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## ULFA (I) camps come under drone attacks, 3 killed, 19 hurt

Himanta, Army deny connections with air strike along India-Myanmar border

**HT Correspondent**  
**DIBRUGARH/GUWAHATI, July 13:** A senior commander of the banned United Liberation Front of Assam (Independent), ULFA(I), was reportedly killed along with two brigadiers and at least 19 others injured in a suspected aerial strike along the India-Myanmar border in the early hours of Sunday, triggering denials from both the Assam government and the Indian Army.

In a press release issued on Sunday, ULFA(I) claimed that the attack began between 2:00 AM and 4:00 AM and targeted several of its mobile camps spread across the Nagaland-Myanmar and Arunachal-Myanmar international borders.

The group alleged that over 150 drones—allegedly of Israeli and French origin—were deployed in the offensive, which it termed a surprise aerial strike. The outfit



Lieutenant General Nayan Asom

confirmed the death of its Lieutenant General Nayan Asom, who was described as the Honorary President of its lower council.

According to the statement, a

missile strike followed shortly after, killing Brigadier Ganesh Asom and Colonel Pradip Asom.

The group also reported injuries among other cadres, officers, and

unspecified civilians.

ULFA(I) further claimed that Indian forces had continued their operation using fighter aircraft, and that air raids were ongoing in certain areas along the border.

The group also alleged that members of Manipuri insurgent outfits, including the Revolutionary People's Front (RPF), political wing of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), suffered casualties in the attack.

However, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma categorically denied any involvement by state police in the purported strike. "Assam Police is not involved in this incident. There has been no strike from the soil of Assam," he told reporters in Guwahati on Sunday.

Sarma added that the state government was monitoring the situation and expected clarity through official channels by the evening. He further **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**

## Support for UNESCO tag, focus on education and grassroots empowerment on tabs Sitharaman concludes Meghalaya visit

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, July 13:** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman concluded her four-day visit to Meghalaya on Sunday with a visit to the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram School in Sohra, underscoring the Centre's focus on education, skill development, and grassroots empowerment in the Northeast.

During her interaction with students and faculty at the century-old institution, Sitharaman commended its long-standing contribution to regional growth.

She also toured the Tailoring and Weaving Centre under the SALUTE initiative, praising its role in promoting sustainable livelihoods through skill-based training.

A poignant moment was her meeting with 90-year-old Kong Lolin Lyndem, an alumna and former teacher, highlighting the school's enduring legacy.

Earlier, on Friday, the Union Finance Minister inaugurated projects worth ₹1,087.81 crore at LARITI – International Centre for Performing Arts.

These include infrastructure and cultural ventures aligned with the state's development roadmap.

Applauding chief minister Conrad Sangma's leadership, she noted Meghalaya's efficient fund utilisation under the ₹5,400 crore SASCI allocation. "The state's efficient fund utilization sets a benchmark," she remarked.



On Saturday, Sitharaman visited Siej village in East Khasi Hills to support Meghalaya's ongoing efforts to secure UNESCO World Heritage status for the iconic living root bridges.

These natural, bioengineered structures—crafted over generations by indigenous Khasi and Jaintia communities—reflect a rare harmony between nature and human ingenuity.

"Recognition is not for showing off, but for showing the world that you did it first," she said, adding that the practices were not only effective but replicable globally.

She backed recent efforts to revive the nomination process, which was first submitted to UNESCO in 2018 under the "cultural landscapes" category.

While the proposal highlighted the ecological, cultural, and architectural significance of the bridges, it had faced delays due to procedural issues and the need for broader community participation in documentation.

Sitharaman also visited Sohbar, a border village in East Khasi Hills, becoming the first Union minister to do so. Emphasising that "border villages like Sohbar are not the end of India, but the beginning," **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**

## EC activates field machinery for possible pan-India voter list



**NEW DELHI, July 13:** The Election Commission has activated its poll machinery across states for a possible roll out of pan-India special intensive revision (SIR) next month just like the one being carried out in Bihar.

The move comes after the Supreme Court last week called the SIR a "constitutional mandate" and permitted the poll panel to continue with the exercise in Bihar. Several opposition parties and others had moved the top court challenging the intensive revision, saying it will deprive eligible citizens of their right to vote. Some of the state chief electoral officers have started putting out voters' list published after the last SIR held in their states.

The website of Delhi CEO has the 2008 voters' list when the last intensive revision took place in the national capital. In Uttarakhand, the last SIR took place in 2006 and that year's electoral roll is now on the state CEO website. The last SIR in states will serve as cut off dates as 2003 voters list of Bihar is being used by EC for intensive revision. Most of the states carried out the revision of electoral rolls between 2002 and 2004. The poll authority will take a final call on nationwide exercise after July 28 when the Bihar SIR case will come up again for hearing in the top court, an official suggested.

The Election Commission announced that it will eventually carry out an intensive review of electoral rolls across India to remove foreign illegal migrants by checking their place of birth.

Bihar is going to polls this year while assembly polls in these five other states -- Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal -- are scheduled in 2026.

The move assumes significance in the wake of a crackdown in various states on illegal foreign migrants, including from Bangladesh and Myanmar. (PTI)

## CM reviews flood situation in Golaghat

Relief and rehab for affected assured

**GUWAHATI, July 13:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday undertook an extensive visit to flood-affected areas across Golaghat district, where he inspected multiple relief camps, interacted with displaced residents, and directed the district administration to ensure timely relief, compensation, and long-term mitigation measures.

The visit was part of a statewide flood-response initiative launched by the Assam government in response to the monsoon-induced devastation.

According to an official statement, the Chief Minister's visit covered the worst-hit revenue circles of Khumtai, Sarupathar, Bokakhat, Morongi, Golaghat, and Dergaon.

These areas have been reeling



under floodwaters for days, affecting thousands and causing significant agricultural losses.

Sarma first arrived at the relief camp set up at Simoluchapori Primary School under the Sarupathar

Revenue Circle. The administration reported that floods in this circle alone have affected 1,708 people across 31 villages and damaged approximately 451.7 hectares of cropland. **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**

## Retired officer files FIR over fake appointment letters in Jorhat

**HT Correspondent**  
**JORHAT, July 13:** A retired District Agriculture Officer (DAO), Dr Nitumoni Gogoi, has lodged a formal complaint with the Jorhat Police, alleging that forged appointment letters bearing his name and signature have been circulated for posts in the Agriculture Department and Assam Agricultural University (AAU).

According to the FIR filed at Jorhat Police Station, the fraudulent documents, dated July 12, 2025, falsely list Dr Gogoi as the issuing authority in his former capacity as DAO, Jorhat.

Dr Gogoi clarified that he retired as DAO, Golaghat on December 31, 2024, and had only briefly held the post in Jorhat earlier.

Speaking to this newspaper, Dr Gogoi said he became aware of the fake appointment letters through a reliable source, who shared copies with him.

The documents allegedly appointed three individuals to posts at AAU and the District Agriculture Office in Nalbari.

The positions listed were Assistant Laboratory Bearer at DAO, Nalbari; Junior Soil Tester, Soil

Department, AAU, Jorhat; and Executive Soil Ranger Assistant, Soil Department, AAU, Jorhat.

Dr Gogoi pointed out several discrepancies in the forged documents, including the incorrect usage of "District Agricultural Officer" instead of the official designation "District Agriculture Officer" and the unauthorized use of a DAO's authority to issue government appointments.

He also questioned how a state Agriculture Department official could appoint staff to a university like AAU, which follows an entirely separate recruitment procedure.

"A serving DAO doesn't have the authority to appoint anyone, let alone issue appointments for a university. Moreover, I am retired. This is clearly a case of forgery, and I hope a proper investigation will uncover those behind this racket," Dr Gogoi stated.

The appointment letters reportedly list candidates from Tezpur, Golaghat, and Sivasagar.

Police are expected to launch an inquiry into the matter based on Dr Gogoi's FIR.

## AI 171 crew acted in line with responsibility under challenging conditions: AI Pilots' grouping ICPA

**MUMBAI, July 13:** The Indian Commercial Pilots' Association (ICPA) on Sunday said the crew of the AI 171 flight that crashed last month acted in line with their training and responsibilities under challenging conditions, and the pilots should not be vilified based on conjecture.

Strongly rejecting insinuations in some quarters about pilot suicide, the association representing narrow-body pilots of Air India stressed that until the official investigation is concluded and the final report is published, any speculation is unacceptable and must be condemned.

It may be noted here that the Airline Pilots' Association of India also had on Saturday demanded a fair and fact-based probe into the Air India plane crash as it claimed that the tone and direction of the investigation into the Air India plane crash suggests a bias towards pilot error.

ICPA is the narrow-body fleet pilots' body at Tata Group-owned Air India.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) has released its preliminary report into the fatal Boeing 787-8 plane crash on June 12 that killed 260 people. The report has found that the fuel supply to both engines of Air India flight AI171 was cut off within a second of each other, causing confusion in the cockpit and the airplane plummeting back to the ground almost immediately after taking off.

The 15-page report says that in the cockpit voice recording, one unidentified pilot asked the other why he had cut off the fuel, which the other denied.

In its preliminary report on the crash of Air India's



AI 171 flight from Ahmedabad to London Gatwick on June 12 that killed 260 people, the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) on Saturday said the fuel switches of the Boeing 787-8 aircraft were cut off soon after takeoff.

"In the cockpit voice recording, one of the pilots is heard asking the other why did he cutoff. The other pilot responded that he did not do so," the report said. ICPA on Sunday said it is deeply disturbed by speculative narratives emerging in sections of the media and public discourse—particularly the reckless and unfounded insinuation of pilot suicide.

"There is absolutely no basis for such a claim at this stage, and invoking such a serious allegation based on incomplete or preliminary information is not only irresponsible -- it is deeply insensitive to the individuals and families involved," **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**

## Two co-accused in Raja Raghuvanshi murder case get bail

**SHILLONG, July 13:** A local court here has granted bail to Lokendra Singh Tomar and Balbir Ahirwar, two co-accused in the murder of Indore businessman Raja Raghuvanshi in May this year.

Tomar is the owner of the flat in Indore where Sonam had stayed after fleeing Meghalaya and Balbir was the security guard at the property.

The Judicial Magistrate First Class on Friday granted bail to Tomar and Ahirwar as they had cooperated fully with investigations. They were charged under bailable offences, their lawyer said.

They faced charges related to obstruction of justice and tampering with evidence at a flat in Indore where Sonam and her alleged boyfriend Raj Kushwaha had stayed after the murder of Raja Raghuvanshi.

Raja Raghuvanshi a businessman from Indore went missing on May 23 while on a honeymoon with wife Sonam in Meghalaya. His mutilated body was found in a deep gorge in Sohra area **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**

## Saha lays foundation for setting up replica of 51 Shakti Peethas



**AGARTALA, July 13:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Sunday laid the foundation stone for establishing a replica of 51 Shakti Peethas in Gomati district's Bandower, aiming to boost religious tourism in the northeastern state.

Speaking at a programme, Saha said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a conclave of the chief ministers of BJP-ruled states, had emphasised developing a tourism site of global standard to attract visitors from around the world.

"In line with the prime minister's wish, we are going to set up a replica of 51 Shakti Peethas at Bandower to attract millions of tourists from around the world," he said.

Saha said the Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned Rs 98 crore for developing a world-class spiritual spot at Bandower.

According to the plan, idols of 51-Shakti Peethas will be installed at the site, spreading over 15 acres of land, he said.

The spiritual site will have an interpretation centre, the biggest idol of Nataraj in the world, a cafeteria, a sky bridge and cottages for accommodation. The proposed facilities will have a capacity of managing 7000 pilgrims at a time, he said.

Hoping that the proposed replica of the 51-Shakti Peethas will be an important spiritual spot in the country, the chief minister said a person can't visit all the Shakti Peethas, spreading across the Indian sub-continent- Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Saha added that the prime minister will be invited to consecrate the 51-Shakti Peethas, which is scheduled to be ready in the next one and a half years.

He said the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has already sanctioned Rs 18 crore to develop Kambewari Kali Bari in Sepahajala and the ADB is likely to fund a facelift project for Chaturdash Devta temple in West Tripura.

Asserting that tourism plays a significant role in boosting the state's gross domestic product, the chief minister said the proposed replica of 51-Shakti Peethas will not only promote spiritual tourism but also strengthen Tripura's growth engine.

The chief minister said the government will provide security to tourists and is set to appoint over 6,000 special executives to assist the state force in maintaining law and order. (PTI)

## In India, approximately 75-80 per cent of infections are asymptomatic Phase-3 dengue vaccine trial enrolment to end by October: ICMR

**NEW DELHI, July 13:** Enrolment of about 10,500 participants in the phase III clinical trial of the indigenous one-shot Panacea Biotech developed dengue vaccine, Dengvaxia, is likely to be completed by October across 20 centres in India, according to ICMR scientists.

So far, 8,000 participants in various centres at Pune, Chennai, Kolkata, Delhi and Bhubaneswar among others have received either the vaccine or a placebo as part of the trial sponsored by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Panacea Biotech.

The trial is co-led by ICMR-National Institute of Translational Virology and AIDS research in Pune, National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE), Chennai and National Institute of Virology, Pune.

Currently, there is no antiviral treatment or licensed vaccine against dengue in India.

The results of the Phase-1/2 trial has shown no safety concerns for the one-shot vaccine, NIE Director Dr Manoj Murhekar said.

"The participants enrolled in the Phase-III trial will be followed up for two-years. This trial will evaluate the efficacy of this tetravalent dengue vaccine," Dr Murhekar said.

The multi-centre, double-blind, randomised, placebo-controlled phase-III trial was launched in August last year to evaluate the jab's efficacy, safety and, long-term immunogenicity.

The first participant in this trial was vaccinated at the Pandit Bhagwat Dayal Sharma Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences



(PGIMS), Rohtak last year.

The development of an effective vaccine is complex due to the need to achieve good efficacy for all four serotypes. The dengue virus

has four serotypes, 1-4, with low cross-protection against each other, meaning individuals can experience repeated infections, Dr Murhekar said.

In India, all four serotypes of dengue virus are known to circulate or co-circulate in many regions.

The Union Health Ministry in a statement earlier had said that the tetravalent dengue vaccine strain (TV003/TV005), originally developed by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), USA, has shown promising results in clinical trials in Brazil.

Panacea Biotech, one of three Indian companies to receive the strain, is at the most advanced stage of development. The company has worked extensively on these strains to develop a full-fledged vaccine formulation and holds a process patent for this work.

Dengue is a major public health concern in India, ranking among

the top 30 countries with the highest incidence of the disease.

The global incidence of dengue has been steadily increasing over the past two decades, with more than 129 countries reporting dengue viral disease by the end of 2023, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

In India, approximately 75-80 per cent of infections are asymptomatic, yet these individuals can still transmit the infection through the bite of Aedes mosquitoes.

Among the 20-25 per cent of cases where symptoms are clinically apparent, children are at a significantly higher risk of hospitalisation and mortality. In adults, the disease can escalate into severe conditions like dengue hemorrhagic fever and dengue shock syndrome. **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**



## Polish major among 6 firms in fray for Deocha Pachami coal mining contract: WBPDC

**KOLKATA, July 13:** The West Bengal Power Development Corporation Ltd (WBPDC) is hopeful of finalising the appointment of a mine developer and operator (MDO) soon for underground mining at the mega Deocha Pachami coal block in Birbhum district, with six companies, including one from Poland, already expressing interest through a global tender process, a senior official said.

The world's second-largest coal mining project is expected to attract an investment of Rs 35,000 crore over its project period, according to state government estimates.

"The global expression of interest (EOI) process for underground coal mining has commenced, with six participants expressing interest, including one from Poland. We are working closely and expect to complete the process soon," WBPDC Chairman and Managing Director P B Salim told PTI.

WBPDC Director (Mining) Chanchal Goswami said the EOI was part of the broader global tender floated on December 20, 2024, along with the geological report and draft notice inviting tender (NIT).

"We are working with these six bidders to take forward the tendering process, with India's leading underground mining firms, and a Polish major, participating," he



said.

The list of bidders who have shown initial interest includes JMS Mining Pvt Ltd, Gainwell Com-mosales Pvt Ltd, Minop Innova-tive Technologies Pvt Ltd, Minsol Ltd, Maheshwari Mining Pvt Ltd, and JSW SA, the largest under-ground coal mining company in Poland.

"In parallel, we are also await-ing the expert study report from the National Institute of Rock Me-chanics (NIRM), Bengaluru, given the complex geological challenges at Deocha Pachami. The coal seams are overlaid by thick basalt rock layers, and the NIRM report will help us finalise the mining strategy," Salim said.

The Deocha Pachami coal

block, estimated to hold 1,000 to 1,200 million tonnes of reserves, is considered among the largest in the world. However, its develop-ment has been delayed due to land acquisition issues, environmental sensitivities, and the site's chal-lenging geology, including a hard basalt overburden ranging from 100 to 200 metres and fault lines.

