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THE HILLS TIMES

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Voice of the hills people

Vol .No. XXVII

Issue No.210

RNI-ASSENG/2000/12862

DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2025

PAGES 8

PRICE ₹ 8

Om Birla forms 3-member panel for probe

Cash discovery row : LS speaker sets in motion impeachment process against Justice Yashwant Varma

NEW DELHI/CHENNAI/BENGALURU, Aug 12: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday constituted a three-member committee to probe charges against Justice Yashwant Varma after admitting a multi-party notice for his removal, setting in motion the process of impeachment of the Allahabad High Court judge.

The inquiry committee comprises Supreme Court judge Justice Aravind Kumar, Madras High Court Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and Karnataka High Court advocate B V Acharya, a 91 year-old veteran.

Hailing from Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh, Justice Shrivastava was chief justice of the Rajasthan High Court before he was moved as the CJ of the Madras High Court. He was elevated as a judge of the Chhattisgarh High Court in December 2009 and transferred to Rajasthan in October 2021.



Acharya is a veteran jurist with a career spanning over six decades. He has held the post of advocate general of Karnataka on five occasions between 1989 and 2012.

He was also the special public prosecutor in the disproportionate assets case against late Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalitha and others.

Birla said he had received a proposal from 146 Lok Sabha members, including Ravi Shankar Prasad and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, seeking removal of Justice Varma on July 21.

Justice Varma was repatriated from the Delhi High Court to the Allahabad High Court after burnt wads of currency notes were found

at his official residence here on March 14.

After referring to relevant laws and judgements of the Supreme Court, the Delhi High Court chief justice found the charges against Justice Varma were of serious nature and followed it up with the "in-house procedure".

Meanwhile, observing that in-house procedure was scrupulously followed, the Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed Yashwant Varma's plea seeking invalidation of an in-house inquiry report finding him guilty of misconduct in the cash discovery row.

Wads of burnt cash were found following a fire in the storeroom of the judge's official residence in the capital on March 14.

Questioning Justice Varma's conduct, the top court said he did not object to the photographs or video footage being uploaded and participated (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt announces measures to uplift Koch Rajbongshi community

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 12: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday announced a series of measures aimed at bolstering the socio-economic standing and educational prospects of the Koch Rajbongshi community

while safeguarding its cultural heritage. In a post on X, Sarma said his government was committed to "empowering Assam's Koch Rajbongshi community with action, not just words,"

and emphasised that the administration's efforts were guided by the principle of working "for the people and of the people." He pointed to several initiatives implemented over the past four years to strengthen the community's position in the state's social and economic landscape.

One of the flagship projects is the installation of a grand statue of Bir Chilarai, the legendary 16th-century Koch general, in Bongaigaon.

Sarma said the memorial would stand as a tribute to the bravery and enduring legacy of the Koch Rajbongshi people, serving as an inspiration for future generations.

In a significant legal reprieve, the government has withdrawn 28,000 pending cases involving members of the community from Foreigners' Tribunals — a step the chief minister described as a move to address long-standing grievances and ease legal burdens.

For development and welfare, the state has earmarked ₹80.10 crore for projects ranging from infrastructure (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam trains 700 Goa police recruits



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 12: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said Goa has become the second state, after Manipur, to send its police personnel for training at the Lachit Borpuhan Police Academy in Dergaon, describing the collaboration as a "manifestation of national integration."

Sarma, along with his Goa counterpart Pramod Sawant, attended the passing-out parade of 700 recruits from the Goa Police's 1st, 2nd, and 3rd India Reserve Battalions.

The recruits completed months of rigorous training at the academy, which Sarma hailed as a centre of excellence in preparing security personnel for the challenges of modern policing.

"It is a proud moment for us as we expand our proven training capabilities and play a key role in preparing the next generation of security personnel to serve the nation with honour," Sarma said, "Assam is ready to provide the best of its services to this important national cause."

Goa chief minister Sawant thanked Sarma and the Assam government for facilitating the training, saying the experience would strengthen the professional skills of Goa Police.

"On a request from the Goa government, the Assam Police Academy trained 700 Goa Police personnel. Those requiring training from across the country should consider this facility. Such training is crucial to realising the dream of Developed India 2047," he said.

In a post on X, Sawant congratulated the recruits, calling it "a proud moment for Goa Police." He praised the Lachit Borpuhan Police Academy as a "state-of-the-art" facility and said the collaboration reflected the true spirit of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat.

The Goa CM wrote on social media, "A Proud Moment for Goa Police! Heartiest congratulations to the 700 recruits of the India Reserve Battalion, Goa Police, on successfully completing their rigorous training at the esteemed Lachit Borpuhan Police Academy. My gratitude to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, Shri Himanta Biswa Sarma ji, for graciously extending Assam's state-of-the-art training facilities. This remarkable collaboration reflects the true spirit of national unity and reinforces the vision of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat."

The Lachit Borpuhan Police Academy, named after the legendary 17th-century Ahom general, has in recent years emerged as a prominent hub for police training in the Northeast and beyond.

It has previously hosted recruits from Manipur and is increasingly being recognised as a national-level institution capable of training forces from across India.

Himanta reviews preparations for PM's Sept 8 Assam visit

GUWAHATI, Aug 12: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday reviewed the preparations for the upcoming visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the state, according to his office.

The chief minister's office, in a post on X, said that Sarma reviewed preparations at the Assam Police Convention Centre in Dergaon for Modi's visit to Golaghat district on September 8.

"Hon'ble Prime Minister will inaugurate the Numaligarh Refinery bio-treatment plant and address public meeting. CM directed officials to ensure all preparations are effectively completed," it added.

Agriculture Minister Atul Bora, Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, Transport Minister Jogen Mohan, Information and Public Relations Minister Pijush Hazarika, Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Keshab Mahanta, and Labour Welfare Minister Rupesh Gowala attended the meeting.

Chief Secretary Ravi Kota, DGP Harmeet Singh and senior officials of the state government also took part in the review meeting.

On September 8, the prime minister will commence his visit to Assam from Golaghat district, where he will dedicate to the nation a bio-ethanol refinery in Numaligarh, set up at a cost of ₹ 4,200 crore.

He will then travel to Mangaldai and lay the foundation of three projects -- the Guwahati Ring Road, a bridge over the Brahmaputra between Narengi and Kurua and the Mangaldai Medical College and Hospital.

Modi will also inaugurate the birth centenary celebration of Bharat Ratna Bhupen Hazarika at a programme in Guwahati later in the evening.

Earlier, it was announced that the Guwahati Ring Road project would entail a total expenditure of ₹ 7,500 (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Bihar SIR row a trust deficit issue: SC

Including, excluding citizens from electoral rolls within ECI remit, says apex court

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: The Supreme Court on Tuesday said including or excluding citizens and non-citizens from electoral rolls was within Election Commission of India's remit as it called the Bihar special intensive revision (SIR) row "largely a trust deficit issue".

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi, which commenced the hearing on a batch of petitions, including some filed by leaders of opposition parties including of Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and the Congress, posed searching questions to the petitioners and said any inadvertent error in declaring a living person dead or dead person alive could be rectified.

"The law of granting or taking away citizenship has to be passed by Parliament but the inclusion and exclusion of citizens and non-citizens from the electoral rolls is within the remit of the election commission," the bench told senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for one of the petitioners.

The top court also agreed with the Election Commission of India (ECI) decision to not accept Aadhaar and voter cards as conclusive proof of citizenship in the ongoing exercise and said it has to be supported by other



documents.

"You see, the election commission is correct in saying that Aadhar can't be accepted as conclusive proof of citizenship, it has to be verified. Section 9 of the Aadhaar Act, specifically says so," the bench told Singhvi.

The senior lawyer said in the 22-year period between 2003 (year of last intensive revision in Bihar) and 2025 many people had voted in five to six elections but suddenly before two months of the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Tell steps taken to prevent illegal mining: SC to Meghalaya

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the Meghalaya government to file an affidavit detailing the steps taken to prevent alleged illegal mining activities in the state's Khasi hills.

A bench comprising Chief Justice B R Gavai and Justices K Vinod Chandran and N V Anjaria was apprised by senior advocate K Parameshwar, assisting it as an amicus curiae, about rampant mining activities in the pristine forest area.

The counsel appearing for Assam said due to the illegal mining activities in Meghalaya, the state was facing flood situation causing hardship to the citizens.

"We, therefore, give four weeks time by way of a last chance to the state of Meghalaya to file an affidavit stating therein what steps have been taken by the state of Meghalaya for preventing the il-

legal mining activities," the bench said.

The amicus curiae said the central empowered committee (CEC) visited the area and witnessed rampant mining activity.

He said Meghalaya did not furnish a reply to the CEC in the matter.

The counsel appearing for Meghalaya said CEC conducted a site inspection on July 18 and handed out a questionnaire to the state following which the state submitted its response.

The bench, however, noted the CEC hadn't received it.

The counsel appearing for Meghalaya said the NGT had already passed a detailed order on the issue of illegal mining.

He argued illegal mining in the state was closed and only legal mining was allowed.

The bench posted the matter for hearing in September. (PTI)

SC restrains Assam Police from taking coercive action against Siddharth Varadarajan

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: The Supreme Court on Tuesday restrained Assam Police from taking any coercive action against senior journalist Siddharth Varadarajan in connection with an FIR lodged against him over an article on Operation Sindoor.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi issued notice to the Centre on a PIL filed by the Foundation for Independent Journalism, which runs the web portal "The Wire", challenging the constitutional validity of Section 152 of BNS.

The provision deals with the "act endangering sovereignty, unity and integrity of India" and reads, "Whoever, purposely or knowingly, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or by electronic communication or by use of financial means, or otherwise, excites or attempts to excite, secession or armed rebellion or subversive activities, or encourages

feelings of separatist activities or endangers sovereignty or unity and integrity of India; or indulges in or commits any such act shall be punished with imprisonment for life or with imprisonment which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine."

