaugurated the workshop.

The concluding ceremony, held

on July 20, featured Rahul Chandra Das, Director of Cultural Affairs, Assam, and Secretary of the Assam Cultural Trust, as chief guest.

He was felicitated along with Bolin Bordoloi, advisor of the Socio-Cultural Committee of the Trust, for their contributions to the state's cultural promotion.

Das delivered a motivational address to the participants, encouraging them to remain rooted in their heritage while fostering creativity and learning.

He distributed certificates of participation to the students and praised their energy and talent.

The closing event also saw speeches by Md Khalid Umar, who applauded the children and thanked the organisers, and Bolin Bordoloi, who emphasised the importance of cultural integrity.

Balendra Kumar Das, Vice Chairman of the Socio-Cultural Committee, stressed the role of cultural unity and assimilation in fostering community harmony.

Swarnajyoti Barua Barbarua felicitated by Sivasagar Jila Sahitya Sabha

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, July 21: Swarnajyoti Barua Barbarua, former principal of TRG Town Higher Secondary School and a life member of Asom Sahitya Sabha, was felicitated by the Sivasagar Jila Sahitya Sabha in collaboration with Rangpur Sahitya Sabha at a special programme held at the Sivasagar Girls' College auditorium recently.

Barbarua, known for her relentless social work despite being a cancer patient for over two decades, was honoured in the presence of a large number of her friends and well-wishers. She had earlier served as the secretary of Rangpur Sahitya Sabha and is also recognised as a noted writer.

The felicitation meeting was presided over by Dr Jeevan Kalita, Vice-President of the Sivasagar District Sahitya Sabha, and hosted by its secretary Manoj Kumar Gogoi.

A special tribute was paid to renowned Sanskrit scholar and educationist Krishnakanta Handique on his birth anniversary, with Sahityacharya Nahendra Padun lighting a ceremonial lamp before his portrait.

This segment was chaired by Yogesh Kishore Phukan, President of the Sivasagar Jila Sahitya Sabha.

A felicitation volume on Swarnajyoti Barua Barbarua, edited by Dr Jeevan Kalita, was released by noted educationist and retired principal of Gaurisagar Higher Secondary Industrial Institute, Tosheshwar Borthakur.

In his address, Borthakur said the book reflects on Barbarua as a teacher, social worker, and above all, as a mother. He stressed that virtues and compassion are essential qualities that the younger generation must emulate.

Distinguished attendees included

former president of the district Sahitya Sabha Prema Gogoi, Dr Arundhati Mohanta, educationist Dr Prakash Katoki, and several other eminent personalities. In her address, Swarnajyoti Barua Barbarua credited her husband for her achievements and described the felicitation volume as a cherished gift.

She spoke emotionally about her ongoing treatment and drew strength from her illness, calling it a source of courage and inspiration.

The event was moderated by Dilip Shaikia and witnessed participation from former president Yoga Gogoi, district representatives Santosh Dutta, Yogmaya Sandiky Shaikia, Kalpana Barua, Lakshminarayan Barua, and members of various branch Sahitya Sabhas and organisations.

The programme concluded with a collective prayer for the speedy recovery of Dr Nagen Saikia.

Awareness session and registration camp held for PMMVY

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 21: A special awareness session and registration camp for the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) was organised on Monday by the Women Empowerment Centre under the District Women and Child Development Department at Amani Sector, under the Bajigaon Integrated Child Development Project.

According to an official statement, the programme was inaugurated by Deepa Shyam, Project Officer of the Bajigaon Integrated Child Development Project.

She urged all eligible beneficiaries and pregnant women to take advantage of the scheme and explained its objectives and benefits.

Over 15 beneficiaries participated in the campaign.

Quin Borah, District Programme Coordinator of the Women Empowerment Centre, facilitated the registration process by opening accounts through the Indian Post Payment Bank.

Chief Sevika Chisrikana Roy, Shubhadra Bora, Moushumi Gayan Tamuli, and beneficiaries were also present at the event.

The Project Officer also appealed to Anganwadi workers and Chief Sevika to ensure timely completion of all tasks related to the scheme.

Nabiul Hazarika, Block Coordinator of Poshan, addressed and resolved FRS-related issues of several beneficiaries, enabling them to receive their PMMVY installments.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Moushumi Gayan Tamuli, Chief Sevika of the Amani Sector, the statement added.



Udalguri's Krispita Pradhan secures RIMC admission

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 21: In a proud moment for the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) and the state of Assam, Krispita Pradhan, a Class 8 student from Udalguri, has become the first student from the state to secure admission to the prestigious Rashtriya Indian Military College (RIMC), Dehradun. Krispita, the elder daughter of Bhim Pradhan and Pranita Newar of Udalguri town, has long aspired to join the armed forces. Her dedication and determination helped her clear the rigorous selection process of the military institution.

Her achievement has brought pride not only to her family and school but also to the entire BTR and Assam.

Her success is being hailed as a source

of inspiration for young aspirants across the region aiming to serve in the armed forces. Congratulatory messages have poured in from various organisations and individuals, including Bodoland Territorial Region Chief Executive Member Pramod Boro. In his message, CEM Boro expressed joy and admiration, stating, "My heartfelt congratulations to Krispita Pradhan, a bright Class 8 student from Udalguri, on becoming the first student from BTR, and Assam, to be admitted into the prestigious Rashtriya Indian Military College. Your dedication and discipline have made us all proud. Wishing you continued success as you embark on this inspiring journey. You are a true trailblazer for the youth of BTR and Assam."

Tinsukia admin holds review meeting for JE prevention

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, July 21: A review meeting to discuss preventive measures against Japanese Encephalitis was held at the conference hall of the Tinsukia Deputy Commissioner's office on Monday.

The meeting was chaired by Tinsukia Deputy Commissioner Swapneel Paul and attended by senior officials including the Chief Executive Officer of Tinsukia Zilla Parishad, Additional Commissioner of the Health Department, Joint Director of Health Services, District Agriculture Officer, District Veterinary Officer, Executive Officer of Tinsukia Municipal Board, and the District Programme Officer of the National Health Mission, among others.

Railway Board official inspects Kamakhya Depot and BOOT Laundry facilities

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 21: Manu Goel, Additional Member (Environment and Housekeeping Management), Railway Board, conducted a comprehensive inspection of key infrastructure and service facilities under the Northeast Frontier Railway on July 17.

The visit was aimed at reviewing housekeeping standards, waste management systems, and passenger service delivery mechanisms, as per an official statement.

Accompanied by Ajay Nandan, Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer of NF Railway, Goel began the inspection at the Kamakhya Depot, where he reviewed the integrated cleaning and maintenance contract for the Brahmaputra Mail.

This initiative, the first of its kind, includes coach maintenance, bedroll distribution, on-board housekeeping services (OBHS), and minor enroute repairs.

According to the statement, the initiative has led to a 25% reduction in passenger complaints on the Rail Madad portal.

Goel also appreciated efforts such as gravity cock solutions for leaky taps and enhanced supervisor training for pipeline isolation.



The inspection also covered the AMI generation and testing facility that supplies over 1.45 lakh litres of bacteria used for bio-toilet maintenance in trains operating from depots including Agartala, Katihar, New Jalpaiguri, Dibrugarh, Naharlagun, and New Bongaigaon.

Innovations showcased during the visit included pre-cooling of AC coaches prior to platform placement, resulting in fewer passen-

ger complaints and reduced platform detention, a dedicated UIC testing model to minimise cable faults, and saltwater resistive load testing for power cars to ensure generator efficiency.

Goel also visited the Rail Madad War Room at Kamakhya, where 24x7 monitoring of OBHS activities and passenger complaints is carried out.

Key features such as real-time cleaning res-

olution, bedroll tracking through IRCTC charts, biometric attendance of OBHS staff, and monitoring of train cleanliness were reviewed.

He praised the integration of digital systems and interdepartmental coordination for improving passenger services.

At the BOOT Laundry facility in New Guwahati, Shri Goel inspected modern equipment including a multi-stage tunnel washer, ironers, folders, and high-capacity boilers used for cleaning bedrolls and blankets.

The facility currently handles around 13,365 bedroll packets daily for Guwahati and Kamakhya-based trains. Quality checks using whiteness meters were also highlighted.

The official statement further noted that the inspection reflects the Railway Board's commitment to improving environmental sustainability, operational cleanliness, and service quality.

Future developments under the NF Railway include the introduction of Vande Bharat trains, installation of a tandem wheel lathe, provision of Overhead Equipment (OHE) over pit lines, and development of a new coaching complex at New Guwahati.

NAME CORRECTION

I, Lourembam Nancy Devi, Daughter of Late Lourembam Shashi Mohan Singh, resident of Manipuri basti, H/N-24, P.O-Ulubari Ghy-07 do hereby declared by an affidavit before the Notary Kamrup & Metro, Guwahati on 16-07-2025 that in my Pan card vide no. CCAPD3471L, my name has been recorded as L. Nancy Devi instead of Lourembam Nancy Devi. Lourembam Nancy Devi and L. Nancy Devi is one and the same person having a single identity i.e. myself.

NOTICE

No.F-686728/15 Dated. 21-07-2025. It is for the information of all the Teachers and Head of Institutions under the Department of School Education, Govt. of Assam (Secondary and Elementary) that the Portal of online application and self nomination for "State Award to Teachers 2025" is opened w.e.f. 21-07-2025 at 12:00 Noon. All the willing teachers are requested to visit the web portal i.e. <http://shikshak.assam.gov.in> and submit online applications on or before 04-08-2025.

All relevant information are available in the portal.

Sd/-
Director
Secondary Education, Assam
Kahilpara, Guwahati-12
DIPR /D/HLT/79/22-Jul-25

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Less is only more where more is no good.
-Frank Lloyd Wright

India's fintech revolution

India has long been celebrated as a global trailblazer in financial inclusion. From biometric identity systems to mobile-enabled digital payments, we've built infrastructure at a scale and speed that few countries can rival. According to the World Bank's Global Findex Database 2021, 78 percent of Indian adults now own a formal financial account—up from just 35 percent in 2011. It's a statistic that looks impressive, and it is. But the real story lies in what these accounts are—or are not—doing. A third of them, according to the same Findex report, are inactive. Millions of Indians hold accounts they don't use. This sobering fact signals a harsh truth: we may have solved for access, but we've barely begun to solve for inclusion. The Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity gave financial accounts to the masses. It was an unprecedented push to formalize the economy and improve the delivery of government benefits. But over the years, the focus has become narrowly administrative—opening accounts, linking them to Aadhaar, transferring funds—without attending to the deeper challenge of making financial services meaningful, especially for the poor and the marginalised. If inclusion is only measured by the number of accounts opened, we are mistaking a means for an end. A dormant account is not a tool for savings, credit, or security. It is, at best, a conduit for a government subsidy—and often, just another number on a dashboard.

Yes, the gender gap in account ownership has narrowed—from 20 percentage points in 2014 to just 6 in 2021. That's commendable progress. But ownership alone does not ensure agency. In practice, many women in rural India depend on male relatives or banking agents to access their accounts. This undermines privacy and autonomy, and in some cases, increases vulnerability to exploitation. A study cited by the World Bank showed that when women in a government welfare program were paid into their own accounts, rather than their husband's, they were more likely to seek employment and exercise control over household finances. The lesson is clear: financial infrastructure must empower women, not just enroll them. India's digital payment ecosystem—fueled by UPI, mobile wallets, and QR codes—is often held up as a model. During the pandemic, over 80 million Indians made their first digital merchant payment. Yet beneath this boom is a digital divide that mirrors our socio-economic one.

More than half a billion Indians with accounts did not make a single digital payment in the year preceding the 2021 survey. Why? Many lack smartphones or affordable data. Others face language barriers or interface complexity. For the elderly, the illiterate, and the digitally uninitiated, even basic navigation can be daunting. And let's not forget: digital fraud and unauthorized deductions are growing concerns, especially for low-income users. Simply put, digital access without digital literacy breeds new forms of exclusion. Many of those who do receive wages or benefits digitally still report frustration. According to the World Bank, one in five wage recipients in India paid unexpected or hidden fees to access their own money. Others cited distance, poor connectivity, or lack of understanding as reasons for not using their accounts.

BRICS and a new global currency

The recent BRICS Summit at Rio, apart from raising concerns on the multilateral issues, was marred by dissensions within the grouping. It also faced the added threats from the American President Trump over BRICS' plans to float a new global currency to give competition to the US Dollar, a move which would face many other hurdles before fruition

By: Asad Mirza

US President Donald Trump Friday (July 18) mocked the BRICS bloc as a "little group" that is "fading out fast" and reiterated his warning of a 10 percent tariff on countries aligning with it, accusing them of supporting "anti-American policies".

Trump further took credit for undermining the bloc's attempts to challenge the global dominance of the US dollar, vowing that he would never let that happen.

Donald Trump, taking firm stance toward global economic competitors, said, "When I heard about this group of six countries in BRICS, I hit them very hard, and if they ever really form in a meaningful way, it will end very quickly." Though he didn't name the nations, Trump added, "We can never let anyone play games with the US." He also stressed the importance of maintaining the US Dollar's global reserve status. "We are not going to let the Dollar slide... If we lost the status of the Dollar as the world's reserve currency, it would be like losing a World War," Trump said.

Trump had targeted Brazil with new trade penalties, announcing a 50 percent tariff on imports beginning in August over what he described as "unfair" trade practices. This follows his earlier July 6 declaration of a 10 percent tariff on any nation aligning with the BRICS group.

BRICS Over the Years

The BRICS group, originally formed in 2009, is a coalition of emerging economies comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (which joined in 2010). In 2024-25, the bloc expanded to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, bringing the total number of member countries to 11.

BRICS was established with the goal of promoting peace, development, and a more balanced global order by strengthening economic cooperation among developing nations. Over the years, it has positioned itself as a counterweight to Western-led institutions like the G7 and the IMF, advocating for a multipolar world and reforms in global governance systems. The bloc also promotes the use of local currencies in trade.

But what defines BRICS today is a subtler, more strategic ambition: to insulate themselves from Washington's gravitational pull while cooperating to build a joint hi-tech industrial base. There are things that the BRICS get right. Finan-

cial global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund are in need of reform; the rich world has failed to honour its climate finance promises. The group's understandable response in the face of inaction is to create its own development bank to promote a form of green industrialisation.

Yet, its size hides its contradictions. The grouping's call for more inclusive global institutions sounds welcome, but there is a preponderance of autocracies within its own ranks. BRICS is right that international law should be upheld in Middle Eastern conflicts. But it climbs down from its moral pedestal by condemning Ukraine's strikes on Russian infrastructure—while staying silent on Moscow's relentless attacks on civilians.

Rio Summit and a new global currency

The BRICS summit in Brazil last week revealed a loose alliance of emerging powers becoming more complex—and perhaps more consequential. But the most important issue on how to replace the dollar globally, was pushed under the

opined that, "The rise of BRICS provides an important multilateral corrective in a world dominated by the US for the past three decades but now transitioning away from both bipolarity and multilateralism. Such a corrective will inevitably come with its own flaws and blind spots. But a stable transition requires it."

Dr Diego Maiorano, a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore (NUS), commenting on the new BRICS currency opined that in fact, the drive by BRICS+ to de-dollarise international trade remains at an embryonic stage. Most cross-border transactions among the BRICS members are still settled in US dollars, and attempts to build alternatives (such as the BRICS Cross-Border Payment System) are nascent and far from supplanting established mechanisms like the SWIFT, even though they are useful tools for countries (such as Russia and Iran) hit by sanctions.

Christopher Phillips, Professor of International Relations at Queen Mary University of London, in his article in the Arab News opined that Russia and China were among the most supportive of a new BRICS currency to challenge the dollar in Kazan. But on the eve of the Rio de Janeiro summit, Trump's threats contributed to reluctance among other BRICS members, especially India, which fears Chinese dominance of the new currency, to advance the proposal. No major headway was made on the issue and the final joint statement even contained references to the global importance of the dollar—perhaps an effort by some to appease Trump.

Overall, the future of BRICS might be shaped less by external threats and more by its ability to reconcile internal contradictions and articulate a coherent vision for global governance. For now, the coalition is more a reflection of the shifting geopolitics of the Global South than a monolithic challenger to the West. The embryonic nature of its de-dollarisation efforts and the moderating influence of India and Brazil suggest that the group's challenge is more latent than explicit. Nevertheless, as Western institutions continue to grapple with questions of legitimacy and representativeness, the mere existence of BRICS, with all its contradictions, signals a world in flux—and an invitation to rethink the foundations of international order.

The declaration of TRF as a terrorist organisation – A big victory



DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Lalit Garg

When innocent lives were lost in the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam, it sent shockwaves across India and the world. The cries of victims once again reminded us that terrorism still thrives—nourished by political patronage, ideological extremism, and cross-border support. In a transformative move, the United States has officially designated The Resistance Front (TRF)—a proxy of Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)—as a global terrorist organisation. This action is not just symbolic; it marks a strategic global shift against the proxy war machinery that has long used Kashmir as a battlefield.

This US action is being hailed as a significant diplomatic success for India, reflecting the persistent efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to internationalise the issue of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. It validates India's long-standing claim that Pakistan continues to harbour, protect, and export terrorism under various facades. Though TRF attempts to appear as a local Kashmiri resistance group, it is merely the rebranded face and extended arm of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hafiz Saeed's terror network. Formed after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, its mission has been to orchestrate attacks in India under the guise of "indigenous rebellion."

TRF employed social media, digital platforms, and diplomatic jargon to mislead international opinion, falsely positioning itself as a grassroots Kashmiri movement. In reality, its strings are pulled directly from Rawalpindi and Pakistan's ISI.

Pakistan has long attempted to disguise itself as a victim of terrorism, while actively cultivating and exporting extremism. The global community has, over time, recognised this hypocrisy, prompting Pakistan to rename and rebrand its terror groups. TRF is a prime example of this strategy. The Pahalgam attack was an assault not just on lives but on India's vision for peace and progress in Kashmir, especially through tourism and infrastructure development. Whenever peace returns to the Valley, terror outfits respond with bloodshed.

The designation of TRF as a global terrorist entity sends a clear global message—that terrorism cannot be hidden behind new names. Using terror as an instrument of foreign policy must face universal condemnation and consequence. India's success is rooted in its strategic outreach. Delegations were



sent to 32 nations, including the US, to present concrete evidence proving that TRF is merely a front for Lashkar-e-Taiba. These efforts bore fruit in the form of the US declaration.

Despite supporting India on paper, the US and international bodies continue financial engagement with Pakistan, often through loans and aid from the World Bank and IMF. This duality must stop. Supporting a terror-breeding nation contradicts the very principles of counter-terrorism. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has often shown indecisiveness in terrorism matters. Similarly, the FATF's reluctance to move Pakistan into its grey list, despite ample evidence, raises serious questions. If Pakistan is openly backing TRF, why is it still escaping stringent sanctions?

India must not rest on symbolic victories alone. The following steps are essential: Strengthen cross-border counter-terror strikes including surgical and drone operations. Demand international economic sanctions on nations or entities funding terrorism. Enhance domestic intelligence and cyber surveillance capabilities. Keep exposing Pakistan's terror nexus at FATF, UN, and G20 platforms.

A united front of democratic, peace-loving nations must adopt a Zero Tolerance Policy against terrorism. No country—directly or indirectly—should be allowed to provide safe haven to terrorists. The declaration of TRF as a terrorist organisation is just the first step. The real challenge lies in eliminating its financial, logistical, and ideological roots. The unholy nexus between Pakistan's government, military, and terrorist outfits must be broken. The Pahalgam attack is a reminder that terrorism is not merely a security threat—it is an insult to humanity, civilisation, and peace.

India must now act with resolve and readiness, not just reaction. We owe it to future generations to build an India where Kashmir is known for its beauty—not its bloodshed. The campaign to globally isolate TRF and similar outfits must continue until terrorism is eradicated from its roots.