"Underground mining is the only viable option for Deocha Pachami given the land acquisition constraints. WBPDC will also prepare a parallel detailed project report (DPR) to validate the project framework, with assistance from CMPDI," another official said.

Despite market scepticism over private sector participation in un-

derground mining due to high technical risks and capital require-ments, WBPDC's recent pilot project for basalt rock removal has attracted strong interest.

"Basalt rock extraction has al-ready begun. The government started bidding with a 15 per cent revenue share, but it went up to 71.5 per cent -- this was unimagin-able," the official said.

The pilot project commenced after a ceremonial 'bhoomi puja' in February 2025. It spans an initial 12 acres, with plans to expand to 326 acres.

Meanwhile, the tender process has attracted scrutiny, with the CPI(M) demanding a judicial probe into the basalt mining con-tracts, citing concerns over trans-parency.

Separately, the state government is exploring underground coal gasification for around 30 per cent of the block where conventional mining may not be feasible. The remaining 70 per cent is planned to be developed through a mix of un-derground and opencast mining, wherever possible.

The success of the basalt ex-traction has provided fresh momen-tum for advancing Deocha Pachami's underground coal development, which is seen as crucial to West Bengal's future energy security and industrial growth, officials said. (PTI)

## India should avoid rushing for trade pact with US Experts

**NEW DELHI, July 13:** India should avoid rushing into a trade deal with the US that compromises core sectors like agriculture, ex-perts on Sunday said, cautioning that Washington is not sparing even its key partners like the EU.

The US has shot off letters to 24 countries and the European Union (EU) imposing tariffs that are as high as 50 per cent on Brazil. On its key trading partners like the EU and Mexico, 30 per cent duties have been proposed from August 1.

Economic think tank GTRI (Global Trade Research Initiative) said India must recognise that it is not alone in facing US pressure.

The US is currently negotiating with over 20 countries and seeking concessions from more than 90. "Yet most are resisting because

they see these MASALA (Mutu-ally Agreed Settlements Achieved through Leveraged Arm-twisting) deals for what they are politically driven, transactional demands of-fering no lasting trade certainty," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

He added that both the EU and Mexico are major trade partners of the US, and Washington can im-pose tariffs on them to pressure them into quick deals, India cannot expect a balanced deal.

Another trade expert said India should tread cautiously while ne-gotiating the trade pact with the US.

The expert added that Trump's trade threat is rapidly losing credi-bility as despite more than three months of pressure, only two countries -- the UK and Vietnam -

- have agreed to the USA's one-sided terms.

From Japan and South Korea to the EU and Australia, countries are resisting Trump's trade deals that demand tariff cuts without recip-rocal US concessions, mandate guar-anteed purchases of American goods, and leave the door open for future tariffs even after a deal is signed, the GTRI said.

A team of Indian trade negotia-tors will soon visit Washington to further talks for the proposed Bi-lateral Trade Agreement (BTA).

"India should stay the course and avoid trading away core sec-tors like agriculture. A hasty deal under pressure could have irre-versible consequences, especially when such agreements may not survive the next shift in US poli-tics," Srivastava said. (PTI)

## Titagarh Rail acquires 40 acres of land in Bengal for expansion

**KOLKATA, July 13:** Titagarh Rail Systems Ltd has acquired around 40 acres of land on lease for ₹126 crore from the West Ben-gal government, a move that will help the company ramp up produc-tion of Vande Bharat coaches and metro cars at its Uttarpara facility in Hooghly district, an official said.

The land parcel spread across mouzas Kotrung and Bhadrakali is

contiguous to Titagarh's existing 34-acre plant at Uttarpara, making it a critical addition to the com-pany's expansion plans, he said.

The 99-year lease agreement, signed on July 12, 2025, with the state, involves a consideration of ₹126.63 crore, he said.

"The additional land will enable us to establish extra production in-frastructure and dedicated areas for forming, testing, and commission-

ing of metro coaches and Vande Bharat trains," the company said in a regulatory filing on Saturday.

A test track of adequate length will also be set up to ensure com-prehensive performance and safety validation before delivery, it said.

The expansion will support Tita-garh's plan to scale up its produc-tion capacity from 300 cars per year to around 850 annually by FY'28. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## ULFA (I) camps come under

noted that there had been no confirmation from the Indian Army regarding any such operation. "If such an operation has indeed occurred, the Indian Army will issue an official statement. As of now, there has been no communication from the defence establishment," Sarma said, urging caution until verified information emerged. Echoing the CM's remarks, Defence PRO Lt Col Mahendra Rawat also denied knowledge of any such military action.

"There are no inputs with the Indian Army on such an operation," he stated. If confirmed, the incident would mark a significant escalation in counter-insurgency efforts against camps of Northeast insurgent groups across the international border.

ULFA(I), led by its elusive commander Paresh Barua—believed to be operating from the tri-junction of India, China, and Myanmar—has suffered multiple setbacks in recent months. One of its senior leaders, Rupom Asom, was arrested by Assam Police in May.

As of now, only one senior commander, Arunodoy Dohotiya, is believed to remain active inside Myanmar.

## Sitharaman concludes Meghalaya

she outlined development priorities under the Vibrant Villages Programme, including road infrastructure, telecom and digital connectivity, television coverage, electricity access, and financial inclusion.

She assured residents that banking and ATM facilities would soon be available within a 5-kilometre radius to promote inclusive growth and rural entrepreneurship.

During her visit, the Finance Minister also interacted with village elders, local leaders, and beneficiaries of the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) programme, supported by the World Bank, KFW, and ADB, to un-derstand how traditional ecological knowledge is being preserved and adapted by indigenous communities. The twin engagements—spanning infrastructure, heritage, education, and grassroots initiatives—reinforced the Centre's commitment to holistic and inclusive development in the Northeast. (With inputs from PTI)

## CM reviews flood situation

The Simoluchapori camp is currently housing 277 people, including 104 children and 108 women. Four such camps have been established in the circle. Interacting with camp inmates, the chief minister assured them of the government's full support. He spent time with the children, engaging in a friendly game of carrom, and in-structed the administration to distribute sports kits—including cricket and football sets—to children from No. 1 Shingimari village, who are currently sheltering at the camp. Emphasising the importance of health and san-itation in the camps, Sarma inspected a special health camp set up within the school premises.

He directed officials to ensure adequate care for the elderly, pregnant women, and children. During the visit, the chief minister also reviewed flood-induced erosion at Jathipatiya Mitha Aam Chapori under Morongi Re-venue Circle, caused by the swelling Dhansiri River. A large number of families have been displaced in the re-gion. Sarma promised to initiate long-term anti-erosion measures and said he would instruct the Water Resources Minister to visit the area for a firsthand assessment.

He also reviewed a proposal for constructing an embankment on the river's left bank, extending from Go-laghat town to the Numaligarh Refinery.

Later in the day, Sarma visited the Kenduguri Primary School relief camp, where he interacted with the dis-placed people and assured compensation for those who lost their homes completely in the flood. He reiterated the state government's commitment to ensuring resettlement and reconstruction wherever necessary.

The chief minister, accompanied by Agriculture Minister Atul Bora, Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, MP Ka-makhya Prasad Tasa, and Golaghat MLA Mrinal Saikia, concluded the visit with a stop at Bokakhat Revenue Circle. Officials reported that more than 9,000 people have been affected in the area.

Sarma inspected the relief camp at Numaligarh Higher Secondary School, where 568 individuals—including 112 children, 224 women, and 2 differently-abled persons—are currently sheltered. He directed the district ad-ministration to expedite resettlement and provide immediate assistance. He also instructed Agriculture Minister Atul Bora to arrange for seed distribution to help flood-hit farmers prepare for the next cultivation cycle.

The chief minister emphasised the importance of healthcare and sanitation in relief camps, and it was noted that the district administration has been conducting special health camps across all flood shelters to provide medical check-ups and distribute essential medicines. Throughout the visit, Sarma was accompanied by key officials including the District Commissioner, Superintendent of Police, and senior officers from relevant de-partments.

## Two co-accused in Raja

of East Khasi Hills district on June 2. Raja had married Sonam on May 11. Sonam and Raj Kushwaha were accused of plotting and hiring three hitmen - Akash Rajput, Vishal Singh Chauhan and Anand Kurmi - to murder Raja Raghuvanshi.

Sonam, Raj Kushwaha and three arrested hitmen are now in judicial custody. (PTI)

## AI 171 crew acted in line with

it said in a statement. The association emphasised that pilots undergo extensive psychological and professional screening, recurrent training, and operate under the highest standards of safety, responsibility, and mental fit-ness.

Noting that ICPA trusts and respects the rigorous investigative protocols established by competent authorities, it said these inquiries are designed to uncover facts methodically and without bias. "Until the official investi-gation is concluded and the final report is published, any speculation, especially of such a grave nature, is un-acceptable and must be condemned.

"... the crew of AI 171 acted in line with their training and responsibilities under challenging conditions. They deserve support, not vilification based on conjecture," it added. AAIB, in the preliminary report, said in-vestigation is continuing and the investigation team will review and examine additional evidence, records and information that is being sought from the stakeholders.

"The tone and direction of the investigation suggest a bias towards pilot error... ALPA India categorically re-jects this presumption and insists on a fair, fact-based inquiry," Airline Pilots' Association of India (ALPA) had said in a statement on Saturday. The association has also demanded that its representatives should be observers in the investigation process to ensure transparency and accountability. ALPA India is a member of the Inter-national Federation of Airline Pilots' Association (IFALPA).

"We are once again surprised at the secrecy surrounding these investigations. We are also reiterating the fact that suitably qualified personnel are not taken on board for these crucial investigations," ALPA India alleged in the letter. "We feel that the investigation is being driven in a direction presuming the guilt of pilots and we strongly object to this line of thought," it alleged.

Noting that the report refers to a serviceability bulletin concerning the fuel control switch gates, which in-dicates a potential equipment malfunction, the association said, "while the bulletin exists, ALPA India demands clarity on whether the recommendations outlined in the bulletin were implemented prior to the flight." Air India has said it will take on board its pilot community by holding dedicated sessions in the coming days to review the preliminary investigation report. (PTI)

## Phase-3 dengue vaccine trial

According to the government data, around 12,043 dengue cases were reported till March this year. In 2024, 2.3 lakh cases and 297 deaths had been recorded. (PTI)

## Vedanta's 3D strategy to double company size through demerger, diversification & deleveraging

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, July 13:** Vedanta Ltd. unveiled a vision for its next phase of growth at its 60th Annual General Meeting said a press release of Vedanta Ltd. The Chairman of Vedanta Ltd., Anil Agarwal stated his vision and plan for further growth by demerger, diversification, and deleveraging.

Vedanta Ltd has strong financials, record share-holder returns, and a growing portfolio of critical minerals and energy transition metals and Vedanta's growth is aligned with India's economic and energy ambitions. Vedanta also announced that it will incubate 1000 deep-tech start-ups.

The company also reiterated its plans to estab-lish India's first industrial zinc and aluminium parks.

Speaking at the AGM, Chairman, Anil Agarwal said, "Our 3D strategy, Demerger, Diversification and Deleveraging will enable us to double in size and unlock maximum value for our stakeholders."

Chairman Agarwal emphasised on "resource nationalism" and its role and its significance to India's economic future, particularly in enabling energy transition technologies like EVs and re-newables, as well as digital infrastructure.

He rue that India with comparable geology to resource-rich nations like Canada and Australia but only 25 percent is being explored, he said the time was ripe for accelerated growth in the critical minerals sector.

Vedanta, strategically positioned to lead the transformation with the company has securing 10 critical mineral blocks across India, one of the largest by any private sector company.

This reinforces Vedanta's transformation into a critical minerals, energy transition metals, energy, and technology conglomerate. It is also setting up the world's first industrial Zinc Park and India's largest Aluminium Park, aimed at nurturing MSMEs and creating lakhs of jobs.

A key highlight of the AGM was the company's demerger plan.

## Vedanta's donations to BJP nearly quadruples to ₹ 97 cr in FY25: Annual Report

**NEW DELHI, July 13:** Billionaire Anil Agarwal's mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd nearly quadrupled its donations to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), contributing ₹ 97 crore in the fiscal year ending March 2025, according to its latest annual report.

Under "Miscellaneous Expenses", Vedanta detailed the political donations as well as the management and brand fee expenses it paid to its parent, London-listed Vedanta Resources Plc. Political donations totalled ₹ 157 crore in 2024-25, up from ₹ 97 crore in the previous fi-nancial year.

While donations to the BJP soared, those to the opposition Congress were cut to just ₹ 10 crore.

The donations in fiscal year April 2024 to March 2025 (FY25) included "contributions to Bharatiya Janata Party of ₹ 97 crore (₹ 26 crore in fiscal year ended March 31, 2024), Biju Janata Dal of ₹ 25 crore (March 31, 2024: ₹ 15 crore), Jharkhand Mukti Morcha of ₹ 20 crore (March 31, 2024: ₹ 5 crore) and All India Congress Committee of ₹ 10 crore (March 31, 2024: ₹ 49 crore)," according to the annual report for 2024-25.

Vedanta has been one of the biggest donors to political parties.

In 2022-23, it had donated a total of ₹ 155 crore to political parties and ₹ 123 crore in FY22 (April 2021 to March 2022). Benefi-ciary-wise, the breakup was not provided for the previous donations. It had, through the now-scraped electoral bonds donated, ₹ 457 crore to political parties in the five years of their ex-istence starting 2017.

Electoral bonds allowed companies and in-dividuals to donate unlimited amounts anonymously to political parties. The Supreme Court last year banned Electoral Bonds, calling them "unconstitutional".

Vedanta's Janhit Electoral Trust is one of the

over a dozen electoral trusts floated by cor-porates for making donations to political parties. Other corporates that own electoral trusts in-clude Progressive Electoral Trust of Tatas, People's Electoral Trust of Reliance, Satya Electoral Trust of Bharti Group, MP Birla Group's Paribartan Electoral Trust and KK Birla Group's Samaj Electoral Trust Associa-tion. Bajaj and Mahindra also have electoral trusts.

On brand fee, Vedanta said the group has a brand license and strategic service fee agree-ment with Vedanta Resources Ltd for use of the brand 'Vedanta' and providing strategic services, which envisage payment to VRL ranging from 0.75 per cent to 3 per cent of the turnover of the company and certain sub-sidiaries.

"During the year ended March 31, 2024, VRL assigned the agreement, including a sub-licensing agreement, to its wholly-owned sub-sidiary, VRL, whereby the Group will fulfil its obligations under the agreement via VRL with effect from April 1, 2024," the annual re-port said. Vedanta paid ₹2,397 crore in brand and other fees to VRL in the 2024-25 fiscal, up from ₹ 2,326 crore in the previous year.

"Furthermore, the company has sublicensed the agreement to its subsidiary, Hindustan Zinc Ltd, at a net sublicensing fee of 1.70 per cent of HZL's annual consolidated turnover. The company also executed a sublicensing agree-ment with Ferro Alloy Corporation Ltd (FACOR) at a net sublicensing fee of 2.50 per cent of FACOR's annual consolidated turnover with effect from April 1, 2024.

"Consequently, for the year ended March 31, 2025, the Group has recorded an expense of ₹ 582 crore (March 31, 2024: ₹ 477 crore)," Vedanta said in the annual report.

Vedanta Resources owns 56.38 per cent of Mumbai-listed Vedanta Ltd. (PTI)

## Pearl farming: How Jharkhand is training farmers to turn mussels into gold with 10x returns

**RANCHI, July 13:** Jharkhand is rapidly emerging as India's fresh-water pearl farming hub, with the state government and Centre im-plementing comprehensive train-ing programmes and infrastructure development to transform this niche sector into a major liveli-hood opportunity for rural youth

and farmers.

The transformation gained mo-mentum when the Centre notified development of Hazaribagh as the first pearl farming cluster with Rs 22 crore investment under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) in collaboration with the Jharkhand government.

What started as a pilot project in 2019-20 under the state plan has now evolved into a structured ecosystem focusing on skill de-velopment, with specialised training centres established across the state to teach farmers the intricate art of pearl cultivation.

**Training revolution takes root**  
The Purty Agrotech Training Centre, established in Ranchi in 2024 using corporate CSR funds, has emerged as the nerve centre of this training revolution. The fac-ility has already trained over 132 farmers from across the state in ad-vanced pearl culture techniques, with these trained farmers now cascading their knowledge to oth-ers in their respective districts, cre-ating a multiplier effect.

"Training is the backbone of successful pearl farming. We are focusing on round pearl culture as it fetches more returns compared to designer pearls," said Budhan Singh Purty, a mechanical engineer from NIT Jamshedpur who runs the training centre and has become one of the state's few surgical ex-perts in round pearl cultivation.