The top court asked the members of the foundation and Varadarajan to cooperate with the case's investigation. Varadarajan was booked after the online news portal published an article on Operation Sindoor, under which India targeted terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in May in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam attack.

Senior advocate Nitya Ramakrishnan, appearing for the Foundation and Varadarajan, said the BNS provision was vague and broadly worded, and created a "chilling effect" on expression, particularly affecting the right of the media to report and raise questions on the

government. The bench told her that the potential for abuse cannot be a ground to strike down a provision. "Is the potentiality of abuse a ground sufficient to declare a law unconstitutional?... There's a difference between implementation and power to legislate," Justice Bagchi observed.

Justice Kant weighed in, "Any provision in penal law can be misused." Ramakrishnan called the provision "inherently vague" and stressed "vagueness" was recognised as a ground to strike down a provision. She said the provision had great potential for misuse and targeting the media.

The bench then asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, "How can it be statically defined that what will be an act of endangering sovereignty? For instance, one can argue that political dissent can't endanger sovereignty... Inviting legislature to define 'endangering sovereignty' is a big danger." (PTI)

NSF urges Nagaland govt to cancel ILPs issued to evictees from Assam

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, Aug 12: The Naga Students Federation (NSF) urged the Nagaland government to immediately cancel the inner line permits (ILPs) issued to people from districts in Assam where eviction is ongoing since July 29.

It also demanded retroactive voiding of ILPs issued from that date onward to prevent any loopholes in enforcement.

In a representation to the chief secretary dated August 11, the NSF said the Assam government initiated its largest eviction drive to date on July 29, targeting over 11,000 bighas of encroached forest land in the Rengma Reserve Forest under Uriamghat area of Golaghat district near the Assam-Nagaland border.

It said the operation, involving thousands of personnel and heavy machinery, has triggered mass dis-

placement, predominantly affecting families from central Assam districts and reportedly of Bengali-speaking Muslim origin.

Given Nagaland's proximity to the eviction zones, the NSF said, there is a significant risk that the people from these affected districts may seek entry to Nagaland via ILPs, potentially undermining both the ILP regulation's intent and the security of indigenous communities.

It pointed out that the Nagaland government has already issued advisories to border districts regarding incoming evictees.

The NSF proposed some supporting measures, such as the suspension of new ILP issuance to people from the affected districts until the situation stabilises and comprehensive verification can be established.

It also proposed coordination protocols (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India shares maritime boundaries with seven nations, with a coastline of over 11,000 km

At UNSC, India reaffirms commitment to 'free, open and rules-based' maritime order

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 12: India has reaffirmed its commitment to promoting a "free, open, and rules-based" maritime order at a UN Security Council debate, underlining that maritime security is a collective challenge that demands international collaboration.

Speaking at the UNSC High-Level Debate on Maritime Security on Monday, Tanmaya Lal, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, also highlighted key initiatives like Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), e-Samudra, Samudra Prachet, IOS Sagar, Deep Ocean Mission and robust naval cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

"India remains committed to promoting a free, open and rules-based



maritime order in accordance with principles of UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea)," Lal said.

"India remains committed to promoting a free, open and rules-based

collective challenges to maritime security and prosperity. As a responsible maritime power, India stands ready to continue to contribute to these joint efforts, he added.

"Maritime security is our collec-

tive challenge and demands international collaboration," he said.

Given the critical importance of sea routes for global trade, energy supplies, and communication cables, India, as one of the world's largest economies, has strong stakes and interest in this subject, he added.

India shares maritime boundaries with seven nations, with a coastline of over 11,000 km and nearly 1,300 offshore islands and islets. It has an Exclusive Economic Zone spread over 2.3 million sq km, he said.

The scale of maritime safety and security challenges, as well as the urgent importance of economic stability and environmental sustainability, are concerns for India, Lal said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Nagaon's 'Dhakapatty' renamed 'Rupkonwar Chowk' after Assamese cultural icon

NAGAON, Aug 12: The 'Dhakapatty' area in Nagaon town has been renamed 'Rupkonwar Chowk' from Tuesday, following instructions from Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, a senior official said.

Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, a noted playwright, songwriter, poet and freedom fighter of Assam, is popularly called 'Rupkonwar' (prince of beauty). He is also considered the father of Assamese cinema as he made the first two feature films of the state. Agarwala died in 1951 at the age of 47.

Dhakapatty got its name from labourers brought from Dhaka, now the capital of Bangladesh, in the 19th century.

Addressing a press conference here, Nagaon District Commissioner Devashish Sharma ceremonially declared to rechristen the name of Dhakapatty in the heart of Nagaon town in central Assam to

Rupkonwar Chowk as per a collective decision of esteemed local citizens.

"As directed by the Assam CM and following advice from eminent personalities, the decision of renaming Dhakapatty area as Rupkonwar Chowk was taken unanimously in the fond memory of Assam's noted cultural icon," Sharma said.

The age-old street area, starting from RD Store point to Sayar Store point, is rechristened as Rupkonwar Chowk from erstwhile Dhakapatty, he added.

"The name of the street area, starting from Sayar Store towards the greater Barabazar area, is also renamed as 'Barabazar' instead of Dhakapatty," the DC said.

After signing the Yandabo Treaty in 1826 with the Burmese kingdom, the British brought some skilled labourers to Assam's Jorhat town from Dhaka for baking, stitching,

binding, and other works.

Later, those labourers from Dhaka were brought to Nagaon town for similar purposes, and that was how the name 'Dhakapatty' came.

"People from every walk of life in Nagaon district have welcomed the government's decision to rename the said area after Assam's pride Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwala instead of the capital of Bangladesh," Sharma claimed.

He sought public cooperation with the said decision and requested the traders of area to rewrite the name as 'Rupkonwar Chowk' in the signboards of commercial establishments in the locality within the next one month.

"I also request the traders to write the name as Barabazar instead of Dhakapatty in the signboards of their business establishments situated in (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

High GST on scrap, e-waste hurting India's circular economy: CSE study

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: The steep GST of 18 per cent levied on several crucial waste categories has become an obstacle in the sustainable management of solid waste in India and is also leading to revenue losses of around ₹ 65,000 crore, according to a new study published on Tuesday.

The study by think tank Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) finds that small dealers who collect scrap cannot afford an 18-per cent GST, so they keep their transactions cash-based and untaxed.

This not only deprives the government of revenue but also distorts the market, as compliant businesses struggle to compete with tax-evading informal operators. In fact, the informal sector dominance results in an estimated ₹ 65,000 crore in annual GST losses due to unrecorded transactions. Without interventions, this loss is projected to escalate to ₹ 86,700 crore by 2035.

"While India is rooting for recycling of waste and promotion of a circular economy, the existing GST regime could be dumping all that effort into the proverbial 'waste bin'. For one, the regime does not differentiate between virgin and recycled materials, taxing them equally, which places recycled products at a severe cost disadvantage despite their lower environmental impacts," said Nivit K Yadav, programme director, industrial pollution unit, CSE.



"Metal scrap, including ferrous and non-ferrous materials essential for secondary steel and aluminum production, faces this high tax rate, making formal transactions economically unviable for small dealers," said Subhrajit Goswami, programme manager at CSE.

This flies in the face of the National Steel Policy, which aims for 40 per cent of India's steel production to come from scrap by 2030. The 18-per cent GST on ferrous scrap makes it economically unviable for small dealers to operate formally. A reduced rate would align the fiscal policy with the country's circular economy objectives, says Goswami.

Similarly, plastic waste, electronic waste and various industrial by-products are subjected to an 18-per cent GST, creating a significant cost burden that pushes operators toward informal, cash-based trans-

actions. Goswami said this high taxation particularly impacts e-waste recycling, where valuable materials like gold, silver and rare earth elements could generate substantial formal economy revenues if properly incentivised through lower tax rates.

Speaking at the report release, Pranshu Singhal of NGO Karo Sambhav concurred: "No one actually looks at waste as a resource. They wake up only when both natural resources and waste are taxed at the same rates for them."

India's waste management sector is dominated by informal operators, who handle up to 90 per cent of certain waste streams like e-waste and metal scrap.

"Policies have focussed more on the EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) rules, which manage to cover about 30 per cent of the

waste but the remaining major chunk of waste (70 per cent) is handled by the informal sector," Sandip Chatterjee of the Sustainable Electronics Recycling International (SERI) said.

Millions of informal workers handle hazardous waste like batteries and e-waste without safety gear or fair wages. The CSE said formalising their work with social security, better pricing and access to healthcare is not just an economic necessity, it is a moral obligation.

The study recommends lowering the GST rates on critical waste streams, such as metal scrap, plastics and e-waste, from 18 per cent to 12 per cent in the short term, with a further reduction to 5 per cent. This would encourage and incentivise compliance while maintaining revenue neutrality.

Even a 50-per cent reduction in informal sector participation, combined with a 12-per cent GST rate, could generate ₹ 62,384 crore in net revenue by 2035.

The report proposes integrating informal workers into government schemes and providing them access to subsidised loans, healthcare and pensions.

To strengthen Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) compliance, the report suggests linking GST benefits to verified recycling. Producers who meet EPR targets through formal channels could receive tax rebates, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of compliance and transparency. (PTI)

Avtara wins Best Newcomer Catering – East India award



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Aug 12: Guwahati-based catering brand Avtara has been awarded the Best Newcomer Catering – East India title at the 9th edition of the Food Connoisseur India Awards, held at The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel in Delhi.

According to an official statement, the award was presented by a panel of food and hospitality industry dignitaries and personalities, including celebrity chef Kunal Kapur, Padma Shri awardee Dr

Pushpesh Pant, Zorawar Kalra, Chef Michael Swamy, along with other chefs, food critics, and hospitality leaders.