Accelerating sustainability - India's electric bus revolution

By: Vinod Chandrashekhkar Dixit

India's electric bus revolution is gaining momentum, driven by government initiatives and investments. The buzz around electric buses is growing louder in India, and it's no surprise why? As cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Guwahati are already leading the way, electric buses are fast becoming a vital part of the country's public transport revolution. India is stepping into the future with an ambitious initiative to overhaul its urban transit systems through the large-scale adoption of electric buses.

The Indian government has launched the PM e-Drive scheme, aiming to deploy 14,028 electric buses across major cities, with a budget of ₹10,900 crore. This initiative is expected to reduce urban pollution and promote sustainable transportation. India has made remarkable strides toward adopting electric vehicles, and electric buses are at the forefront of this change. As of 2024, over 3,616 electric buses are running on Indian roads, a small but growing percentage of the more than 41,000 diesel buses still in operation. The Indian government has launched several initiatives to promote the adoption of electric buses, including Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) Scheme providing incentives for the adoption of electric vehicles and National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) aiming to achieve 30% electric vehicle penetration by 2030.

When it comes to electric buses, a few key players are driving the industry forward. While Tata Motors leads the charge with over 1,400 electric buses, others like Olectra Greentech, JBM Auto, and PML Electro Mobility are not far behind. Companies like ZapGo Ltd are working on ultra-fast charging technologies, such as Carbon-Ion cells, which can charge electric buses rapidly and efficiently. Several Indian companies, including Tata Motors, Ashok Leyland, and EKA Mobility, are actively involved in developing electric buses and related infrastructure. Electric buses are making a difference in cities across India. Not only are they contributing to reduced emissions, but they're also revolutionizing public transport systems. Looking forward, the electric bus market in India is set to grow exponentially. Experts predict that by 2032, the electric bus sector could reach a market size of over \$1.7 billion.

Electric buses offer a cleaner, quieter, and more cost-effective alternative to diesel buses. They reduce carbon emissions, lower fuel and maintenance costs, and contribute to a healthier urban environment. The rise of electric buses in India is just the beginning of a greener, more sustainable future for public transport. With major players like Tata Motors leading the charge, and exciting government initiatives making the switch to electric more feasible, we're on the brink of a major shift in how we travel.

As air pollution continues to grow as an issue, cities in India are turning towards electric buses to reduce carbon emissions and improve the quality of air. From the crowded streets of Delhi to Bangalore's tech hubs, electric buses in India are slowly and steadily becoming a regular feature. Why? Because electric buses promise a reduction of carbon footprint and cleaner air for the citizens in the growing metropolitan areas. However, metropolitan areas are still registering a rise in air pollution. Continued innovation in electric bus technology, including ultra-fast charging and advanced battery systems, will be crucial for the growth of the electric bus market.

India's electric bus revolution is a significant step towards sustainable transportation. With government initiatives, technological advancements, and growing demand for cleaner transportation options, electric buses are poised to transform the public transportation sector. As India continues to invest in electric bus infrastructure and technology, it is likely to become a leader in the global electric vehicle market.

Whither Indian bureaucracy: Problems to tackle

By: Diganta Barooah

(Contd. from yesterday)

Erosion of trust –

Corruption, bureaucratic apathy during disasters, and undue political influence over decision-making further erode trust. There are also concerns about favouritism and cronyism. **Bureaucratic culture of hierarchy & seniority –**

They can stifle innovation and discourage younger civil servants from taking risks.

Structural Reforms and the Way Forward:

Lateral Entry:

While it is touted as a solution, it risks creating new hierarchies without addressing core problems of accountability, elitism, and internal culture.

Ethical Recalibration:

India lacks a shared code of administrative ethics grounded in public accountability and democratic sensitivity. Existing conduct rules are often reactive and prohibitive, lacking a forward looking ethical framework.

The Caste Issue:

Developing this ethical culture also means acknowledging caste not just as a social reality but as a decisive factor in bureaucratic conduct. Avoiding caste discourse under the guise of neutrality only reinforces existing hierarchies. * Operationalising ethics involves clearly defined, context sensitive norms. From how a citizen is treated in a government office to how public grievances are addressed, administrative behaviour should reflect democratic values – not imperial hangovers.

Approach of the Modi Government for Bureaucratic Reforms:

Curbing Politicization:

Measures to limit politically motivated transfers and enhance accountability were introduced.

Lateral Entry Initiative:

From 2018 to 2023, 57 lateral entrants, including private sector experts, joined senior bureaucratic roles. By 2023, only 33% of Joint Secretaries at the Centre were from the IAS, compared to near-total dominance a decade ago.

Challenges to Lateral Entry:

Resistance from retired civil servants and political opposition over concerns about morale, promotion incentives, and lack of reservation for marginalised groups. Political pressure led to a temporary halt in the lateral entry initiative.

Obstacles to Bureaucratic Reforms in India:

Resistance from Within:

Institutionalised seniority-based progression and generalist roles hinder reform efforts. Proposals for lateral entry and performance-based promotions face pushback.

Political Interference:

Legislative measures like the Civil Services Standards, Performance, and

Accountability Bill (2010) have been stalled. Supreme Court directives, such as establishing civil services boards in 2013, have seen limited enforcement.

Capunism: Better Model of Bureaucratic Governance:

Capunism is a bureaucratic system that merges the best aspects of market forces and public service. It offers a framework where market forces and bureaucratic structures work together for mutual benefit. Singapore stands as a stellar example of this system, demonstrating how a well-designed bureaucratic structure can lead to remarkable socio-economic development and public service efficiency. Singapore is a British colony that bears much resemblance to the Indian and British administrative system. But in 1995, the Singapore government launched the Public Service for 21st Century initiative (PS21), which focuses on institutional ethos such as innovation, quality, customer service and staff well-being. Singapore's government recognizes the importance of decentralization and the distribution of decision-making powers. Each department operates with clear missions and objectives, and teams have specific, measurable targets. Decentralization empowers subordinates to complete complex tasks effectively, fostering a culture of accountability and innovation, while rewarding high performers. To attract and retain the best talent, Singapore invests heavily in education and offers competitive compensation for public servants. Bureaucrats' salaries are aligned with private sector standards. This ensures that decisions are made based on expertise and the public good rather than personal gain. This technocratic approach ensures that merit-based appointments and promotions are given. Only competent and hardworking individuals are rewarded, thus reducing corruption and inefficiency. India can learn from Singapore's example, by embracing meritocracy, decentralization, investment in talent, continuous improvement and anti-corruption measures. This approach can transform India's bureaucratic system into an engine of innovation and efficiency, making it more accountable, transparent and responsive to citizens' needs. This will prevent the pitfalls of rigid bureaucracy as seen in India's case. Rather than the system itself picking the winning and loser, the role of the system will become that of a facilitator, which will create a level playing field for all participants. The winners and losers are decided by performance, not by allegiance to authority. More importantly, the state of a country's economy will always be a reflection of what its system promotes. The American system promotes innovation (innovative economy); the Chinese promotes scale (export-oriented

economy); while the Indian system promotes inefficiency and sycophancy. Despite missions like Mission Karmayogi and Digital India, many bureaucrats resist change due to: * Job security through permanency * Aversion to transparency * Lack of training in tech or modern governance models This represents a cultural lag, where institutional culture fails to adapt to modern technological and participatory needs, a key concept in Ogburn's theory of social change.

Impact on Development and Democracy:

An inefficient bureaucracy undermines both development administration and democratic governance: * Welfare schemes are delayed or misimplemented * Citizen grievances remain unresolved * Social justice goals are compromised As India's demographic dividend grows, a sluggish bureaucracy becomes a major structural bottleneck in achieving inclusive development and good governance.

Conclusion:

One of the significant challenges that the Indian bureaucracy faces is the issue of political interference. Politicians often use their power to influence the decision-making process of the bureaucracy, leading to the implementation of policies that may not be in the best interest of the public. This interference can also affect the independence of the bureaucracy, compromising its ability to act objectively. Another issue that the Indian bureaucracy faces is the lack of diversity in its composition. The bureaucracy is still dominated by upper-caste individuals, with lower-caste and minority groups being underrepresented. This lack of diversity can lead to a bias in decision-making and can affect the implementation of policies that are intended to benefit marginalized communities. To truly democratize governance, reforms must be structural, cultural and ethical. Celebrating individual success in clearing exams while ignoring institutional decay only perpetuates illusions of meritocracy. What India needs is not just efficient administrators but ethical public servants – who see their power not as entitlement but as responsibility. Unless we redirect the narrative from valorisation to accountability, India's steel frame risks becoming a rusted relic of unfulfilled democratic promise.

The "ghosts" haunting India's bureaucracy aren't just inefficiencies—they are deep sociological relics of colonialism, elitism, and institutional decay. Understanding them requires more than administrative reforms; it demands a sociological lens that examines structures, cultures, and power dynamics. Only then can India hope to build a bureaucracy that is truly transparent, accountable, and citizen-centric.



Before the firewall, after the wall: Looking back at 1989

By: Prabir Kumar Talukdar

I was 33 years old when I joined the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Delhi as a master's student. The average age in my class was around 24. Therefore, there would be a natural curiosity among my batchmates to know my age and the year I was born. I never revealed my birth year. But there was no reluctance in me telling them my age, nor in their accepting me into their circle. These students came from varied backgrounds, from chemistry to physics, from computer engineering to life sciences. As they got used to the course syllabus, an area-specific study of International Relations, they arrived at a very critical year: 1989, the year I was born. Since then, the reaction was always more than polite interest. It carried a strange weight for me to explain and for them to understand the meaning of the period. In a field shaped by political fault lines, revolutions, and ideological moves, 1989 was a tectonic shift. The world, in many ways, was reborn that year. Every time there would be a mention of this particular year by the Professors, glances would be passed. A child born in 2002 feels both uneasy and amazed to be with someone from that era. But here's the thing I've been thinking about lately: how long will that memory last? Not the textbook version of 1989, but the emotional, lived memory of it as a universal watershed year. I believe it will remain significant for exactly one more milestone: its hundredth

year. By 2089, when the century rolls around, the world will turn around to take one last meaningful look. After that, I believe there would be a dynamic shift, and not just 1989, but the whole 20th century will likely slip into the background of public consciousness. Its urgency, its symbolism, its power—all will begin to fade. This isn't about nostalgia. It's about how time works on memory. I believe history tends to give its most serious attention at the 100-year mark. Think about it for a moment. The First World War's centenary in 2014 brought back a moment of global reflection. 2039 will do the same for World War II. These anniversaries aren't just calendar events; they're moments where cultures attempt closure. They teach. They mourn. They remind. And then they start to move on. Because after a certain time, memory changes. No living witnesses remain. No oral history. The relevance begins to flatten into commemoration. The other key component is how humanity made a big leap in not only technology but also overall growth as we progressed from the 1980s to the 1990s and finally to the Y2K crisis. That's why I believe 2089 will be the last moment when 1989 feels alive in public conversation. Not just because of the numbers lining up, but because the world that remembers 1989—those who protested, those who ruled, those who sang, wrote, photographed, and were shaped by that year—will largely be gone. I will be gone. What will remain is context, not connection. And yet, for one last time, the world will

look back at the whole century that was defined by the events that marked 1989.

The case for 1989 being a turning point isn't a stretch, but it's the closest thing we have to a universally acknowledged shift in the late 20th century. The Berlin Wall fell, and with it, a Cold War symbol cracked open in real time. East and West Germany would soon reunite. Across Eastern Europe, communist regimes unravelled with a speed no one had thought before. In Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania, governments that had ruled for decades crumbled in months. A great example is Nicolae Ceausescu, the Romanian dictator, who bore witness to his entire empire crumbling down in front of his eyes on a single day. The next day, 25th December, he was assassinated by the very guards who once swore to protect him.

Take China. Students filled Tiananmen Square with banners and poems and an impossible hope, bringing democracy and freedom of the press and speech. What followed was state violence on an unimaginable scale. Yet the world took note of it. And so did China's leaders, who would choose, after that moment, to keep the political iron-grip tight while letting the economy accelerate. No one could deny that the hybrid model of authoritarian capitalism took wings in the shadow of Tiananmen. Outside of the usual Cold War zones, the changes were no less significant. The Soviets left Afghanistan. Civil war tightened its grip on Sri Lanka. The Kash-

mir insurgency picked up. In South Korea, democratic consolidation was underway.

In India, 1989 marked a major political shift. The Congress party lost its dominance in the general elections, and the rise of coalition parties began to reshape India's political landscape. The Mandal Commission's implementation was about to drop in. Ayodhya politics were heating up. Identity, caste, and communal lines were being redrawn, not with borders, but with ballots, street protests, and violence. And then there's Assam, grappling with its own set of problems. The state had been a ticking time bomb for over a decade, its fuse lit by the unrest of the Assam Movement, protesting illegal immigration and demanding protection for Assamese identity. Though the Assam Accord was signed in 1985, by 1989, the promises had been diluted. Tensions simmered. Insurgent groups, most notably ULFA, started gaining strength. One of the most tragic flashpoints that year was the Gohpur Massacre, where 535 people were killed in a brutal episode of ethnic violence. The scale of savagery was such that the state suffered immediate political implications. The Election Commission cancelled voting across Assam for the 1989 general elections, citing security reasons. While India held its breath and watched the fall of one-party dominance, Assam was denied even the basic act of casting a vote.

So while the world watched walls fall in Europe, young men in Assam were picking up arms,

driven by a different kind of fire to save one's culture, linguistic, and political dynamics. It was a reminder that the idea of "transition" wasn't always peaceful and the same everywhere, and that for some parts of the world, 1989 was less about liberation and more about deepening unrest.

It wasn't just borders and ideologies that shifted in 1989. The culture changed, too. If the political world was falling apart and rearranging itself, the cultural world was capturing that uncertainty, bottling it into music, film, and literature. The year saw many incredible stars take their final breath. Start with music. Freddie Mercury, the iconic frontman of Queen, recorded his final song as his health deteriorated due to AIDS. The band released *The Miracle*, an album marked by unity, reflection, and a kind of quiet farewell. Mercury would not publicly recognise his sickness until just before he died in 1991, but by 1989, his public appearances had become rare. It felt as if a generation's defining voice was gradually dissolving into quietness. And it wasn't just him. The AIDS crisis was altering the music industry as a whole, forcing people to confront stigma, loss, and action.

One of India's most prominent cultural voices was silenced on the first day of the year. Safdar Hashmi, a writer, activist, and co-founder of Jana Natya Manch, was viciously attacked while performing a street play in Ghaziabad. He died the following day. His death not just stunned the nation, but it also sparked a movement. Hashmi saw theatre as a

political intervention rather than a mere performance. His murder provided an impetus for artists, intellectuals, and workers alike to bind together into a cohesive force. Even today, his name remains at the crossroads of art and resistance, reminding us that freedom of expression in India has always been both powerful and equally fragile.

In Japan, the death of Emperor Hirohito marked the end of an era in a very literal sense. He had ruled for over 60 years and oversaw Japan's militaristic expansion, rapidly consuming parts of Asia and its devastating defeat at the end of World War II. Though postwar Japan had recast him as a symbolic figurehead, his presence remained a living link to the trauma. His death in January 1989 ended the Shōwa era and ushered in the Heisei period. 1989 also saw the passing of two other global icons: Samuel Beckett and Salvador Dalí. Both men had shaped postwar modernism in radically different ways. Their deaths marked the slow retreat of a cultural generation that had emerged from war and depression, and had now given way to a digitized, fragmented, and globalized culture. Meanwhile, in a quiet lab at CERN, Tim Berners-Lee proposed the World Wide Web. Not a flashy product launch. Just a technical document: a successful communication between the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) and a server with the help of the Internet. From then on, things didn't change in bits and pieces; the internet revolutionised mankind.

All these events are not just

scattered history. It's a shared threshold. That's what makes 1989 different from most other years. A common link, a certain thread, could be found linking them all. 1989 shows how humanity prepared to move itself into a new century by shedding its old skin. But here's the hard truth about time: its meaning and value erode gradually. Slowly, memory detaches from emotion. That's why I believe 2089 will be the final year when 1989 will be remembered with a feeling, and not simply because it's a historical checkpoint. The people who tore down walls, who protested in the square, who performed in the streets and faced tanks, or who simply held on as the world changed around them, will no longer be able to bear testimony. Only their memory will be passed down, not felt directly. Where there is no digital space, oral memory will stand guard as long as it can. Think of 2045, when the world will likely look back at the end of World War II with one final global pause. After that, the emotional charge will taper off. The same will happen with 1989. It will get its centennial. And then, like all things, it will settle into silence. This is how remembrance works. We honour, we reflect, and then we move on.

But I was born in 1989. I don't take that lightly. To me, this isn't just the year I arrived, but it's the year the world rearranged itself. And if 2089 is the last time we truly look back at it, I hope we can do so with the full weight of what was won, what was lost, and what still lingers.

Dr Deepika Pant's creative and academic niche in Kumaun

By: Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee

Dr Deepika Pant got the prestigious Prof. YPS Pangtey Research Award in 2023. She was happy but not super excited. She knows the value of serenity. Awards inspire anyone. But awards cannot make her arrogant, it inspires her to be humble and more cultivated. She knows any recognition in academic or creative achievement is a stepping stone for a long journey to be undertaken and she will not rest till the goal is reached reminding us of the final lines of Robert Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening": "The woods are lovely, dark, and deep, / But I have promises to keep, / And miles to go before I sleep, / And miles to go before I sleep." When I invited her long ago during the Covid days for delivering a lecture in my PG English Dept, she mesmerized the students and teachers who attended the session of that International Lecture Series. She was a wonderful human being as all good teachers are expected to be. I know about her wonderful research on Canadian fiction. She did it from heart. She loves to deal with psychology and once even planned to compose a volume of poetry on the strange nature of female mind.

Dr. Deepika studied human psychology, in varying proportions, has always been an inherent part of literature across the world. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that psychoanalysis has been widely used in the study of literature throughout the ages. It is the high compatibility and the ability that it provides to understand the text with more clarity brings it together with literature. It is pertinent to note that literature depicts the human psyche and its conflicts whereas psychoanalysis examines it. It can be said that the analysis of literature from a psychoanalytical perspective broadens one's understanding about the complexities of the human mind. Keeping in view all such points and the limitation imposed by the diminutive framework of short stories Horneyan theory aptly assists in understanding the characters in this genre in a better way. Dr Deepika attempts to understand psychologically complex characters presented in the story Dimension written by Alice Munro. Third wave psychoanalytical theory given by Karen Horney, has been used as a tool for the required purpose. Dr. Deepika can switch easily from fiction to poetry and she can fast write her reflection. This is a great feat for a teacher. Her students are surely lucky ones to get her as a teacher in Kumaun University.

"Be grateful for what you have, stay grounded, and let your curiosity guide you—not just for personal gain, but to contribute meaningfully to the world around you" says Dr. Deepika Pant who is at present one of the most successful academicians in Kumaun University for her academic research and creative pursuits. Dr. Deepika has been teaching English Literature at Kumaun University, Nainital, for the past 11 years. She is a woman of quiet strength, resilience, and deep intellectual curiosity. An academic, writer, poet, and researcher, she is deeply rooted in both the literary world and the cultural ethos of the Himalayas. She earned her Ph.D. in 2017, focusing on the short stories of Canadian author Alice Munro from a psychoanalytical perspective. Even in childhood, Deepika was captivated by stories, poems, and the visual and performing arts. Literature became her first love and the lens through which she understood the world. This enduring passion shaped her academic focus, leading to specializations in the 'short story genre' and psychoanalytical literary criticism. Her commitment to education is evident in her classroom presence, mentorship, and academic contributions. As a faculty member, she is known for blending critical insight with cultural sensitivity, nurturing a generation of thoughtful learners. As a teacher she believes education must shape empathetic, grounded individuals. She reminds her students to respect *Prakriti* (Nature), just as our ancestors did, and to cultivate a harmonious relationship with their surroundings. As a writer and poet she explores the quiet beauty of everyday life, the strength of women, and the spiritual bond between

humans and the natural world. As a researcher she advocates for culturally rooted, ethically sound academic inquiry.