The training programmes em-phasise skilled surgical grafting techniques, use of specialised in-struments, and careful post-surgi-

cal management -- critical factors that determine survival rates and quality of pearl production. This focus on technical expertise is crucial since culturing round pearls demands precision to ensure high survival rates and quality produc-tion. Recognising the sector's poten-tial, St Xavier's College, Ranchi, has introduced certificate courses in pearl farming ranging from six months to one-and-a-half years, in-tegrating academic research with practical field experience.

"Pearl farming is going to be a rising sector in Jharkhand and pro-vide job opportunities to youth. The knowledge of science along with field experience will help de-velop enterprising skills," Profes-sor Ritesh Kumar Shukla told PTI.

**Compelling economics drive adoption**

The state's emergence as a pearl farming hub is driven by com-pelling economics -- round pearls can be cultivated in backyard set-tings using cement tanks, buckets, or fish tanks, and yield profits of more than ten times the invest-ment. The cultivation can be done in small spaces, making it accessi-ble to small farmers and youth seeking alternative livelihoods.

The economics are straightfor-ward: it costs Rs 35-50 to nurture one mussel for three years until it produces a pearl, which then sells for up to Rs 1,000, depending on quality. This means farmers can expect significant returns on rela-tively modest investments.

**Success story: From engineer to pearl entrepreneur**



## Cinema, Culture, and Memory: BTR bets big on heritage with ₹3 cr push in Kokrajhar

### CEM Pramod Boro lays foundation stones for cultural infrastructure in Kokrajhar

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, July 13:** Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Pramod Boro, laid the foundation stone for multiple cultural infrastructure projects in Kokrajhar on Sunday, reaffirming his administration's commitment to preserving and promoting Bodo cultural heritage.

The CEM laid the foundation stone for a Guest House-cum-Office building of the Bodo Cine Artist Association (BCAA) at Choto Adabari.

He also initiated the construction of the Ustad Kamini Kumar Narzary Memorial Building in Kokrajhar town, paying floral tributes to the iconic Bodo cultural figure on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, CEM Boro highlighted the crucial role of cinema in enriching cultural life.

He said that film is a medium free from politics, capable of uniting people through creativity and entertainment.

"Cinema is not a political tool, but a means for cultural advancement and social expression," Boro stated.

He informed the gathering that the construction of six cinema halls is currently underway across the BTR, and a digital mini cinema hall has already been inaugurated in Serfanguiri.

Further, he announced that a proposed digital cinema hall in



Kokrajhar town will be named in memory of celebrated Bodo actor Tikendrajit Narzary, popularly known as Jalakho.

The hall will have a seating capacity of 500.

On the infrastructure front, CEM Boro announced a financial grant of ₹1.5 crore from the BTR government for the construction of the BCAA office-cum-guest house.

The Ustad Kamini Kumar Narzary Memorial Building will be built at a cost of ₹1 crore, while an additional ₹50 lakh has been earmarked for the expansion of the Harimu Afad office.

He also committed to the devel-

opment and beautification of the memorials of noted writer and social reformer late Mohini Mohan Brahma, and former Member of Parliament Samar Brahma Choudhury.

Both sites are located near the BCAA complex and are considered important markers of Bodo intellectual and political history.

In a significant gesture towards preserving cultural memory, Boro urged the Bodo Cultural Association to document and preserve a century of Bodo cultural history.

He announced a dedicated grant of ₹25 lakh to support this archival project.

The programme was attended by

Executive Member Saikhong Basumatary, MCLA Madhab Chandra Chetry, renowned filmmaker Jwngdao Bodoso, advisors of the Bodo Cultural Association including Rohendra Nath Brahma, and prominent artists such as Sulekha Basumatary and Budang Bulab Brahma.

The gathering included members of the creative community, cultural activists, and local residents.

The foundation laying ceremony underscored the BTR government's emphasis on cultural infrastructure as a pillar of regional development and identity preservation.

## ASS launches major translation project to bring global critical thought into Assamese

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, July 13:** In a significant literary initiative, the Assam Sahitya Sabha (ASS) has launched a special translation project aimed at rendering into Assamese some of the world's finest critical essays that have shaped modern thought and consciousness. The initiative, under the Sabha's Publication Sub-committee, seeks to address a long-standing gap in Assamese literary discourse, where while global fiction and poetry have seen sporadic translations, seminal critical writings remain largely untouched.

According to Debajit Bora, Principal Secretary of Assam Sahitya Sabha, the project is being guided and coordinated by a team of eminent academics and translators.

The core planning and editorial responsibilities are being handled by Professor Madan Sharma and Professor Bibhash Choudhury of Gauhati University, who serve as Chief Editors. They are joined on the editorial board by Professor Jyotirmoy Pradhan of North-Eastern Hill University, Professor Hemjyoti Medhi of Tezpur University, Professor Mridul Bordoloi of Dibrugarh University, and Professor Arindam Sharma of Chaiduar College. Arindam Borkotoky is serving as Convener and Editor.

The project was formally inaugurated on Friday, marking the beginning of what is expected to be a landmark effort in Assamese publishing. To execute the translation work, a diverse group of translators comprising professors, lecturers, and research scholars from leading

institutions across Assam has been selected. The list includes Juri Dutta (Tezpur University), Dibya Khataniar (Gauhati College), Lakhpriya Gogoi (Dibrugarh University), Prasanjit Das (KK Handique Open University), Manabendra Sharma (B. Baruah College), Pari Hiloidari (Handique Girls College), Pranjal Sharma Basishtha (Gauhati University), Debabhusan Bora (Sati Sadhani University), Dalim Das (IDOL, Gauhati University), Anup Kumar Das (Pandu College), Pallabi Konwar (Pandu College), Ananya Hiloidari (Nagaon University), Dhrujati Sharma (Gauhati University), Stuti Goswami (Royal Global University), Dibyajyoti Bora (Hemprabha Borbor College), Ajitabh Hazarika and Himangshu Sharma (Research Scholars), Manab Medhi (Bodoland University), Apurba Kumar Hazarika (Majuli College), Siddhartha Goswami, Manas Pratim Bora, Nasim Akhtar (Sati Sadhani and Dibrugarh Universities), Hemchandra Dutta (Translator), Shibajit Dutta (Doomdooma College), and Parthapratim Goswami.

The Sabha expressed confidence that the team will deliver high-quality translations within the stipulated timeframe, making a valuable addition to Assamese intellectual and literary resources. The initiative is expected to not only enhance academic engagement but also broaden the horizons of readers in the region by bringing global critical perspectives into the Assamese language.

## KAF hosts deferred World Music Day celebration in Diphu

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, July 13:** The Karbi Artistes Forum (KAF) celebrated World Music Day at the Sarsing Teron Memorial Town Hall here Saturday last evening.

Although traditionally observed on June 21, the event was deferred due to unavoidable circumstances, according to an official statement.

The programme began with the ceremonial lighting of the inaugural lamp by social activist James Hanse. The occasion was graced by several notable figures, including former Minister Holiram Terang, eminent writer Sar-et Hanse, acclaimed singer Queen Hazarika, and KAF president Katharson Engti. As part of the celebration, the KAF felicitated Sabina Teronpi in recognition of her recent international honour -The Pride of Tribe award - conferred in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Teronpi was recognised for her outstanding contributions to handicrafts, handloom, textiles, and tribal artistry. A series of musical tributes marked the evening. Singer Prosen Phangcho performed in memory of the late Mongol Sing Kro, a prominent All India Radio (AIR) artist from the mid-1990s.

Mongol Rongpi and Alisha Engti presented a duet dedicated to the late Joyram Tisso, a revered Karbi singer, songwriter, and composer known for his role in the revival of Karbi modern music. Manoj Teron paid tribute to legendary playback singer Kishore Kumar with renditions of his classic songs.

## Majgaon Senior Citizens' Forum marks 18<sup>th</sup> foundation day

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, July 13:** The Majgaon Senior Citizens' Forum, the Tezpur branch of the Assam Senior Citizens' Association, celebrated its 18th Foundation Day on Sunday with a day-long programme marked by tributes, cultural performances, and recognition of its founding members.

The celebration began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by founding president Prabin Gogoi, followed by the flag hoisting of the Assam Senior Citizens' Association by current president Indreswar Saikia.

Former president Kesharam Nath joined other members in paying floral tributes to departed associates in a solemn remembrance ceremony.

Under the direction of Jadab Chandra Nath, selected members of the forum performed the association's theme song, "Eikhon Asomir Senchi Kolat...", lending a musical start to the proceedings. Forum secretary Deba Das outlined the objectives of the gathering and presented a concise report on the forum's progress over the past year, during a meeting chaired by Saikia.

Established on July 13, 2008, the forum honoured its founding members — Prabin Gogoi, Bhuban Chandra Gogoi, Kushal Chandra Baruah, Dulal Chandra Dutta, Tankeswar Bora, Pradip Hazarika, and Mamoni Bora — with traditional Assamese attire and gamocha as a token of gratitude for their contributions.

Newly elected central committee Finance Secretary Sekhar Baruah and Organising Secretary Jadab Chandra Nath were also felicitated during the occasion.

The event featured a soulful musical tribute by member Hemanta Deka, who performed a song by the legendary Bhupen Hazarika. The celebration concluded with the singing of the state's Jatiya Sangeet and a vote of thanks offered by secretary Deba Das.

## Foundation stone laid for silkworm rearing house

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, July 13:** Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Kache Rongpi, laid the foundation stone for the construction of a silkworm rearing house under the Silk Samagra 2 scheme of the Sericulture Department, KAAC, here on Sunday.

Silk Samagra 2 is a Government of India initiative aimed at the holistic development of the silk industry, with a focus on enhancing production, improving quality, and supporting the livelihoods of stakeholders across the silk value chain.

Speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony, EM Rongpi described the project as a significant step toward strengthening the local silk industry.

"It is a new milestone in promoting the initiative to support local silk farmers and enhance sustainable livelihood opportunities through improved infrastructure and training," she said.

The event was attended by Additional Director of Sericulture, Rongbong Rongphar, along with other officials of the department.

## Facebook is producing more 'writers' than literary spaces today: Jayanta Madhab Bora

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, July 13:** Eminent novelist and Sahitya Akademi award-winning author Jayanta Madhab Bora on Sunday voiced concern over the growing trend of self-proclaimed writers emerging on social media platforms, particularly Facebook.

He was speaking as the key resource person at a short story writing workshop organised by the Balipara branch of the Assam Sahitya Sabha in collaboration with Ghoramari Primary Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Bharatipara Missing Sahitya Sabha, Balipara Regional Tea Community Sahitya Sabha, and the Khanamukh Branch of the Nepali Sahitya Sabha.

"More so-called 'writers' are emerging on Facebook than in real-life literary spaces these

days," Bora remarked during his address.

He pointed out that while micro-fiction or anugarpa (flash fiction) has become popular, many of its practitioners lack a foundational understanding of what constitutes a well-crafted story or poem.

Bora stressed the importance of structured literary initiatives, saying, "Workshops like these are essential to guide young and aspiring writers, and to preserve our literary traditions."

He also delivered an extensive session on the basic principles and techniques of story writing, offering insights to help participants improve their craft.

The workshop drew over a hundred participants, including students and professionals from various fields, all representing different Sahitya Sabha branches.

The programme was conducted by Hemen Saikia, president of the Balipara branch of the Assam Sahitya Sabha.

Dulal Nath, organising secretary of the Mangaldai regional office of the Sabha, also addressed the gathering.

Jayanta Madhab Bora was felicitated with a traditional gamocha and formally welcomed at the event.

Certificates of participation were distributed to all attendees by Nirala Deka, secretary of the Balipara branch.

The event also saw the presence of several literary figures and committee members including Bhuban Chettri, Sahin Ahmed, Ashwini Kumar Deka, district president of the Nepali Sahitya Sabha Anil Gautam, and others from both state and district levels.

## Raijor Dal announces Rahul Chetry as Margherita candidate for 2026 Assembly Polls

**HT Correspondent**

**MARGHERITA, July 13:** Amidst ongoing political uncertainty over pre-poll alliances in Assam, Raijor Dal president and Sibsagar MLA Akhil Gogoi on Sunday formally announced Rahul Chetry, former secretary of the Satra Mukti Sangram Samity (SMSS), as the party's candidate for the 83rd Margherita Assembly Constituency in the upcoming 2026 state elections.

The announcement was made during a public meeting at the North Margherita Rangmanch, where Rahul Chetry was introduced to the public for the first time in his new political role. The event drew significant attention, as

it also marked the formal induction of Chetry into Raijor Dal. Over 1,000 residents from the constituency also joined the party on the same occasion, according to an official statement.

Notably, before Akhil Gogoi's formal declaration, SMSS district secretary Dharmaraj Sharma pre-emptively declared Chetry's candidature during his address, adding symbolic weight to the occasion and indicating continued support from the student organization's grassroots.

Addressing the gathering, Akhil Gogoi launched a sharp critique against local MLA Bhaskar Sharma, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, and the

BJP-led governments at both the Centre and the state, accusing them of failing the people of Margherita and Assam at large.

Gogoi also expressed dissatisfaction with the opposition alliance dynamics, stating that Assam Pradesh Congress Committee President Gaurav Gogoi and Leader of the Opposition Debabrata Saikia were not supportive of a united opposition front.

The event signals Raijor Dal's strategic push to expand its grassroots presence in Upper Assam and marks the beginning of what could become a key contest in the politically significant Margherita seat.

## NFR records 9.6% surge in freight loading in June

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 13:** The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has registered a consistent surge in freight loading, underscoring the zone's growing role in supporting economic activity across the region.

According to an official statement, NFR loaded 0.968 million tonnes (MT) of freight in June 2025 — a 9.6% increase over the corresponding period last year. This growth was primarily fuelled by a substantial increase in the movement of key commodities. Cement loading saw a sharp rise of 53.1%, while coal grew by 37.5%, and petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) by 41.7%. Fertilizer loading increased by 9.1%, container traffic by 11.1%, and other miscellaneous goods by 36.2%. A standout figure was recorded in the loading of stone chips, which rose by an impressive 275% compared to June of the previous financial year, indicating heightened construction activity and infrastructure demand in the region. Officials attributed this consistent growth to improved logistical coordination, efficient use of railway assets, and growing industrial and infrastructural activity across the northeastern states.

"NFR is working round the clock to serve its customers and ensure the timely delivery of essential commodities to end users," the statement said. Railway authorities also emphasised that the upward freight trend not only reinforces the economic momentum in the Northeast but also contributes significantly to the revenue of the railway zone.

In response to the increasing demand, NFR has committed to investing in technical upgrades and capacity enhancement measures to improve service reliability and operational efficiency. With sustained growth in freight movement, the Northeast Frontier Railway aims to strengthen its role as a vital economic enabler in the region while supporting national logistics and supply chain networks.

## Investors protest in Nagaon over online trading scam

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, July 13:** Tension gripped Nagaon on Sunday as hundreds of aggrieved investors gathered outside the residence of Kashyap Phukan, one of the key accused in an alleged multi-crore online trading scam linked to a company named Bulls Eye.

The protest, which began at Nehrubali Field, culminated at Phukan's residence in the Morikolong area, where the crowd demanded immediate refunds and police action.

The situation turned volatile as the agitated investors created a ruckus, prompting the police to intervene.

Phukan was taken into custody and brought to the Nagaon police station to defuse the situation and

aid the ongoing investigation.

Soon after, the crowd followed the police convoy to the station, continuing their demand for justice and action against another accused, Anirban Deori, who remains absconding.

Investors claim they had deposited large sums—ranging from ₹10 lakh to ₹50 lakh—in the online trading platform, lured by promises of high returns.

However, with no returns or refunds forthcoming, they allege the company has defrauded them, leaving them in financial distress.

Earlier, cases had been registered against both Phukan and Deori at the Nagaon police station and with the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). Phukan is currently being interrogated.

## Governor attends artificial limb distribution programme

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, July 13:** Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Sunday attended an artificial limb distribution programme at the KBR Auditorium of Cotton University, reaffirming the government's commitment to empowering persons with disabilities and promoting social inclusion.

The event was organised by Bharat Vikas Parishad, Assam Prant, in collaboration with its South Pune and PMPC branches.

In an official statement, the Raj Bhavan said the programme was part of a broader effort to enable dignity, mobility, and self-reliance for specially-abled individuals.

Artificial limbs were distributed to beneficiaries at the event, which was attended by dignitaries from across the country.

In his address, Governor Acharya lauded the efforts of Bharat Vikas Parishad, describing the organisation as a longstanding pillar in championing the cause of social equity.

"Such initiatives not only change lives but also inspire society to embrace the values of equality and compassion," he said.

The Governor highlighted several Central and State Government welfare schemes designed for Divyangians, including the Deen



Dayal Divyangian Sahajya Yojana, Mukhyamantri Jeevan Prerna Yojana, and the Central Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP) Scheme.