The jury recognised Avtara's vision to transform catering in North East and East India by introducing a modern, artistic approach that offers not just quality cuisine but a memorable dining experience.

Founded in 2021 by husband-wife duo Arjun Khandelwal and Praticha Khandelwal, Avtara began with intimate house parties and soon expanded to large-scale weddings.

By 2025, the brand had established a strong reputation for taste, quality, and presentation, with multiple bookings already in place.

"We want to bring a new era of catering to our region—where every dish creates a memory," the founders said.

Berger Paints aiming for ₹ 20,000 crore turnover by 2030: CEO

KOLKATA, Aug 12: Berger Paints India Limited, the country's second-largest paint manufacturer, is aiming to achieve a turnover of ₹ 20,000 crore by 2030, a top company official said on Tuesday.

Addressing shareholders at the company's 101st Annual General Meeting, Managing Director and CEO Abhijit Roy highlighted Berger's resilience in navigating economic slowdown and increased competition last year, achieving over seven per cent volume growth and improved operating profit.

The company now holds a 20 per cent market share in the organised paint segment. The takeover of Akzo Nobel's coating business by JSW will not have an impact on us, he told reporters.

"We continue to gain market share and improve profitability, showcasing our strength. Our ambition is to reach ₹ 20,000 crore by 2030," Roy said, emphasising opportunities in decorative paints, construction chemicals, and industrial segments. The company is focusing on innovation, rapid digitalisation, and network expansion in urban markets. Berger has secured the number three position in the fast-growing construction chemical and waterproofing segment, outpacing most competitors, while maintaining leadership in protective coatings and general industrial segments, buoyed by India's infrastructure growth and 'Make in India' initiatives.

Despite rising costs of some raw materials, Berger has no plans to increase product prices, as softer prices of other input components balance the impact. "We are closely monitoring demand and input prices, with the demand scenario remaining mixed in different pockets of the market," Roy added.

The company anticipates another year of strong growth with expansion of distribution network, leveraging its robust market position and strategic initiatives, he said. (PTI)

Stock markets in choppy waters; Sensex drops 368 points dragged by bank shares

MUMBAI, Aug 12: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower in a highly volatile trade on Tuesday dragged down by blue-chip bank stocks and caution ahead of domestic and US inflation data.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 368.49 points or 0.46 per cent to settle at 80,235.59. During the day, it hit a high of 80,997.67 and a low of 80,164.36, gyrating 833.31 points.

The 50-share NSE Nifty went lower by 97.65 points or 0.40 per cent to 24,487.40.

Investors are also awaiting cues from the US-Russia talks on August 15.

From the Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, Trent, Hindustan Unilever, HDFC Bank, Eternal, Bajaj Finserv, ICICI Bank, and Bharat Electronics were among the laggards.

However, Maruti, Tech Mahindra, Mahindra & Mahindra and

NTPC were among the major gainers.

"The national market reacted with volatility to the ongoing developments in global trade tariffs, reflecting caution following the extension of the US-China tariff truce and ahead of key inflation data due later today. The US inflation figures with any signs of tariff-related impact could influence the Fed's policy stance," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

The BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.25 per cent and smallcap index edged marginally up by 0.04 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, bankex dropped 0.83 per cent, capital goods (0.76 per cent), realty (0.75 per cent), telecommunication (0.46 per cent) and FMCG (0.44 per cent).

Oil & gas, healthcare, metal, utilities, IT and BSE Focused IT were the gainers.

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

European markets were trading on a mixed note.

The US markets ended lower on Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.18 per cent to USD 66.75 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,202.65 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

On Monday, the Sensex jumped 746.29 points or 0.93 per cent to settle at 80,604.08. The Nifty climbed 221.75 points or 0.91 per cent to 24,585.05. (PTI)

Gold plunges ₹ 1,000 amid sell-off in global markets

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: Gold prices plunged ₹ 1,000 to ₹ 1,01,520 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday in line with a sell-off in global markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

On Monday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at ₹ 1,02,520 per 10 grams.

In the local markets, gold of 99.5 per cent purity dipped ₹ 1,000 to ₹ 1,01,100 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Tuesday.

"Gold prices dipped after US President Donald Trump clarified on social media that there would

be no tariffs on gold imports. Although an official confirmation from the White House is still pending, the announcement eased some trade-related concerns," Abans Financial Services CEO Chintan Mehta said. Adding to this, the White House announced on Monday that the suspension of high-level tariffs on China will be extended until November 11. This decision has helped ease ongoing macroeconomic tensions for now, which has pressured gold prices downwards, Mehta added.

On Tuesday, the rupee edged higher by 10 paise to 87.65 against

the US Dollar in early trade.

Meanwhile, silver prices slumped by ₹ 2,000 to ₹ 1,12,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Tuesday. It had settled at ₹ 1,14,000 per kg on Monday. On the global front, spot gold was trading at USD 3,347.18 per ounce, up by 0.13 per cent in New York.

Renisha Chainani, Head of Research at Augmont, said Trump's announcement on Monday that gold will not be subject to tariffs allayed concerns about a dramatic rise in the price of importing the metal, causing prices to drop below USD 3,400 per ounce. (PTI)

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Om Birla forms 3

in the inquiry without demur. The bench said even in his representation dated May 6, addressed to then CJI Sanjiv Khanna, there was "no whisper" of the procedure violating any constitutional provision.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Augustine George Masih held Justice Varma's conduct did not inspire confidence, not meriting his plea to be examined.

Justice Varma sought quashing of the May 8 recommendation by then Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna urging Parliament to initiate impeachment proceedings against him. (PTI)

Govt announces measures

improvements and skill development programmes to the preservation of cultural traditions. Educational support has also been prioritised, with 22 seats reserved for Koch Rajbongshi students in 12 universities, 58 seats in polytechnic institutes, and 22 seats in engineering colleges.

According to Sarma, these provisions are designed to open more avenues for technical, professional, and academic advancement.

The chief minister said these measures form part of a broader strategy to protect Assam's cultural diversity while ensuring inclusive growth.

"Our approach combines heritage preservation with forward-looking development," he added, underscoring the government's intent to balance tradition with progress.

NSF urges Nagaland

with the Assam government officials to obtain and share data on displaced people and their declared origins. It further said regular review should be done by the state government to determine when ILP issuance can safely resume for people of these areas. According to the NSF, these steps are necessary to uphold the original purpose of the ILP system in protecting Nagaland's cultural and demographic identity during a period of significant regional disruption.

Bihar SIR row

election there was presumptive exclusion saying these people will not be on the list. "Presumptively citizenship cannot be doubted for five crore people," Singhvi said, accusing the poll panel of declaring five crore people invalid. The bench said if anything suspicious was found it could direct including all those in the 2025 list in the electoral roll. While Singhvi agreed that the ECI had the power for inclusion or exclusion of citizens or non-citizens from the electoral roll, he said the poll panel couldn't determine citizenship.

"EC was never intended to be the policeman of citizenship... What is happening here is de facto deletion. Non inclusion is the clever word being used here. ECI cannot become the determiner of citizenship," he added.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for RJD leader Manoj Jha, said despite residents holding Aadhaar, ration cards and EPIC cards, poll officials refused to accept these documents.

"Is it your argument that people who have no documents but are in Bihar and therefore he should be considered as a voter of the state. That can be allowed. He has to show or submit some documents (sic)," the bench said.

When Sibal said people were struggling to find birth certificates and other documents of their parents, Justice Kant said, "It is a very sweeping statement that in Bihar nobody has the documents. If this happens in Bihar, then what will happen in other parts of the country?"

The top court called the SIR row "largely a trust deficit issue" as the ECI claimed roughly 6.5 crore people of the total 7.9 crore voting population didn't have to file any documents for them or their parents featured in the 2003 electoral roll. "If out of 7.9 crore voters, 7.24 crore voters responded to the SIR, it demolishes the theory of one crore voters missing or disenfranchised," the bench told Sibal.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for NGO Association for Democratic Reforms questioned the timeline for the completion of the exercise and the data of 65 lakh voters who were declared as dead or migrated or registered in other constituencies. Political activist Yogendra Yadav, who addressed the court in person, questioned the data given by the poll panel and said instead of 7.9 crore voters there was a total adult population of 8.18 crore and the design of SIR exercise was actually to delete the voters.

"They (EC) were not able to find any individual whose name was added and the booth level officers visited house to house for deletion of names," Yadav said, calling it a case of "total disenfranchisement".

Interestingly, he produced in court three persons, who he said were declared dead by the ECI, prompting senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the poll panel, to object.

Dwivedi protested against "such drama" in the courtroom and said if Yadav was so concerned, he could help the poll panel in updating the records by including their names.

The bench said in case of any inadvertent error, there could be rectification as it was only the draft stage.

Dwivedi pointed out the exercise of such nature was "bound to have some defects here and there at the draft stage" and to claim dead persons were declared alive and alive as dead could always be corrected. (PTI)

Himanta reviews preparations

crore, including the cost of the bridge over Brahmaputra connecting Narengi on the southern bank in the capital city and Kuruwa on the northern bank. (PTI)

More flexible security dimension

engagement plan" for all 35 littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), grounded in shared common interests. The panel said it acknowledges the paramount strategic, economic, and environmental significance of the IOR for India. With a coastline of over 7,500 km, coupled with its vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 2.4 million sq km, India is uniquely positioned at the heart of one of the most vital regions in the world.

"Given this geo-strategic importance, the Committee are of the considered view that India's leadership role in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is both a natural and necessary extension of its geopolitical and economic interests and thereby, it should take a leading role in ensuring the security, stability, and prosperity of the region," it said.

In its report, the panel said the IOR is "vital to China for its great power ambitions".