Dr. Deepika is creating her niche as a researcher in the international academic forum. She has presented papers at national and international conferences, published in peer-reviewed journals, and actively engages in curriculum development and interdisciplinary research. Her work often explores the intersections of gender, ecology, folklore, and storytelling traditions from the Central Himalayan region. She is the author of two significant books: *Foundation Course in English Language* Cambridge University Press, 2022 which is a pedagogical resource aimed at developing English language proficiency among undergraduate student and *The Himalayan Saga: Nature, Culture and Literature* Indu Publications, New Delhi, 2024. This work offers a multidisciplinary exploration of the Himalayas, weaving together folklore, ecology, and indigenous knowledge systems through a literary lens.

Her life story is one of determination and balance—between early responsibilities and higher aspirations, between personal commitments and public contributions. After completing her secondary and higher secondary education while living with them, Deepika got married at the young age of 19. At 21, she became a mother. Yet, her thirst for knowledge remained undiminished. She pursued her graduation, and Masters in English Literature, and remarkably, qualified the UGC-NET in her very first attempt while simultaneously completing her postgraduation.

She is not a professed feminist. But she is an inspiring icon for her students and in fact all women who are struggling for academic recognition from a difficult background. She showed how a woman can gain self independence. As a woman, Deepika encourages others to embrace their strength and never give up on education—no matter when or where life begins anew. Being a researcher on Psychological aspect in literature she delves deeper into the female psychology and tries to focus on the power of female energy and resilience.

Deepika is a creative soul with deep love for the arts. Her hobbies include painting, dancing and reading. She is often inspired by the Himalayan landscape. She loves classical and folk forms in dancing. She loves flower and this is reflected in her hobby of Gardening. Reading which is a – a meditative and grounding practice for her makes her engrossed in – literature, philosophy, and ecological thought. Her favourite Writers and Poets include Hermann Hesse – for his spiritual and philosophical depth W. B. Yeats – for his lyrical mysticism T. S. Eliot – for his intellectual rigor and poetic innovation.

Asked about her Family and Support System she informs that her journey has been shaped by the love and guidance of some remarkable individuals. Born in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, Deepika's early years were marked by movement and change. Her upbringing was shaped by the values of adaptability, self-discipline, and learning. She later moved to live with her maternal aunt and uncle, Mrs. Sheela Pant and Mr. Muktesh Pant who have always stood by her side. Now settled in Canada, they remain unwavering sources of strength and motivation. Provided her with a nurturing environment that allowed her to dream beyond boundaries. Their encouragement during her school years laid the foundation for her academic pursuits. Her mother, Mrs. Lata Pant, is her eternal source of strength, a symbol of grace and resilience. Widowed at a young age, she brought up her children with unwavering courage, becoming a living embodiment of perseverance and hope. It is from these strong pillars of her life that Deepika draws her inspiration. Together, these figures have shaped the woman, scholar, and human being she has become, one who believes in empathy, knowledge, gratitude, and purpose. (*International Tagore Awarded Multilingual poet and writer Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee a former Faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University USA is a literary critic. Email prafatanbhattacharjee@gmail.com*)



Udayaditya Bharali: The progressive flame of Assam's intellectual conscience

By: Dipak Kurmi

Professor Udayaditya Bharali, one of Assam's most luminous minds and steadfast voices of reason, passed away on July 6, 2025, bringing to a close an era in the state's socio-intellectual history. His death, following a long and courageous battle with multiple health afflictions that began with cancer surgery five years ago, leaves behind an irreplaceable void. More than just a historian or an academic, Bharali was the rare embodiment of an extraordinary teacher, a prolific writer, a political thinker, a humanist, and a radical social democrat. He stood as a towering public intellectual, deeply rooted in the ethos of equity, justice, and unwavering moral clarity.

Born on September 1, 1947, in Moran—a part of the undivided Sibsagar district—Bharali's formative years were shaped by movement. As the son of Umakanta Bharali, a police officer posted across Assam, young Udayaditya attended schools in Mazbat, Mangaldai, Udalguri, Dhekiajuli, Gohpur, Sivasagar, Guwahati, Baroma, and Nalbari, finally completing his matriculation from Barpeta Vidyaapeeth in 1962. This itinerant schooling exposed him to Assam's richly diverse social fabric, allowing him to engage with communities across linguistic, ethnic, and cultural lines. It was here, amid the mosaic of people and ideas, that he absorbed the liberal, inclusive worldview that would come to define his life's work.

Bharali graduated from Cotton College in 1966 and topped the MA in History from Gauhati University in 1967, earning the prestigious university gold medal. The following year, on November 14, 1968, he returned to Cotton College as a lecturer in the History Department. Over the next four decades, Bharali emerged as a towering figure in Assam's intellectual community, serving not only as a beloved teacher but as an institution builder, culminating in his appointment as Principal of Cotton College in 2003, a post he held until his retirement in 2006.

As a pedagogue, Bharali was unconventional yet magnetic. He addressed his students with the informal 'toi' instead of the formal 'tumi,' signaling camaraderie and openness. He taught history not as a rigid timeline of facts, but as a vibrant and contested arena of ideas, drawing parallels from daily life and social experiences to unravel complex concepts. His classroom was a democratic space—one of dissent, discussion, and discovery. His influence extended beyond his discipline. Students from various streams—sciences, humanities, and commerce—attended his lectures, drawn by his charisma and the rare clarity of thought that only a few teachers ever truly command. His bond with students was deep and personal; one of them, Uttam Barhakur, would later serve as his dora-dhora (best man) during his marriage to Asomi Bharali in 1983.

Bharali's engagement with students wasn't confined to the classroom. In 1991, he spearheaded the formation of the Cotton College Study Circle—a student-led intellectual forum that sparked serious dialogue on contemporary events. Its first discussion was on the Iraq-Kuwait War, followed by guest lectures from leaders like Dr. Jayanta Rongpi and Holiram Terang on autonomy and identity. The forum later birthed the publication *Chatra Barta*, an academic magazine that sustained conversations around social justice and democracy. Under Bharali's guidance, similar study circles began sprouting in other colleges across Assam, reflecting his unwavering commitment to nurturing young, critical minds.

Parallel to his academic life, Bharali was a



committed left intellectual deeply embedded in Assam's radical democratic movements. His politics were shaped by a commitment to inclusive nationalism—one that sought to bridge caste, ethnic, and linguistic divides. His seminal 1981 work *Jati Samashyar* Prosnat questioned narrow ethnonationalist constructs and offered an alternative vision of Assamese identity rooted in progressive values and equal rights. These ideas resonated powerfully with marginalised groups, including the All Bodo Students' Union, Takam Mising Porin Kebang, Autonomous State Demand Committee, All Assam Tea Tribe Students' Association, and All Tai Ahom Students' Association. During the 1980s and '90s, he was a revered presence at tribal conventions and student meetings, his words received with rare attention and respect.

Professor Bharali's reach extended to multiple spheres of Assamese public life. In the realm of literature and journalism, he was a respected columnist for *Sadin*, *Asom Bani*, and *Asomiya Pratidin*. His writings were rigorous, contextual, and laced with the insight of a historian. His short story collection *Beimanor Thikona Handhan*—a powerful literary rendering of moral ambiguity and social decay—earned him the Bishnu Rabha Award from the Assam Sahitya Sabha in 1996. As an editor, he contributed to *The Political History of Assam* (Volume I) under the leadership of H.K. Barpujari. Another landmark contribution was his co-authorship of *Hundred Years' History of Cotton College: 1901–2001*, which remains an invaluable resource for students of institutional history.

His creativity also found expression in sport-themed stories such as *Beimanor Thikona Handhan* and *Hengaror Hipare*, which revolved around football and cricket. But these were not just tales of the game—they were social commentaries layered in allegory. Bharali was also a sports administrator of note. He helped draft the constitution of the Guwahati Sports Association and contributed to organising major events under the Assam Cricket Association. He combined a passion for sports with a commitment to transparency, often highlighting how athletic participation could become a means of social mobility.

Professor Bharali's life was also steeped in activism. A tireless campaigner against human rights violations, he stood at the forefront of civil liberties movements in Assam. He was a vocal critic of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), deeming it a divisive and dangerous project. In rallies and debates, he warned that the Act threatened to fragment Assam's multi-

ethnic society and corrode the inclusive ideals of the Constitution. True to his values, he remained steadfastly aligned with causes that uplifted the marginalised—Dalits, Adivasis, religious minorities, and the working poor. His activism never courted populism; instead, it was grounded in democratic reason, historical awareness, and unyielding empathy.

An exceptional organiser, Bharali had the rare ability to translate vision into action. He played a key role in orchestrating the centenary celebrations of Assamese icons such as Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Bhimbor Deori, Bishnu Prasad Rabha, and Hemanga Biswas. These were not mere commemorations; they were platforms to reignite public dialogue on art, politics, and identity in Assam. Bharali's leadership infused these events with a sense of purpose and intellectual integrity that is often lacking in today's personality-driven spectacles.

Yet beyond his many accolades and public roles, what truly defined Udayaditya Bharali was his enduring belief in progress—through knowledge, solidarity, and justice. He imagined an Assam where every citizen, regardless of caste, creed, or ethnicity, could live in peace, dignity, and harmony. That dream informed every facet of his life: in the way he taught, wrote, organised, protested, and built institutions. He saw education not as a transactional activity, but as a means to liberate human potential. He viewed history not merely as a record of past events, but as a lens to interrogate power and understand social change.

Bharali was not merely a scholar or a teacher. He was a builder of democratic culture—one that valued truth, empathy, dissent, and collective well-being. In the age of performative politics and fleeting digital fads, his life reminds us of the slow, rigorous work needed to shape thoughtful citizens and just societies. His passing has left a cavernous void in Assam's intellectual and moral ecosystem.

Yet in his writings, in his students, in the institutions he nurtured, and in the ideals he stood for, Professor Bharali lives on. As Assam navigates the complex terrains of identity, development, and democracy, it would do well to remember the man who, in both word and deed, dedicated his life to shaping a more thoughtful and just society. In the annals of Assam's intellectual history, the name Udayaditya Bharali will endure—not just as a scholar or teacher, but as a conscience-keeper for generations to come. (*the writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com*)

Russia launches major aerial attack on Kyiv hours before high-level talks on support for Ukraine

The virtual meeting will be led by British Defense Secretary John Healey

KYIV, July 21: Russia unleashed one of its largest aerial assaults on Ukraine in recent months, only hours before the UK and Germany are to chair a meeting to discuss US President Donald Trump's plans for NATO allies to provide Ukraine with weapons.

The attack killed two people and wounded 15, including a 12-year-old, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

The drone and missile assault on Kyiv overnight into Monday underscored the urgency of Ukraine's need for further Western military aid, especially in air defence, a week after Trump said deliveries would arrive in Ukraine within days.

The virtual meeting will be led by British Defense Secretary John Healey and his German counterpart Boris Pistorius. Healey said US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth and NATO leader Mark Rutte, as well as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Gen Alexus Grynkeiwich, will attend the meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group.

Moscow has intensified its long-range attacks on Ukrainian cities, and analysts say the barrages are likely to escalate as Russian drone production expands.

In an shift of tone toward Russia, the US president last week gave Moscow a 50-day deadline to agree to a ceasefire or face tougher sanctions.

At Monday's meeting, British defence chief John Healey was ex-



pected to urge Ukraine's Western partners to launch a coincidental "50-day drive" to get Kyiv the weapons it needs to fight Russia's bigger army and force Russian President Vladimir Putin to the negotiating table, the UK government said in a statement.

Trump's arms plan, announced a week ago, involves European nations sending American weapons to Ukraine via NATO — either from existing stockpiles or buying and donating new ones. The US president indicated discussions were partly focused on advanced Patriot air defence systems and said a week ago that deliveries would begin "within days".

But last week various senior officials suggested no transfers had yet taken place.

NATO's Grynkeiwich told The Associated Press on Thursday that "preparations are underway" for

weapons transfers to Ukraine while US Ambassador to NATO Matthew Whitaker said he couldn't give a time frame.

Germany has said it offered to finance two new Patriot systems for Ukraine and raised the possibility of supplying systems it already owns and having them replaced by the US.

But delivery could take time, Merz suggested because "they have to be transported, they have to be set up; that is not a question of hours, it is a question of days, perhaps weeks".

Other Patriot systems could come thanks to Switzerland, whose defence ministry said Thursday it was informed by the US Defence Department that it will "reprioritise the delivery" of five previously ordered systems to support Ukraine.

While Ukraine waits for Patri-

ots, a senior NATO official said the alliance is still coordinating the delivery of other military aid — such as ammunition and artillery rounds — which includes aid from the US that was briefly paused. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

Zelenskyy said Saturday that his officials have proposed a new round of peace talks this week. Russian state media on Sunday reported that no date has yet been set for the negotiations, but said that Istanbul would likely remain the host city. The Kremlin spokesman said Sunday that Russia is open to peace with Ukraine, but achieving its goals remains a priority.

The overnight Russian barrage of Kyiv began shortly after midnight and continued until around 6 am. Residents of the capital were kept awake by machine gun fire, buzzing drone engines, and multiple loud explosions.

In one Kyiv district, a kindergarten, a supermarket and warehouse facilities caught fire, officials said. It was the first major attack on Kyiv since Trump's special envoy to Ukraine, Keith Kellogg, arrived in the city last Monday. Russia halted strikes on Kyiv during his visit.

Ukraine's air force said Russia launched 426 Shahed and decoy drones overnight Monday, as well as 24 missiles of various types. It said 200 drones were intercepted with 203 more jammed or lost from radars. (AP)

Iran will hold nuclear talks with European nations in Turkey

TEHRAN, July 21: Iran said Monday it would hold renewed talks this week with European nations over the country's nuclear programme, with discussions to be hosted by Turkey.

The talks, to be held in Istanbul on Friday, will be the first since a ceasefire was reached after a 12-day war waged by Israel against Iran in June, which also saw the United States strike nuclear-related facilities in the Islamic Republic. A similar meeting had been held in the Turkish city in May.

The discussions will bring Iranian officials together with officials from Britain, France and Germany — known as the E3 nations — and will include the European Union's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas.

"The topic of the talks is clear, lifting sanctions and issues related to the peaceful nuclear programme of Iran," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said in his weekly briefing. He said the meeting will be held at the deputy ministerial level.

Under a 2015 deal designed to cap Iran's nuclear activities, Iran agreed to tough restrictions on its international programme in exchange for an easing of sanctions.

The deal began to unravel in 2018, when the United States pulled out of it and began to reimpose certain sanctions. European countries have recently threatened to trigger the 2015 deal's "snapback" mechanism, which would allow sanctions to be reimposed in the case of non-compliance by Tehran.

German Foreign Ministry spokesperson Martin Giese, asked who Germany will send to the



talks and what its expectations are, said that "the talks are taking place at expert level".

"Iran must never come into possession of a nuclear weapon," so Germany, France and Britain are "continuing to work... at high pressure on a sustainable and verifiable diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear programme," he said. "This course of action is also coordinated with the US."

"It's very clear that, should no solution be reached by the end of August... snapback remains an option for the E3," Giese told reporters in Berlin.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Sunday the three European nations lack "any legal, political, and moral standing" to invoke such mechanisms, and accused Britain, France and Germany of failing to uphold their commitments in the deal.

"Attempting to trigger snapback" under these circumstances,

in defiance of established facts and prior communications, constitutes an abuse of process that the international community must reject," Araghchi said.

He also criticised the three European nations for "providing political and material support to the recent unprovoked and illegal military aggression of the Israeli regime and the US".

The US bombed three major Iranian nuclear sites in Iran in June as Israel waged an air war with Iran. Nearly 1,100 people were killed in Iran, including many military commanders and nuclear scientists, while 28 were killed in Israel. Araghchi stressed in the letter that his country is ready for diplomatic solutions.

After US President Donald Trump pulled his country out of the 2015 deal, Iran has gradually increased its nuclear activities, including enriching uranium up to 60%, a step away from weapons-grade nuclear materials, or 90% enrichment of uranium. (AP)

Ishiba's coalition loses majority in Japan's upper house election

TOKYO, July 21: Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's ruling coalition failed Monday to secure a majority in the 248-seat upper house in a crucial parliamentary election, further shaking the stability of his government as Japan faces challenges such as rising prices and high US tariffs.

Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner Komeito, which needed to win 50 seats on top of the 75 seats they already have to retain their majority, won 47 seats. It was three seats short of a majority and a retreat of 19 seats from before the vote.

The loss is another blow to Ishiba's coalition, making it a minority in both houses following its October defeat in the lower house election, and worsening Japan's political instability. It was the first time the LDP has lost a majority in both houses of parliament since the party's formation in 1955.

Despite the loss, Ishiba expressed determination to stay on and not create a political vacuum to tackle challenges such as U.S. tariff threats, but he could face calls from within his party to step down or find another coalition partner. "I will fulfil my responsibility as head of the No. 1 party and work for the country," he said.

Ishiba hoped for a simple majority but came up short' Ishiba had set the bar low, wanting a simple majority of 125 seats, which means his LDP and its Buddhist-backed junior coalition partner Komeito needed to win 50 seats. Exit poll results released seconds after the ballots closed Sunday night mostly showed a major setback for Ishiba's coalition. The LDP alone won 39 seats, better than most exit poll projections of 32, and still the No. 1 party in the parliament, known as the Diet. But Ishiba said the coalition's poor showing was because his government's measures to combat price increases had yet to reach many people.

"It's a tough situation. I take it humbly and sincerely," Ishiba told a live interview with NHK. The poor performance in the election will not immediately trigger a change of government because the upper house lacks the power to file a no-confidence motion against a leader, but it will certainly deepen uncertainty over his fate and Japan's political stability. Ishiba could face calls from within the LDP party to step down or find another coalition partner.

Economic worries frustrate voters Soaring prices, lagging incomes and burdensome social security payments are the top issues for frustrated, cash-strapped voters. Stricter measures targeting foreign residents and visitors also emerged as a key issue, with a surging right-wing populist party leading the campaign.

Sunday's vote comes after Ishiba's coalition lost a majority in the October lower house election, stung by past corruption scandals, and his unpopular government has since been forced into making concessions to the opposition to get legislation through parliament. It has been unable to quickly deliver effective measures to mitigate rising prices, including Japan's traditional staple of rice, and dwindling wages. (AP)

High-level talks to be held on support for Ukraine after Trump said Europe will pay for weapons

LONDON, July 21: The UK and Germany are chairing a meeting Monday to discuss President Donald Trump's plans for NATO allies to provide Ukraine with weapons, a week after the US president said deliveries would arrive in Ukraine within days.

The virtual meeting will be led by British Defence Secretary John Healey and his German counterpart Boris Pistorius. Healey said US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth and NATO leader Mark Rutte, as well as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Gen Alexus Grynkeiwich, will attend the meeting of Ukraine Defence Contact Group. The talks come after Russia pounded Ukraine with some 300 drone strikes Saturday, Ukrainian officials said. Moscow continues to intensify its long-range attacks on Ukrainian cities, and analysts say the barrages are likely to escalate.

In an shift of tone toward Russia, the U.S. president last week gave Moscow a 50-day deadline to agree to a ceasefire or face tougher sanctions.

Trump's arms plan, announced a week ago, involves European nations sending American weapons to Ukraine via NATO — either from existing stockpiles or buying and donating new ones. The U.S. president indicated discussions were partly focused on advanced Patriot air defence systems and said a week ago that deliveries would begin "within days". But last week various senior officials suggested no transfers had yet taken place.