He said these efforts have created pathways for people with disabilities to live lives of dignity and independence.

Referring to national reforms under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Acharya spoke of how government initiatives—backed by technological innovations—are transforming accessibility for people with disabilities.

He credited institutions like AL-

IMCO, Jaipur Foot, DRDO, and ISRO for their pioneering contributions in the field of assistive technology that now benefits both civilians and defence personnel alike.

Pointing to a key demographic concern, the Governor noted that nearly 75% of India's specially-abled population resides in rural areas.

He called upon civil society organisations and NGOs to focus on outreach in remote areas, adding that "true service to humanity begins where access is hardest to reach."

The Governor also invoked stories of Paralympic champions and

successful Divyang entrepreneurs to urge society to acknowledge the capability and resilience of persons with disabilities.

He specifically acknowledged the National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFD) for offering financial assistance of up to ₹5 lakh to support Divyang-led entrepreneurial ventures.

Acharya hailed Bharat Vikas Parishad's service since 1963 in building a Samarth Bharat, Samann Bharat—a self-reliant and prosperous nation inclusive of every citizen regardless of physical limitations.

He expressed heartfelt gratitude to the doctors, engineers, and volunteers who made the programme possible, calling them "living examples of karma yoga, where service becomes a sacred duty."

The event was attended by Dr Kishor Kumar Barua, Prantiya Parishad of Bharat Vikas Parishad, Assam Prant; Darshan Amolok Duggad, President of the Pimpri-Chinchwad Branch; Ramchandra Ekbote, Chief Trustee of the South Pune Branch; Prof M Premjit Singh, Regional President of the North-East Region; and Dr Ramesh Chandra Deka, Vice Chancellor of Cotton University, among other dignitaries.



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*We first make our habits, and then our habits make us.*  
—John Dryden

## Decline in purchasing power of commoners

Industrial growth, the stock market and the rupee have already been sinking. Now more and more reports show a constant fall in Indian households' rapidly shrinking expenditure capacity. According to the latest data released by the National Accounts Statistics, Indians have significantly reduced their spending on clothing and footwear over the past three years. Clothing and footwear are essential items for any household. A continued decline in expenditure on these items for last three years means that the crisis has started turning endemic in nature. The data shows that the consumer expenditure on clothing and footwear stood at Rs 4.52 trillion in the financial year 2023-24, marking a seven percent decline from Rs 4.94 trillion in 2021-22. This dip shows a growing trend of cautious spending among Indian consumers. Such a situation arises when there is a definite fall in the purchasing power of the people. A deeper look into the data reveals that the during this period the footwear consumption remained largely stagnant, with a marginal slip from Rs 1 trillion in FY21 to Rs 99,000 crore in FY24, while the clothing segment faced a steeper decline, falling from Rs 3.93 trillion in FY22 to Rs 3.53 trillion in FY24. The downward trend in Indian consumers' ability to spend money on clothing and footwear began in 2020-21 fiscal, the year which was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. That year the spending on clothing and footwear dropped by 15 percent in comparison to the level of expenditure Indian consumers had shown on these items in the financial year 2019-20.

Recent figures from the Ministry of Statistics signals that the fall in Indians' capacity to spend on items of daily use is acquiring deeper roots in the economy. They also highlight the desperate need for policy support to boost income growth and restore consumer confidence. However, such a transformation would require massive efforts to reverse the trend of fall in the employment generation in the country. This in turn would require a complete policy overhaul. This seems an impossible proposition given the way the unemployment, falling expenditure capacity, rising inflation and almost stagnant economy have become the defining feature of the Narendra Modi government. Only in February this year, a study by venture capital firm "Blume Ventures" found that Nearly 100 crore Indians, 90 percent of the country's population, lack discretionary spending power to purchase goods or services. The report stated that the intensification in the decline of the consumption pattern is driven not only by a decline in purchasing power of ninety percent of the population in India but also by a sharp drop in financial savings and a surge in mass indebtedness.

The study, titled "Indus Valley Annual Report 2025" clearly stated that only the top 10 percent of India's population have shown a significant hike in their consumption expenditure. It, therefore, called this small group of Indians as "the primary driver of consumption and economic growth". The report, however, noted that this "consuming class" in Asia's third-largest economy is not expanding in size but rather becoming wealthier, meaning the rich are getting richer while the overall number of wealthy individuals remains stagnant.

## ECI has to follow the procedure, cannot have intent to exclude electors

By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

The crux of the observations and suggestions made by the Supreme Court of India in the matter of Special Intensive Revision of Electoral Roll in Bihar is that the Election Commission of India (ECI) has to follow the well laid procedure under the law, and cannot have intent to exclude electors from the voter list.

The deadline of submission of documents by the electors is July 25, and the Supreme Court will be hearing the case next on July 28. By that time many things will be known, such as how the ECI has been going ahead with its constitutional responsibility of revision of the electoral roll, and how far people would be able to meet the deadline for submission of documents that the ECI has given them.

While allowing the SIR, the Bench of the Supreme Court comprised of Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia and Justice Joymalya Bagchi had actually made significant observations and suggestions while hearing the bunch of petitions on July 10, 2025 challenging the ECI's order of June 24 for SIR of Electoral Roll of Bihar. The petitioners had alleged that the exercise was intended to delete large number of electors from the voter list.

Senior Advocate Rakesh Dwivedi appearing on behalf of the ECI, had submitted, "Election Commission is one constitutional body which is in direct relationship with the elector. It cannot and does not have any intent whatsoever to exclude anybody from the voter list unless and until the hands of the Commission are compelled by the provision of law itself."

On the ECI's submission Justice Dhulia had concluded the hearing with his remark, "We have serious doubt on whether you can follow this timeline. Remember, you have to follow the procedure. It is something that is not practical."

Additionally, the Bench also asked the ECI to consider Aadhaar card, voter ID card, and ration card as acceptable documents for inclusion of names in the voter list. It is a significant suggestion because a large number of people in Bihar do not have any of the 11 documents that the ECI has declared acceptable.

The Supreme Court has asked three pertinent questions to the ECI: one, about the EC's very authority to conduct a "special intensive revision"; two, about the valid procedure, including what it can ask for; and then the timing of the exercise, just months ahead of the assembly polls. The ECI is supposed to answer these questions by the next hearing. Most haunting issue for the electors of Bihar at this point of time is that if they will not be able to provide documents within the deadline given to them which will end on July 25, their name will be deleted not only from the voter list but they might be treated as not a citizen of India or even as infiltrators from other countries.

Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal appearing for a petitioner RJD MP Manoj Jha said, "The burden is not on me to prove citizenship. Before they remove me from electoral roll, they have to show that they have some document in their possession that proves that I am not a citizen."

The Supreme Court said that citizenship is an issue to be determined not by the Election Commission of India, but by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Justice Bagchi questioned the ECI's exclusion of Aadhaar, and said "Even these other documents by themselves don't prove citizenship." ECI's order has made it mandatory for the electors of Bihar whose name was not in the Electoral Roll of 2003 to prove their citizenship, and also of their parents. The order effectively requires a person born after 1987 to prove their own citizenship along with the citizenship of their parents to get his or her name included in the revised in the electoral roll.

Senior advocate Gopal Sankaran Narayan appearing on behalf of one of the petitioners pointed out that Aadhaar is an acceptable document as per the Representation of Peoples Act, but the ECI is not considering it a valid document for Bihar SIR of Electoral Rolls.

The bench then asked the ECI why? Senior Advocate Rakesh Dwivedi appearing on behalf of the ECI has simply said, "Aadhaar Card cannot be used as proof of citizenship." On which Justice Bagchi said, "That (citizenship determination) is a different issue and the prerogative of Home Ministry."

Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia remarked: "... citizenship is an issue to be determined not by the Election Commission of India, but by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs." On this ECI's lawyer said that the poll panel has the powers to check for citizenship for voting rights, under the Article 326 of the Constitution of India. He also said that the ECI has role as the Representation of People Act, 1950 mandate that one must be a citizen to vote.

The issue of proof of citizenship and the jurisdiction of ECI will come up in the future hearings, since it is still a matter that is haunting the electors of Bihar. Even Justice Dhulia has found that the issue of determination of citizenship can't be settled within the deadline.

"Isn't it too late now for that?", asked Justice Dhulia to ECI, adding, "Your decision, let us say to disenfranchise the person who is already there on the electoral roll of 2025, would compel this individual to appeal against the decision and go through this entire rigmarole and thereby be denied of his right to vote in the ensuing election." He also said, "They are saying that you are asking people for documents suddenly which they don't have."

Then the issue of giving reasonable time also came for argument since the ECI had given a deadline of only 30 days to submit documents. Justice Bagchi questioned the practicality of ECI, "This timeline ... why just 30 days? The census will take a year."

On this ECI's lawyer assured the court that all eligible voters would be included and that hearings would be held in case of objections, adding, "Let the revision exercise be completed. And then your lordship can look at the entire picture."

Supreme Court then allowed the SIR exercise, with caution. However, the larger questions will come in the future hearing, including whether the ECI's order is arbitrary and unconstitutional violating fundamental rights, or violates the principle of due process and natural justice? (IPA Service)

## BRICS push back against EU's green trade walls



The objection from India and its partners is both principled and pragmatic. At the heart of international climate agreements like the 2015 Paris Agreement is the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR). This doctrine recognises the historical responsibility of developed nations for the bulk of greenhouse gas emissions and grants developing countries more flexibility to pursue economic development even as they transition to cleaner energy sources. CBAM, in contrast, imposes a flat penalty regardless of a country's developmental status or historical emissions footprint.

India has been vocal about this asymmetry on multiple platforms. The most visible pushback came at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, when India, China, and others delayed the opening plenary session by demanding that climate-related trade barriers like CBAM be added to the agenda. Although this effort was ultimately thwarted by EU opposition, it marked a significant moment of resistance — one that echoed earlier protests at COP27 in Egypt and COP28 in Dubai. At Sharm El Sheikh in 2022, the BASIC countries (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China) issued a joint statement warning that "unilateral measures and discriminatory practices, such as carbon border taxes, must be avoided."

In Rio, the BRICS reiterated this stance, expanding their opposition to include other measures such as due diligence requirements and taxes related to deforestation, which they argue also carry trade-distorting implications. For countries like India, these actions are viewed not only as economic threats but as a breach of trust in the global climate regime — a regime where developed countries have already failed to fulfil basic promises, such as the \$100 billion per year in climate finance pledged for the

Global South.

Indeed, the problem with CBAM isn't only what it does — it's what it symbolizes. In a world already grappling with geopolitical tension, trade wars, and widening inequalities, the imposition of climate-linked tariffs by wealthy economies risks entrenching a new form of inequality. While Europe can afford the green transition — bolstered by subsidies, advanced technology, and integrated infrastructure — much of the Global South still depends on coal-fired power plants, inefficient supply chains, and emission-heavy manufacturing. To penalise these structural disadvantages without providing adequate technological and financial support is, critics argue, both unjust and counterproductive.

The EU, however, appears unmoved. CBAM entered its transitional phase in October 2023, with full implementation slated for 2026. While it currently applies to a limited set of products, Brussels has made it clear that more goods will be added in future phases. Given that the EU represents approximately 15% of global imports, the implications are immense. Countries heavily reliant on export-led growth — like India, whose manufacturing sectors supply steel, aluminium, cement, and fertilisers to Europe — will bear the brunt of these tariffs.

The worry extends beyond just Europe. Other advanced economies are watching closely. The United Kingdom and Canada have reportedly considered implementing similar carbon tariffs, and the United States' Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), signed into law in 2022, already incentivises domestic production of clean energy technologies — indirectly disadvantaging foreign manufacturers. While the IRA does not formally include a CBAM-like provision, its subsidy-

heavy structure for American green industries acts as a non-tariff barrier that reshapes global trade flows under the pretense of climate action.

Moreover, the global race for energy transition is being coloured by strategic anxieties. China's dominance in clean tech — solar panels, wind turbines, battery technology, and critical minerals — has triggered an economic nationalism in the West cloaked in environmental rhetoric. As the fossil fuel era gives way to a new energy order, countries like India are wary of being boxed out by policies designed more to contain China or protect Western interests than to actually reduce global emissions.

Ironically, policies like CBAM may do little to slow climate change in the long term. By diverting production to regions with better emissions records rather than helping high-emission sectors decarbonise, CBAM risks being a tactical fix rather than a transformative solution. Worse, it could fracture the fragile international consensus on climate cooperation. Developing countries might see little incentive to commit to deep decarbonisation if their efforts are met not with financial support or technology transfer but with punitive tariffs and trade discrimination.

The way forward cannot be unilateralism. If the global climate agenda is to succeed, it must rest on trust, fairness, and mutual respect. Developed countries should prioritise assisting developing economies in greening their industries through financial aid, concessional loans, joint R&D, and preferential access to green technologies. Trade tools like CBAM should be part of a broader framework that includes equity-based climate finance and capacity-building measures, not standalone instruments that penalise the poor while protecting the rich. As BRICS and the BASIC group continue to challenge CBAM and similar climate trade policies, the debate is no longer just about trade or emissions — it's about climate justice. The challenge is to ensure that the transition to a greener planet does not become another theatre for old economic hierarchies and new forms of coercion.

The 2025 Rio declaration is therefore not merely a statement of protest — it is a call to reimagine climate action through the lens of equity. It asks a fundamental question that the world cannot afford to ignore: Will the fight against climate change be a collective, cooperative endeavour — or another tool of global division?

The answer will determine not just the fate of CBAM, but the future of climate multilateralism itself. (the writer can be reached at [dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com](mailto:dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com))

## Capitalist countries are rolling back spending on welfare programmes

By: Prabhat Patnaik

Immediately after the war when capitalism had faced a serious existential crisis, it had adopted a dual strategy to cope with it. First, it whipped up the "red scare" which was absolutely without any justification, in order to terrorise the domestic working class into acquiescing with the system. Second it was forced to make adjustments in its modus operandi, of which four in particular deserve attention, namely, formal political decolonisation, the introduction of democratic governance based on universal adult franchise, the acceptance of Keynesian "demand management" to eliminate mass unemployment, and the adoption of welfare state measures everywhere, especially in Western Europe. These changes were so significant that an impression got around that "capitalism had changed", that it was no longer the old predatory capitalism which prevailed but a new "welfare capitalism".

With finance capital gathering strength during the long post-war boom that followed, and with this finance capital going global, which paved the way for an attenuation of the autonomy of the nation-state and the imposition of a neoliberal regime everywhere, these post-war measures were getting reversed anyway; but this reversal has now acquired an unprecedented momentum. The open genocide being perpetrated against the Palestinians with the support of metropolitan capitalism has a brutality equalling if not exceeding that of colonial times; the upsurge of neo-fascism and of bourgeois authoritarianism has attenuated the democratic space available to people; the economic crisis of world capitalism can no longer be treated through Keynesian "demand management" because of the hegemony of globalised finance; and now there is also a concerted effort to roll back welfare spending everywhere, and to devote the resources released from it for making financial transfers to capitalists and for raising military expenditure.

Donald Trump's "big beautiful bill" which got passed by both houses in the US and has now become law, is a massive assault on welfare spending. According to the Congressional Budget Office which makes estimates independent of the US government, this bill will give tax concessions whose cumulative value over the next ten years is \$4.5 trillion; and the main beneficiaries of the tax concessions will be the rich. In addition, military expenditure will rise cumulatively by \$150 billion and "border security" (that is, expenditure incurred for keeping out immigrants) by \$129 billion. All these outgoings are financed through a cut in Medicaid by \$930 billion, in Green Energy by \$488 billion and in Food Benefit by \$287 billion. Medicaid is the programme that is meant to help the most vulnerable sections of American society, such as the old, the poor and the disabled; and curtailing it as the bill does, is to hit at the most helpless segments of this society. Trump's "big beautiful bill" is a brazen transfer of ben-



efits from the poorest to the richest.

Of course the tax concessions are far larger than even the curtailment in expenditures mentioned above; as a result, the fiscal deficit in the US is slated to increase cumulatively over the next decade by \$3.4 trillion. The US government in short will be borrowing on its own account, and reducing the welfare expenditure it undertakes, in order to simply hand over wealth to the American rich. This is sought to be justified in the name of reviving the economy; but if revival was the objective, then the government itself should have directly spent what it borrowed; but instead it is just handing over all this purchasing power to the rich. Its impact by way of stimulating the economy will be trivial; it amounts only to a gratuitous addition to the wealth of the rich.

A question will arise here. A larger fiscal deficit is disliked by finance capital. Even when the larger fiscal deficit is incurred for financing transfers to the rich, finance capital still does not like it. In fact this is what Liz Truss, a former British prime minister had tried to do; but so great was the objection of finance to her programme that the pound sterling fell in value and Liz Truss had to resign. She became in the process the shortest-serving prime minister in the entire history of Britain, with a tenure of no more than 50 days. How then has finance capital allowed Donald Trump to undertake larger borrowings for making larger transfers to the rich?