"Its search for energy, mineral resources and its compulsion to look for newer market for finished goods has led China to increase its engagement with IOR littorals. Therefore, consistent presence of People's Liberation Army (Navy) i.e. PLA (N) in the IOR, is a strategic imperative for China," it said.

In a written submission, the defence ministry has told the panel that two Carrier Battle Groups of PLA (N) are operational and a third and much more potent aircraft carrier Fujian, is at an "advanced stage of pre-commissioning trials". Dedicated efforts are being made in deep sea exploration for mining rare earth minerals towards niche technologies, and in 2024, 20 Chinese research vessels operated in the IOR for a duration of 862 days, which has been the highest number of days since 2020, the report said.

In response to the committee's query about India's assessment of the strategic implications of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the String of Pearls strategy in the IOR, the defence ministry said China has maintained presence since 2008 in IOR, "under pretext of anti-piracy operations".

"China is increasingly trying to gain foothold in the region to pursue its vested interests and gain strategic leverage over the resources. Overall, these actions would be detrimental to India's economic growth which is linked to the seas," it flagged. The panel further recommended that India should adopt a multifaceted and comprehensive approach to securing and stabilising the Indian Ocean.. (PTI)

Nagaon's 'Dhakapatty' renamed

between Sayar Store point to greater Barabazar point area," the official said. He also said that a circle will be constructed at the newly named Rupkonwar Chowk point after a detailed discussion with the Nagaon Municipal Board and the departments concerned. (PTI)

At UNSC, India reaffirms

twin inter-linked concerns of security and prosperity provide the basis for India's vision for maritime security – MAHASAGAR – the Hindi word for 'Ocean', which was elaborated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as - Mutual And Holistic Advancement for Security And Growth Across Regions," Lal added.

He said the Indian Navy is assisting with security and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations in the Indo-Pacific region, and is among the first responders.

"Recognising the collective nature of the challenges and the required joint response, we engage with our partners, especially from the Global South," he added. Lal also talked about India's AI-powered digital platform called e-Samudra, which will be launched later this year for real-time monitoring and smarter decision-making to enable more efficient and transparent maritime governance.

Mentioning India's initiative in maritime environmental protection and sustainable practices, Lal said last month India launched "Samudra Prachet", its indigenously built Pollution Control Vehicle."

He said India's approach to maritime security draws upon five principles: free flow of legitimate maritime trade; Peaceful dispute resolution under UNCLOS; Collective response to disasters & non-traditional threats; Marine environment protection, and encouraging responsible maritime connectivity. (PTI)

Guwahati woman recovers after 18 surgeries at Amrita Hospital

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Aug 12: In a case highlighting the importance of timely and multi-disciplinary trauma care, a 33-year-old woman from Guwahati, Pinku Mani Talukdar, has made a remarkable recovery after surviving a severe road accident and undergoing 18 reconstructive surgeries at Amrita Hospital, Faridabad.

According to an official statement, Pinku sustained extensive injuries to her right leg, buttock, and perineal region on January 20, 2025, when a speeding truck hit the scooter she was riding pillion with her husband and dragged her several metres. Large areas of skin, muscle, and soft tissue were torn away, putting her at risk of sepsis and death.

After initial stabilisation in Guwahati, she was airlifted to Delhi but was reportedly turned away by several leading hospitals



due to bed shortages or the complexity of her injuries. She was eventually admitted to Amrita Hospital on January 25, where Senior Consultant in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Dr Shikha Gupta immediately assessed her condition and initiated emergency surgery the following day.

"Her condition was critical — extensive tissue loss, multiple fractures, and early sepsis. We couldn't afford to wait," Dr Gupta said. The treatment involved staged reconstruction to control infection, preserve limb function, and rebuild lost tissue, avoiding the need for amputation.

Dr Mohit Sharma, Head of the Department of Plastic Surgery, said early surgical intervention and cross-speciality coordination were key to saving both life and function. Pinku remained in intensive care for several weeks and began walking before her discharge. "From the moment I arrived, I felt I was in the right hands," she said, adding that the medical and emotional support she received was extraordinary.

Now back home in Guwahati, she is mobile and on the path to full recovery. Her husband, Bhriku Talukdar, expressed gratitude to the hospital's team for their compassion and commitment.

The hospital stated that the case reflects its readiness to handle complex trauma emergencies, even during weekends and off-hours, and its belief that no patient should be turned away due to the complexity of their condition.

Bodoland University campus at Udalguri soon: Ranoj Pegu

Assam Govt to create new posts in Bodo medium schools



HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Aug 12: Education and Tribal Affairs Minister Ranoj Pegu recently announced that the State Government has assured the creation of new posts in 40 Bodo medium higher secondary schools upgraded from high schools and 72 LP schools upgraded from erstwhile Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) centres.

He also confirmed that a campus of Bodoland University will soon be operational at Udalguri.

In a social media post, Pegu said he had an in-depth discussion with the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) on challenges faced by Bodo medium schools and broader education-related issues in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

The meeting also reviewed the provincialisation of schools in BTR and Bodo medium schools in non-BTR areas under Clause 6.3 of the Bodo Peace Accord.

The high-level meeting, held at Janata Bhawan in Dispur, discussed a range of education matters including provincialisation of schools as per the Bodo Accord; creation of posts in PGT and up-

graded EGS schools; establishment of new Bodo medium model high schools with World Bank support; launch of Bodoland University's Udalguri campus from the current academic session; demand to upgrade Udalguri College into Udalguri University; rationalisation of Bodo medium schools outside the Sixth Schedule areas; regularisation of tutor teachers; special TET for Bodo medium outside BTR; creation of Bodo department posts in Baksa and Balipara model degree colleges; and transfer policy for teachers from Bodo medium to non-Bodo medium backgrounds. The ABSU delegation was led by president Dipen Boro, along with vice president Umesh Daimary, assistant general secretary Dinesh Brahma, education secretary Swmaosar Bamsamary, assistant education secretary Biswajit Narzary, and PRS Swmdwn Brahma, among others.

Teok, Mariani begin functioning as co-districts in Jorhat

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Aug 12: Teok and Mariani in Jorhat district on Tuesday officially began functioning as co-districts after Titabar, as Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Excise and other departments Atul Bora, and Minister of Transport, Cooperation and other departments Jogen Mohan inaugurated the offices of the newly-formed co-districts.

Titabar was inaugurated in October 2024. Bora inaugurated the office of the Teok co-district commissioner at Aliamukhia, near the Jorhat Development Authority office here.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, the Minister said that forming co-districts within existing districts was a novel initiative of the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led government aimed at decentralising the district administration.

Stating that the initiative was another step of the government to bring administration closer to the people, the Minister said that co-districts will benefit the public in many ways.

Citing the benefits, Bora said that people residing within the co-district areas would no longer have to visit the district headquarters for matters related to land, MLA funds, unutilised funds or implementation of government schemes.

He said a number of essential services will be provided by the co-district administration, which will have administrative control over all departments within its jurisdiction.

He stated that the boundaries of co-districts have been drawn on the pattern of the delimitation carried out in the Assembly constituencies.

Dergaon MLA Bhabendra Nath Bharali, Jorhat DC Jay Shivani, SP Shwetank Mishra, several district administration officials, and BJP and AGP district leaders were among those who attended the programme.

Meanwhile, Minister Jogen Mohan inaugurated the Mariani co-district office at Sukanjanja, Teok-Boloma Road, at a function organised at Lahing Grant High School campus.

Mohan, in his address, stated that the formation of co-districts was part of the government's move to enable citizens to get several essential services near their homes instead of travelling long distances to district headquarters.

Mariani MLA Rupjiyoti Kurmi, the Jorhat DC, district administration officials and local people attended the event.

It is pertinent to mention here that in October last year, the government had constituted 39 co-districts across the State.

Bike rally marks Har Ghar Tiranga campaign in Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Aug 12: As part of the Azadi Ka Maha Utsav celebrations under the Har Ghar Tiranga 2025 campaign commemorating India's 79th Independence Day, the District Administration, Karbi Anglong, organised a bike rally from Taralango to Diphu town.

The rally was flagged off by Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Tuliram Ronghang in the presence of KAAC Chairman Raju Tisso, Deputy Chairman Avijit Kro, MLA Bidya Sing Englang, District Commissioner Nirola Phangchopi, ACS, Superintendent of Police Sanjiv Kumar Saikia, APS, along with other senior officials and dignitaries.

The rally began at 6:00 am from Singmirjeng Achatai, Taralango, and traversed through Taralango, Disama, Hidim Teron Gaon, and

Manja—where a short stoppage was made for refreshments—before concluding at Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) Stadium. Over 20 bikers participated, carrying the national flag and spreading the message of unity and patriotism across the district.

Patriotic fervour filled the air as participants, dressed in the colours of the national flag, rode through the streets carrying the tricolour high.

The CEM, in his address, urged everyone to honour the sacrifices of freedom fighters and strengthen the bond of national unity.

He also joined the rally, riding a classic Royal Enfield motorcycle with a pillion rider.

The event saw enthusiastic participation from citizens, youth organisations, and local leaders, marking it as one of the highlights of this year's Independence Day celebrations in Karbi Anglong.

State-level intensified HIV awareness campaign launched in Sonitpur

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 12: The Assam State AIDS Control Society (ASACS) on Tuesday launched a State-level Intensified IEC (Information, Education and Communication) Campaign on HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) at Dhekiajuli in Sonitpur district, coinciding with International Youth Day.

The campaign aims to enhance awareness among the public, particularly in high-priority areas across Assam.

The programme was inaugurated at the Martyrs' Memorial Park Convention Centre by Assam Health and Family Welfare Minister Ashok Singhal, in the presence of Sonitpur Deputy Commissioner Ananda Kr Das, ASACS Project Director Dr Indranishee Das, and other senior officials.