NATO's Grynkeiwich told The Associated Press on Thursday that "preparations are underway" for weapons transfers to Ukraine while US Ambassador to NATO Matthew Whitaker said he couldn't give a time frame.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Thursday that Germany will finance two new Patriot systems for Ukraine and raised the possibility of supplying systems it already owns and having them replaced by the US.

But delivery could take time, Merz suggested because "they have to be transported, they have to be set up; that is not a question of hours, it is a question of days, perhaps weeks."

Other Patriot systems could come thanks to Switzerland, whose defence ministry said Thursday it was informed by the US Defence Department that it will "reprioritise the delivery" of five previously ordered systems to support Ukraine.

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German Foreign Ministry spokesperson Martin Giese, asked who Germany will send to the

talks and what its expectations are, said that "the talks are taking place at expert level".

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in defiance of established facts and prior communications, constitutes an abuse of process that the international community must reject," Araghchi said.

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After US President Donald Trump pulled his country out of the 2015 deal, Iran has gradually increased its nuclear activities, including enriching uranium up to 60%, a step away from weapons-grade nuclear materials, or 90% enrichment of uranium. (AP)

Japan's Ishiba says he'll stay in office to tackle inflation

TOKYO, July 21: Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said Monday he will stay in office to tackle challenges such as rising prices and high US tariffs after a weekend election defeat left his coalition with a minority in both parliamentary chambers and triggered calls for his resignation.

Ishiba's ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner Komeito were short three seats to maintain a majority in the 248-seat upper house in Sunday's vote. Though the LDP is still the leading party, its ruling coalition is now a minority in both houses of the Diet, or parliament, which makes it difficult for the coalition to pass any legislation.

The loss of a majority in Sunday's election does not immediately lead to a change of government because the upper house lacks power to file a no-confidence motion against a leader. With opposition too fractured to form a united front powerful enough to topple the ruling coalition, Ishiba is under more pressure to step down from ultraconservative rivals in his own party. Ishiba said he takes the result seriously but that his priority is to avoid creating a political vacuum and to tackle impending challenges, including the Aug 1 deadline for a tariff deal with the US.

"While I painfully feel my serious responsibility over the election results, I believe I must also fulfil my responsibility I bear for the country and the people so as not to cause politics to stall or go adrift," Ishiba said. "Challenges such as global situation and natural disaster won't wait for a better political situation."

His chief tariff negotiator, Economic Minister Ryosei Akazawa, is heading to Washington for his eighth round of talks. The prime minister hopes to reach a mutually beneficial deal and meet with US President Donald Trump "as soon as possible," he said. Sunday's vote comes after Ishiba's coalition lost a majority in the October lower house election, stung by past corruption scandals, and his unpopular government has since been forced into making concessions to the opposition to get legislation through parliament. It has been unable to quickly deliver effective measures to mitigate rising prices, including Japan's traditional staple of rice, and dwindling wages.

Trump has added to the pressure, complaining about a lack of progress in trade negotiations and the lack of sales of US autos and American-grown rice to Japan despite a shortfall in domestic stocks of the grain. A 25% tariff due to take effect Aug 1 has been another blow for Ishiba.

At a news conference Monday, Ishiba said his LDP and the Komeito have agreed to stick with their coalition while seeking further cooperation from opposition parties.

Ishiba resisted calls for his resignation and did not say how much longer he planned to stay on. He is sticking around for the country and the people, not for self-interest, "to put the pressing issues on a path to a solution," he said. Voters frustrated with price increases exceeding the pace of wage hikes, especially younger people who have long felt ignored by the ruling government's focus on senior voters, rapidly turned to emerging conservative and right-wing populist parties. Established liberal to centrist parties, including the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, gained little ground.

The Democratic Party for the People quadrupled its seats by campaigning for higher take-home pay. The right-wing Sanseito, running on a "Japanese First" platform that puts tougher regulations on foreigners and brakes on gender and sexual diversity, surged to number three in the opposition.

The LDP has lost support due to the people's discontent over the party's measures for rising prices, foreign residents and other reasons and that he will "quickly analyse the results and learn the lesson," Ishiba said.

None of the opposition parties said they want to form a full-fledged alliance with the governing coalition but are open to co-operating on policy. (AP)

Bees have some ways to cope with warming Earth, but researchers fear for their future

WILLIAMSPORT (US), July 21: Sweat covers Isaac Barnes' face under his beekeeper's veil as he hauls boxes of honeycomb from his hives in his truck. It's a workout in what feels like a sauna as the late-morning June temperatures rise.

Though Barnes was hot, his bees were even hotter. Their body temperatures can be up to 27 degrees Fahrenheit (about 15 Celsius) higher than the air around them. As global temperatures rise under climate change, scientists are trying to better understand the effects on managed and wild bees as they pollinate crops, gather nectar, make honey and reproduce.

They noticed flying bees gathering nectar avoided overheating on the hottest days by using fewer but harder wingbeats to keep their body temperature below dangerous levels, according to a study published last year. Scientists also say that bees — like people — may also cope by retreating to a cooler environment such as the shade or their nest.

"Just like we go into the shade, or we sweat or we might work less hard, bees actually do the exact same thing so they can avoid the heat," said Jon Harrison, an environmental physiologist at Arizona State University and one of the study's authors.

But that means the bees aren't able to do what they normally do, said Kevin McCluney, a biology professor at Bowling Green State University.

"They're not going out and getting more nectar. They're not mating. They're not doing the things that bees would otherwise do," McCluney said.

Heat is just one challenge for critical pollinator

Generally, most bees are heat-tolerant, but as the climate warms, some experts think their ability to fend off disease and gather food might become harder. And habitat loss, increased use of pesticides, diseases and lack of forage for both managed and wild bees are all listed as potential contributors to the global decline of bees and

other pollinators.

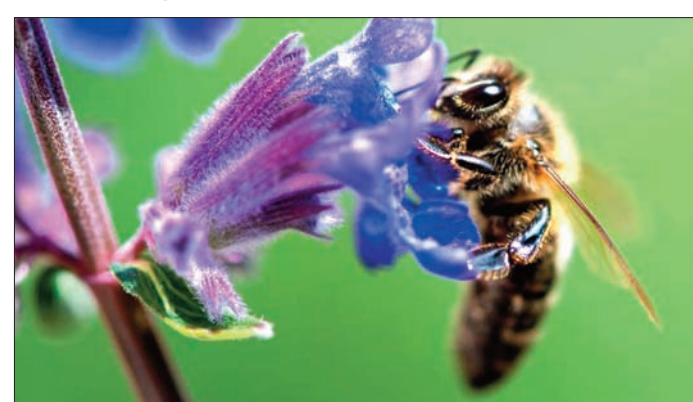
"If you're not well-fed, and your body is intoxicated with pesticides and you have lots of diseases in your body, you're going to be less heat-tolerant than if you were healthy," said Margarita López-Urbie, a pollinator health expert at Pennsylvania State University.

Earlier this year, preliminary results from the annual US Beekeeping Survey found that beekeepers lost almost 56% of their managed colonies, the highest loss since the survey started in 2010.

Almost all of the managed honeybee colonies in the US are used to pollinate agricultural crops such as almonds, apples, cherries and blueberries. Fewer pollinators can lead to less pollination and potentially lower yields.

"It's a very fragile system if you think about it," López-Urbie said. "Because if something goes wrong, you have these super high-value crops that won't get enough bees for pollination."

Losing hives at Honeyrun Farms Back at Barnes' hives in Ohio,



thousands of honeybees fly around as he gathers boxes to take back to his farm for honey production. Nearby, a couple of his bees land on milkweed flowers, a rare bit of plant diversity in an area dominated by corn and soybean fields.

For Barnes, who operates Honeyrun Farm with his wife, Jayne, one of the challenges heat can pose to his 500 honeybee hives is fending off parasitic mites that threaten the bees. If temperatures get too hot, he can't apply formic acid, an

organic chemical that kills the mites. If it's applied when it's too hot, the bees could die.

Last year they lost almost a third of the 400 hives they sent to California to help pollinate commercial almond groves. Barnes thinks those hives may have been in poor health ahead of pollination because they were unable to ward off mites when it was hot months earlier.

"Dead hives aren't pollinating the almonds," he said. "It's a real ripple effect that stems back from

the heat in the summertime."

Sometimes the heat helps. Here in Ohio, Barnes' hives last summer produced a bumper crop of honey as they feasted on nearby soybean nectar as the plants bloomed in the heat. Still, the lack of diverse plants for bees to forage in an area dominated by corn and soybean fields isn't ideal.

And even the native blooms are appearing erratically, Barnes said. In autumn, his bees search for food on goldenrod, but those blooms are appearing later. And even then, he has supplemented his hive with additional food to keep them healthy into the winter.

"Every single plant that blooms is something that the bee can use," Barnes said. "And every single plant is affected by climate change."

Research that may aid bees is in peril

It's only in the last decade that people have become aware of the magnitude of the pollinator decline globally, said Harrison, of Arizona State University. Data is limited on

how much climate change and heat stress is contributing to pollinator decline.

"It's a relatively new focus for biology," he said. "I think it's super important, but it's not being studied a ton."

The Trump administration's proposed budget would eliminate the research program that funds the USGS Bee Lab, which supports the inventory, monitoring and natural history of the nation's wild bees. Other grants for bee research are also in jeopardy.

US Sen Jeff Merkley of Oregon said America's pollinators are in "grave danger," and he'll fight for the federal funding. Pollinators contribute to the health of the planet, the crops we grow and the food we eat, he said.

"Rather than taking bold action to protect them, the Trump administration has proposed a reckless budget that would zero out funding for critical research aimed at saving important pollinators," he said in a statement to The Associated Press. (AP)

Significant progress made under CM road development plan in Arunachal: Khandu

State-driven road push boosts rural connectivity beyond national planning radar, says CM



ITANAGAR, July 21: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday announced significant progress under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive State Road Development Plan, a people-centric initiative aimed at bridging infrastructure gaps in the state's most neglected and remote regions.

Khandu said the roadmap for infrastructure development in Arunachal must not be dictated solely by national priorities, but rather by the everyday needs of

people residing in its scattered hamlets and difficult terrains.

"To ensure inclusive development, it is imperative that highways and roads are built not just where national priorities align, but where our people live, work, and serve," he said in a social media post.

The chief minister said the ambitious state-driven initiative has already seen Rs 965.99 crore sanctioned, resulting in the completion of over 393.57 km of road length in challenging areas, many of

which fall outside the conventional national planning radar.

"This is a reflection of our improved financial health and our determination to ensure no village is left behind," Khandu said, adding that the government will continue to invest in connectivity to uplift lives and empower communities.

During the day, the chief minister convened a meeting with Director General of Border Roads Organisation Lt Gen Raghu Srinivasan, at his office, to review progress on vital infrastructure

projects being implemented by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

The meeting was also attended by senior officials from BRO Projects Arunank, Brahman, and Udayak.

Taking to social media, Khandu wrote, "Sat down with Lt Gen Raghu Srinivasan, Director General of Border Roads, along with senior officers from Projects Arunank, Brahman, and Udayak. We discussed how to further strengthen road infrastructure across Arunachal, with a special focus on our remote and border regions."

The discussions revolved around scaling up last-mile connectivity in the border areas, which not only strengthens national security but also uplifts rural economies and improves local livelihoods.

He lauded the BRO for its commendable efforts in executing projects in some of the most treacherous terrains of the state.

"BRO has been doing outstanding work connecting communities, boosting the local economy, and reinforcing national security in our most difficult areas," Khandu added. (PTI)

APSCPCR lauds govt for approving child support guidelines

ITANAGAR, July 21: The Arunachal Pradesh State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (APSCPCR) on Monday commended the state government, led by Chief Minister Pema Khandu, for approving the model guidelines for support of persons under section 39 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Describing the move as a landmark initiative, the Commission in a statement here, said the guidelines will provide a robust framework to support child survivors of sexual offences throughout the legal process.

It also praised the Women and Child Development department for its commitment and proactive role in drafting and implementing the guidelines, which aim to promote a child-sensitive and justice-driven approach across the state.

APSCPCR Chairperson Ratan Anya termed the approval a "historic and progressive step" towards creating a safer environment for children.

"These guidelines will ensure that child survivors receive the emotional, psychological, and legal support they need to navigate the justice system with dignity and confidence. We are grateful to the chief minister and the women and child development department for their unwavering commitment to safeguarding the rights and well-

being of children," she said.

In a related development, an APSCPCR team led by the Chairperson and member Ngurang Achung visited Roing recently to conduct a detailed inquiry into a recent case of sexual assault of minors of a school.

The visit included interactions with the Child Welfare Committee, District Child Protection Unit, NGOs, parents, and the school's management.

A stakeholder meeting was also held under the chairmanship of Lower Dibang Valley deputy commissioner Fwrrman Brahma, the statement said.

During an inspection of the school premises, the Commission observed gross negligence on the part of the school authorities regarding the safety and security of children.

The APSCPCR Chairperson instructed the Deputy Director of School Education of the district to ensure that all students from the school are enrolled in institutions of their choice without being denied admission, so that no academic year is lost.

The Commission also urged the superintendent of police to take strict legal action against the school authorities under Section 21 of the POCSO Act, 2012, and other relevant legal provisions for failing to report the matter to the police and concealing the crime

when minors had initially raised complaints.

The APSCPCR team met all five victims and their families to counsel them on filing FIRs and informed them about assistance available under the Arunachal Pradesh Victim Compensation Act, 2011.

The Act provides financial support to victims to help mitigate the emotional and financial hardships caused by such crimes.

Based on the inquiry, the Chairperson also recommended the permanent closure of the school for gross negligence in ensuring student safety and for operating without official recognition from the competent authority since 2015.

The Commission appreciated the prompt action taken by the deputy commissioner, who constituted a school safety and security audit board to review safety protocols in all schools across the district.

The audit report is expected within seven days, the Commission said.

At least eight minor girls were subjected to physical abuse in a private school at Roing, by a migrant youth from neighbouring Assam, who was later lynched by a mob on July 11.

The youth used to work at a construction site near the school, police said. (PTI)

Plans finalised for science centres in Namsai and Dirang

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, July 21: In a significant move to enhance science education infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh, a meeting was held on July 21 at the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM), Ministry of Culture, Government of India, in Kolkata to finalise the architectural drawings for proposed Category-II Science Centres and Planetariums in Namsai and Dirang.

According to an official statement, the meeting brought together representatives from the NCSM, Arunachal Pradesh State Council for Science and Technology (APSCST), and the architectural firm Kothari & Associates.

The session began with a welcome address by the Director of NCSM, followed by opening remarks from Er Tage Taki, Chairman of APSCST.

He stressed the strategic importance of Arunachal Pradesh and the limited civil construction season from September to March, highlighting the relevance of the proposed centres in Namsai (Eastern Zone) and Dirang (Western Zone) in addition to the existing centre in Itanagar (Central Zone). Er Taki also urged NCSM to continue supporting efforts to bring these facilities up to national standards.

Arunachal launches institute-to-industry connect programme with Toyota Kirloskar

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, July 21: In a move to strengthen industry-aligned technical education, the Department of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (SDE), Government of Arunachal Pradesh, has launched a five-day "Institute-to-Industry Connect Orientation Program" in collaboration with Toyota Kirloskar Motor Pvt Ltd (TKM), Bengaluru.

The programme commenced on July 21 and will continue till July 25. The information was provided in an official statement issued by the department.

A delegation comprising 15 representatives from various Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) across Arunachal Pradesh is participating in the programme.

The team includes six principals, one group instructor, and eight instructors, all led by Director of SDE, Sibbo Passing.

They were received at the Toyota Technical Training Institute in Bidadi, Bengaluru, by the host company, which has partnered with the state government in this industry-connect initiative.

The orientation programme is designed to provide ITI faculty with hands-on exposure to real-time industrial operations and shopfloor practices.

According to the official statement, the goal is to bridge the gap between academic instruction and the practical requirements of the industrial sector.

Participants will gain an in-depth understanding of workplace culture, industry processes, and technological trends, all of which are expected to significantly contribute

to their teaching methods and curriculum design upon return.

By integrating such experiences into their teaching, faculty members will be able to guide students more effectively, offer relevant career counselling, and promote project-based and skill-driven learning.

The department said that this exposure would also help align instructional techniques with current industry standards and keep educators informed about emerging technologies.

Speaking at the launch event in Bengaluru, Director Sibbo Passing reaffirmed the department's commitment to building a skilled workforce in the state.

He said that the programme underscores the state government's objective of expanding access to industry-integrated training opportunities for the youth of Arunachal Pradesh.

He added that creating a robust interface between technical institutions and industry is key to ensuring that trainees graduate with the practical skills and confidence required to excel in a competitive job market.

The department further noted that the initiative marks a major step in enhancing the capacity of technical educators and in shaping ITIs into institutions that are more responsive to the demands of the modern industrial landscape.

By equipping educators with first-hand industrial knowledge, the government aims to ensure that technical education in Arunachal Pradesh remains innovative, forward-looking, and relevant to future workforce needs.

22 sports associations disaffiliated in Arunachal for non-performance: AOA

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, July 21: The Arunachal Olympic Association (AOA) has disaffiliated 22 sports associations and organisations in the state for non-performance and failure to submit performance reports despite repeated notices, according to an official statement. AOA Secretary General Bamang Tago informed that the decision was taken during the recent Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the association.

He described the move as a significant step towards strengthening sports in the state. "This kind of decision might not have been taken in any other state so far," Tago said.

The list of disaffiliated bodies has been forwarded to the state government and the

Sports Department for necessary legal and administrative action.

The disaffiliated bodies include: Arunachal Athletics Association, All Arunachal Pradesh Carom Association, Arunachal Powerlifting Association, Shoot- ing Ball Association of Arunachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh Billiard Board Association, Softballs Association of Arunachal Pradesh, Equestrian Association of Arunachal, Arunachal Amateur Aquatic Association, Arunachal Sepak Takraw Association, Arunachal Pradesh Strength Lifting Association, Net Ball Association of Arunachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh Kurash Association, All Arunachal Pradesh Gymnastic Association, Arunachal Pradesh Due Ball Association, Arunachal Pradesh

Beach Volleyball Association, All Arunachal Pradesh Tennis Ball Association, Arunachal Pradesh Bridge Federation, Arunachal Sambo Association, Motor Sports Association of Arunachal, Arunachal Ball Badminton Association, Arunachal Pradesh Tennikoit Association, and Arunachal Pradesh Fencing Association. Tago stated that the AOA had 72 affiliated sports bodies prior to this decision. After the disaffiliation, 50 associations remain — 22 of them provisional, 28 permanent, and 13 considered active.

Highlighting Arunachal Pradesh's potential in sports, Tago noted that the state's performance in recent national games reflects its growing prominence in track and field events.

YMCR urges CM Khandu to enact river protection law in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, July 21: The Youth Mission for Clean River (YMCR) has urged the Arunachal Pradesh government to introduce a dedicated river protection Act to address increasing threats to state's waterbodies.

The proposal was presented on Monday during a meeting between a YMCR delegation led by chairman S D Loda and Chief Minister Pema Khandu at the state secretariat, here.

Citing growing concerns over illegal riverbed extraction, pollution, and disrupted natural flow patterns, YMCR stressed the need for comprehensive legal

and administrative measures.

The group, working for river protection and conservation, proposed that the new legislation should clearly define community responsibilities and enforcement mechanisms, drawing inspiration from successful models implemented in other states.

As part of its recommendations, YMCR called for the creation of a dedicated department or cell under the environment or water resources department to monitor river health, ensure enforcement of regulations, coordinate restoration efforts, and conduct sustained public education initia-

tives. The organisation suggested that this new body could complement the recently passed Arunachal Pradesh Flood Plain Zoning Act, 2025.

To build public awareness and mobilise wider engagement, the delegation also proposed the institution of an annual 'Arunachal River Day' and a dedicated state-level conclave on environmental protection.