It is still not clear if Trump has got away with a larger fiscal deficit; that is, whether finance capital will not force him to curtail the fiscal deficit further, not necessarily by reducing transfers to the rich but by cutting down welfare expenditures even further. But Trump does have some leeway because of the fact that the American dollar has a status today that is quite different from that of the British pound sterling. The world's wealth-holders still regard the dollar to be almost "as good as gold", and would be unlikely to move out of it even in the face of Trump's enlarged fiscal deficit. This leeway was not available to Liz Truss when she embarked on her infamous plan to make deficit-financed transfers to the British rich.

The curtailment in welfare spending that is occurring in the US at present is soon going to be followed by a similar curtailment all over the metropolitan capitalist world. At a NATO summit held on June 24-25 in the Hague, a decision was taken to raise military spending in all member countries of NATO to 5 per cent of GDP by 2035. The current

spending is about 2 per cent of GDP and in many countries not even that. NATO countries, especially those in Europe, in other words are planning to raise their military spending from 2 per cent to 5 per cent of GDP in a decade's time.

Now, the currencies of the other NATO countries are not comparable to the American dollar, which is why they cannot raise their fiscal deficits relative to GDP in defiance of the wishes of globalised finance capital. Besides, most European NATO countries, being members of the European Union, are statutorily constrained not to raise their fiscal deficits above 3 per cent of their GDP, which is more or less the level where it currently is anyway. Since taxing the rich is out, again in deference to the wishes of finance capital, it follows that the rise in military expenditure will have to be effected at the expense of the working people in these countries, which can take the form either of higher taxation imposed on the workers or of cuts in welfare expenditure.

Of the two alternative ways of raising the burden on the workers, cuts in welfare spending are obviously more easily achieved, though it matters little which way is adopted, for both ways entail a decline in the living standard of the workers. The imposition of an additional burden of 3 per cent of GDP on the workers is an immense imposition. The NATO countries in short have given clear notice that even officially the days of so-called "welfare capitalism" are over, that the world is back to the days of "predatory capitalism".

Why have NATO countries decided to raise their military spending? There is of course the standard invoking of a Russian threat to Western Europe. But even in the heyday of the so-called Soviet threat that was invoked to justify the Cold War, such high levels of military expenditure had never been witnessed. Besides, even today the annual military expenditure of Russia is less than a third of the total annual military expenditure of the European NATO countries alone, even if we leave aside the USA. So, the "Russian threat" is just a camouflage. The significantly higher military expenditure to which the NATO countries have committed themselves is motivated by a desire to protect a crumbling Western imperialist order by using force against all countries that are seen as possible challengers to this order. The bombing of Iran was motivated by this desire; and the coming years are likely to see several such instances of aggression.

It is to prepare for such aggression that the workers of the advanced countries are being made to sacrifice whatever welfare measures they had enjoyed till now. A crumbling imperialism however is dangerous in the extreme, for it is perfectly capable of pushing the world to a catastrophe. The recklessness involved in bombing Iran's nuclear sites testifies to this. Raising the awareness of people all over the world to resist this imperialist recklessness thus becomes absolutely necessary. (IPA Service)



# Impact of Brain Drain on Assam's Future

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Assam today finds itself at a crucial juncture, where the aspirations of its younger generation are increasingly charting paths away from their home state. This ongoing departure of talent—students, professionals, researchers, and skilled workers—has emerged as a defining concern for its long-term developmental trajectory. Often termed as “brain drain”, this silent migration of human capital presents a complex paradox: while it speaks to the excellence of Assamese individuals who are able to secure opportunities beyond the region, it simultaneously underlines the lack of adequate systems, infrastructure, and promise within the state that can accommodate and retain its best minds. The long-term impact of this outflow cannot be dismissed as mere numbers on a graph—it directly affects the socioeconomic, educational, and cultural future of Assam.

The forces propelling brain drain from Assam are deeply rooted in longstanding structural deficiencies. Higher education institutions within the state, though improving, often fall short of national standards in terms of faculty strength, research capabilities, global exposure, and modern pedagogical practices.

Many students, after completing their higher secondary education, prefer to move to institutions in other states for undergraduate and postgraduate studies, particularly in disciplines like engineering, medicine, law, management, and pure sciences. This migration for academic excellence becomes a natural precursor to permanent settlement outside Assam, especially when metropolitan cities offer abundant employment options and higher salaries. The result is a widening intellectual gap within Assam's own institutions and professional sectors.

Urban India and foreign countries appear to promise greater

rewards—economic, social, and professional. Assam, despite its natural beauty and rich cultural identity, struggles to offer comparative returns. The state's economy is still heavily reliant on agriculture and tea, with limited diversification into modern sectors such as information technology, biotechnology, research, and advanced manufacturing. Start-up ecosystems, which have become accelerators of growth in cities like Bengaluru and Hyderabad, remain underdeveloped in Assam. This unevenness not only disincentivizes return migration but actively fuels permanent resettlement elsewhere. As a consequence, the state is not just losing young minds—it is also losing potential entrepreneurs, job creators, and thought leaders who could have played pivotal roles in transforming Assam's economy and governance.

Beyond employment, social and infrastructural gaps exacerbate the sense of alienation among the youth. Issues like intermittent electricity, poor internet connectivity in rural and semi-urban areas, limited healthcare services, bureaucratic delays, and lack of cultural spaces dampen the desire of returnees or aspiring professionals to invest their energy in Assam. Many of them find that the pace of change back home does not match the momentum of their aspirations. As time passes, their connections to the homeland weaken and are replaced by attachments to new places that offer stability, efficiency, and recognition.

The brain drain also carries deep implications for Assam's intellectual and cultural landscape. The state has a rich legacy of literature, music, theatre, indigenous knowledge systems, and language diversity. When talented individuals migrate, they carry with them the stories, traditions, and memories of their homeland, but the active process of nurturing and transmitting these to the next generation back home is disrupted. Cultural institutions find it difficult to attract young leadership. Academic institutions miss out on



dynamic researchers and thinkers who can revitalize the curriculum and bridge global and local knowledge. Art spaces, rural innovation hubs, and community organizations struggle to find the next generation of passionate stewards.

This phenomenon also deepens the urban-rural divide within the state. Most often, it is the rural and semi-urban youth who migrate, leaving behind an ageing population in their native villages. The result is a weakening of local economies, decline in agricultural productivity, erosion of traditional farming knowledge, and collapse of rural cooperatives. Women and elderly residents are frequently left to shoulder the burdens of households and farmlands in the absence of male members. Though remittances sent back home offer temporary relief, they rarely translate into sustainable investments that can rebuild local economies or create employment for others.

The long-term demographic implications are no less alarming. A continuous outflow of the educated class creates a void in

leadership, innovation, and governance. Institutions such as schools, rural health centres, panchayats, and local industries suffer from a shortage of qualified professionals. Policymaking and administrative execution at the grassroots level become subpar due to lack of young, driven individuals. In turn, this leads to a vicious cycle—poor services push more people to leave, further weakening the system. This cycle must be broken if Assam aspires to a future of inclusive development and regional strength. Economic growth remains stunted when it fails to integrate its youth force into its development plans. Assam's over-reliance on a few traditional sectors, and lack of investment in contemporary industries, discourages skilled youth from staying.

The tea industry, which once provided employment and identity, is no longer sufficient to meet the economic ambitions of a digitally connected generation. Even sectors such as tourism and culture, which hold enormous potential, suffer from lack of organized infrastructure and innovation-driven marketing. The absence of high-growth industries results in limited high-paying jobs and professional fulfillment, which are critical for retaining young talent.

While the negative impacts of brain drain are obvious, it is important to acknowledge that not all migration is inherently harmful. Many Assamese individuals who leave the state go on to achieve great success, often becoming ambassadors of Assam's culture, values, and ethos on national and global platforms. This diaspora, if engaged meaningfully, can be a valuable resource for the state's growth. Countries across the world, including India at a national level, have begun to tap into their diaspora for investment, policy guidance, mentorship, and technology transfer. Assam too must actively develop mechanisms to maintain long-term relationships with its diaspora, encourage knowledge exchange, and create avenues for return. Reversing brain drain or transforming it into brain gain, however, is not a spontaneous process. It demands a visionary approach by the government, educational institutions, industry bodies, and civil society. First and foremost, Assam must invest

in revamping its education system. Universities and colleges should be equipped with modern facilities, updated syllabi, industry linkages, research grants, and international collaboration. Faculty development programs and research fellowships can help retain and attract academic talent. Special focus should be given to STEM education, vocational training, and entrepreneurial studies.

Parallel to education reform, the state must create an enabling environment for start-ups and small businesses. Young entrepreneurs need access to seed capital, incubation centres, legal support, and mentorship networks. By facilitating a local entrepreneurial ecosystem, Assam can not only prevent the outflow of business-minded youth but also become a hub of innovation in the northeast. Integration of rural products with global markets through e-commerce, crafts innovation, and sustainable tourism can provide meaningful livelihoods to young people within the state.

Digital infrastructure is another area that demands urgent attention. High-speed internet, reliable electricity, and accessible transport can revolutionize the way people work and learn, especially in remote areas. The post-pandemic world has normalized remote work. Assam has a golden opportunity to create work-from-home job clusters, especially in areas like digital marketing, content creation, data analytics, and customer service, thereby retaining its youth who would otherwise migrate to cities for such opportunities.

Emotional belonging is another factor that influences migration choices. A youth who feels disconnected from the state's vision is less likely to return. Therefore, the government and civil society must also promote a strong cultural and civic identity among the young generation. Celebrating Assamese festivals, supporting regional literature, encouraging local cinema, and reviving indigenous traditions through youth participation can rekindle a sense of pride and ownership in the homeland. Cultural exchange programs, heritage education, and creative fellowships will go a long way in nurturing this connection.

Diaspora engagement must be institutionalized through the creation of a dedicated Assam Global Network that can regularly interact with overseas Assamese professionals, provide investment platforms, and recognize their contributions. Return migration policies such as simplified registration, job matching, real estate incentives, and social security support can further encourage professionals to come back and contribute to Assam's development.

For any of these strategies to work, there must be political will, policy continuity, and participatory governance. Youth-led organizations should be given voice in state planning and innovation councils. Research institutions must be supported to study migration patterns and create region-specific solutions. Transparency, accountability, and a merit-based public system are essential to inspire confidence among the youth that Assam is indeed a place worth building their future in.

The story of brain drain in Assam is not just a statistical concern—it is a mirror reflecting the hopes, disappointments, and decisions of an entire generation. If this trend continues unchecked, the state risks becoming a land of lost opportunities, governed by memories rather than momentum. But with the right vision and collective effort, Assam can reverse the tide. It can become a state where the best minds stay not out of compulsion, but out of conviction—a state that not only remembers its children but also gives them reasons to return, to stay, and to lead. Assam's future depends not just on development, but on where its dreams decide to live.

## Why are colorectal, other GI cancers on the rise in younger people?

By: Katharine Lang

The risk of all types of cancer increases with age. Trusted Source, with, according to the National Institutes of Health, more than 1 in every 100 people over the age of 60 being diagnosed with cancer.

However, in recent years, there has been a worrying increase in cancers of the digestive system—known as gastrointestinal or GI cancers—in people under the age of 50, and experts have yet to identify a reason.

A new analysis of studies notes that between 2010 and 2019 early-onset colorectal cancers increased by 14.8% in the United States, and rates are increasing worldwide.

The comprehensive review, which is published in The British Journal of Surgery, suggests that, while the exact cause is unknown, environmental factors, diet and lifestyle, may be responsible for the increase.

Anton Bilchik, MD, PhD, surgical oncologist, chief of medicine and Director of the Gastrointestinal and Hepatobiliary Program at Providence Saint John's Cancer Institute in Santa Monica, CA, not involved in the review, suggested some possible reasons for the rise in early-onset GI cancers.

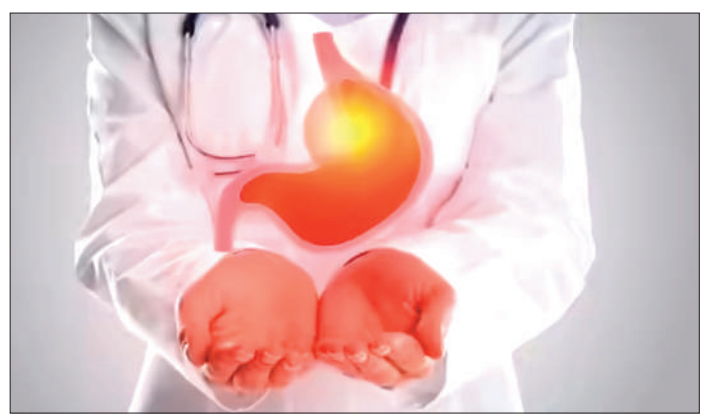
“While the increase in obesity is associated with a major increase in early-onset colorectal cancer, the majority of patients are not obese, do not have a family history or any other obvious risk factors,” Bilchik told Medical News Today.

“This suggests that other factors such as the environment, lifestyle, diet (processed food and red meat), lack of exercise and stress may all negatively affect the trillions of bacteria in our bodies (the microbiome) as well as our immune system creating a proinflammatory response which has been linked to the development of early onset cancers.” — Anton Bilchik, MD, PhD

**Greatest rises in colon and rectal cancers**

The researchers note that early-onset cancers of the colon and rectum had increased the most. People born in 1990 are more than twice as likely to develop colon cancer, and more than four times as likely to develop cancer of the rectum than those born in 1950.

They identified global increases in colorectal cancers. A study of



20 European countries showed that between 2004 and 2016, colorectal cancers had increased by almost 8% for those aged 20–29, almost 5% for people aged 30–39, and by 1.6% in the 40–49 age band.

Even more shocking are figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Wonder database in the U.S., which identified a 333% increase in the incidence of colorectal cancers among 15–19 year olds and a 185% increase among people aged between 20 and 24.

Despite these apparently huge percentage increases, the authors emphasize that the absolute numbers of cancer diagnoses are still very much lower in those under 50 than in older people.

However, the researchers on this study highlight the need for targeted awareness and interventions, particularly among younger age groups.

**Bilchik concurred, commenting that:**

“Public awareness that GI cancer is now the leading cause of [cancer-related] deaths in males under age 50 and the second leading cause in women is essential. The US Preventative Task Force has already reduced the screening age to 45. Given the disproportionate increase in blacks and Hispanics compared with non-Hispanic whites, the screening age may need to be further reduced to 40.”

**Can experts explain the increase in colorectal cancers?**

“Though the rates of colorectal cancer are rising fastest in the youngest age groups—ages 15–24—the absolute number of cases in this age group is relatively low compared to those aged 40–49, which makes it challenging to isolate risk factors specific to this younger group,” joint first author of the review Sara K. Char, MD, Clinical Oncology Fellow at

the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, told MNT.

“Several factors, including obesity, excessive alcohol intake, intake of a Western-pattern diet, sedentary lifestyle, and consuming sugar-sweetened beverages have been associated with increased risk of early-onset colorectal cancer,” Char suggested.

“Other factors, such as exposure to microplastics and changes in the gut microbiome have also been implicated,” she told us. “However, we know that not all patients with early-onset colorectal cancer have these risk factors. Ongoing research efforts are needed to better understand these rising trends.”

**Gastric cancers preventable by stopping bacterial infection**

Another recent study, led by researchers from the International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Lyon, France, and published in Nature Medicine, found a link between gastric cancers and infections with a common bacterium.

The study was concerned with preventable gastric cancers, and it analyzed data from participant cohorts across 185 countries, focusing on individuals born in 2008–2017.

The researchers concluded that an estimated 15.6 million gastric cancer cases are likely to develop among people from these birth cohorts.

Of these cases, a staggering 76% are attributable to infections with the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*, which are very common but also preventable.

This, according to the study authors, highlights the need of implementing education and preventive strategies addressing this cause for gastric cancer worldwide.

**What can be done to prevent colorectal cancers?**

While the reason for the rise in colorectal cancer cases are less clear, experts argue that perhaps, for now, the focus should be on early detection, to allow more effective treatment.

At the same time, Nilesh Vora, MD, a board-certified hematologist and medical oncologist and medical director of the MemorialCare Todd Cancer Institute at Long Beach Medical Center in Long Beach, CA, also not involved in the research discussed, attributed the decrease in colorectal cancers in older people to the “widespread adoption of colonoscopies for screening.”

He told MNT that: “Finding precancerous lesions is one way to decrease the risk of colon cancers. Could this be done in younger patients? Potentially. The recommended screening age has decreased from 50 to 45, and perhaps an argument could be made to lower screening ages even further.”