Prior to the launch, a rally involving college students was flagged off at Swahid Maidam by the Deputy Commissioner, joined by ASACS officials and local dignitaries.

Addressing the gathering, Singhal warned that high-risk behaviours such as unprotected sex and injecting drug use remain the primary causes of HIV infection.

"If the present generation cannot stay away from these behaviours, their lives will be ruined



and we will not be able to save the future because HIV is non-curable," he said.

He added that the government would focus on skill development centres rather than HIV rehabilitation facilities, and urged the youth to "choose their heroes wisely and live a healthy life."

In his welcome address, Das noted that HIV cases are rising in the state and stressed that "awareness is the only key" to prevention.

Outlining the campaign's objectives, Dr Das said the initiative will cover 25 high-priority districts, reaching villages, schools, colleges,

slum areas, tea gardens, char areas, and remote locations through a 360-degree communication approach using mass, folk, and social media.

Mission Director of NHM, Assam, Dr Lakshmanan S, highlighted that while HIV cases had declined since 2010 due to government interventions, new infections are now increasing.

"We need to stop these new infections to eliminate AIDS as a public health threat by 2030," he said.

The campaign will include sensitisation meetings, school and college outreach programmes, folk performances, door-to-door awareness drives, and special health camps offering free HIV/STI testing, counselling, and treatment.

Activities will also target slum populations, with messages disseminated via mass media, folk shows, outdoor campaigns, and social media.

According to an official statement from the Biswanath district administration, the initiative will cover 3,000 villages in the 25 identified districts.

The launch concluded with a cultural programme featuring HIV-awareness messages by college students.

NFR marks 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign with patriotic events



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 12: The North-east Frontier Railway (NFR) has organised a series of activities under the fourth edition of the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign, aimed at celebrating India's independence and fostering patriotic spirit among its staff, according to an official statement. At the General Manager/NFR (Construction) office, General Manager Arun Kr Chaudhary led officers and employees in a gathering dedicated to the nation's values.

The Personnel Department/Construction Organisation conducted a Tiranga Yatra on August 12, in which over 200 officers, staff and representatives from NFREU and NFRMU, along with senior officials, marched carrying the national flag and raising patriotic slogans.

A selfie booth was set up at the GM/Con/NFR premises to encourage participants to share their photographs on the national platform harghartiranga.com. A short film on the importance of the national flag and the country's freedom struggle was screened, with Chaudhary urging all present to uphold honesty and integrity as part of true patriotism. The NFR also distributed national flags to officers and staff for hoisting at their homes between August 13 and 15, ensuring that the tricolour is displayed both in workplaces and households.

Awareness on POCSO Act held

HT Correspondent
HOJAI, Aug 12: An awareness programme on the POCSO Act was held for caregivers in Hira Basti, Hojai, on Tuesday. The FS Programme of SOS Children's Village, Hojai, in collaboration with the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), organised the programme for caregivers of the Hira Basti cluster.

The initiative aimed to educate parents and guardians on child protection laws, reporting mechanisms, and preventive measures against abuse. The session was addressed by Ms Merlin Hazarika, Secretary, DLSA Hojai; Ms Dipnjalini Devi, Program Officer (I/c); and Ms Beauty Gogoi, Law Officer, DCPU Hojai.

Hazarika highlighted the free legal services and victim support facilities under the DLSA, including compensation provisions during trial.

Wild elephant kills 26-year-old woman at Kaliabor

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Aug 12: A tragic incident occurred in the early hours of Tuesday when a wild elephant attacked and killed a 26-year-old woman, identified as Sangeeta Sero, at her residence in the Kaliabor Tea Estate under Nagaon district.

According to sources, following the incident, District Commissioner Debashish Sarma visited the victim's residence to assess the situation and met with the family members and local residents.

The incident has sparked tension in the area, and authorities are working to address the issue of

human-elephant conflict. The state government, district administration and forest department have been taking measures to mitigate the conflict, but the increasing encroachment of human settlements into forest areas has led to a rise in such cases.

During his visit, the District Commissioner was accompanied by Divisional Forest Officer, Nagaon, Suhas Kadam, and other officials.

The administration is working to provide support to the affected family and take necessary steps to prevent such incidents in the future.

Raj Bhavan signs MoU for free UPSC coaching in Assam



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 12: Raj Bhavan, Assam on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Arya Pratibha Vikas Sansthan to provide free coaching to UPSC aspirants from the state, in the presence of Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya at Raj Bhavan.

According to an official statement, the initiative aims to identify and support 10 talented UPSC aspirants and train them at reputed civil services institutes in New Delhi.

Arya Pratibha Vikas Sansthan, a unit of Akhil Bharatiya Dayanand Sewashram Sangh, is a civil services preparatory initiative by Arya Samaj.

The statement further informed that the Governor had launched the "Governor Assam Pratibha Protsahan Yojana" on September 17, 2024, the birthday of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to benefit civil services aspirants from Assam.

The MoU was signed by Joint Secretary to the Governor's Secretariat Bidit Das and Vice-President of Akhil Bharatiya Dayanand Sewashram Sangh Vinay Arya.

It seeks to collaborate in supporting and implementing the "Governor Assam Pratibha Protsahan Yojana 2025" for the benefit of aspirants across the state.

Tiranga Yatra in Margherita unites communities ahead of Independence Day

HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, Aug 12: On the eve of India's 79th Independence Day, the 83rd Margherita Legislative Assembly Constituency in Tinsukia district came alive with patriotic spirit as hundreds of motorcycles adorned with the tricolour roared through the streets in a spectacular "Tiranga Yatra" on Tuesday, painting the region in hues of saffron, white and green and uniting communities in a celebration of freedom and unity.

The "Tiranga Yatra" unfolded across two routes, the first beginning at Powai MV School and weaving through the heart of Margherita, while the second started from Jagun Bazaar. Both routes converged at the Bargolai Bashbanti Playground, where the air resonated with chants

of patriotism and pride. More than 300 motorcycles draped in the national flag transformed the streets into a river of tricolour, captivating onlookers and filling the region with a sense of national pride.

The rally was led by 83rd Margherita Legislative Assembly Constituency MLA Bhaskar Sharma, alongside Tinsukia Zila Parishad Chairman Bhadeswar Moran, Margherita Anchalik Panchayat President Moonmi Gogoi, senior BJP leaders Bhim Karmakar, Bhabesh Dutta, Sukhdev Sharma, Suman Khalein, Anand Kumar Sharma, panchayat presidents, anchalik panchayat members, ward members from 13 gaon panchayats and Bharatiya Janata Yuba Morcha members.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Spot Auction of Debris at Rengma Reserve Forest

This is to inform the general public that a spot auction of debris remaining at Rengma Reserve Forest, following the eviction drive conducted on 29th July, 2025, held by the office of the Range Forest Officer, Uriamghat Range, Golaghat.

The spot auction will take place on 20th August, 2025 at 11:30 AM (IST) in Uriamghat Range under Golaghat Division (T), Golaghat.

Interested parties are invited to participate in the auction and submit their bids in person on the schedule date.

Terms and Conditions:

- Date and Venue:** The auction will be held on 20th August, 2025 at 11:30 AM (IST) in Uriamghat Range. Bidders must be present in person or through an authorized representative.
- Eligibility:** The auction is open to all interested individuals who are legally eligible to participate.
- Bid Submission:** Bids will be accepted only on the auction day at the designated venue. The Highest bidder will be declared the successful bidder.
- Payment:** The successful bidder shall pay the full bid amount on the same day of the auction or as per the direction of the Range Forest Officer.
- Clearance of Debris:** The highest bidder is responsible for clearing all debris from Rengma Reserve Forest within 15 (Fifteen) days from the date of auction.
- No Claims:** The Range Forest Officer and the Forest Department shall not be responsible for any damage, loss or claims arising from the debris after the auction.
- Compliance:** The successful bidder must comply with all applicable forest laws, rules and regulations during removal and transportation of debris.
- Right to Cancel:** The Range Forest Officer reserves the right to cancel or postpone the auction without assigning any reason thereof.
- Dispute Resolution:** Any disputes arising out of the auction process shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the competent courts in Golaghat district. For further information, please contact the office of the Range Forest Officer, Uriamghat

Sd/-
Range, Golaghat.

DIPR /C/HLT/119/13-Aug-25 Range Forest Officer, Uriamghat Range, Golaghat

No.TDB/SOPD/105/2024-25/725

Date 12/08/2025

INVITATION FOR BIDS

The Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Development Block, Dist-Tamulpur, BTC, Assam invites bid affixing non-refundable Court fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight and Twenty-Five Paisa) only from the approved and eligible contractor Class-I (A, B, C), Class-II or Class-III category registered with Assam PWD (R&B) Irrigation Deptt. for the following work under Market and fairs Deptt. under SOPD fund for the year 2025-26. Tender Box will be available for dropping tender in the Office of the Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Development Block from 13/08/2025 up to 2.00 PM on 03/09/2025 (if any holidays or Bandh falls then the subsequent day) and the tender box will be opened at the same day on 3.00 PM in same office.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Tender value	Time of Completion	Tender Cost & Earnest Money & Date of Tender
1	Construction of Market Shed at Patkijuli Weekly Market	Rs. 10,00,000.00	12 Months from the date of issue of final work order.	1. Tender cost @ 0.03% of A/A amount to be pledged by Bank draft in favour of Principal Secretary, BTC. 2. Earnest money @ 2% (In case of ST/SC 1% of estimated value) to be pledged by demand draft/FDR in favour of B.D.O Tamulpur Development Block. 3. Bidders are specifically requested to inspect the field and study the working condition before submitting their offer/bid.

Details NIT may be seen at Office of the B.D.O Tamulpur Development Block, Tamulpur, Dist- Tamulpur.