The group further requested Khandu to serve as chief patron of YMCR, noting that his support would inspire greater youth participation in river conservation efforts. (PTI)

No. OFFICE ORDER -SSGDI/110/Pt. V/2024/06 Dated: 14/07/2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders in prescribed form eventually to be drawn in APVVD's F2 form) affixing nonrefundable court fee of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only are hereby invited from registered Class-I (A,B,C), Class-II and Class-III category contractors of Irrigation Department for the following works under Suklai Serfang Goreswar Division (Irrigation), Goreswar, Dist-Tamulpur, BTR, Assam and will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00 PM on dated 30/07/2025. Tender will be opened in the same place and date at 3.00 PM, in presence of the intending contractors or their authorized agents if any. If the closing date of receiving the tender paper to be a "holiday" the same will be received and opened on the next working day in the same time and place.

1. NAME OF WORKS:

Group No	Name of Work	Value of the Works (Approx)	Time of Completion
1	Repairing of Existing New JE No.4 Quarter at Suklai Serfang Goreswar Division, Irrigation Goreswar Office campus of HRM.Sukla Irrigation Project under PMKSY-AIBP for the year 2021-22.	Rs.8,53,000.00	45 (Forty-Five days)

2. EARNEST MONEY TO BE DEPOSITED: 2% of tendered value (1% in case of ST/SC/OBC/MOBC) in the form of only valid Demand Draft of Banker Cheque along with the tender duly pledged to the Executive Engineer Suklai Serfang Goreswar Division (Irrigation), Goreswar, Dist-Tamulpur, BTR, Assam without which tender will not be accepted. This NIT will form part of the Contract Agreement in addition to APWD F-2 Form.

3. Details particular of NIT, particular of item, specification, terms & conditions and tender papers may be obtained from the office of the undersigned on payment of Rs. 500.00 (Rupees five hundred) only for Class-I(A,B,C) and Rs 300.00 (Rupees three hundred) only for Class-II & Class-III Contractors in the form of Cash (Non-refundable) during office hours in all working days up to 12 noon of 21-01-2025.

4. TIME OF COMMANCEMENT: Strictly within three days from the date of issuing work order.

Sd/-Executive Engineer
Suklai Serfang Goreswar Division
(Irrigation)Goreswar,Tamulpur, BTR

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/1894

No.DPRD/BTC(SOPD)/Ud29/2025/09 Dated Kokrajhar the 18th July, 2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders with a validity period of 90 (Ninety) days from the date of receipt in prescribed form affixing non-refundable court fee stamps of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only subsequently to be drawn up in printed F-2 form are hereby invited from the Govt. registered PWD (Roads/ Building), Irrigation, Water Resources, PHE others Govt. Contractor's under Class-I (A, B, C), Class-II and Class-III category from approved firm/ suppliers of 2020-21/2021-22 according to tender limit of eligibility for the following works and will be received in the office of the undersigned up to 2.00 pm on 11-08-2025 and will be opened on the same date and place at 2.30 pm in the presence of willing contractors or their authorized agents.

Name of Dev. Block	Name of Scheme	A/A Amount (In Rs. lakh)	Tender Amount (in Rs. lakh)	Earnest Money (ST, SC, OBC- 1% & Gen-2%)	Cost of Tender	Time for completion in days
Udalguni Dev. Block	Repair and renovation of boundary wall, Ayurvedic Doctor's Chamber, Const. of deep pit and three iron gates of State Dispensary in Bandarguri village	19.99900	19.99900	(ST, SC, OBC- 1% & Gen-2%)	@ 600/-	3 months

Details NIT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent up to 12.00 Noon on all working days from 19-07-2025 to 11-08-2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment of in the form of Banker cheque/ Demand draft of any nationalized Bank (Preferable SBI) duly pledged to the Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar. The Cost of tender (Non-Refundable) must be in the form of Demand Draft/ Banker Cheque of a Nationalized Bank drawn in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar and payable at SBI, Kokrajhar to be deposited 0.03%.

Sd/- Director,
Panchayat & Rural Development,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/1896

No.DPRD/BTC/Gen.-208Pt./2020/6thASFC/2023/136 Dated Kokrajhar the 21st July, 2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders with a validity period of 180 (one hundred eighty) days from the date of receipt in prescribed form affixing non-refundable court fee stamps of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only subsequently to be drawn up in printed F-2 form are hereby invited from the Govt. registered PWD (Roads/ Building), Irrigation, Water Resources, PHE others Govt. Contractor's under Class-I (A, B, C), Class-II and Class-III category from approved firm/ suppliers according to tender limit of eligibility for the following works and will be received in the office of the undersigned up to 2.00 pm on 13/08/2025 and will be opened on the same date and place at 2.15 pm in the presence of willing contractors or their authorized agents.

Sl. No.	Name of Dev. Block	Name of Scheme	Tender Amount (Rs.)	Cost of Tender in Rs.
1	Kokrajhar	Const. of water bottling at Karigaon Police Station	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
2	Kokrajhar	Const. of water bottling at Debargaon HS School	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
3	Sidi-Chirang	Const. of water bottling at Bengtol Weekly Market	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
4	Sidi-Chirang	Const. of water bottling at Kajaigaon Weekly Market	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
5	Sidi-Chirang	Const. of water bottling at Basugaon School	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
6	Udalguni	Const. of water bottling at Diamond English School, Udalguni	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
7	Udalguni	Const. of water bottling at Auxilium College, Udalguni	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
8	Udalguni	Const. of water bottling at Harisinga HS School, Udalguni	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
9	Udalguni	Const. of water bottling at Edenbari Chowk	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
10	Udalguni	Const. of water bottling at Sastrapara Market	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
11	Udalguni	Const. of water bottling at Ambagaon High School	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
12	Udalguni	Const. of water bottling at Khowrang Chowk	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
13	Udalguni	Const. of water bottling at Shri Hanuman Goushala Samitee	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
14	Udalguni	Const. of water bottling at Udalguni Rakhal Market	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
15	Udalguni	Const. of water bottling at Udalguni H.S. School	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
16	Udalguni	Const. of water bottling at Daifang Lal Bahadur School	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
17	Udalguni	Const. of water bottling at Badagaon Weekly Market	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
18	Kalaigaon	Const. of water bottling at Kabirali Market	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
19	Rowta	Const. of water bottling at Rowta HS School	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-
20	Rowta	Const. of water bottling at Kajiarnati Weekly Market	Rs. 5,00,000.00	150/-

Earnest Money : (ST, SC, OBC- 1% & Gen-2%) Pre-Bid meeting date & time : On 28th July, 2025

Time for completion in days : 2 (two) months

Details NIT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent up to 12.00 Noon on all working days from 21/07/2025 to 13/08/2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment of in the form of Banker cheque/ Demand draft of any nationalized Bank (Preferable SBI) duly pledged to the Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar. The Cost of tender (Non-Refundable) must be in the form of Demand Draft/ Banker Cheque of a Nationalized Bank drawn in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar and payable at SBI, Kokrajhar (Court Para) to be deposited 0.03%.

Sd/-Director,
Panchayat & Rural Development,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/1879

All 12 accused acquitted; HC says 'hard to believe' they committed the crime

MUMBAI, July 21: Nineteen years after seven train blasts here killed more than 180 persons, the Bombay High Court on Monday acquitted all the 12 accused, saying the prosecution "utterly failed" to prove the case and it was "hard to believe the accused committed the crime".

The judgement comes as a major embarrassment to the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) which probed the case. The agency had claimed that the accused were members of the banned outfit Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and had hatched the conspiracy with Pakistani members of terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

In a damning indictment of the prosecution's case, the high court declared all confessional statements of the accused as inadmissible suggesting "copying".

Further eroding the credibility of the confessions, the court said the accused had successfully established that torture was inflicted upon them to extort these confessional statements.

A special bench of Justices Anil Kilar and Shyam Chandak said the prosecution has failed to even bring on record the type of bombs used in the crime and that the evidence relied on by it was not con-

clusive to convict the accused.

"Punishing the actual perpetrator of a crime is a concrete and essential step toward curbing criminal activities, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring the safety and security of citizens," HC said in its 671-page judgment.

But creating a false appearance of having solved a case by presenting that the accused have been brought to justice gives a misleading sense of resolution, it added.

"This deceptive closure undermines public trust and falsely reassures society, while in reality, the true threat remains at large. Essentially, this is what the case at hand conveys," the bench said.

The death row convicts were Kamal Ansari (now dead), Mohammad Faisal Ataur Rahman Shaikh, Ehtesham Qutubuddin Siddiqui, Naveed Hussain Khan and Asif Khan. The special court had found them guilty of planting bombs and several other charges.

It had imposed life imprisonment on Tanveer Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim Ansari, Mohammed Majid Mohammed Shafi, Shaikh Mohammed Ali Alam Shaikh, Mohammed Sajid Margub Ansari, Muzammil Ataur Rahman Shaikh, Suhail Mehmood Shaikh and

7/11 train blasts



Zameer Ahmed Rehman Shaikh.

The witness statements and alleged recoveries made from the accused have no evidentiary value, the HC said while quashing the conviction of the 12 persons. Five had been sentenced to death and seven to life imprisonment by a special court. One of the death row convicts died in 2021.

Seven blasts ripped through Mumbai local trains at various locations on the western line on July 11, 2006, killing more than 180 persons and injuring sev-

eral others.

"The prosecution has utterly failed to prove the case against the accused. It is hard to believe that the accused committed the crime. Hence their conviction is quashed and set aside," the HC said.

The HC said the accused shall be released from jail forthwith if not wanted in any other case. After pronouncing the verdict, the judges said they had done their duty as per the responsibility cast upon them. (PTI)

The prosecution's evidence, witness

statements and alleged recoveries made from the accused persons have no evidentiary value and hence cannot be held as conclusive for conviction, the HC said.

The bench also drew an adverse inference on the prosecution for failing to examine important witnesses in the case and also for poor and improper sealing and maintenance of the recovered items - explosives and circuit boxes allegedly used to assemble the bombs.

"The prosecution has failed to even bring on record the type of bombs used in the alleged crime. Hence, the evidence of recovery is not sufficient to prove the offence against the accused," it said.

Discarding the confessional statements, HC said they seem to have been taken after torture was inflicted upon them and were "incomplete and not truthful". The high court also pulled up the investigating agency for not providing legal assistance to the accused persons before and while recording their confessional statement.

The bench said the confessional statements are vague on several aspects like planning of the conspiracy, in what containers the bombs were packed, how they were detonated, what device was used to

trigger the bombs and so on.

"It is well known that, in most cases, police are in the habit of extorting confessions by illegal and improper means, including torture," HC said.

The HC also held as "incredible and non-trustworthy" the evidence given by witnesses, including taxi drivers who drove the accused to the train station, those who saw the accused plant the bombs, those who were witness to bombs being assembled and those who were witness to the alleged conspiracy.

The court also noted that the provisions of the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Syndicate (MCOCA) would not apply to this case and that sanction for the same was granted in a "mechanical manner without application of mind".

Maharashtra revenue minister and senior BJP leader Chandrashekhar Bawankule said the state government will assess the merits of the HC order, before deciding on whether to challenge it in the Supreme Court.

AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi sought to know whether Maharashtra government would take action against ATS officers who investigated the train blasts case. (PTI)

Mamata sounds 2026 poll bugle, calls for 'language movement'

KOLKATA, July 21: Sharpening her 'Bengali asmita' pitch ahead of the 2026 polls, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday accused the BJP of unleashing "linguistic terrorism" on Bengalis, asserting that the fight for identity and language will continue until the saffron party is defeated.

Addressing a massive Martyrs' Day rally in Kolkata, Banerjee gave a clarion call to defeat the BJP in the 2026 assembly elections and eventually oust it from power at the Centre, declaring, "If this linguistic profiling doesn't stop, our resistance movement will reach New Delhi."

"If needed, there will be another language movement against the BJP's terrorism on the Bengali language... From July 27, a movement will start in Bengal in protest against the attack on Bengalis, Bengali language and 'Bhasa santras' (linguistic terrorism)," she announced, positioning the campaign as a mass resistance to the alleged marginalisation of Bengali identity.

"We must win more seats in the 2026 assembly polls and then march to Delhi to defeat the BJP," she said.

Accusing the BJP of harassing Bengalis in states ruled by it, Banerjee alleged attempts to erase the identity of the community - from NRC notices to exclusion of names from voter lists and even



detention camps.

"In 2019, they vandalised the statue of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. They saw the results of that audacious act of insulting Bengali icons. Now, they have issued notifications to delete Bengali names from voter lists. In BJP-ruled states, Bengalis are being harassed and put in detention camps," she said.

"I challenge the BJP - let me see how many people they will put in jail."

Banerjee also launched a frontal attack on Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, stating, "He cannot handle his state but is meddling in the affairs of Bengal. I urge Sushmita Dev (Assam TMC

leader) to organise a massive protest in that state. We will all join."

"Who gave the Assam government the right to send NRC notices to residents of Bengal?" she asked.

Noting that Bengal is home to nearly 1.5 crore migrants from other states, the CM said, "We welcome people from all over India, but look at what the BJP is doing to Bengalis."

The TMC supremo also trained her guns at the Election Commission, accusing it of working in tandem with the BJP.

"The BJP and the Election Commission are conspiring against Bengal. They want to do in Bengal what they did in Bihar through

SIR. In Bihar, they have deleted names of 40 lakhs voters. If they try the same here, we will gherao them. We will never allow it," she asserted.

Referring to the BJP's frequent rallies and marches to her residence and state secretariat, Banerjee warned of retaliation in the "language that they understand".

"They (BJP) organise marches to my house and state secretariat. What will happen if TMC workers also organise a sit-in outside the homes of BJP leaders?" she asked.

Whenever a Bengali is detained or harassed in BJP-ruled states, sit on dharna to express solidarity with them here, she urged her cadre.

Hitting out at the saffron party's claims of championing democracy, she said, "BJP talks against Emergency, whereas they have imposed 'Super Emergency' in the country."

Criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Banerjee said, "You say development will come to Bengal with change of guard. But, what have you done for the country's development in the last 11 years?"

Her sharp rebuke came in the backdrop of Modi's recent rally in West Bengal, where he had positioned the BJP as the only party that truly respects and protects Bengali asmita (pride), calling for an end to a regime of "lies, lawlessness and loot." (PTI)

Surjewala slams BJP for 'fake propaganda'

BENGALURU, July 21: AICC General Secretary in-charge of Karnataka Randeep Singh Surjewala on Monday accused the BJP of "manufacturing" false allegations against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over MUDA case as he welcomed the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Karnataka High Court judgment, which quashed the ED notice in the case.

Referring to media reports, he said the apex court ruling has invalidated what he termed as "fake propaganda" of ED-BJP partnership.

In a post on X, he said, "BJP manufactured false allegations against Karnataka CM, @siddaramaiah over MUDA ! BJP protested for months against Karnataka CM, @siddaramaiah over MUDA ! BJP misused the Office of Governor and unleashed the ED against Karnataka CM, & his wife over MUDA ! BJP maliciously hounded and levelled false allegations against Karnataka CM, over MUDA !"

"The Supreme Court today and High Court earlier, rejected and quashed the fake propaganda of ED-BJP partnership. Truth has won! Satyameva Jayate," he said.

The Mysuru Urban Development Authority case involves alleged irregularities in land allotted to Parvathi B M, wife of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. (PTI)

Suvendu demands SIR in Bengal to remove illegal voters from electoral rolls



SILIGURI (WB), July 21: Leader of the Opposition in West Bengal Assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, on Monday demanded that special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls be conducted in the state as is being done in Bihar for removing illegal voters from the list.

He maintained that those Hindus who have come to India from Bangladesh due to religious persecution need not be afraid.

"They are refugees in the eyes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Adhikari said, addressing a rally here after leading a march to Uttarkanya, the north Bengal branch of the state secretariat here, to protest atrocities on women in the state.

"Indian Muslims need not worry," Adhikari said to reassure the minority community, who the ruling TMC is claiming are being targeted by the saffron brigade, if an SIR is held in the state.

Maintaining that the BJP stands firm with them, he said, "No Rohingya or Bangladeshi Muslim illegal immigrant, however, will be allowed to have their names in the electoral rolls in the state."

The SIR of electoral rolls has triggered a major political controversy in Bihar, where elections are due later this year, with the opposition INDIA bloc alleging that it was designed to "benefit the ruling NDA", a charge denied by the EC that is carrying out the massive exercise.

Adhikari alleged that there are 2.15 crore jobless people in West Bengal, while alleging the flight

of industries from the state. "Why are there 60 lakh migrant labourers from the state working outside if the chief minister has provided work to all?" he asked.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressed the annual Trinamool Congress' Martyrs' Day rally in Kolkata on Monday.

Stating that the TMC supremo has asserted in the rally that her party will win more seats in the 2026 West Bengal assembly polls than the numbers it secured in 2021, Adhikari said, "I also challenge that she will be a former chief minister of the state after the next elections."

Pointing to the rape and murder of an on-duty doctor at R G Kar Medical College and Hospital and the alleged sexual assault of a student at a law college in Kolkata, he claimed that womenfolk in the state "are not safe under the present dispensation".

Adhikari and other leaders participated in the programme called by the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) to protest the atrocities on women and demand security for them.

Alleging that north Bengal lacks modern healthcare facilities, he claimed that the state government was not providing land for an AIIMS that the central government wants to set up for the benefit of the people here.

He alleged that tea garden workers in north Bengal were not getting their dues while the Mamata Banerjee government was working to sell off the land of the gardens. (PTI)

Landslide hits Vaishno Devi track in J&K's Reasi; 10 injured

JAMMU, July 21: A massive landslide struck the old track to the Vaishno Devi shrine in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday, leaving at least 10 persons including five pilgrims, injured, officials said.

Officials said a booking office and an overhead iron structure caved in under the weight of the landslide, triggered by heavy rains which lashed Katra town, the base camp for the pilgrims visiting the shrine atop Trikuta hills, they said.

The yatra to the shrine has been suspended till 1 pm as a precautionary measure.

The incident occurred around 8.30 am at Gulshan Ka Langar near Banganga, the starting point for the yatra where mostly pony riders gather along the old track and register before taking the pilgrims to the cave shrine, 12 km from the town.

"The landslide resulted in critical injuries to

three persons and minor injuries to seven others. All the injured were rescued and taken to hospital," officiating Chief Executive Officer of Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, Sachin Kumar Vaishya told reporters.

Vaishya, who is also the district magistrate Jammu, rushed to the scene and said a full fledged rescue and debris clearance operation is underway. The officials said a rescue operation was launched immediately by local volunteers, shrine board staff, SDRF, police and CRPF personnel.

An earth-mover was also rushed to speed up the rescue efforts, they said.

The critically injured -- Uppan (70) of Chennai, his wife K Radha (66), and Rajinder Bhalla (70) of Haryana -- were admitted in Narayan hospital, while Leela Raikwar (56) of Uttar Pradesh was undergoing treatment at community health centre Katra, the officials said.

Gujarat govt waives ₹ 200 ownership certificate fee under SVAMITVA scheme

AHMEDABAD, July 21: The Gujarat government has decided to waive the Rs 200 fee for ownership certificates under the SVAMITVA scheme, easing the financial burden on rural property owners, an official said on Monday.

Property holders in rural areas of Gujarat can now get the "sanad" or ownership certificate under the SVAMITVA scheme free of cost, he said.

SVAMITVA Yojana is a central scheme launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2021 for issuing property cards to rural landholders across the country.

Under the 'Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas (SVAMITVA)

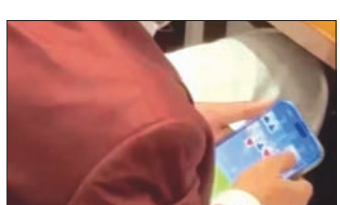
Scheme, drone technology is being used to survey properties in inhabited rural areas, and property cards are issued to the residents.