Still, while emphasizing that screening guidelines relate only to asymptomatic individuals and that anyone with symptoms such as blood in stool, pain, or changes in bowel habits should see their doctor, Char explained:

“In the United States, individuals at average risk of colorectal cancer are recommended to start screening at age 45. However, those with a family history of colorectal cancer or precancerous colorectal polyps should start at either age 40 or 10 years prior to the age of the affected family member, whichever is sooner. It is important for younger adults to talk to their families and understand their familial risk.”

“Research is ongoing to determine how to tailor screening programs to even younger individuals most at risk for developing early-onset colorectal cancer,” she added. As for lifestyle changes that may help reduce a person's risk of colorectal cancer, Char advised that:

“Many generally healthy behaviors can reduce one's risk of developing colorectal cancer, such as not smoking, avoiding excessive alcohol consumption, limiting red meat consumption, treating vitamin D deficiency, and staying physically active. We generally recommend 30 minutes of moderately vigorous exercise at least five times a week.” (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

## Global health diplomacy in a Post-COVID world

By: Lakshmy Ramakrishnan

Historically, the US been the largest funder of global health efforts and technical health assistance. It has partnered with other countries and with international organisations, and conducted extensive research. But President Trump's return to the White House initiated a sudden and unprecedented about-face.

First, the Trump administration alleged a lack of transparency over the origin of Covid-19. It subsequently took steps to formally withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO). Trump then dismantled the United States Agency for International Aid (USAID), a stalwart of development assistance, voicing concerns that a number of USAID contracts were incompatible with American interests.

Global health may not be a major consideration in current US foreign policy. Yet global health diplomacy is a powerful soft-power instrument, and the Trump administration ignores it at its peril.

**Global health diplomacy is a powerful soft-power instrument, and the Trump administration ignores it at its peril**

Early examples of potent global soft-power health activities include the US-led medical civic action programme during the Vietnam war, and the medical diplomacy of China and Cuba in 1960s Africa and Latin America.

More recently, the UN embedded health in its sustainable development goals, and the high profile of health at the G7 and G20 reflect how health influences global policy. There is a moral argument for global aid to advance health as a global public good. But there are other advantages to global health diplomacy, including the promotion of national interests and foreign policy goals, and raising a country's international status.

**Continuing threats to health security**

Aside from common health challenges, governments around the world must address novel infectious diseases, bioterrorism, and accidental biological incidents. Tackling such challenges requires concerted global action involving multiple stakeholders, under the aegis of multilateral organisations.

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted how advancing health policies for the global public good requires coordinated international efforts. For example, collaboration between Oxford University, AstraZeneca, and the Serum Institute of India produced the Covishield vaccine.

COVAX was a novel partnership between the WHO, UNICEF, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. The partnership distributed Covid-19 vaccines, under a licensing and technology transfer agreement, to meet global immunisation demands. The sharing of biological information across borders remains critical to global health security, and promotes innovation in medical research and development.

The sharing of biological information across borders remains critical to global health security, and promotes innovation in medical research and development.

Despite these notable partnerships, geopolitical rivalry, vaccine nationalism, and the hoarding of medical supplies marred global pandemic management. The crisis damaged public trust in the WHO, weakening its soft power. There were delays in declaring Covid-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), and uncertainty over



the pandemic's origin. This demonstrates the urgent need for transparency and enhanced accountability in the WHO, and, ultimately, for its structural reform.

Several WHO member states, most recently the US, are calling for distinct guidelines on when to declare a PHEIC, greater accountability over financing, and measures to ensure the global health workforce is protected.

**Rethinking global health**

Negotiations over a pandemic treaty alleviated some of these concerns. Despite the US' absence, the Pandemic Agreement treaty was adopted last month. Yet glaring caveats remain. Negotiations over a Pathogen Access Benefit Sharing (PABS) mechanism, for example, have yet to take place. And any effective agreement will take years to enforce, during which time another pandemic might well occur.

Global health diplomacy remains crucial for navigating the shifting geopolitical landscape. Repercussions from the US' withdrawal from the WHO, the dismantling of USAID, and proposed US funding cuts to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, all call for urgent change. A resurgence in military conflicts, and increased military spending by the US, China, Russia, Germany, and India, has reduced global health funding. Finally, global health security remains much weaker without technical assistance and data-sharing with the US.

**Any effective agreement will take years to enforce, during which time another pandemic might well occur**

To raise their standing on the world stage, China and India continue to influence health activities in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia. India, in particular, is avidly pursuing a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

India is the leading vaccine manufacturer by volume, with vibrant biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries. The country now has a remarkable opportunity to assert its voice in global health. China, meanwhile, has pledged to supplement its mandatory WHO contribution with an additional \$500 million over the next five years. Concerns remain, however, over how other countries will be able to interact with China under such multilateral fora.

Global health is undergoing seismic shifts, and biological threats will not diminish. The US departure from health activities leaves a power vacuum, and signals the pressing need for a restructuring of the global health landscape. India and China are poised to address these challenges. Before they can do so, however, both rising powers must address systemic problems that continue to mar global health governance. (Courtesy: ORF)



# 'Brahmos was instrumental in Operation Sindoor, got several countries' attention'

New BrahMos testing facility in Lucknow will strengthen India's self-reliance: Rajnath Singh

LUCKNOW, July 13: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said that the Brahmos missile proved instrumental in Operation Sindoor and since then, more than a dozen countries have expressed interest in it.

Singh said this at an event in Lucknow where he unveiled a statue of former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Chandra Bhanu Gupta at the National PG College and released a postage stamp in tribute to him.

"Just a few days ago, I inaugurated a Brahmos aerospace integration and testing facility in Lucknow. You must have seen that in Operation Sindoor, Brahmos missile has done a miraculous job and not only this, after the miracle shown by Brahmos missile, about 14-15 countries of the world have demanded Brahmos missile from India," Singh said.

"Brahmos missile will now be exported from Lucknow as well. I believe that this facility will strengthen our country's self-reliance in the defence sector, and at the same time, it will also create employment. My effort is that more industries should also come here so that, along with Lucknow, the state also develops rapidly," he said. The minister claimed that UP was attracting more and more industries on the back of strong law and order and infrastructural re-



bustness. "Historical changes are taking place in infrastructure. Expressway, airport, metro, medical college, all these are presenting a new picture of development," he said. Singh, who is the Lok Sabha MP from Lucknow, also showered praise on Chandra Bhanu Gupta, who served as the chief minister of

Uttar Pradesh for three terms.

"Chandra Bhanu Gupta ji started as a simple worker in the freedom movement and made a place in the hearts of millions of people through his sacrifice, commitment and leadership. Chandra Bhanu Gupta's life tells us that power does not mean only position or au-

thority, but responsibility, sacrifice and protecting the interests of the public.

"His life also gives us the message that there may be differences in politics, but there should not be animosity," he said.

Singh, who is also a former UP CM, said the postage stamp was

not only a tribute to Chandra Bhanu Gupta, but also a tribute to his "high life values."

"It is a message that service, simplicity and honesty have been important in Indian politics and will remain important in the future too," he said. Singh said Chandra Bhanu Gupta's vision and agenda were never regional, always nationalistic.

"Chandra Bhanu ji was not in power for very long (time). But in the short time he was in power, he gave priority to public welfare works. He was always known for his integrity," he said.

He also said that the former CM did not agree much with the economic policies of Jawaharlal Nehru.

He said that even though Gupta did not agree with the Kamaraj Plan, he resigned from the CM post. "You can imagine how an elected leader had to step down from the post due to the dislike of some people," Singh said.

In 1963, K Kamaraj (former chief minister of Madras) suggested to Nehru that senior Congress leaders should leave ministerial posts to take up organisational work.

The suggestion came to be known as the Kamaraj Plan, which was designed primarily to dispel the notion that Congressmen were attached to power. (PTI)

## Cong to hold strategy meet tomorrow for upcoming Parl session



NEW DELHI, July 13: Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi has convened a meeting of top party leaders on July 15 to finalise strategy for the upcoming Monsoon session of Parliament, which is expected to be stormy with the opposition raring to raise several issues like EC's special intensive revision in Bihar and Operation Sindoor.

Sources said the Parliamentary strategy group meeting would be attended by the Leaders of Opposition in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, besides the deputy leaders in both houses and the chief whips and whips of the party. The meeting will be chaired by Sonia Gandhi at her 10 Janpath residence and will also be attended by some senior leaders who are part of the strategy group.

The government has announced that the Monsoon session of Parliament will begin on July 21 and continue till August 21, a week longer than planned earlier, signalling a heavy legislative agenda.

The sources said the Congress is likely to take up the issues of special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar being carried out by the Election Commission (EC) ahead of the assembly polls.

It has joined several opposition parties in challenging the SIR in the Supreme Court and senior Congress leader and lawyer Abhishek Singhvi is arguing the case.

The Congress wants the SIR to be scrapped, alleging that it is "unconstitutional" and is aimed at disenfranchising around two crore voters in the state.

The Congress is also likely to seek answers from the government on what it claims were "lapses and losses" during Operation Sindoor

and the circumstances that led to the cessation of hostilities following US President Donald Trump's claims of mediation in the India-Pakistan conflict to avert a nuclear war.

The government has rejected Trump's claims with Prime Minister Narendra Modi telling him, during a phone call last month, that India has never accepted mediation and would not ever accept it in future.

The INDIA bloc parties have been demanding a debate on the Pahalgam attack and Operation Sindoor -- the strike on terror sites in Pakistan-controlled areas by the Indian armed forces in response to the April 22 massacre by terrorists in Kashmir.

The issue of US tariffs against India is also likely to be taken up during the discussions, besides the state of the economy, prices and unemployment.

The issue of impeachment of Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav of the Allahabad High Court is also likely to come up as the notice for moving a motion for his removal is also pending before the Rajya Sabha Chairman.

The Congress has objected to certain remarks by Justice Yadav which it alleged are "communal" and not expected from a person holding such a position.

Once the strategy on issues that the party wants to raise in Parliament is finalised, the Congress will speak to other opposition parties to evolve a joint plan of action for the Monsoon session, the sources said.

The longer duration of the session comes amid the government's plans to bring in key legislations, including one to facilitate the entry of the private sector in the atomic energy domain. (PTI)

## Actively engaging with students, taking steps to address their concerns after 'rape' incident: IIM-C

KOLKATA, July 13: The Indian Institute of Management-Calcutta on Sunday said it is actively engaging with students and taking necessary steps to address their concerns in the wake of the alleged sexual assault of a woman on its campus.

The woman was allegedly raped by a student of IIM-Calcutta inside a hostel on the campus, police had said on Saturday.

The accused student was arrested on Saturday on the basis of an FIR lodged by the woman, he said. A court here has remanded the student to police custody till July 19.

The IIM-Calcutta, however, declined to share details of the measures being undertaken, citing sensitivity of the matter and ongoing legal proceedings.

"We are constantly engaging with our students internally to ensure their safety and well-being. I have instructed my team to do everything necessary to address the situation. This is my clear directive," Director-in-Charge Saibal Chattopadhyay told PTI.

He said the IIM-Calcutta campus is co-educational and the recent developments have led to some apprehension among parents,



which he termed as "natural" given that the institute has never faced such a situation in the past.

"I cannot speak in detail about what we are doing. We will not

share with the media anything more than what we have already said in our statement on Saturday, as this matter is both sensitive and sub judice," Chattopadhyay added.

In its statement issued on Saturday, IIM Calcutta had said: "We are treating this matter with the utmost seriousness and are fully co-operating with the law enforcement authorities, who are currently conducting an investigation. The concerned individual has been taken into police custody, and the legal process is underway."

The institute is committed to ensuring that due process is followed

while safeguarding the dignity, safety, and privacy of all individuals involved, it had said.

"We wish to affirm that the Indian Institute of Management-Calcutta has zero tolerance for such incidents and remains steadfast in upholding a safe and respectful campus environment," the statement added.

Police have constituted a nine-member special investigation team (SIT) to probe into the alleged incident.

The woman's father, however, has claimed that the reported incident did not take place. (PTI)

## EC always a 'puppet' in hands of Modi govt: Kapil Sibal

NEW DELHI, July 13: The Election Commission has always been a "puppet" in the hands of the Modi government, Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal has alleged and claimed the poll body's Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Bihar is an "unconstitutional" move aimed at ensuring that majoritarian governments remain in power.

In an interview with PTI, Sibal also alleged that each election commissioner surpasses the previous one in his "alignment to this government". Hitting out at the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, the former law minister said the Election Commission (EC) doesn't have the jurisdiction to decide issues of citizenship.

The EC has all along maintained that the revision, being held after 22 years, will cleanse the voters' list of ineligible people, duplicate entries and include those eligible as per law to vote. Asked about the opposition's attack on the EC over SIR, Sibal said, "It has always been a puppet in the hands of the government for a long long time ever since this government came to power."

The conduct of the Election Commission, the less said about it, the better, he said.

"In fact, each election commissioner surpasses the previous one in his alignment to this government," Sibal said. On the ongoing SIR, he said, "This is according to me a completely unconstitutional process that is being carried on. The Commission doesn't have the jurisdiction to decide issues of citizenship and that also by a block level officer." "I have been saying that they (BJP) adopt all possible means to somehow win elections. In fact, this whole particular process of a special intensive revision is a process to ensure majoritarian governments for all times to come," the senior advocate said.

"This is the intent because if you

delete the names of poor people, the marginalised, the adivasis, you will ensure that the majoritarian party always wins. So this is yet another way of ensuring that and this is very worrisome," he said.

Sibal said he has always stated that he doesn't believe in the independence of the EC at all because the institution has not reflected that independence that was expected of them. On the Supreme Court's interim order, Sibal refused to comment on it, pointing out that he is a counsel in the matter.

"Whatever the court has said will be taken into account hopefully by the EC itself. So that we don't have this controversy moving forward," he said. Noting that the Monsoon session of Parliament is coming up, Sibal said the issue of SIR is perhaps more significant than any other issue being talked about today. He also said the Maharashtra issue is also very important because "the EC has still not been able to explain how there was a sudden spurt of voters only in those constituencies where the BJP has won".

On issues that need to be taken up during the Monsoon Session, Sibal said there are many issues that the government raises everyday but the problem is "they never give us time". "They never allow a discussion to take place whether it is about foreign policy or continuance of terror activities or the isolation of India in the international community or the levels of corruption that have quadrupled ever since 2014, or discrimination against states that are not ruled by the political party in power at the Centre, or how the federal structure of this country is being slowly eroded," Sibal said.

Sibal's remarks come days after the Supreme Court asked the Election Commission to consider Aadhaar, Voter ID and ration cards as valid documents during SIR in Bihar, set to go to polls later this year. (PTI)

## Martyrs day: Kashmir leaders say they are under house arrest, Omar calls it 'undemocratic move'

SRINAGAR, July 13: Prominent political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday claimed they have been placed under house arrest to prevent them from paying homage to the 22 persons killed by the Dogra army on this day in 1931, with Chief Minister Omar Abdullah terming the move as "blatantly undemocratic".

There was no official confirmation to the house arrest claims made by the leaders.

Paying tributes to the 22 people killed, Abdullah likened the July 13, 1931 incident to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

"13th July massacre is our Jallianwala Bagh. The people who laid down their lives did so against the British. Kashmir was being ruled under the British Paramountcy. What a shame that

true heroes who fought against British rule in all its forms are today projected as villains only because they were Muslims," the chief minister said on X.

In 1919, hundreds of people protesting peacefully against the Rowlatt Acts, which granted the colonial administration repressive powers, were gunned down by British forces without any provocation at the Jallianwala Bagh in Punjab's Amritsar.

Abdullah said, "We may be denied the opportunity to visit their graves today but we will not forget their sacrifices".

In an earlier post, Abdullah criticised the house detention of the leaders as a "blatantly undemocratic move".

"In a blatantly undemocratic move homes have been locked

from the outside, police & central forces deployed as jailers & major bridges in Srinagar blocked. All to stop people from visiting a historically important grave yard containing the graves of people who laid down their lives to give Kashmiris a voice & to empower them. I will never understand what the Law & Order government is so afraid of," he said. Opposition PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said the mistrust between Delhi and Kashmiris will truly end only when India accepted Kashmiri "martyrs" as their own.

"The day you accept our heroes as your own just as Kashmiris have embraced yours, from Mahatma Gandhi to Bhagat Singh that day, as Prime Minister Modi once said, the 'dil ki doori' (dis-

tance of hearts) will truly end," she said in a post on X.

The former chief minister posted pictures of a locked gate to her residence.

"When you lay siege to the Martyrs' Graveyard, lock people in their homes to prevent them from visiting Mazar-e-Shuhada, it speaks volumes. July 13th commemorates our martyrs those who rose against tyranny, much like countless others across the country. They will always be our heroes," she said.

The former chief minister claimed several leaders of her party who managed to sneak out of their homes have been detained at various police stations.