Sd/-

Block Development Officer,
Tamulpur Dev. Block, Tamulpur

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/2529

No.EE(Agri)/Koj/BTC/SOPD/Feed.Milli/2025-26/

Date 11/08/2025

QUOTATION

In pursuance of Administrative approval vide letter No. BTC/Agri-62/2025-26/03, dtd. 07/08/2025, short sealed quotation affixing non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only are hereby invited from the intending Govt. registered Firms/ Suppliers for quoting the unit rate of the following items under SOPD, 2025-26 as per term & conditions detailed given below and will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00 pm on 19-08-2025 and will be opened at 3.00 pm at the same place in presence of intending dealers/ suppliers/ firms or their authorized representatives. If any reasons, the last date of receiving and opening of tenders is declared a holiday, the same will be received and opened in the next working day.

Sl. No.	Name of Purpose/ Scheme/ Projects	Specification	Quantity	Unit	Remarks
1	Supply & Commissioning of Mini Feed Mill Machinery comprising Pulverizer & Grinder at 100% subsidy under SOPD for the year, 2025-26	Chamber- Main crusher- ID:300mm, w:215mm Warn:54mm Feeding Tray Capacity:26KG(400mm x 305mm x2 25mm) Collecting Container/Bag-20inches bag, material cotton Rotating Hammer: ID25, OD: 280mm, L:130mm Teethed half ring(Datti): 139mm w, Surface OD: 249.8mm Filter: Size (Hole) and material: 0.50mm & SS, 0.55mm & Brass, 0.80mm & SS, 1 mm to 10mm Electric power: 3HP Heavy duty, Single phase 2800-2880 RPM, 230VAC, Motor Drive Shaft: 25mm OD, Bearing : 6206 ZZ Grinding Capacity: 10-80 KG (as per Materials) 60-100KG Machine over all Dimension: L:650 mm x W: 375XH: 1200mm Overall weight: 95KG	1	Pcs	

Detail Quotation may be seen at Office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/- Executive Engineer (Agriculture),
Kokrajhar Division, BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/2526

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Disease is the retribution of outraged Nature
-Hosea Ballou

Nuclear weapons

Everyone by now knows the dreadful effects of the atomic bombs used by the US on human population at Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6th and 9th August 1945 respectively. Testimonies by the survivors, the Hibakusha and the reports by the Red Cross speak effectively of the catastrophe that occurred in these two places. Over two lakh people died. Number of people injured, rendered destitute, homeless and orphaned far exceeds this number. Effect of radiations on the generations after that is still felt. That was the time of unprecedented humanitarian crises and agony never heard of before. It was noted the consequences of the bomb for Hiroshima's medical corps; out of 300 doctors, 270 died or were injured; out of 1,780 nurses, 1,654 perished or were injured. This catastrophe should have been a lesson for the world community to move forward for complete abolition of nuclear weapons from earth. On the contrary the number of nuclear weapons possessing countries increased with present number to be at nine. These include USA, Russia, Britain, France, China, North Korea, India, Pakistan and Israel. It is an irony that five of these are in Asia, which is relatively a deprived region.

In 2023 China, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, the UK and US spent a combined \$91.4 billion on their nuclear arms, which breaks down to \$173,884 per minute, or \$2,898 a second. The United States' share of total spending, \$51.5 billion, is more than all the other nuclear-armed countries put together. It is now well proven through various studies that the nuclear weapons are a real threat to not only the human population but the whole flora & fauna on earth. A study on Climate Consequences of Regional Nuclear War has pointed out that even a limited nuclear war between India and Pakistan using 100 Hiroshima sized nuclear weapons would put over two billion people at risk of starvation and death. A nuclear exchange between the two major nuclear powers, the Russia and the USA could be end of modern civilisation built through thousands years of human labour.

It is therefore imperative that nuclear weapons are abolished for good. On-going wars must stop. Nuclear weapon will not be used suddenly but conditions for their use are created by the pre-existing war conditions. Any further escalation between Russia and Ukraine as indicated by the NATO, EU and the decision of the US to supply long range missiles to Ukraine could lead to dangerous results. Continuing genocide of Palestinians in Gaza by the Zionist Israeli regime and its quest to increase the area under control to other parts of the Middle East could be dangerous in the long run.

Manipur's path to peace amid Ethnic strife

Manipur, a state in India's northeastern region, has long been a land of rich cultural diversity, natural beauty, and historical significance. Nestled between rolling hills and verdant valleys, it is home to a mosaic of communities, including the Meitei, Kuki-Zo, Naga, and other indigenous groups, each contributing to the state's vibrant tapestry. However, since May 2023, Manipur has been gripped by a devastating ethnic conflict that has fractured its social fabric, claimed over 260 lives, displaced thousands, and left the state in a state of prolonged turmoil. The imposition of President's Rule on February 13, 2025, following the resignation of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, marked a significant turning point in the state's governance, reflecting the central government's attempt to address a crisis that has defied resolution. As of August 2025, with Parliament approving an extension of President's Rule for another six months until February 13, 2026, the question of how to heal Manipur remains urgent and complex, requiring a nuanced understanding of its challenges and a multifaceted approach to reconciliation and recovery.

The ethnic conflict in Manipur, primarily between the valley-based Meitei community and the hill-dwelling Kuki-Zo tribes, erupted in May 2023, sparked by a Manipur High Court order recommending the inclusion of Meiteis in the Scheduled Tribe category. This decision ignited tensions over economic benefits, job quotas, and land rights, as the Kuki-Zo and other tribal communities feared it would erode their protections and access to resources. The violence that followed was unprecedented in its scale and intensity, with clashes resulting in the deaths of at least 260 people, the displacement of over 60,000, and the looting of more than 6,000 police weapons. National Highways 2 and 37, critical lifelines connecting the Imphal valley to Nagaland and Assam, became inaccessible to Meitei residents due to their passage through Kuki-Zo-dominated areas, further isolating communities and crippling the state's economy. The unrest exposed deep-seated grievances, historical mistrust, and the fragility of Manipur's inter-community relations, which had previously coexisted, if uneasily, for decades.

The resignation of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on February 9, 2025, was a pivotal moment. Singh, a Meitei leader, faced mounting pressure from within his own Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and from opposition groups due to his government's inability to curb the violence. His resignation came amid allegations, fueled by leaked audio tapes, that he had instigated the ethnic conflict, a charge that further eroded his credibility. The Supreme Court's observation of an "absolute breakdown of constitutional machinery" in Manipur underscored the gravity of the situation, prompting President Droupadi Murmu to impose President's Rule under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution on February 13, 2025. This move suspended the state's legislative assembly, transferred executive powers to the Governor, and placed Manipur under direct central control, with the Union Home Ministry overseeing governance. The decision was seen as an acknowledgment that the state government could no longer function in accordance with constitutional norms, but it also raised questions about the long-term implications

of central intervention in a region marked by complex local dynamics.

President's Rule, while a constitutional mechanism to stabilize governance during crises, is not a panacea for Manipur's deep-rooted issues. Its imposition was necessitated by the BJP's failure to agree on a new Chief Ministerial candidate after Singh's resignation, as factionalism within the party and the lack of consensus among lawmakers stalled efforts to form a new government. Meetings involving BJP lawmakers, the party's northeast coordinator Sambit Patra, and Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla in February 2025 failed to produce a successor, and the looming constitutional deadline under Article 174, which mandates that the state assembly convene within six months of its last session, further complicated matters. By August 2025, the central government, led by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, moved to extend President's Rule for another six months, a decision approved by both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha despite opposition protests over unrelated issues. This extension reflects the Centre's view that stability remains elusive and that reconciliation between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities is a prerequisite for restoring an elected government.

The prolonged imposition of President's Rule has sparked mixed reactions. On one hand, it has allowed the central government to intensify security operations, with joint teams of Manipur Police, the Indian Army, Assam Rifles, and other forces conducting counter-insurgency drives across the state. In July 2025, ten militants from banned groups like the Kangleipak Communist Party and People's Liberation Army were arrested, and significant caches of weapons and ammunition were recovered. These efforts signal a commitment to restoring law and order, a critical step toward creating a safe environment for dialogue. The government has also expressed its intent to facilitate the return of displaced persons to their homes by the end of 2025, a goal that, if achieved, could mark a significant milestone in Manipur's recovery. However, the suspension of the state's legislative powers and the absence of an elected government have fueled discontent among Meitei and Naga MLAs, who have campaigned for the restoration of a "popular" government, arguing that central rule has not sufficiently addressed the crisis or restored normalcy.

Healing Manipur requires more than security measures or administrative interventions. The ethnic divide between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities is rooted in historical grievances, economic disparities, and competing claims to identity and resources. The Meiteis, who form the majority in the Imphal valley, have long sought greater political and economic inclusion, while the Kuki-Zo and other hill tribes guard their tribal status and land rights fiercely. The 2023 court order on reservations was merely a trigger, not the sole cause, of the conflict. Any meaningful resolution must address these underlying issues through inclusive dialogue involving all stakeholders—community leaders, civil society, and representatives of both the Meitei and Kuki-Zo groups. The absence of significant progress in such talks, even 26 months after the conflict began, is a glaring gap in the current approach. The central govern-

ment's focus on security and governance, while necessary, must be complemented by a robust framework for reconciliation, perhaps through a neutral mediator or a truth and reconciliation commission tailored to Manipur's context.

Economic revitalization is another critical aspect of healing Manipur. The conflict has devastated livelihoods, disrupted trade, and severed vital supply chains, particularly along National Highways 2 and 37. The displacement of over 60,000 people has created a humanitarian crisis, with many living in temporary shelters and lacking access to basic services. The government must prioritize rehabilitation programs, including financial assistance, skill development, and infrastructure rebuilding, to help displaced families rebuild their lives. Restoring access to highways and ensuring safe movement across ethnic boundaries will also be essential to reviving the state's economy and fostering inter-community trust. Furthermore, the recovery of looted weapons and the disarmament of militant groups are crucial to preventing further violence and creating a secure environment for economic recovery.