The first copy of the property card is provided to owners free of cost under the scheme, an official release said.

With Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel's decision to waive the ₹ 200 survey fee under the Land Revenue Act, 1879, rural residents will now receive both the property card and "sanad" (ownership certificate) for free, it stated.

The state government will bear an estimated ₹ 50 crore to distribute around 25 lakh such certificates across Gujarat, the release said. (PTI)

Cong targets Maharashtra govt over farmer suicides, minister's 'mobile game' video



MUMBAI, July 21: Maharashtra Congress president Harshwardhan Sapkal on Monday hit out at the state government, accusing ministers and office-bearers of the ruling parties of being arrogant and insensitive towards farmers' issues.

Six farmers were committing suicide daily in Maharashtra, while Agriculture Minister Manikrao Kokate was seen playing an online game during the legislature session, Sapkal claimed while demanding immediate dismissal of the minister.

"The agriculture minister insults farmers, calls them beggars and claims they spend loan waiver amount on marriages. Now he is seen playing game on mobile. What is wrong in protesting against the minister? Arrogance of power doesn't last long," Sapkal said in a statement.

Workers of the Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) beat up activists of Chhava Sanghatana on Sunday after they confronted Maharashtra unit president Sunil Tatkare and threw playing

cards in front of him during his press conference in Latur.

Activists of the Chhava Sanghatana were protesting against minister Kokate after a viral video showed him purportedly playing a game of rummy on his mobile phone during the recently concluded monsoon session of the state legislature.

After NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar shared Kokate's video clip, the latter clarified he was merely skipping a downloaded game that flashed on the screen of his mobile phone in the legislative council.

Referring to the scuffle in Latur, Sapkal claimed activists from the Chhava organisation had peacefully protested by handing over a pack of playing cards to NCP state president Sunil Tatkare. They were then assaulted by workers of the Ajit Pawar-led NCP, he alleged.

"This is not democracy, it's mob rule. Not just MLAs, but even ministers and office-bearers have become arrogant," Sapkal claimed. "The chief minister must show the courage to take action," he added. The Congress leader also accused Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis of misleading the legislative assembly over alleged honey-trap incidents involving state ministers and bureaucrats. (PTI)

From beaches to bots: Goa rolls out AI Mission 2027 to boost governance and innovation

PANAJI, July 21: The Pramod Sawant government has rolled out Goa AI Mission 2027, a visionary roadmap to build an inclusive and future-ready Artificial Intelligence ecosystem, officials said.

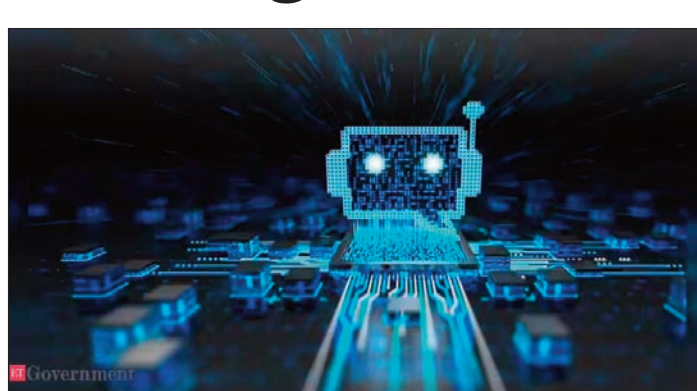
The mission, a bold leap from Goa's laid-back coastal charm to cutting-edge tech ambition, aims to empower people, enhance governance and spark innovation across sectors, placing the state firmly on the digital transformation map, they said.

In a recently held meeting, Chief Minister Sawant and state Information Technology Minister Rohan Khaunte appealed to stakeholders to work towards drafting the AI Mission 2027, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision.

Nearly 350 Information Technology companies and startups are operating in Goa, as per data from the IT department.

Goa Information and Technology Director Kabir Shirgaonkar told PTI Videos that the state government's AI mission is derived from the Centre's ambitious India AI Mission.

"We intend to meet various ob-



jectives through this mission, and one of them is create an inclusive and future-friendly AI ecosystem to empower citizens, enhance governance and support innovation across sectors," he said.

The government's predominant focus under the Goa AI Mission 2027 would be on setting up Graphic Processing Units (GPUs) to increase compute capacity, Shirgaonkar said.

"There's also the concept of an AI Coach. When talking about AI, datasets are very important. The Government of Goa will play an active role in preparing datasets, as you all know, the government pos-

sesses a vast amount of data, and these datasets will be critical when working with AI," he said.

Shirgaonkar said the ethical use of AI will also be a major focus area as the Goa government moves forward.

"Some of the major highlights of the Goa AI Mission include the formulation of a Goa AI Policy," he said, adding the AI Advisory Council has already been formulated.

"The AI Advisory Council, a multi-stakeholder body, aims to provide strategic direction and ensure consistent implementation across domains. So, the first step is

the formation of the council, followed by drafting of the Goa AI Policy," he explained.

Shirgaonkar further said the focus will also include AI education, the setting up of Goa AI Labs, and the development of a Konkani Large Language Model (LLM).

"As you know, language models are essential, and developing a Konkani LLM will be one of our key priorities. We aim to use AI to preserve and promote Goa's cultural and linguistic heritage through this locally built LLM in Konkani," he said.

Specifically, the Goa AI Mission will rest on four core pillars -- skilling, startups and companies, capital, and government and infrastructure, the official said.

"Under the 'skilling' pillar, we will target colleges and schools to ensure that AI education is integrated at all levels so that our future generation is AI-ready," he said.

Amash Chaturvedi, co-founder of Neural Private Ltd in Panaji, said his is an AI first startup, working with enterprises to help scale their AI initiatives with ease and comfort.

"We are also glad to be a part of the AI state mission in Goa, which is one of the pioneering initiatives in the country," he added.

Goa is one of the "very, very few states in the country" which is looking at AI and making the state ready for the future in technology, Chaturvedi said. He said the Goa AI Mission 2027 also aims at bringing together academia, industry, startups and the government to fulfil multiple objectives.

"The first one being making the population of Goa AI ready, and this also entails skilling and reskilling people to work with AI, not just as users, but also creators," he said.

The mission also includes building the core infrastructure to carry out foundational research, not just physical infrastructure, but digital infrastructure that could entail collaboration of academia in Goa with universities elsewhere in the world, Chaturvedi said.

"So, from a holistic perspective, the intent is right and the steps that are being planned to undertake and fulfil the objectives of this mission are also in the right place," he added. (PTI)

Mizoram: Over 10,100 meth tablets seized, 2 arrested

AIZAWL, July 21: Over 10,100 methamphetamine tablets have been seized and two persons arrested in Mizoram's Champhai district, an official of the state Excise and Narcotics Department said on Monday.

The tablets, weighing around 10.1 kg, were seized during an operation on Saturday, the department's spokesperson Peter Zohmingthanga said.

One person, identified as Lunminlzo (34), a resident of Manipur's Churachandpur town, was arrested on Saturday.

"Based on inputs provided by him, a woman, identified as Christy Hmingthanzami (19), a resident of Champhai's Vengthar locality, was nabbed from Maubaw village in the district on Sunday," he said.

"A car used for transporting the contraband was also seized," he said.

He said that the seized methamphetamine tablets were being smuggled outside Mizoram.

The two accused have been booked under sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, Zohmingthanga said.

According to the official, the department has intensified its anti-drug campaign and is rounding up drug addicts in Aizawl and other district headquarters.

Several addicts have been counseled and sent to rehabilitation centers with the consent of their parents, while others have been engaged in community work as per court directives, Zohmingthanga added. (PTI)

Three militants among six held in Manipur

IMPHAL, July 21: Security forces have arrested three militants belonging to two banned organisations from Manipur's Imphal East and Kakching districts, police said in a statement on Monday.

Three others were also apprehended from Imphal West district for allegedly being involved in the trading of ammunition, it said.

A self-styled sergeant major of the banned Prepak was arrested from his residence at Kontha Ahallup in Imphal East district on Saturday, the police said, adding that he had received basic military training at Tanal in Myanmar and had recruited a cadre in October last year for the outfit.

Two active members of the proscribed UPPK were apprehended from a market in Kakching on Sunday for allegedly being involved in extortion activities in the district and adjoining areas, the police statement said.

Security forces also arrested three persons from Thangmeib and Khuyathong Polem Leikai areas in Imphal West district on Sunday for their alleged involvement in illegal sales of ammunition, it said.

More than 100 ammunition items were recovered from their possession, the police said.

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

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

The Centre had on February 13 imposed the President's rule in Manipur after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned.

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

Union Finance Minister highlights Meghalaya's transformation on X

Modi, Sitharaman term Meghalaya 'blueprint for resilient, self-reliant India'

SHILLONG, July 21: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has heaped praises on Meghalaya's development model, describing the state as a 'blueprint for a resilient and self-reliant India'.

His remarks came in response to a post by Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on X, where she highlighted Meghalaya progress following her four-day visit to the state from July 10 to 13.

"Union Finance Minister Smt. @nsitharaman highlights Meghalaya's remarkable transformation driven by tourism, youth empowerment, women-led SHGs, initiatives like the PM Suryaghar Muft Bijli Yojana, the Vibrant Village Programme and more. With strong government support and



vibrant community spirit, the state stands as a blueprint for a resilient and self-reliant India," the Prime

Minister's Office posted on X on Sunday.

In an article published in a na-

tional daily, Sitharaman lauded the state's inclusive and sustainable development initiatives, noting the role of community participation, youth engagement, and women's empowerment in driving change.

"Throughout this journey, I was moved by the determination, optimism, and harmony with nature that define the people of Meghalaya. With government support and community spirit aligned, Meghalaya today offers a blueprint for a vibrant, confident, and self-reliant India. Till next time, Khublei Shibun and Mithela Meghalaya!" she wrote.

Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma, whose government has targeted to increase the state's economy USD 1 billion by 2028, reposted the tweets. (PTI)

Nagaland CM Neiphiu Rio inspects landslide-hit old KMC dumping site



HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, July 21: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio visited the severely landslide-affected

stretch along National Highway-29 at Old Kohima Municipal Council (KMC) dumping site on Monday. He was accompanied by deputy

chief minister TR Zeliang and others to assess the affected stretch.

The inspection assessed the severity of the landslide and explored both immediate and long-term mitigation measures to ensure the safety and smooth flow of traffic along this critical route.

During the visit, Rio held discussions with various stakeholders to formulate a comprehensive plan to address the issue.

He emphasised the need for co-ordinated action among all concerned departments and community stakeholders to address the problem effectively.

Authorities are initiating necessary interventions to stabilise the affected area and minimise further disruptions along NH-29.

Two institutes to be converted into varsities, says Tripura CM

AGARTALA, July 21: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday said the government is contemplating converting Women's College, Agartala and Tripura Institute of Technology (TIT) into two universities to expand higher education scope in the northeastern state.

Founded in 1965 at the heart of the city, the college is the first institute for women, and offers two streams—Science and Arts.

The erstwhile Tripura Polytechnic Institute (TPI) was elevated to Tripura Institute of Technology (TIT) a few years back.

While speaking at a government programme, the chief minister said, "The government is contemplating converting Women's College and Tripura Institute of Technology (TIT) into full-fledged universities to expand the scope for higher education in the state."

Saha said the higher education department has already begun to implement the government's plan to turn the two institutes into separate universities.

Asserting that the northeastern state is gradually becoming an educational hub, the chief minister said the state used to get only a few MBBS seats earlier, but now the number has gone up to 400.

At present, the state has one government medical college, one society-managed medical facility and a privately run institute.

"Now, Tripura Government Dental College has 63



BDS seats. The council of ministers has approved proposals for new universities in the state," he said, without elaborating how many proposals were given the green signal.

Currently, the northeastern state has Tripura University, a central varsity, one state government-run MBB University, apart from some private universities.

The state also has National Law University (NLU), National Forensic Science University (NFSU), Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) and National Institute of Technology (NIT). (PTI)

ADB granted ₹ 975 cr loan for building infra in 9 industrial areas in Tripura

AGARTALA, July 21: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has granted a loan amounting to ₹ 975.26 crore for building infrastructure in nine industrial areas in Tripura, an official said on Monday.

Tripura Industrial Development Corporation (TIDC) Chairman Nabadal Banik said building of industrial sheds, power substations, underground electric lines, fire service stations and 34 roads will be taken up under the project.

"The ADB has sanctioned a loan amounting to ₹ 975.26 crore to build world-class infrastructure for

development in nine industrial belts in Tripura. The implementation is underway," he told PTI.

"Industrial areas in Bodhjungnagar, R K Nagar, Dukli and AN Nagar are among the nine zones," he said.

Banik said the state government has handed over plots for setting up industrial areas at Santirbazar (127 acres) in South Tripura and Fatikroy (28 acres) in Unakoti district.

"The TIDC has already begun demarcation work to undertake infrastructure building in the two new areas. We are ensuring that no land

allocated for industries remains unused for a long period of time," he said.

According to him, the TIDC has recovered 28 acres of land from 24 dormant industrial units because new entrepreneurs are coming up to set up industries in the northeastern state.

Banik said the corporation has taken a new initiative to promote the plywood industry.

Currently, two plywood-making units are operational in the state, and seven more are in the pipeline, he said. (PTI)

Mizoram launches digital platform to connect, engage with global Mizo diaspora

Chief Minister urges Mizo welfare associations and groups to register



AIZAWL, July 21: Mizoram on Monday unveiled Mizo DiasporaHub, a comprehensive digital platform to connect and coordinate as well as foster ethnic ties among different Mizo communities living in different parts of the world.

The portal developed jointly Mizo Diaspora Cell and LushATech was launched by Chief Minister Lalduhoma.

The launch comes at a time when more Mizo people from different states and countries, especially Myanmar, are migrating to India and abroad.

Launching the platform, Lalduhoma said his government aims to strengthen bonds among Mizos through the platform.

Citing that strong and sustained engagement with Mizo communities abroad is vital, he urged all Mizo welfare associations and groups around the world to register in the portal and make use of it.

He said the Mizo Diaspora Cell, formed last year from the Chief

Minister's Office, will coordinate support and maintain connections with Mizos living abroad.

"The Mizoram government is ready to extend help to those in need, especially those in difficult situations in foreign countries," the CM added.

"The portal allows Mizo welfare associations to communicate with each other and access helpful tools, which will aid in collective action and better coordination," he added.

State commissioner and secretary to the chief minister Vanlaldina, who is also the chairman of Mizo Diaspora Cell, said the cell was formed on 11 June last year with an initial mandate to track and respond to the challenges faced by Mizoram communities living in foreign countries.

According to officials, the newly launched Mizo DiasporaHub is now open for registration by Mizo welfare associations, and individual registration will begin soon. (PTI)

Drugs worth ₹ 76 crore seized in Manipur



IMPHAL, July 21: Assam Rifles, in a joint operation with the Manipur Police and CRPF, recovered drugs worth ₹ 76 crore from Jiribam district, the paramilitary force said in a statement on Monday.

Acting on a tip-off, the security forces on Sunday seized heroin, concealed in 616 soap cases, and 50,000 banned methamphetamine tablets in the district, it said.

"The narcotic substances were being transported by a boat on the Barak river in Jiribam district," the statement said.

Lauding the Assam Rifles for the recovery of drugs, former chief minister N Biren Singh, in a post on X, said, "I commend the Assam Rifles for their decisive action in foiling major drug trafficking attempts in the region." Singh also urged the paramilitary force to continue its crackdown on cross-border smuggling.

"With our border areas historically used as drug trafficking routes, continuous and intensified vigil is crucial to prevent new corridors from emerging," he added. (PTI)

Manipur's new chief secretary assumes charge

IMPHAL, July 21: Manipur Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel on Monday assumed charge at the secretariat here, officials said. "Goel took charge from outgoing CS Prashant Kumar Singh at a brief function held at the Old Secretariat building," they said.

"The Manipur government marked a transition in administrative leadership with the official

handover of charge from outgoing Chief Secretary Prashant Kumar Singh to newly appointed CS Puneet Kumar Goel," an official statement said.

Senior officials and department heads expressed their gratitude to Singh for his dedicated service and visionary leadership during his tenure.

"Warm wishes were also ex-

tended to Goel as he assumed charge," the statement said.

Goel, the 1991 batch AGMUT cadre officer, arrived in Imphal on Sunday and was received by officials led by Commissioner (home) Ashok Kumar.

He was appointed as the Manipur chief secretary by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) on July 16. (PTI)

NU selected to host incubation centre in NE

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, July 21: Nagaland University has been chosen to host one of the four incubation centres in the Northeast under a central government initiative. The 50 highest-performing beneficiaries will receive a startup seed money grant of up to ₹ 5 lakh under the centre.

The varsity was chosen under the project 'Establish, Develop, and Manage Entrepreneurship Development Centres and Incubation Centres in the Educational Institutes of the North Eastern Region'. This project is being sponsored by the North Eastern Council, Shillong, and implemented by the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati.

The North Eastern Council is the nodal agency for the economic and social development of the northeastern region, which consists of the eight states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland,



Sikkim and Tripura.

The IIE is an organisation under Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

Nagaland University's Kohima campus has been designated as one of the four incubation centres in the region.

A total of 44 beneficiaries will be in-

cubated in the first batch of incubatees. The 44 beneficiaries include 16 from Arunachal Pradesh, six from Assam, four from Manipur, and the remaining from Nagaland.

Onboarding of the incubates will be done in July 2025, a varsity release said on Monday.

Meghalaya: 3 stolen scooters recovered, 2 arrested

RESUBELPARA (MEGHALAYA), July 21: Two persons have been arrested and three stolen scooters recovered from their possession in Meghalaya's North Garo Hills district, police said on Monday.

One of the accused is a local resident, while another is from adjoining Assam.

Police arrested the local person on Thursday and recovered a stolen scooter from his possession. Based on inputs provided by him, another person hailing from Goalpara district of Assam was nabbed on Sunday and two more scooters were recovered, an officer said.

A case has been registered at Resubelpara police station. Further investigation is underway, he added. (PTI)

No.SLRC-G-III/91/Advertisement/2023/90,

PRESS NOTE

Special consideration for Candidates from Dima Hasao and Barak Valley Districts to appear in Computer Skill Test in view of disruption of Rail communication

In light of the information regarding landslide incidents in the Luming-Badarpur Hill section and consequent disruption of railway connectivity from Barak Valley and Dima Hasao District to Guwahati, as revealed from Press Release No.202, dated 03-07-2025 of N.F. Railway, special consideration is being extended to the candidates from the affected districts who might have been unable to attend their Computer Skill Test conducted under the State Level Recruitment Commission for Class-III Posts vide Notice No.SLRC-G-III/91/Advertisement/2023/85, dated 30th May, 2025.

To ensure equal opportunity for all candidates impacted by this unforeseen incident, candidates belonging to Dima Hasao District and Barak Valley Districts will be given an opportunity to appear in the Computer Skill Test.

Any such candidate may contact the Commission by e-mail slrc3assam@gmail.com along with the Admit Card and proof of residence by 5.00 PM of 24th July, 2025. Without Admit card and proof of residence, any such prayer will not be considered.

Candidates should note that this opportunity is being extended to only those candidates who were to appear in the Computer Skill Test from Barak Valley Districts and Dima Hasao District.

Sd/-
Secretary,
State Level Recruitment Commission for Class-III Posts
AASC, Khanapara, Guwahati-22.

DIPR /D/HLT/78/22-Jul-25



NEW DELHI, July 21: Mohit Suri's romantic drama "Saiyaara", featuring debutant Ahaan Pandey and actor Aneet Padda, registered the highest opening for a romantic film ever by grossing ₹ 119 crore in the first three days, the makers said.