"Continuing with its regressive policies many of our party leaders like Khurshid Allam, Zohaib Mir,

Hamid Kohsheen, Arif Liagroo, Sara Nayeema, Tabassum, Basharat Naseem and others who managed to sneak out of their homes have been detained in police stations. They were on their way to Mazar e shuda. It seems we are getting back into the oppressive times that our 13 July Martyrs fought against," she claimed.

Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone also claimed that he has been stopped from leaving his residence.

"Not allowed to move out of home. Detained. I don't know why the union government is so keen to redefine what is sacred for the people of Kashmir. The sacrifices rendered on July 13 are sacred for all of us," he said. (PTI)

## Environment group appeals to J-K govt to protect 252-million-year-old fossil site

SRINAGAR, July 13: The Environmental Policy Group (EPG) has appealed to the state government to take steps for protecting the 252-million-year-old Guryul Ravine Fossil Park located in Khonmoh, Jammu and Kashmir.

The EPG, in a statement issued on Saturday, expressed concern over the establishment of a large illegal garbage dumping yard near the fossil park.

"The act not only constitutes a grave ecological violation but also endangers a globally significant geo-heritage site that dates back 252 million years," the EPG said.

They highlighted that the site is critically important, as it is the only known geological formation that preserves definitive evidence of the world's first recorded tsunami, embedded within its ancient sedimentary layers.



"The Guryul Ravine is globally acknowledged by geologists, palaeontologists, and climate scientists as one of the most important Permian-Triassic boundary sites in the world. The fossil record at Guryul Ravine offers a rare glimpse into the ecological collapse and recovery phases that

followed the extinction. It serves as a natural laboratory for studying Earth's climate history, mass extinctions, tectonic activity, and evolutionary processes," the group said.

Shedding light on what made the Guryul Ravine unique, the EPG mentioned it was due to the

presence of tsunami-generated sedimentary structures, identified and documented by geoscientists, that confirm the earliest evidence of a massive oceanic disturbance triggered during the Permian-Triassic transition.

These findings have been cited in international scientific journals and attract global research interest, making the site not only a national but also a world heritage asset, it added.

"The establishment of a waste dumping ground in such close proximity to this ecologically and scientifically sensitive area is a shocking act of environmental vandalism. It directly violates several key environmental protection laws, including the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016," the EPG said.

The group warned that the illegal dumping poses an immediate risk to the fossil beds, fragile sedimentary layers, and the overall ecological balance of the region. They cautioned that if this negligence is not addressed, it could destroy one of the few accessible records of the Earth's most "dramatic evolutionary moment".

The EPG appealed to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and the chief secretary to intervene at the highest level and issue immediate directions for corrective action.

They also called for the park and its surrounding buffer zone to be officially declared as a no-dumping zone and designated as an eco-sensitive area under relevant provisions of the environmental and heritage protection law. (PTI)



## Seized weapons show Manipur insurgent groups modifying some looted arms into sniper rifles

*Improvised sniper rifles and cannons emerge as ethnic groups weaponise looted arms, scrap metal in Manipur*



**NEW DELHI/IMPHAL, July 13:** Manipur's ethnic insurgent groups from both the Meitei and Kuki communities are modifying weapons, many of them looted from police armouries in 2023, and converting them into makeshift sniper rifles to increase their range and lethality, officials said on Sunday.

They said the weapons have been converted into makeshift sniper rifles to target opposing communities. Among over 6,000 weapons looted from police armouries were .303 rifles, AK assault rifles and INSAS rifles and carbines.

The standard .303 rifle has an effective kill range of about 500 metres, the officials said, adding that after modifying the butt of the gun and placing a specialised telescope with other specifications, the round from the same rifle can travel much further, with more accuracy and lethality.

The AK-47 is most effective within 300-400 metres only. These modifications suggest that the groups wanted to engage in long-distance combat, but before they could pose a new challenge to security forces, the police along with the Assam Rifles and other paramilitary forces confiscated these weapons from various districts of the Imphal valley and hills.

In June, Manipur Police and other security forces recovered 328 weapons during simultaneous operations across five districts of the Imphal Valley on the intervening night of June 13 and 14 from Meitei dominated insurgent groups and 203 arms in first week of July from four districts in the hill areas where Kuki insurgent groups have an upper hand.

The weapons recovered from these two raids included INSAS rifles, AK series rifles, Self Loading Rifle, modified sniper rifles, grenade launchers, pistols and country-made 0.22 rifle.

Immediately after clashes broke out in 2023 between the two communities that have claimed 260 lives so far, security agencies had seized guns fabricated from parts of uprooted electric poles or galvanised iron (GI) pipes.

After the clashes turned bloodier in June 2023, the people of the hill district, who are traditionally hunters and have the ability to improvise and make deadly weapons, uprooted some electric poles and water pipes.

This community traditionally used swords, spears, bows and arrows. Later, they started using muzzle guns and bullets also known as 'Thihngang'.

The uprooted electric poles were used to manufacture indigenous cannon, also known as 'pumpi' or 'bampi', filled with scrap iron and other metallic items which act as bullets or pellets.

These are manufactured by village blacksmiths, also known as 'Thih-Kheng Pa' who often render free service to defend their community, the officials said.

The hill community is also known for its techniques in guerrilla warfare and often defends itself by carrying out sudden attacks on approaching people or ambushing them by rolling down huge stones in steep areas.

The electric pole converted 'bampi' is given an electric charge and is operated from a distance as the possibility of the pipe or the electric pole bursting in the middle cannot be ruled out, the officials said. (PTI)

# Govt charting youth-centric roadmap for 'Viksit Arunachal': CM Khandu

*'Not just grooming youth on talent platforms but preparing them for leadership, innovation, and enterprise'*

**ITANAGAR, July 13:** The Arunachal Pradesh government is working on a comprehensive roadmap for 'Viksit Arunachal', placing youth development at the heart of its long-term vision, Chief Minister Pema Khandu said.

The government aims to equip young people with skills to become not only achievers in sports, culture, and arts, but also entrepreneurs and future job creators.

Khandu, speaking at the grand finale of the 7th edition of 'Arunachal Idol' held in Namsai on Saturday night, said the state is aligning its vision with 'Viksit Bharat' 2047 by strengthening youth-led initiatives.

"We are not just grooming youth on talent platforms but preparing them for leadership, innovation, and enterprise," he said.

Since 2016, the state has institutionalised seven flagship youth events under the Sports and Youth Affairs Department, including Arunachal Idol, Mr Arunachal, Miss Arunachal, Mrs Arunachal, Arunachal Got Talent, Arunachal Super Dancers, and Arunachal Yuva Samanvay, to offer structured platforms for young talents in various fields.

"The government is now ensuring that these events are professionally managed and are sustainable, with mechanisms in place for long-term sponsorships and oversight," Khandu said.

These events, he noted, reflect the government's firm commitment to nurturing and promoting creativity, confidence, and leadership among the youth.



In the sports sector, the chief minister highlighted significant progress, including the development of national-standard infrastructure such as the Yupa football stadium and numerous indoor and outdoor arenas across districts.

"Our athletes are already making a mark in national and international events, and we are determined to create even greater opportunities for them," he added.

The state is also laying emphasis on entrepreneurship and skill development to transform its youth from job seekers to job providers.

"We are creating avenues for upskilling so that our young generation can build their own ventures and inspire others," Khandu said.

Recognising the potential of the youth in creative industries, the chief minister announced that the state's film policy, currently in the final stage of drafting, will be introduced soon.

The policy is expected to groom local talent, promote filmmaking, and attract big production houses from Bollywood and South

India, he said, while citing past examples like 'Koyle', shot in Tawang, and other films shot in Pasighat and Ziro that boosted tourism in those regions.

Fluency in Hindi, he said, is one of the unique strengths of people of Arunachal Pradesh, enabling youth to connect nationally and enter industries such as cinema and media. He highlighted Bollywood actress Chum Darang, from the state, as a role model for aspiring youth.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein said 'Arunachal Idol' has grown into a premier youth-focused cultural platform since its inception in 2015 by the Arunachal Orphan Care Society.

Recognising its impact, the government declared it an official calendar event in 2018 to ensure professional organisation and consistent support, he said.

"This show is more than a competition. It is a movement that encourages creative expression and builds confidence among our youth," Mein said, urging young people to take full advantage of such platforms and assuring them that the government stands firmly behind them.

Out of over 4,000 aspiring singers, Tsering Sandup from Tawang won the coveted title of Arunachal Idol 2025. Julee Tikkom from Longding and Dakmo Riba from Leparada were declared first and second runners up, respectively. They received cash prizes of ₹ 3 lakh, ₹ 2 lakh, and ₹ 1 lakh, respectively, along with trophies. (PTI)

## Tipra Motha supremo demands 'Bihar model' electoral rolls revision in Tripura

**AGARTALA, July 13:** Tipra Motha supremo Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma on Sunday called for a 'Bihar model' revision of electoral rolls in Tripura ahead of Assembly elections in 2028.

The Election Commission (EC) has initiated a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Bihar ahead of the crucial Assembly polls scheduled later this year.

The process has already stirred controversy, with opposition parties raising concerns over the strict criteria being applied for voter registration.

Taking to social media, Debbarma wrote: "The same exercise should be conducted in Northeast India — especially Tripura — and the officers must include our indigenous Tiprasa people/officers."

He accompanied the post with a photograph of Bihar poll officials checking

voters' names. Although Tripura's Assembly elections are scheduled for March 2028, the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) is slated to go to polls next year.

Debbarma argued that the northeastern states deserve the same electoral scrutiny as Bihar.

"I fail to understand why Bihar is important and northeast is not for EC. Aren't we also children of India? Time for Tipra Motha MLAs to write to EC to do the same here", he posted on Facebook.

Debbarma also urged upon people to put pressure on the regional political parties of the Northeastern states seeking 'Bihar model' of roll revision.

He added, "I request all our northeastern brothers and sisters to put the same pressure on your regional parties to do the same!". (PTI)

## Tripura Congress to stage protest rallies against BJP-led government's 'anti-people' policies

*TPCC alleges targeted assaults on its party workers*

**AGARTALA, July 13:** The Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) will stage demonstrations in all the district headquarters on Monday against "anti-people policies" of the BJP-led government in the state, a senior party leader said.

Accusing the government of failing to address people's problems, TPCC president Asish Kumar Saha said the state electricity company has hiked power tariff by installing smart meters.

"We want the government-controlled Tripura State Electricity Corporation Ltd (TSECL) to abandon the plan to roll out smart meters across the state. The consumers are ag-

grieved by the move," he told reporters in South Tripura's Beldanga on Saturday.

Saha said people, who are already over-burdened to meet the daily expenditure due to price rise, are made to shell out additional money for the usage of piped gas.

The TPCC president also alleged a breakdown of law and order in the northeastern state, claiming that opposition parties are not being allowed to carry out any programme.

"Our leader Sudip Roy Barman (MLA) was threatened in Udaipur (in Gomati district) while senior party legislator Gopal Roy was attacked by 'BJP-backed goons' in his home

constituency (Banamalipur). Is this law and order?" he asked.

Saha also criticised Chief Minister Manik Saha's claim of maintaining law and order in the northeastern state.

"How is law and order normal when opposition MLAs are facing threats in broad daylight? It is unfortunate that the law enforcement agencies fail to act against the trouble-makers," he said.

"To protest the anti-people policies and worsening law and order in the state, the Congress will stage protest rallies in all district headquarters of the state on Monday to send a strong message to the government," he added. (PTI)

## Biometric enrolment of Myanmar refugees in Mizoram in end-July: Officials

**AIZAWL, July 13:** The Mizoram government is preparing to launch a large-scale exercise to collect biometric and demographic data of more than 35,000 Myanmar refugees currently taking shelter in the state, a senior official of the home department said on Sunday.

The official said the process is expected to begin in the last part of July.

He said the enrolment will be done online using Foreigner Identification Portal and it will be carried out first in towns and villages where there is good internet connectivity.

He said all Myanmar refugees, including those who entered in 2021 following armed conflict between Chin armed groups, will be covered.

The official added that the government has earmarked ₹ 38 lakh for the exercise, which will be borne by the central government.

Additional funds will be allocated if required, he said.

The official said offline mode may also be required as many refugees live in remote areas with poor inter-



net connectivity.

He said the exercise will be carried out by district administrations headed by deputy commissioners and they will be provided all necessary equipment.

Officials said maximum Myanmar refugees are currently taking shelter in Champhai district.

The refugees, mostly from the Chin community, share ethnic ties with the Mizos. (PTI)

## Sikkim Governor, CM greet people on 211<sup>th</sup> Bhanu Jayanti

**GANGTOK, July 13:** Sikkim Governor Om Prakash Mathur and Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang have extended warm greetings to the people of the Himalayan state on the occasion of the 211th Bhanu Jayanti.

In his message, the governor said, "Bhanu Jayanti is celebrated with gaiety and happiness as a symbol of valuable knowledge and unity across the state and other parts of the country." "Bhanu Bhakta Acharya was an exceptional scholar who made immense contribution to the world of literature," he said.

Mathur added that poet Bhanu Bhakta's work on Ramayan in Nepali from Sanskrit which is widely credited to have played an important role in the development of Nepali literature and the language itself is very commendable. Due to his composition, he was honoured with the title of 'Adikavi'.

"On this occasion, let's pay homage to Adikavi Bhanu Bhakta Acharya and revitalise our endeavour towards the development and preservation of this great language, literature and tradition," he said.

He further urged the Sikkimese people particularly the youths to carry out their scholarly pursuits keeping in mind the greatness of Bhanu Bhakta Acharya.

The governor also congratulated the Nepali-speaking Indian community for having the Nepali language included in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India as



there are a lot of benefits that come with this recognition.

Chief Minister Tamang in his message said that Bhanu Jayanti is celebrated on the 13th of July, this day marks the birth anniversary of Adikavi Bhanubhakta Acharya, whose literary genius and cultural vision left an indelible mark on Nepali literature.

He said that Adikavi Bhanubhakta's work transcended literary value, it inspired social unity and cultural pride that continue to resonate today. His enduring legacy reminds us of the power of language in shaping identity and community. "As we honour his memory, let us continue to preserve and promote our rich linguistic and cultural heritage, and uphold the spirit of unity and harmony that defines our Sikkim," he said. (PTI)

## Five militants arrested in Manipur

**IMPHAL, July 13:** Security forces arrested five militants belonging to various proscribed outfits from three districts of Manipur, police said on Sunday.

Two active cadres of the banned Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) were apprehended from Laikhong in Imphal East district on Saturday, while a member of the Kangleipak Communist Party (TAIBAN-GANBA) was arrested from Tronglaobi in Bishnupur on Friday, they said.

Security personnel also nabbed an active cadre of the outlawed Kangleipak Communist Party (APUNBA) from his residence at Kongpal in Imphal East on Saturday, and a member of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) from Wangjing Bazar in Thoubal district, a police officer said.

Further investigation is underway, he added. (PTI)

## MP Nabam Rebia urges youth to become job creators, inaugurates Dental Clinic in Kimin

**HT Correspondent**

**KIMIN, July 13:** Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament Nabam Rebia has urged the educated youth of Arunachal Pradesh to shift their mindset from job-seeking to job-creating, calling upon them to utilise their qualifications to become entrepreneurs and contribute to the state's development.

Addressing a gathering at Kimin in Papum Pare district on Saturday, the MP was speaking during the inauguration of a new dental clinic.

The facility, established at the Sub-Division headquarters, is aimed at enhancing access to oral healthcare for residents of Kimin and nearby rural communities.

According to an official statement, Rebia emphasised the importance of expanding primary healthcare services in remote areas, particularly in specialised fields like dentistry which often remain neglected.

"The establishment of such clinics is essential to cater to the needs of rural populations. This initiative reflects our commitment to



strengthening grassroots healthcare infrastructure," he said.

Rebia also highlighted the role of educated youth in building self-reliant communities.

"Don't waste precious time waiting for interviews and appointments. Instead, strive to become an employer," he urged. He encouraged young professionals to

return to their hometowns and serve, adding, "Go to learn and come to serve — this is how we can fulfil the needs of our people and simultaneously create employment opportunities for others."

He appealed to the youth to take advantage of various government schemes and benefits aimed at supporting entrepreneurship and

employment-oriented ventures.

"Government and white-collar jobs are fine, but instead of waiting endlessly, use your knowledge and qualifications for the betterment of the state and its people," he added.

The new clinic is expected to reduce the burden on district hospitals and promote awareness around oral hygiene.

Local leaders, medical officers, and residents welcomed the development, expressing optimism about its impact on community health.

Rebia also interacted with health workers at the facility and assured continued support for infrastructure and staffing improvements.

He encouraged young people to consider careers in healthcare, underscoring the importance of community-driven medical initiatives.