The role of civil society and grassroots organizations cannot be overstated in Manipur's healing process. Local leaders, women's groups, and youth organizations have historically played a vital role in mediating conflicts and fostering dialogue in the Northeast. Empowering these groups to facilitate community-level reconciliation could help bridge the trust deficit between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities. Educational initiatives that promote mutual understanding and cultural exchange could also counter the narratives of division that have fueled the conflict. The central and state governments should partner with these organizations, providing them with resources and platforms to engage in peacebuilding efforts. The extension of President's Rule until February 2026 buys time for the central government to stabilize Manipur, but it also risks alienating local communities if it is perceived as a delay in restoring democratic governance. The BJP's efforts to form a new government, as evidenced by meetings of Meitei and Naga MLAs in May 2025, indicate a desire to return to elected rule, but the lack of consensus on leadership and the persistent ethnic divide make this challenging. The Centre must balance its security-focused approach with proactive steps toward political and social reconciliation. A clear roadmap for peace, involving dialogue, economic recovery, and community engagement, is essential to prevent Manipur from slipping further into division.

Healing Manipur is a daunting task, but it is not insurmountable. The state's people have shown resilience in the face of adversity, and their shared history of coexistence offers hope for a unified future. The central government, under President's Rule, has the opportunity to lay the groundwork for lasting peace by addressing the root causes of the conflict, fostering inclusive dialogue, and prioritizing the well-being of all communities. As Manipur navigates this critical juncture, the path to healing lies in restoring trust, rebuilding lives, and reaffirming the state's pluralistic identity. Only through collective effort and unwavering commitment can Manipur emerge from this crisis stronger and more united.

Latest developments in India's trade & bilateral relations with USA and UK

CONTD FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE

By: Diganta Barooah

* Intelligence, defence cooperation, and high-tech ties with the US must be preserved. * These should not be sacrificed due to trade tensions.

✓ **Avoid appeasement:**

* Submitting to Trump's demands will invite more pressure later. * According to the Realist school, yielding to bullies emboldens them, furthering.

✓ **Recall past resolve:**

* India successfully resisted: • The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT, 1968) despite immense pressure from the then superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union. • The discriminatory Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT, 1995) despite being a lone holdout. • Prior to renouncing its moral position and accepting the 2015 Paris Climate Accord, India stood up for the Rio Convention's ideals in climate change negotiations. • Past courage must inspire today's diplomacy.

✓ **Strategic Patience and Public Endurance:**

✓ **Economic costs:** * It is estimated that India's GDP growth will suffer a reduction of 2 percentage points from Trump's tariff tantrum. * This is a small price to pay for upholding India's larger interests.

✓ **Public support:**

Indian citizens have historically supported leaders who acted in the national interest even at a cost.

✓ **Implications for Quad and Indo-Pacific:**

✓ **Uncertain future of Quad:** * India is set to host the Quad Summit later this year. If the US backs out from the meeting, it questions the US commitment to the Indo-Pacific strategy. * Other Quad nations are also re-evaluating their positions.

✓ **Recent Developments in India-UK Relations:**

✓ These include the endorsement of the "India-UK Vision 2035" which aims to unlock the full potential of a revitalized partnership by 2035, alongside the signing of a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). ✓ The CETA includes a Double Contribution Convention to exempt Indian workers and their employers from UK social security contributions for three years, boosting competitiveness. ✓ Additionally, there's a focus on increasing bilateral trade and investment, cooperation on global security, and strengthening people-to-people connections.

✓ **India-UK Vision 2035:**

✓ This vision, endorsed by the Prime Ministers of both countries, sets strategic goals and milestones for deepening and diversifying bilateral cooperation by 2035. ✓ It aims to redefine the India-UK relationship through flagship partnerships, delivering transformative opportunities and tangible benefits. ✓ The vision

encompasses various sectors, including trade, investment, technology, and defense.

✓ **Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA):**

✓ The CETA aims to boost trade and investment between India and the UK, with a focus on mutual growth and prosperity. ✓ It includes a Double Contribution Convention that exempts Indian workers and their employers from UK social security contributions for up to three years, potentially making Indian talent more cost-competitive, according to a government press release. ✓ The agreement is expected to facilitate trade, boost exports, and strengthen economic ties.

✓ **Dilution of India's Position on Compulsory Licensing**

* Historically, India has been a staunch defender of compulsory licensing, a mechanism that allows governments to authorise the production of patented products without the patent owner's consent, especially to address high medicine prices. * The new CETA provision, however, elevates voluntary licensing as the preferable and optimal route for access to medicines. * This represents a move away from compulsory licensing, which India had previously championed at both domestic and multilateral levels. * The case of Natco Pharma's compulsory license in 2012 for the anticancer drug sorafenib tosylate is illustrative: the price for one month's treatment fell from ₹2,80,428 to under ₹8,800, making the drug vastly more affordable for Indian patients. * Such cases highlight how compulsory licensing can play a critical role in countering the excessive rent-seeking behaviours enabled by strong patents.

✓ **Legal and Policy Safeguards under Threat**

* India's alignment with the WTO's TRIPS Agreement had originally retained regulatory mechanisms for compulsory licensing within the Patents Act. * It tailored to public interest grounds, such as lack of availability or high prices of patented products. * Periodic reporting on the 'working' (commercialisation) of patents was also a key safeguard, ensuring patents actually benefit Indian consumers. This safeguard has been eroded. * Changes brought about by India's prior free trade agreements and now reinforced by CETA have extended the reporting period reducing transparency and making enforcement of the working requirement more challenging. This, in turn, weakens another pillar for compulsory license issuance.

✓ **Problems with Voluntary Licensing**

* Voluntary licensing relies on the consent and negotiating strength of patent holders, which tend to favour powerful multinational pharmaceutical firms over domestic generic producers in developing countries. *

Organisations like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) have shown that voluntary licenses come with restrictive terms, such as supply controls and geographic limitations, limiting their ability to guarantee widespread, affordable access. * For example, when Cipla produced remdesivir under a voluntary license from Gilead Sciences during the COVID-19 pandemic, the resulting price in India, after currency adjustments, was actually higher than what Gilead charged in the U.S. * This example underscores the inability of voluntary licenses to serve as a reliable mechanism for affordable access to essential medicines.

✓ **Broader Implications: Weakening Demand for Technology Transfer**

* Beyond public health, CETA may also undercut India's longstanding demand for technology transfer on favourable terms from advanced countries. * This demand, rooted in the 1974 United Nations General Assembly's New International Economic Order (NIEO), was designed to spur industrialization and environmental progress in developing countries.

* Yet, despite decades of advocacy, significant barriers such as slow technology transfer and restrictive IP regimes persist. * India's 2024 update to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change explicitly noted that IP and inadequate technology transfer remain obstacles to scaling up climate-friendly technologies. * By moving away from demanding favourable terms for technology transfer, as signalled in the new CETA commitments, India compromises its leverage in global negotiations related to climate change and sustainable development.

✓ **Conclusion**

India must remain steadfast in upholding its strategic autonomy while pragmatically engaging with global powers on equal terms. A firm, principled stance today will not only safeguard national interests but also reinforce India's credibility as a resilient and independent global player. * India's commitments under the CETA intellectual property chapter represent more than mere legal adjustments, they reflect a shift in policy priorities with profound implications for public health, affordable medicine access, and the right to technology transfer.

* The prioritisation of voluntary over compulsory licensing dilutes critical safeguards that helped India protect public interest, while the weakening of demands for favourable technology transfer terms risks undermining India's role as a leader among developing nations in international negotiations. * The broader consequence is a potential reduction in affordable access to medicines and slower progress toward industrialization and environmental sustainability.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Satyabrata Borah

Political polarization has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges to democratic systems across the globe. While ideological diversity is both inevitable and healthy in a democracy, the transformation of political differences into rigid, hostile divisions has created a climate in which democratic values are increasingly strained. In its most extreme form, polarization does not merely represent a difference of opinion but evolves into an entrenched "us versus them" mentality, eroding the common ground that is essential for the functioning of democratic governance. This phenomenon, seen in varying degrees across different nations, is reshaping the nature of political discourse, public trust, institutional credibility, and ultimately, the resilience of democratic structures.

In a democracy, disagreement is not only normal but vital—it stimulates debate, fosters innovation in policymaking, and ensures that governance is subject to checks and balances. However, when political polarization deepens, disagreement shifts from focusing on issues to targeting identities. Political opponents cease to be viewed as individuals with alternative perspectives and are instead perceived as threats to the nation's very existence or moral fabric. This transition from respectful contestation to adversarial demonization undermines the principle of pluralism, which is foundational to democratic life. It transforms the political space into a battlefield where compromise becomes weakness, consensus-building is seen as betrayal, and the willingness to work across party lines diminishes sharply.

One of the gravest consequences of polarization is its corrosive effect on trust—both in institutions and in fellow citizens. In polarized societies, citizens increasingly interpret information through partisan lenses, accepting narratives that affirm their worldview while dismissing contradictory evidence as biased or fabricated. The media environment, particularly with the proliferation of digital platforms, has exacerbated this by enabling echo chambers where individuals are exposed primarily to views that mirror their own. As a result, shared realities—the bedrock of rational public discourse—begin to fracture. When facts themselves become contested and institutions such as the judiciary, election commissions, or law enforcement are seen through partisan suspicion, the legitimacy of democratic governance comes under severe threat.