The movie, which marks Pandey's big screen debut and a critically-praised turn for Padda, who previously featured in "Big Girls Don't Cry" and Kajol-starrer "Salaam Venky", earned ₹ 101.75 (gross) and ₹ 84 crore (nett) in India and brought in ₹ 17.25 from international markets.

Helmed by Mohit Suri of "Ek Villain" and "Aashiqui 2" fame, the movie is produced by Yash Raj Films. The film also marked the highest worldwide opening weekend for a debutant-led film. Pandey is actor Ananya Pandey's cousin.

The film's impressive three-day run at the box office has beat lifetime collection of

ROMANTIC DRAMA 'SAIYAARA' EARNs ₹ 119 CRORE WORLDWIDE

other debuts of star kids like Alia Bhatt's "Student of the Year" and Jahnvi Kapoor and Ishaan Khattar's "Dhadak", which earned ₹ 70 crore and ₹ 73 crore (lifetime). "Saiyaara" follows Krish, played by Pandey, a fiery, ambitious musician, and Vaani, played by Padda, a shy lyricist recovering from heartbreak. The chemistry of the lead pair, built through soulful songwriting sessions and raw emotional moments, is the heart of the film, reads the official logline.

"Saiyaara" opened with ₹ 22 crore, earned ₹ 26.25 crore on day two and it has made ₹ 35.75 crore on day three according to Yash Raj Films in the domestic box office amounting to 84 crore. In the international box office, the film has made ₹ 17.25 crore. It is also Suri's highest opening among his other films -- "Ek Villain" earned ₹ 16 crore on day one, "Aashiqui 2" made over ₹ 6 crore and "Murder 2" earned almost 7 crore on the first day of their release. The film is the first and only romance movie to gross over ₹ 100 crore in its opening weekend.

The film is among the highest grossing opening weekend alongside films like Vicky Kaushal's "Chhava" (₹ 122.43 crore), Salman Khan's "Sikandar" (₹ 90.25 crore) and Akshay Kumar's ensemble comedy "Housefull 5" (₹ 91.83 crore).

Yash Raj Films have requested exhibitors to not hike ticket prices in order to keep them accessible for the youth supporting the film. The production house had also previously decided that Pandey and Padda not engage in promotions of the film. The music of "Saiyaara", which features seven songs composed by Mithoon, Sachet-Parampara, Tanishk Bagchi, Rishabh Kant, Vishal Mishra, Faheem Abdullah and Arslan Nisami, is already a chartbuster.

Alongside Pandey and Padda, the romance also stars Geeta Agarwal, Rajesh Kumar, Varun Badola and Shaad Randhawa in key roles. (PTI)

MAMI MUMBAI FILM FESTIVAL TO SKIP 2025 EDITION, TO RETURN NEXT YEAR

MUMBAI, July 21: The MAMI Mumbai Film Festival, an important event in cinephiles calendar in the city, will not take place in 2025 and instead return the next year with a "dynamic vision and a new team", festival director Shivendra Singh Dungarpur announced on Monday.

In a post shared on social media, Dungarpur, who is known for his extensive work on film restoration and preservation, asked fans of the festival for their "understanding and support."

"This is to inform you that the 2025 edition of MAMI Mumbai Film Festival will not take place as we are in the process of revamping the festival with a dynamic vision and a new team to ensure that the festival returns as a premier showcase for the best of independent, re-

gional and classic cinema from India and around the world.

We are working diligently to reschedule the festival and will announce the new dates for the 2026 edition as soon as possible. Thank you for your understanding and support," Dungarpur wrote on Instagram.

Filmmaker Tanuja Chandra said it was sad that the festival will not be there this year.

"It's a part of the year so many of us have loved. Good wishes for coming back stronger," she added.

The MAMI Mumbai Film Festival is organised by the Mumbai Academy of Moving Image (MAMI). The festival has been known for bringing the best of contemporary world cinema and talent to the city since 1997. (PTI)



Superstar Ajith Kumar crashes during GT4 European Series race

NEW DELHI, July 21: Tamil superstar and avid racer Ajith Kumar crashed while participating in the GT4 European Series race in Italy on July 20. Following the crash, the actor helped the staff clear the debris.

The incident took place at the Misano track in the second round of the series. The official X page of GT4 European Series posted a video of the aftermath of the crash.

The actor crashed into a stationary car and did not sustain any injuries. The caption with the video read, "Out of the race with damage, but still happy to help with the clean-up. Full respect, Ajith Kumar."

"Ajith Kumar out of the car, out of the race. It's the first significant bit of a damage we've seen from him this year. He's a fine champ, he goes and helps the marshals clear up all the body. Not many drivers would do that," a commentator can be heard saying.

The 54-year-old actor, known for hits such as 'Mankatha', 'Billa', 'Varaalaru', 'Vaalae' and 'Viswasam', has participated in various races, including Germany and Malaysia. He drove in the 2003 Formula Asia BMW Championships as well as the 2010 Formula 2 Championships.

The actor was honoured with a Padma Bhushan from the Government of India this year, which is the third highest civilian award. He most recently featured in the Tamil film, "Good Bad Ugly" and hasn't announced any upcoming projects yet. (PTI)

'Grew up to your school of cinema' Ahaan Pandey thanks Karan Johar

NEW DELHI, July 21: Actor Ahaan Pandey, who is basking in the success of his debut movie "Saiyaara", expressed gratitude to Karan Johar after the filmmaker praised his performance in the Mohit Suri-directed romantic drama.

Johar shared a heartfelt note on his Instagram on Monday lauding Pandey's performance.

"What a debut @ahaanpandey !!! You broke my heart and yet engaged me as a filmmaker... your eyes spoke volumes and I can't wait to see your journey ahead.... You are spectacular," Johar wrote.

The 27-year-old actor responded to the message by re-sharing the post on his Instagram story.

Pandey said he grew up watching Johar's films including his 1998 directorial debut "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" and he is "shell-shocked" to be praised by the filmmaker.

"I grew up watching 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai', I grew up to your school of cinema, and to hear this from you, I am truly shell-shocked.

Thank you sir, from the bottom of my heart for this and for everything you've given us, thank you a thousand times over," he wrote in his story.

Released on July 18, "Saiyaara" also stars Aneet Padda, known for featuring in web series "Big Girls Don't Cry" and the Kajol-starrer film "Salaam Venky".

The film has already grossed ₹ 119 crore at the global box office in its opening weekend, according to Yash Raj Films, who have produced the movie.

Actor Ranveer Singh, who made his acting debut with YRF with the 2010 film "Band Baaja Baaraat", also showered praise on Pandey.

Sharing the poster of the film on his Instagram story, Singh wrote, "SAIYAARA is HEARTFELT. The very best of Mohit Suri. Congrats to my dear friends at YRF - Akshay (Widhani), Sumana (Ghosh) and Shanoo (Sharma) for an unprecedented feat. Ahaan and Aneet, you were special. A scintillating debut! God bless you & welcome to the movies." (PTI)



Karan Johar lashes out at troll calling him 'nanny of nepo kids': Do some work

NEW DELHI, July 21: Filmmaker Karan Johar, whose credits include films such as "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" and "My Name Is Khan", slammed a troll on social media for addressing him as "nanny of nepo kids" and called for lesser negativity.

Johar shared a post on his Instagram handle on Monday praising "Saiyaara" actors, Ahaan Pandey, who made his acting debut, and Aneet Padda, known for featuring in web series "Big Girls Don't Cry" and the Kajol-starrer film "Salaam Venky".

Directed by Mohit Suri, "Saiyaara" was released on July 18 and has garnered a positive response from the audience. Johar penned a heartfelt note and also called the film Suri's

best directorial.

In the same post, one of the users left a comment pointing out Johar, but the filmmaker was ready to answer.

The comment under the post read, "A gaya nepo kid ka daijaan (here comes the nanny of nepo kids)".

Johar responded by saying, "Chup kar!!! Ghar baithe baithe negativity mat paal! Do bachon ka kaam dekh !! Aur khud kuch kaam kar (Shut up. Don't breed negativity while sitting at home. Watch the work by two kids and do some work yourself)." The filmmaker often faces negativity when it comes to the topic of nepotism as he has launched several star kids, including Alia Bhatt, Varun Dhawan, Jahnvi Kapoor, and Ananya

Pandey.

"Saiyaara" collected ₹ 21.25 crore at the box office on its opening day. The film has emerged as the biggest opening day release ever for a debutant-led film, a career-best opening for the director Suri, and the highest opening day for a love story. It is described as an intense love story of a young couple and is backed by Yash Raj Films (YRF).

Johar is gearing for the release of his next, "Dhadak 2", which he is producing alongside Hiroo Johar, Apoorva Mehta, Somen Mishra, Adar Poonawalla, Umesh Bernal, Meenu Arora. Directed by Shazia Iqbal, the film stars Tripti Dimri and Siddhant Chaturvedi and is slated to release in theatres on August 1. (PTI)



'Difficult Daughters', backed by Alia and Shaheen, chosen for Asian Project Market at BIFF

NEW DELHI, July 21: Actor Soni Razdan's "Difficult Daughters", produced by daughters Alia and Shaheen Bhatt, is among the four films from India selected for this year's Asian Project Market at the Busan International Film Festival.

The indie film also lists Alan McAlex and Grishma Shah as producers. Cannes-winner Payal Kapadia and her "All We Imagine As Light" actor Kani Kusruti have teamed up with "The Great Indian Kitchen" director Jeo Baby to back "Last of Them Plagues". The film, directed by Kunjila Mascillamani, is also part of the list alongside Saurav Rai-directed "Lanka" (The Fire) and "Moon" by Pradip Kurbah. "Lanka" is produced by Sudeepata, Sadhukhan, Viraj Selot and Ankita Purkayastha.

Asian Project Market, the largest co-production and financing platform in Asia, plays a vital role in discovering emerging talent and connecting them with global investors.

This year APM received a record-breaking 455 submissions from 44 countries and selected 30 projects from 15 countries. The line-up also includes several other filmmakers who have previously been at the Busan International Film Festival, including Kurbah whose "Iewduh" won the Kim Ji-seok award at the festival in 2019. Bangladeshi filmmaker Biplob Sarkar is also returning with LGBTQ+-themed "The Magical Men" after screening his debut feature "The Stranger" at the festival in 2023. The Busan International Film Festival runs from 17 to 26 September and the APM will be held from September 20 to 23. (PTI)

India to host chess World Cup in October-November

NEW DELHI, July 21: India will host this year's chess World Cup from October 30 to November 27 with a host city for the event to be named in "due course", the sport's global governing body FIDE announced on Monday.

The tournament that will see 206 players battling for the coveted title and qualification spots in the 2026 FIDE Candidates Tournament. India last hosted the event in 2002 in Hyderabad where Viswanathan Anand won the title.

The players will compete in a knockout format, where the losing player in each round is eliminated. "The event has used several formats over the years, but since 2021, it has followed a single-elimination format. Each round spans three days: two classical games on the first two days, followed by tie-breaks on the third day, if necessary," FIDE stated.

In the first round, the top 50 players receive byes, while players seeded from 51 to 206 compete, with pairings based on the principle of the top half versus the reversed lower half.

"The top three finishers of the 2025 World Cup will earn direct qualification for the 2026 Candidates Tournament, which determines the challenger for the World Chess Championship," FIDE said.

Reigning world champion D Gukesh, R Praggnanandhaa, the runner-up of the 2023 World Cup, and Arjun Erigaisi, currently ranked world number five, are among the stars who would be seen in action. World number one Magnus Carlsen has also qualified to compete in the biennial event that he won in 2023.

India has recently hosted major events, including the 2022 Chess Olympiad, Tata Steel Chess India, the 2024 World Junior U20 Championships 2024, and the 5th leg of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix in April this year.

"We are thrilled to bring the FIDE World Cup 2025 to India, a country with a deep-rooted passion and support for chess. Indian chess fans' enthusiasm has always been remarkable, and we anticipate great interest in the event among local chess lovers, both on-site and online," FIDE CEO Emil Sutovsky said in a press release. (PTI)

WORLD C'SHIPS FROM AUG 25 TO 31 IN PARIS SATWIK-CHIRAG EYE STRONG START AT CHINA OPEN



CHANGZHOU, July 21: India's top men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will aim to build momentum for the upcoming World Championships when they compete at the China Open Super 1000 badminton tournament starting here on Tuesday.

The China Open is the last major event before the World Championships, scheduled from August 25 to 31 in Paris, and all players will be hoping to register some wins to build confidence ahead of the prestigious tournament.

Currently ranked world No. 15, Satwik and Chirag have reached three semifinals this season, including the Malaysia and India Open in January, but their progress was stalled by Satwik's health concerns and Chirag's back

injury, which kept them out for several weeks.

On their return, the duo made the semifinals at the Singapore Open and the quarterfinals at the Indonesia Open. However, they suffered a setback last week, losing to Paris Olympic silver medallists China's Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang at the Japan Open.

The former world No. 1 pair will look to bounce back quickly when they open against Japan's Kenya Mitsuhashi and Hiroki Okamura.

In singles, Lakshya Sen, HS Prannoy, and PV Sindhu will hope to regain form at the USD 2,000,000 event.

Lakshya, currently ranked 18, has struggled with consistency this season, managing only a quarterfinal finish at the All Eng-

land.

The 23-year-old has battled shoulder, ankle, and back issues. He showed glimpses of form in a narrow three-game defeat to world No. 3 Shi Yu Qi in Indonesia but fell in the second round at Tokyo last week against Japan's Kodai Naraoka. He opens against China's fifth seed Li Shi Feng.

Prannoy, who won World Championships and Asian Games bronze medals in 2023, has dropped to world No. 35. The former top 10 player returns after missing the Japan Open and faces Japan's Koki Watanabe in the first round.

For Sindhu, now ranked 16, a quarterfinal at the India Open remains her best result this year. The 30-year-old former world champion has suffered multiple early exits despite training under

Indonesian coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama for the past six months.

Last week, she lost to Korea's Sim Yu Jin, marking her fifth first-round exit this year.

Sindhu opens against Japan's sixth seed Tomoka Miyazaki, the 18-year-old former world junior champion.

Among others, Unnati Hooda, a Taipei Open semifinalist earlier this year, faces Scotland's Kirsty Gilmour in the first round, while Anupama Upadhyaya takes on Lin Hsiang Ti of Chinese Taipei.

In women's doubles, Kavipriya Selvam-Simran Singh, the Panda sisters Rutaparna and Sweta, and the pair of Amrutha Pramuthesh-Sonali Singh are in the fray, while Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde will compete in mixed doubles. (PTI)

Task cut out for India Women in series-decider after England rally

CHESTER-LE-STREET (UK), July 21: Coming off a mediocre outing thanks to their injudicious shot selection in the testing conditions at Lord's, India will have their task cut out when they face a rejuvenated England in the series-deciding third Women's ODI here on Tuesday.

Visiting India produced a fine display with the bat to win the first match by four wickets but came a cropper in a rain-curtailed game in the British capital on Saturday to leave the three-match series evenly poised at 1-1 heading into the final ODI.

The series holds significance for both teams as the World Cup is scheduled to start in two months' time. The marquee 50-over women's tournament kick-starts on September 30, with five cities across Sri Lanka and India playing host.

India came into the second game with their nose ahead and were expected to grab the series due to their all-round strength and form of some big players.

However, poor shot selection and an inability to adapt to the conditions spoiled their plans as they struggled to 143 for eight batting first in a 29-overs-a-side contest.

The bowlers, too, failed as England's top-order batters completed an easy chase with plenty of overs to spare.

Now, coming into the decider, India suddenly have a lot to ponder over.

Except for vice-captain Smriti Mandhana and Deepti Sharma, their batters were found wanting against the likes of Sophie Ecclestone, Em Arlott and Linsey Smith at Lord's and the bowling also failed to live up to the expectations. With the accurate Ecclestone leading the way, the India batters struggled against the spinners especially, and they will certainly hope for a much better outing against the slow bowlers at Chester-le-Street.

India bat long but for the visitors to win the game and the se-

ries, they will need at least a couple of players from among Mandhana, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, Jemimah Rodrigues, Pratika Rawal, and Harleen Deol to play big knocks with Richa Ghosh and Deepti providing them support lower down the order.

The team will be looking for early breakthroughs from the pacers before the spinners get into the act.

As far as England are concerned, they are in a much better space then they were after the series-opener and the likes of Ecclestone and Arlott would look to do an encore with the ball.

The batters such as Amy Jones and Tammy Beaumont with captain Nat Sciver Brunt would also be wanting to contribute handsomely to the team's cause.

Adding some spice would a hint of tension that was visible in the second game.

The Harmanpreet-led side had appealed for obstruction of the field by Tammy Beaumont after Jemimah threw the ball at the striker's end.

The Indians believed that the batter deliberately blocked the throw, but the third umpire concluded that it was not out after taking a good look at the replays causing a fair bit of disappointment in the visiting camp.

Teams (from):

India: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Pratika Rawal, Harleen Deol, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Yastika Bhatia (wk), Tejal Hasabnis, Deepti Sharma, Sneha Rana, Sree Charni, Shuchi Upadhyay, Amanjot Kaur, Arundhati Reddy, Kranti Gaud, Sayali Satghare.

England squad: Nat Sciver-Brunt (c), Em Arlott, Tammy Beaumont, Lauren Bell, Maia Bouchier, Alice Capsey, Kate Cross, Alice Davidson-Richards, Charlie Dean, Sophia Dunkley, Sophie Ecclestone, Lauren Filer, Amy Jones, Emma Lamb, Linsey Smith.

Match starts at 5:30pm IST. (PTI)

McIlroy falls short in bid to crown British Open homecoming with the claret jug

PORTRUSH (NORTHERN IRELAND), July 21: Scottie Scheffler was walking down the first fairway at Royal Portrush when a shout came from outside the ropes: "Go Rory!"

They were all over the Dunluce Links again Sunday, those passionate supporters of Rory McIlroy cheering on their favorite son in the final act of his homecoming — whether they were watching him or not. The big disappointment for McIlroy was that he couldn't deliver what they craved.

"It's been an awesome week," McIlroy said after shooting 2-under 69 to tie for seventh at the British Open. "I've gotten everything I wanted out of this week apart from a claret jug, and that's just because one person was just a little bit better than the rest of us."

That might be an understatement.

Scheffler, the world No. 1, won by four shots to capture his fourth major title. He was seven strokes clear of McIlroy and playing on a different level in this pretty corner of Northern Ireland.

McIlroy even acknowledged as much. "He's an incredible player," he said of Scheffler. "He's been dominant this week. Honestly, he's been dominant for the last couple years. He is the bar that we're all trying to get to."

As for Scheffler, he could only apologize for spoiling the McIlroy party. "I know I wasn't the fan favorite today," he said, grinning, in his post-round speech on No. 18, "but I did hear a lot of USA and Dallas, Texas chants."

Scheffler might have won two majors this year and asserted himself as the game's dominant player. Yet, for many, 2025 still belongs to McIlroy after his dramatic win at the Masters in April to complete the

career Grand Slam. Fans came in droves this week to celebrate McIlroy's achievements, and produced some of the loudest roars he has ever heard on a golf course.

If McIlroy didn't quite deliver, then Royal Portrush — where he shot 61 as a 16-year-old for the course record — certainly did, gaining widespread rave reviews.

When the Open returned to Portrush in 2019 for the first time in 68 years, McIlroy was so emotional he hit his opening drive out-of-bounds, shot 79 and missed the cut.

He made amends six years later.

"I feel so thankful and just so lucky that I get to do this in front of this crowd," McIlroy said. "Hopefully I'll have one or two Opens left here, if the R&A decide to keep coming back — probably one while I'm still competitive and another one while I'm more gray than I already am."

McIlroy started Sunday six strokes back from Scheffler after a wild third-round 66, and needed a minor miracle to catch his big rival.

He got up-and-down for birdie at the par-5 second hole but couldn't make a fast enough start. A bogey at No. 4, after missing the green with his approach, was a mistake he couldn't afford and he suddenly was eight shots adrift of Scheffler, who played as steady as ever.