Former APSCS&T Chairman Bamang Mangha and Kimin ZPM Bamang Yau were also present at the event and addressed the gathering, appreciating the initiative and its relevance for the region.

## Capital DC urges parents to guide children towards bright futures

**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, July 13:** Deputy Commissioner of Itanagar Capital Complex, Toko Babu, has called upon parents and guardians to play a more active role in shaping the careers and futures of their children.

Addressing a felicitation programme organised by the Bengia Welfare Society (BWS) at the DK Convention Centre in IG Park recently, Babu stressed that the responsibility of a child's development rests not only with teachers but equally with parents and guardians.

In an official statement issued after the event, the Deputy Commissioner emphasised that parental involvement is crucial in ensuring children remain on the right path.

"It is not only the responsibility of teachers but also the duty of parents and guardians to monitor their children's activities, habits, and behaviour. By doing so, we can prevent them from falling into bad habits and instead guide them toward becoming responsible and successful professionals," he said.

Reflecting on the changes brought by modern advancements, Babu said, "Earlier, there were many challenges, but today we have



access to technology, mobile phones, and electronic devices that can support learning. It is important that students make good use of these opportunities."

He urged students to remain focused and disciplined, stating, "If you work hard, success will follow. Respect others to earn respect, and dedicate yourself fully to your education so that you can serve your family, society, state, and nation."

He also advised students to take care of their health while pursuing academic excellence.

The programme saw the presence of several dignitaries from the Ben-

gia Welfare Society, including Chairman Bengia Tabb and Education Secretary Bengia Tade, among others.

As part of the event, students who had excelled in the CBSE Class X and XII examinations were felicitated with certificates of appreciation. Other achievers from the community were also recognised for their contributions and accomplishments.

The programme aimed to inspire students to strive for excellence while reinforcing the role of family and community support in shaping future generations.



# WEST INDIES TAKE HONOURS ON 1<sup>ST</sup> DAY OF DAY-NIGHT 3<sup>RD</sup> TEST AGAINST AUSTRALIA

*Indian pacers reduce England to 98 for four at lunch*

**KINGSTON (JAMAICA), July 13:** The West Indies produced another dominant day with the ball against a fragile Australia batting lineup and then survived a tense final hour Saturday to take the honors after the first day of the day-night third test.

Shamar Joseph took four wickets, with Justin Greaves and Jayden Seales taking three apiece, as the West Indies pace attack took full advantage of the seam and pitch conditions once the lights were turned on at Sabina Park to bowl Australia out for 225.

The hosts then survived an evening onslaught from 100-test veteran Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins, for just the loss of Kevlon Anderson to Starc, to be 16-1 at the close.

Earlier, 19-year-old Sam Konstas' tough tour continued as he was the only wicket to fall in the opening session after Australia had won the toss and elected to bat. Konstas labored to 17 from 53 balls before he was snared lbw by Greaves (3-56).

Usman Khawaja didn't fare much better as he fell for a scratchy 23 from 92 balls until he



was spectacularly caught behind by Shai Hope to give Shamar Joseph (4-33) his first wicket of the day.

Cameron Green (46) and Steven Smith (48) steadied the ship for the Baggy Greens with a 61-run partnership, but both were

dismissed in quick order just before milestones.

Unlike the first two tests in Barbados and Grenada, Australia's middle order didn't fire with Head (20), Webster (one) and Carey (21) all falling cheaply as the lights were turned and the

ball began hooping and swinging about.

Seales (3-59) then returned to pick up Cummins (24), who

holed-out in the deep looking for his third six in the over and Starc went for a duck in his milestone 100th test.

Shamar Joseph got a deserved fourth wicket when he had Josh Hazlewood caught at deep point to see the tourists lose their last seven wickets for 68 runs in yet another unconvincing batting display.

"Every pitch has been tough," Green said after play. "It was a real grind. Usman batted well and never looked in. Steve Smith looked like he batted on a different pitch again."

"We wanted to give them a tricky 45 minutes at the end and I thought they batted beautifully."

King and Anderson had the unenviable task of opening the batting for the hosts under lights with Mikyle Louis and John Campbell both unavailable to bat after taking blows in the field during Australia's first innings.

After Starc, who relishes bowling with the pink ball, didn't have to wait long to get his 396th test wicket when he found the stumps between the gap of Anderson's (3) bat and pad.

But captain Chase and King dug in grimly and survived a number of close calls to see the hosts through to stumps and take

the honors after the first day.

Australia spinner Nathan Lyon was dropped for the first time in 12 years as the tourists opted for an all-pace attack with the pink ball at Sabina Park.

Scott Boland was brought in beside usual attack trio of Cummins, Starc and Hazlewood.

The West Indies, on the other hand, broke up its all-pace attack from Grenada by recalling left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican at the expense of quick Anderson Phillip.

Also, opening batter Kraigg Brathwaite was dropped following his 100th test in Grenada after scores in the series of 4, 4, 0, 7. He was replaced by Louis, while Guyana's Anderson debuted at No. 3 in the order after displacing Keacy Carty.

Starc is playing his 100th test, the 16th Australian to the landmark. After taking Anderson's wickets under lights at Sabina Park, he's now just four wickets away from a career 400.

Australia's bowlers have dominated the series after winning the first two tests — by 159 runs in Barbados then by 133 runs in Grenada — to secure the Frank Worrell Trophy. (AP)

## KACHUGAON, KAJALGAON ENTER FINAL CM Sarma to grace grand finale of first-ever Bodoland CEM Cup 2025



**HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, July 13:** The stage is set for the grand finale and vibrant closing ceremony of the first-ever Bodoland CEM Cup 2025, scheduled for July 15 at the SAI Stadium, Titaguri, Kokrajhar. The highlight of the event will be the presence of Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, who will grace the final match as the chief guest, acknowledging BTC's strong commitment to grassroots sports and youth development.

Organised by the Government of Bodoland Territorial Region under the leadership of CEM Pramod Boro, the Bodoland CEM Cup 2025 has emerged as one of the largest grassroots football tournaments in the country. It began on 14th June at the Village Council Development Committee (VDC) level in Udalguri, with participation from all 420 VDCs across the five BTR districts—Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang, Udalguri, and Tamulpur.

Winning teams advanced through multiple competitive phases—Constituency Level (June 22-26), followed by the District Level (July 1-5), culmi-

nating in the Council Level phase starting from 10th July. Matches were hosted at DASA Stadium (Dotma), South Aflagaon (Banaragaon), Taranguri (Salakati), and the SAI Stadium in Titaguri. In total, over 3,750 teams and nearly 70,000 players took part, making it a tournament of historic scale and inclusivity.

In the semi-finals, Kachugaon constituency of Kokrajhar district defeated Bhergaon constituency by 2-0 in a match held at South Aflagaon, while Kajalgaon constituency of Chirang district beat Jomduar constituency 2-1 in an exciting match at Taranguri on Sunday.

The grand finale will feature Kachugaon vs. Kajalgaon at the SAI Stadium on 15th July.

The Bodoland CEM Cup 2025 has not only showcased athletic excellence but also revived village-level sports culture, strengthened community bonds, and inspired a new generation of football talent. As thousands gather for the final showdown, the tournament stands as a powerful symbol of peace, unity, and aspiration in the heart of Bodoland.

## Shafali's 75 goes in vain, India lose 5<sup>th</sup> T20I by 5 wickets but win series 3-2

**BIRMINGHAM, July 13:** A historic maiden Women's T20 series victory already scripted against England, India failed to end on a high, losing to the hosts by five wickets in a last-ball thriller in an inconsequential fifth and final match here.

India, however, won the series 3-2.

India rode on Shafali Verma's quick-fire 75 to score 167 for 7, a target which England chased down with five wickets to spare on the last ball.

Sent in to bat on Saturday, India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana started on an aggressive note, hitting Em Arlott for consecutive boundaries in the opening over before perishing on the last delivery, caught by Linsey Smith at point while trying to pull a short delivery.

Jemimah Rodrigues too didn't last long, departing an over later bowled by Smith.

Shafali Verma (75) and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (15) then stitched 66 runs off 43 balls for the third wicket to take India forward before the latter was cleaned up by off-spinner Charlie Dean (3/23).

Next in Harleen Deol too failed to make a mark, out LBW to Sophie Ecclestone (2/28).

Shafali, on the other hand, was going great guns by dealing in boundaries to notch up her score in just 41 balls. She hit 13 boundaries and a six.

In fact in the seventh over, Shafali was particularly severe on medium pacer Issy Wong, hitting the bowler for three boundaries and a six to pick up 20 runs. She played her shots all around

the ground, with the straight drive over the bowler's head standing out.

Shafali brought up her fifty in just 23 balls, the second joint-fastest by an Indian woman in WT20s, when she smashed Ecclestone over the covers for four.

Dean finally got the prized scalp of Shafali in the 14th over when Maia Bouchier took a brilliant diving catch at long on with India at 111 for 5.

Wicket-keeper Richa Ghosh struck a quick 16-ball 24, while Radha Yadav made a run-a-ball 14 as India made 56 runs off last 41 balls.

Chasing, openers Sophia Dunkley (46 off 30) and Danielle Wyatt-Hodge (56 off 37) gave England a flying start, sharing a 101-run stand in just 10.4 overs

to set the tone.

India made a comeback by dismissing both Dunkley and Wyatt-Hodge in quick succession but skipper Tammy Beaumont (30) and Bouchier (16) ensured a win.

There was a slight scare for England in the final over when they needed six runs.

Right-arm pacer Arundhati Reddy (2/47) picked up two wickets in the last over -- first disturbing Beaumont's stumps with a slower delivery and then dismissing Amy Jones, caught by Radha a ball later with England still needing 5 off 3 balls.

But Ecclestone and Paige Scholfield held their nerves to take England home.

India and England will now engage in a three-match ODI series, starting July 16 at Southampton. (PTI)

## Poland beat Denmark for first ever Women's European C'ship win

**LUCERNE (SWITZERLAND), July 13:** Natalia Padilla scored one goal and set up the others for Poland's first ever Women's European Championship win, 3-2 over Denmark in their final group game on Saturday. Poland is appearing in the tournament for the first time and the Spanish-born Padilla got the country's first ever goal when she opened the scoring in the 13th minute, pouncing on a rebound to fire past Maja Bay Ostergaard after Ewa Pajor's initial effort was blocked at the right post.

"We waited a long time for it," Poland coach Nina Patalon told UEFA. "We wanted to score that one goal, and we scored three. Today I am so proud of my girls and just so, so happy."

Padilla followed her goal by crossing for Pajor to head in the second in the 20th.



Denmark suffered another blow five minutes later when captain Pernille Harder went off with what looked like a hamstring injury. Denmark was already without Emma Snerle, who suffered a head injury during Tuesday's 2-1 loss to Germany.

Denmark players paused during their pre-game warmup to pose with Snerle's jersey, while Danish fans also displayed a large banner wishing her well.

Denmark pulled one back through Janni Thomsen before

the hour-mark when Kinga Szemik let her long-range effort slip through her fingers.

Martyna Wiankowska scored Poland's third against the run of play in the 76th when Padilla's attempted shot from Pajor's cross turned into a layoff for the substitute to fire in off the underside of the crossbar. Forward Signe Bruun finally got her goal in the 83rd after several close attempts, setting up a nervy finale, but Poland held on for a momentous win. "We were so looking forward to that final whistle! Those emotions are still with me, and will probably stay with me for the rest of my life," Patalon said.

Neither team had any hope of emerging from Group C after losing their opening games. Sweden defeated Germany 4-1 in the other match to top the group. (AP)

## IOA President PT Usha forms committee to ascertain delay in BFI elections

**NEW DELHI, July 13:** Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha has constituted a three-member Fact-Finding Committee to ascertain the reasons for the prolonged delay in conducting the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) elections and to recommend a roadmap to ensure fair and timely polls.

The committee, formed on Friday, is chaired by IOA Treasurer Sahdev Yadav, with IOA Executive Council member Bhupender Singh Bajwa and Advocate Payal Kakra as members.

"The term of the current Executive Committee of the BFI ended on Feb 2 and fresh elections have not been conducted since," Usha said in an IOA office order dated July 11. According to the order, the panel will examine the "current legal and administrative status of the BFI and assess the implications of the delay on the governance and functioning of boxing in India." It will also "recommend necessary actions, including engagement with World Boxing, and suggest a clear roadmap for holding elections in a fair and timely elections."

The committee has been asked to submit its report within a week "so that the factual position can be presented to World Boxing."

The formation of the panel comes after the Sports Ministry, in a letter dated July 5, requested Usha to "device a mechanism providing a suitable way forward in consultation with World Boxing to ensure elections are held at the earliest in accordance with the National Sports Code, 2011 and

bye laws of BFI." Usha had also met World Boxing President Boris van der Vorst in Lausanne last month.

The tenure of the previous BFI office-bearers ended on February 2. Elections were initially scheduled for March 28, but the process has since been stalled due to legal wrangling, including multiple appeals and counter-appeals.

To ensure administrative continuity and oversight of domestic and international competitions, World Boxing set up a six-member Interim Committee, headed by Ajay Singh on April 7, with a 90-day mandate.

Last week, it extended the committee's tenure and urged the panel to complete the election process by August 31.

Interestingly, while Usha has announced the fact-finding panel, she has yet to nominate the final member of the BFI Interim Committee.

"Everything is out in the open the delay is due to legal complications. We have kept the Sports Ministry, World Boxing as well as the IOA abreast with all the developments. We intend on holding the elections before August 31 deadline set by the world body," a BFI official told PTI.

The BFI has been plagued by internal strife and factionalism in the run-up to the elections. The Returning Officer, former Delhi High Court judge RK Gauba, had also resigned from his post, alleging a smear campaign against him. Former Sports Minister Anurag Thakur is set to contest the elections against the incumbent BFI President Ajay Singh. (PTI)



## WPL has played integral part in players' progress: Muzumdar after women's T20I series win

**BIRMINGHAM, July 13:** India coach Amol Muzumdar credited the landmark achievement of clinching the first-ever women's T20I series win against England to the Women's Premier League, saying it had played an "integral part" in the progress of the players. He also credited the competitive domestic season for the success.

India lost the fifth and final match on Saturday but they sealed the series 3-2 after securing a dominant six-wicket triumph in the fourth T20I at Manchester on Wednesday.

"WPL has been an integral part of the progress of the players. There's no doubt about it. But there are other tournaments as well in India which we really have a good look at it. There are so many domestic players playing."

"WPL is just a part of the initiative of the BCCI. So, I think it's been a happy hunting ground for us, the WPL. But at the same time, there are other tournaments which also take the importance," said Muzumdar during

the post-match press conference after India lost the thrilling fifth T20I by five wickets on the last ball.

Debutant India left-arm spinner Shree Charani played a crucial role in the series victory, bagging 10 wickets, and Muzumdar, one of the most prolific run-getters at the domestic level during his playing days, said she had been "the find of the WPL."

Charani, 20, was adjudged the 'Player of the Series' for her phenomenal effort, though she went wicketless on Saturday.

"I guess, you know, from WPL we identified her and then I think her progress has been fantastic. She's been phenomenal in this series. We had a good look at her in the Sri Lanka series where we played a tri-series against South Africa and Sri Lanka. So, I think she's been the find," Muzumdar said.

"We were searching for a left-arm spinner and she's fitted the bill perfectly," he added. Muzumdar said that the key takeaway from the series was India's bowling and

fielding which complemented the already-strong batting this time around.

"I think the key takeaways were our bowling. There's no doubt about it. We had a game plan before we set off from the Indian shores. We had a good camp and we focused quite a bit on our bowling and fielding, which showed in this series. I think the biggest takeaways without a doubt have been our bowling and our fielding."

"Having said that, the batting has been our strength for a long time. A year-and-a-half that I've been in charge, I think we've played some fearless cricket as far as batting is concerned. The two departments which we wanted to take care of was bowling and fielding," he said. "And I think this series has shown the results." Radha Yadav's bowling and fielding also caught the attention during the series and Muzumdar said the improvement was because of the effort the left-arm spinner had put in at the domestic level.

"She's been phenomenal. She puts in a lot

of hard work. Not many people know it, but behind the scenes there's a lot of hard work that she puts in as far as fielding is concerned. Radha is somebody we actually have to stop her sometimes."

"She's got a knack of picking up those brilliant catches. I've seen it in the Dubai T20 World Cup and she picked up a magnificent catch there," he said.

Muzumdar said he was left with "mixed emotions" after losing the final match here but winning the series was pleasing.

"To be honest, mixed emotions. At the halfway mark (of the match), when we had a chat at the ground, we said that either we make a match out of it and we fight till the last run that is there. So, I think they (players) responded really well. Pleased with the results (of the series)." With the T20 World Cup scheduled in England in exactly 11 months' time, Muzumdar said the tour had given his side good preparation for the global event. (PTI)