A double at No. 10 ended his hopes.

McIlroy couldn't reproduce his Saturday charge but at least played all four days this time.

"I tried as best as I could to keep my emotions in check, especially walking up the last there and that reception," McIlroy said.

"It's just been incredible to come back here and to play and at least feel like I had a chance today going out there. Just an awesome week." (AP)

Italy one win away from women's Euro final, 3 years after players were permitted to turn pro

ROME, July 21: Italy is one win away from reaching the final of the Women's European Championship, but just three years ago its players couldn't even get professional contracts in their own country.

Little wonder veteran captain Cristiana Girelli was in tears after her two goals inspired Italy to a 2-1 victory over Norway last week, and a first semifinal appearance at the tournament in 28 years.

The Azzurre next plays defending champion England on Tuesday in Geneva.

"It's a great joy to be among the top four in Europe and it is a happiness that we want to share because we know how important it is to bring home the results in Italy and especially for the new generations," Girelli said, after again wiping the tears from her eyes.

"Because obviously we do this for our glory but there is a much deeper meaning, which we certainly want to bring, which is that in Italy women can play soccer too."

Of course they can, although they couldn't hope to make a lot of money for it until 2022 after years of amateur-only status.

It was in April of that year that the executive board of the sport's national federation approved new regulations to open the way for a women's professional era starting July 1 — in time for the following Serie A season.

A 1981 Italian law had limited female players to amateur status, meaning they couldn't earn more than 30,000 euros (\$32,000) per year before taxes.

Benefits such as social security contributions, an end-of-career fund, pension, medical protection for injuries and maternity leave were a distant dream.

The 35-year-old Girelli and many of her national teammates have experienced the change firsthand, with several of them having had to do hospitality jobs to support their soccer careers.

"There were difficult years where



we really suffered a lot," Girelli said. The push to make the women's game professional in Italy followed the national team's surprise run to the quarterfinals of the 2019 Women's World Cup.

It was also helped by the big clubs — Juventus, AC Milan, Inter Milan, Roma and Lazio — starting to invest more in their women's teams.

Progress has been slower than in the countries of its traditional soccer rivals — such as England, France and Spain — but Italy is showing signs that it is catching up on the international stage.

Under coach Andrea Sorcini, Italy is proving it can go toe-to-toe with the top teams, culminating in its first semifinal match at the European tournament since a run to the

1997 final.

"It's something magical," Girelli said. "But to tell you the truth I have felt something special in the air since I arrived in Switzerland, since the coach took charge of this team I felt something special."

"And you know, women are never wrong with their feelings," she continued with a wry smile.

While it hasn't quite reached fever pitch back home, 2.4 million television viewers in Italy — a 16.2% audience share — watched the team's match against Norway and that's likely to be even more for the semifinals.

"We hope this love, this affection, this atmosphere that's coming to us from Italy doesn't disappear," Girelli said. "I really hope that with all my heart because we struggled to get here."

"We've reached something amazing, something extraordinary, and however it goes, I really hope it continues to feed this passion, this love for us." (AP)

Scottie Scheffler dominates in British Open victory for his 2nd major title this year

PORTRUSH (NORTHERN IRELAND), July 21: The enormous yellow scoreboard above the 18th green at Royal Portrush perfectly illustrated the state of golf these days. Scottie Scheffler's name was at the top. No one was close.

That's how it was in the British Open on Sunday, when Scheffler never gave anyone a chance from the time his 9-iron settled a foot away for birdie on the first hole until he tapped in for a 3-under 68 and a four-shot victory over Harris English. That's how it is in the sport, a level of dominance not seen since Tiger Woods.

"He is the bar that we're all trying to get to," Masters champion Rory McIlroy said. "In a historical context, you could argue that there's only maybe two or three players in the history of the game that have been on a run the one that Scottie's been on here for the last 24 to 36 months. Incredibly impres-



sive." Scheffler not only won his second major this year — and fourth in the last three years — he captured the third leg of the career Grand Slam, now missing only the U.S. Open.

He became the first player in more than a century to win his first fourth major title by at least three

shots, and if not for his lone blunder from a bunker on the eighth hole when he had a seven-shot lead, he would have played bogey-free on the weekend.

"Being able to walk up 18 with the tournament in hand is a really tough thing to describe. It's a really cool feeling. I have a lot of grati-

tude towards being able to accomplish something like this," Scheffler said, the silver claret jug on the table next to him.

"It's taken a lot of work — not only a lot of work, but it takes a lot of patience," he said. "It's a high level of focus over 72 holes of a tournament. This was, I felt like, one of my best performances mentally."

The emotions he showed were telling.

Until he had his name etched on golf's oldest trophy, Scheffler had a week marked by his extraordinary insight on how he views winning. He said celebrations last only a few minutes. He has wondered, "What's the point?"

He loves the work required to be the best. He thrives on competition. But in terms of fulfillment, he often questions why he wants to win so badly when the thrill of winning is fleeting.

On the golf course, his biggest fist pump was for a par on the sixth hole. As he crouched to line up his birdie putt on the 18th, he rested his head on his hand with a slight smile of deep satisfaction. When he tapped in the final putt, he plucked the ball from the cup and put it in his pocket as if he had just won a regular PGA Tour event.

But when he finally found his family — wife Meredith, 15-month-old son Bennett, and his parents — Scheffler went crazy. He thrust both arms in the air, pumped both arms, screamed and threw his cap in the air. That's what it's all about for the 29-year-old from Texas. "She's always the first person I want to celebrate with," he said. "She knows me better than anybody. That's my best friend. It takes a lot of work to be able to become good at this game, and I wouldn't be able to do it without her support." (AP)

ICC forms working committee to explore two-tier Test system; CL T20 to re-launch next year



LONDON, July 21: An eight-member working group, headed by ICC's new chief executive officer Sanjog Gupta, has been formed by the game's global governing body to explore the possibility of restructuring Test cricket into a two-tier system. The committee was set up during ICC's annual general meeting in Singapore under the all-Indian leadership of the chair, Jay Shah and Gupta, who was appointed as CEO earlier this month.

Other members of the panel include England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chief executive Richard Gould and the Cricket Australia (CA) chief executive Todd Greenberg, according to a report in 'The Guardian'.

"Any changes would be introduced for the next cycle of the World Test Championship, due to run from 2027 to 2029, and involve an expansion from the current nine-team format to two divisions of six," the report read.

The working party has been asked to submit its recommendations to the board by the end of the year. The presence of Gould and Greenberg indicate that there is strong possibility of the new two-tier system being introduced as CA and ECB have been major advocates of it.

Currently, nine teams compete in the World Test Championship, but if the proposed two-tier system is implemented, the structure would shift to two divisions of six teams each, featuring a promotion and relegation mechanism. CA and ECB discussed the two-tier concept last year. CA has been a key proponent, pushing for a model where Australia, England, and India face each other twice every three years, an increase from the current format of two series every four years.

More than 10 years after its last edition, the Champions League T20 (CLT20), a club-based international T20 competition, could make a comeback next year, with the ICC actively exploring its revival.

Discussions around re-launching the competition have been ongoing, with cricket boards from India, Australia, and England leading the conversations. The proposal to revive it has reportedly received backing from key member nations at the AGM, according to 'Sydney Morning Herald'.

The last edition of the CLT20 was held in India in 2014 with Chennai Super Kings winning the title after defeating Kolkata Knight Riders in the final at Bengaluru. That edition involved three teams from India, two each from Australia and South Africa, and one side each from Pakistan, West Indies, and New Zealand. As many as six editions of the CLT20 were played between 2009-10 to 2014-15, with four of these being organised in India and two in South Africa. The tournament was won twice each by Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians, while Australia's New South Wales and Sydney Sixes won it one time each. (PTI)

With Asia Cup uncertain, PCB's revenue could take massive hit

KARACHI, July 21: With the future of this year's Asia Cup T20 tournament mired in uncertainty, the Pakistan Cricket Board is bracing for a severe hit to its revenue. The Pakistan Cricket Board is expecting to earn an estimated 8.8 billion rupees this year from its share of the revenue from the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the Asian Cricket Council (ACC).

According to details coming from a reliable Board source, the PCB has outlined an amount of USD 25.9 million (approximately 7.7 billion rupees) during this fiscal year as its share from the ICC. The Board is hoping to earn another 1.16 billion rupees from the Asia Cup and 7.77 million rupees through other international cricket events.

"The revenues from these two major sources (ICC and Asia Cup) is very important for the financial health of Pakistan cricket," one well-informed insider said.

He said the uncertainty over the schedule and venue for the Asia Cup has increased as PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi did not travel to Singapore for the ICC meetings last weekend. Naqvi, who is also the federal interior minister, instead took part in the AGM virtually.

According to the insider, PCB CEO Sumair Ahmed, who had gone for the ICC meeting, "didn't get positive responses" from either the BCCI or the boards of Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan over attending the ACC meeting called on July 24 in Dhaka to finalise the Asia Cup arrangements. (PTI)

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Discussions around re-launching the competition have been ongoing, with cricket boards from India, Australia, and England leading the conversations. The proposal to revive it has reportedly received backing from key member nations at the AGM, according to 'Sydney Morning Herald'.

The last edition of the CLT20 was held in India in 2014 with Chennai Super Kings winning the title after defeating Kolkata Knight Riders in the final at Bengaluru. That edition involved three teams from India, two each from Australia and South Africa, and one side each from Pakistan, West Indies, and New Zealand. As many as six editions of the CLT20 were played between 2009-10 to 2014-15, with four of these being organised in India and two in South Africa. The tournament was won twice each by Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians, while Australia's New South Wales and Sydney Sixes won it one time each. (PTI)

Currently, nine teams compete in the World Test Championship, but if the proposed two-tier system is implemented, the structure would shift to two divisions of six teams each, featuring a promotion and relegation mechanism. CA and ECB discussed the two-tier concept last year. CA has been a key proponent, pushing for a model where Australia, England, and India face each other twice every three years, an increase from the current format of two series every four years.

Owen's debut half-century and wicket propel Australia to T20 win over West Indies

KINGSTON (JAMAICA), July 21: Mitchell Owen marked his international debut with a half-century and a wicket to help Australia to a three-wicket win in the Twenty20 cricket series opener against West Indies.

Owen shared an 80-run fifth-wicket stand off 40 deliveries with Cameron Green, who scored 51 off 26 balls, to put Australia on course to reach the victory target of 190 with seven balls to spare on Sunday.

After being sent in to bat and making a flying start, West Indies was restricted to 189-8 after losing four wickets for five runs off the last nine balls.

Australian fast bowler Ben Dwarshuis returned a career-best 4-36, taking three wickets in four deliveries — Jason Holder blocked a hat-trick ball but was out next delivery — in the next-to-last over of the West Indies innings.

The top four West Indies batters all got starts, with Roston Chase plundering 60 from 32 deliveries before he was caught in the deep off Dwarshuis' bowling to end a 91-run second-wicket partnership with Shai Hope (55) in the 13th over.

A notable win has given Australia, coming off a 3-0 test series sweep, an early lead in the five-game T20 series.



Owen, a Tasmanian allrounder who opened the batting with success for the Hobart Hurricanes in the domestic T20 league last season, joined David Warner and Ricky Ponting as Australians who've scored a half-century on debut in the format.

"Firstly happy we got the win — it was nice to contribute," he said. "Just nice to be mentioned with those class players."

The 23-year-old allrounder's first scoring shot was a six straight down the ground against Andre Russell in a contest between a player on international debut against a veteran playing his next-to-last game. He also clouted the last ball of that over for six.

Owen hit three sixes in one over from Akeal Hosein that went for 20 runs and included a dropped catch when the batter was on 26.

He survived a very narrow miss on 42. Owen was at the non-striker's end and was out of his ground when Cameron Green hit a drive straight back down the pitch and it went through spinner Gu-

dakesh Motie's hands and hit the stumps. After a long delay to check with ultra-edge technology, there was no evidence of any touch from Motie and umpires confirmed Owen was not out.

Green raised his 50 off 25 balls later in the same over with a six and a boundary but was out next ball, caught in the deep off Motie.

Owen scored 50 off 27 deliveries before he was caught out in the deep off Alzarri Joseph's bowling with Australia needing 15 runs from 21 deliveries and four wickets in hand for victory.

Shimron Hetmyer swiped Owen's first delivery in international cricket — in the 16th over of the match — over his left shoulder for six in extraordinary fashion. But the young Australian got his first wicket two balls later when Hope mis-timed a slower ball and was caught in the deep after hitting four boundaries and three sixes in a 39-ball innings.

"Fantastic," Australia skipper Mitch Marsh said of Owen's debut. "Any time you get a young kid that comes in and performs like that in his first game for Australia, it's always really exciting."

"I'm sure there'll be lots of people — I think it's mid-morning back home now — that would've watched that and will be really excited. So we're pumped for him." (AP)

Nepal's team to train at BCCI Centre of Excellence

NEW DELHI, July 21: Nepal's men's cricket team will train at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru from August 20 to September 4 as part of its preparations for the T20 World Cup qualifiers, a move that is supported by the Indian government to "connect the youth of the two countries". The T20 World Cup qualifiers are scheduled in October this year. The tournament proper will be held in India and Sri Lanka.

India previously supported training of Nepal's team at the Centre of Excellence in August last year.

Nepal also participated in a triangular T20 practice tournament against teams of Baroda and Gujarat Cricket Associations before the T20 Cricket Cup held in June last year.

"Cricket cooperation has added a new dimension to the deep rooted and age-old historical ties between India and Nepal, connecting the youth of the two countries through a shared passion for cricket," an Indian government official stated. (PTI)

Karate competition in Shillong attracts over 700 participants

SHILLONG, July 21: Buoyed by a string of strong performances at national championships in recent times, Meghalaya's young karatekas are set to showcase their skills at home as more than 700 participants from 101 schools gear up for the 31st State Level Inter School Karate Tournament 2025.

The All Meghalaya Karate-Do Association is organising the three-day tournament from July 24 to 26 at the Multipurpose Indoor Hall, SAI, NEHU campus in Shillong. A total of 731 karatekas have registered for the event, up from 609 last year, marking a new record and reflecting the growing enthusiasm for the martial art among school students in the state.

Meghalaya's karate contingent has earned national acclaim in recent times. At the National Shoto Cup Karate Championship 2023 in Khandala, the state team was crowned overall champions with an impressive haul of 109 medals, including 45 gold.

The success continued with 22 medals at the SEIKOKAI All India Karate Championship (February 2024), 32 medals at the All India Independence Karate Championship (August 2024), and 12 medals at the Federation Cup Premier League & Youth League Championship (November 2024), all held in New Delhi. Last year, St Anthony's Higher Secondary School were the champions in the boys' category, while Sacred Heart Girls Higher Secondary School claimed the girls' title. (PTI)

Six Indian badminton players barred from World University Games due to alleged administrative lapse

NEW DELHI, July 21: The Indian badminton squad that won the mixed team bronze medal at the ongoing World University Games in Rhine-Ruhr, Germany has been hit by a controversy over selection after six of the 12 chosen players were barred from participating due to an alleged administrative lapse.

Twelve players were selected and sent to represent India, but only six were allowed to compete as officials failed to submit all names correctly during the managers' meeting on July 16.

"This is not just mismanagement — it's career sabotage. We demand answers, accountability, and that our voices be heard. We didn't lose a match — we lost our right to even participate," wrote Alisha Khan, one of the players left out, on Instagram.

"This isn't just a mistake. It's career sabotage by AIU and our team officials. We demand justice."

According to sources, BV Rao and Ajit Mohan were the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) officials who attended the meeting. The AIU, which is the nodal body for university-level sports in the country, acknowledged the incident.

"We have been informed about this and the matter is being investigated," AIU Secretary Dr Pankaj Mittal told PTI while refusing to comment any further.

According to a source, the issue was not just an error but stemmed from "systematic irregularities" starting from the selection trials held at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), Bhubaneswar.

"During the managers' meeting, officials were given a letter listing all 12 players from India. It was their responsibility to read it carefully, check for missing or injured players, and confirm or adjust the names accordingly. However, they took it lightly," the source said.

"The names of players who hadn't attended trials were there. They came here only to enjoy. In the meeting, they also made a basic mistake. They were supposed to declare which player would play singles, doubles, and mixed, but didn't process it properly."

Saneeth Dayanand, Sathish Kumar Karunakaran, Devika Sihag, Tasnim Mir, Varshini Viswanath Sri, and Vaishnavi Khadkekar were the six who competed in the mixed team event.

India defeated Macau but lost to Hong Kong in the group stage, then beat the USA in the round of 16 and Malaysia in the quarterfinals before losing to Chinese Taipei in the semifinals. Rohan Kumar, Darshan Pujari, Aditi Bhatt, Abhinash Mohanty, Viraj Kuvale, and Alisha Khan were part of the 12-member squad but did not get to play.

"The team manager made the blunder. The officials didn't focus during the meeting, and after the trials they didn't follow the proper process. They just submitted six names, so the other six were not allowed by FISU," the source said.

"I don't know whether to call it a technical error or sheer misfortune. Entries were mailed, confirmations received, the team travelled all the way, and yet in the manager's meeting they missed out names. I don't know how it is possible to overlook such a basic responsibility," he added.

He alleged that the players were again being misled with the promise of participation in individual events starting on Tuesday. "Players have been misled throughout. Now that they couldn't stand on the podium, officials are giving them false hopes about participation and medals in the individual events. (PTI)

REGISTRATION AT National Scholarship Portal (NSP)

ONE TIME REGISTRATION (OTR)
TO GET BENEFIT OF THE SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME OF
NATIONAL MEANS-CUM-MERIT SCHOLARSHIP (NMMS) SCHEME
for the scholarship session 2025-26



HOW TO DO STUDENT'S OTR

- Login at <https://scholarships.gov.in>
- Go to Get Your OTR with Aadhaar
- Download NSP OTR App from Google Play Store
- eKYC with Face Authentication by the NSP OTR App

APPLY

APPLY FOR THE NMMS SCHEME:

- Selected students of the National Means-Cum-Merit Scholarship (NMMS) Examination, 2024 must apply at the National Scholarship Portal (NSP) to get the scholarship money on time.
- Students only have to select the National Means Cum Merit Scholarship Scheme under the Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Government of India.
- The NMMS holder students of 2023, 2022 & 2021-22 must submit the Renewal Application at the National Scholarship Portal (NSP). Revised date of Application: 15/08/2025.

INSTITUTE NODAL OFFICER (INO) VERIFICATION

- The Head of the Institution (HOI) has to complete Biometric Authentication to verify the applications.
- HOI has to identify the applications submitted by the students, whether he/she applied for the correct scheme or not. If not, then HOI has to reject the application and inform the concerned student to resubmit the form in the correct scheme.
- The HOI will be responsible for the completion of the registration process by the students on time.
- The HOI must verify the correct applications before 20/08/2025.

DNO

DISTRICT NODAL OFFICER (DNO) VERIFICATION

- The DNO has to provide an ID Password to the INO.
- Also, the DNO has to approve the INO login after their Bio authentication.
- The District Nodal Officer (DNO) has to ascertain the Registration at NSP of each eligible student.
- After INO verification, the DNO has to do a final verification of the application before the last date.
- The DNO verified application will finally proceed for payment of the scholarship money.
- Be careful. No further possibility of registration by the left-out students or INO/DNO Verification at NSP after date is closed. Last date: 30/08/2025.

AADHAAR SEEDING WITH BANK ACCOUNT

- Aadhaar Seeding with the Bank Account of the student is the main part for the student to get the scholarship money through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system.
- The scholarship amount will be credited to the Bank Account after the Aadhaar Seeding only.
- Each bank has to provision on their website to SEED the Bank Account with the Aadhaar.
- Finally, Bank Account have to map at NPCI through the website <https://npci.org.in>

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