Polarization also disrupts the legislative process, making effective governance more difficult. In a deeply divided political climate, policymaking is often paralyzed by gridlock, as opposing parties prioritize electoral point-scoring over substantive problem-solving. This paralysis can foster public disillusionment, as citizens perceive the political system as incapable of delivering tangible improvements to their lives. The frustration generated by such inefficiency can lead to decreased voter turnout, political apathy, or, conversely,

a rise in populist movements that promise decisive action but may disregard institutional safeguards. Both outcomes are harmful to the health of democracy, either by draining civic engagement or by encouraging shortcuts that weaken democratic norms.

The rise of polarization often coincides with the manipulation of identity politics. While identities such as ethnicity, religion, language, or region are natural elements of social diversity, political actors in polarized environments frequently exploit these differences to mobilize supporters. The strategy of consolidating a political base by deepening divisions may yield short-term electoral gains, but it carries long-term consequences for national cohesion. Once such divisions are entrenched, reversing them becomes exceedingly difficult, as political identities begin to merge with personal and community identities. In such circumstances, political debates are no longer about policy disagreements but about existential defense of one's identity, making compromise even less likely.

The impact of polarization extends beyond domestic politics, influencing a country's position and credibility in the global arena. Democracies that are internally fractured often find it challenging to pursue consistent foreign policies, as changes in government can bring abrupt policy reversals. This undermines a nation's reliability as an international partner. Moreover, when political infighting dominates the national agenda, long-term strategic priorities such as climate action, economic reform, or technological innovation are sidelined. Adversarial states can exploit these divisions to weaken democratic unity both internally and among allied nations, further destabilizing the international order.

Polarization also fosters an environment in which misinformation and disinformation thrive. Partisan loyalties can make individuals more susceptible to falsehoods that confirm their biases and more resistant to credible information that challenges them. Political actors, pressure groups, and even foreign powers can take advantage of this vulnerability to manipulate public opinion, often with the aim of deepening existing divides. The erosion of a shared informational foundation weakens the public's capacity to hold leaders accountable, as citizens lose trust in the very mechanisms—like free media—that are meant to safeguard democratic transparency.

Importantly, the consequences of polarization are not limited to political elites or institutions; they manifest in the everyday interactions of citizens. Polarization can seep into families, workplaces, and communities, straining relationships and reducing opportunities for meaningful dialogue across differences. When political allegiance becomes the primary lens through which individuals judge each other, the social fabric itself begins to fray. In such an environment, the spirit of civic cooperation, essential for addressing community-level challenges, diminishes significantly.

Despite these grim realities, it is im-

portant to recognize that polarization is not an irreversible condition. Historical examples demonstrate that deeply divided societies can move toward greater unity through deliberate and sustained efforts. The key lies in reinforcing the democratic values that polarization erodes: tolerance, mutual respect, and the willingness to engage in honest dialogue. Strengthening civic education to foster critical thinking, encouraging independent journalism to provide balanced coverage, and reforming political systems to reward cooperation rather than division are all critical steps in this process.

Political leadership plays a central role in either exacerbating or mitigating polarization. Leaders who prioritize inclusive governance, respect institutional independence, and model civil discourse can set a tone that reduces antagonism. Conversely, leaders who thrive on sowing division may deepen polarization to the point where democratic institutions are unable to recover. Thus, the long-term health of a democracy depends not only on the formal rules and structures in place but also on the political culture cultivated by those in positions of influence.

Civil society too has a crucial part to play. Non-governmental organizations, grassroots movements, and community leaders can serve as bridges between polarized groups, creating spaces where dialogue can take place outside the high-stakes arena of electoral politics. Initiatives that focus on collaborative problem-solving—whether related to local governance, environmental issues, or social welfare—can demonstrate that cooperation across differences is possible and beneficial. Such efforts, though small in scale compared to national politics, can help rebuild the trust and mutual understanding necessary for a functioning democracy.

Ultimately, political polarization is a test of a democracy's resilience. It challenges the ability of citizens and institutions to maintain the principles of fairness, equality, and representation in the face of deep divisions. While political competition will always be a defining feature of democracy, the manner in which that competition is conducted determines whether it strengthens or weakens democratic values. A polarized democracy risks becoming a hollow shell, maintaining the form of democratic governance but losing its spirit. The path away from such a future demands conscious, collective effort to reaffirm the shared commitments that bind citizens together despite their differences.

The preservation of democratic values in polarized times requires an acceptance of complexity and an embrace of diversity without allowing disagreement to devolve into hostility. It requires vigilance against forces—both internal and external—that seek to exploit divisions for personal or political gain. And above all, it requires a commitment to the idea that democracy is not simply a set of procedures but a living system sustained by trust, dialogue, and the recognition of a shared destiny. Without these, the promise of democracy withers; with them, even the deepest divides can be bridged.

EVERYTHING IS POLITICAL: Lessons from 30 years of the National Federation of Dalit Women

By: Ruth Manorama

I rushed a Dalit woman to a police station. This woman had faced land grab and violence by dominant caste men in a slum in Bangalore. It was around 4 pm. The police inspector recognised me immediately and said with a smile, "Namaste madam, what would you like: tea or coffee?"

I looked at him and said, "I want your gun instead."

He knew exactly why I said that. The police were complicit in this case. They had stood by and done nothing while this Dalit woman was tansured in public, assaulted and dispossessed.

This episode reflects the crux of the Dalit feminist struggle. Every space we have entered has been and continues to be a site of struggle, whether in the world or in civil society and progressive movements.

As we mark 30 years of the National Federation of Dalit Women, I reflect on a journey forged through struggles and resilience. There is so much we, as Dalit women, have built against all odds. There is so much to celebrate and feel proud of.

Yet, one challenge continues to weigh heavily on our work today, just as it did three decades ago: the struggle for power and resources. The lack of it chokes our organising and sustenance. It stifles our vision. It must be named over and over again, until it changes.

Laying the groundwork

The establishment of the National Federation of Dalit Women was the result of more than a decade of emotional, intellectual and political struggle.

I started a women's rights organisation called Women's Voice in 1981, Bangalore. I led land struggles for urban poor women across Karnataka. Through mass grassroots mobilising and legal battles in the 1980s, we successfully got a long-term stay order from the Supreme Court against slum evictions in Karnataka. These grassroots victories were transformational in the lives of the urban poor but had little space within larger movements.

As one of the first Dalit activists entering the autonomous women's movement, I quickly realised that Dalit women's struggles were completely missing from the feminist discourse. I would attend meetings where women spoke passionately about power, patriarchy and sexuality but caste was invisible.

In those lonely early years, I found courage in the writings of anti-caste visionaries such as BR Ambedkar and Priyanka. I read scholar-activist Gail Omvedt and Black feminists Audre Lorde and Angela Davis, who helped me find a language for what I was experiencing within the progressive movements and civil society in India.

Davis's framework of race, class and gender resonated deeply. I adopted it to our context of caste, class, gender, and framed it as Dalit women are thrice-discriminated or triple-alienated based on their social location. I emphasised that "Dalit women are the Dalits among the Dalits".

The Black feminist analysis of systemic oppression, of the need for self-determined leadership, moved me. I remember reading Black civil rights activist Vincent Harding saying, "Our ancestors did not wade through rivers of blood so that we might surrender the interpretation of their lives into the hands of others."

That stayed with me.

Working at the grassroots, I witnessed how caste, gender, labour and inter-generational poverty intersect in the lives of the marginalised. That's why I found myself equally engaged in the feminist, Dalit, unorganised labour and urban poor movements. I spoke extensively about the inter-connectedness of our struggles.

At the core was a clear conviction: our movements must be self-led, intersectional and political – non-partisan but political. It was this clarity

that laid the foundation for several platforms I co-founded, whether it was one of the first registered Domestic Workers Union in India or the Slum Dwellers Federation, the National Center for Labour, or other national women and Dalit networks.

Self-determination is not divisive

On several occasions, I was told that by creating a separate platform for Dalit women, I was dividing the autonomous women's movement. To which I would always respond that division occurs not because of us or our organising, but because of the caste system itself.

Dominant caste comrades asked me, "Why do you need a separate platform for Dalit women at the national level? Aren't women agricultural workers and women informal labourers already being organised?"

I challenged them in public meetings and informal conversations: "Who is leading those movements/organisations/campaigns?" It was the elites from the dominant castes deciding what issues mattered. We Dalits, I insisted, must build our own platforms and strengthen our networks at the national level.



The formation of the National Federation of Dalit Women in 1995 was political, searingly political, not identity-based as elites reduced it to being. We were not building a platform simply to assert an identity. We were building an anti-caste, non-partisan, intersectional feminist movement, grounded in our lived realities.

In one of my earliest presentations on Dalit women in the late 1980s, I noted, "A Dalit woman is feminist, non-Brahminical, non-patriarchal and positively oriented towards ecology."

Within the feminist movement, elite feminists welcomed Dalit women organising at the grassroots. There were several small community-based Dalit women's groups at the state level and Dalit women's networks in rural areas. The elites liked the image of "empowered poor women". But when it came to leadership, resources and decision-making spaces, especially at the national level, they made sure we were kept out.

They ran the show, they decided what counted as "feminist issues" but the caste question was nowhere. They failed to understand that patriarchy cannot be dismantled without the annihilation of caste.

In preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the Women's Voice and the Asian Women's Human Rights Council organised the first-ever seminar designed as a public hearing on atrocities against Dalits in 1994. It marked a historic moment when Dalit women from across the country publicly testified to systemic caste-based discrimination and vio-

lence.

The jury headed by Justice VR Krishna Iyer and lawyer Nandita Haksar firmly reiterated that "Crimes Against Dalits are Crimes Against Humanity".

This landmark recognition further solidified our conviction that we needed our own national platform, one led by Dalit women, for Dalit women.

The National Federation of Dalit Women was formally established on August 11, 1995, in New Delhi, weeks before the Beijing Conference in September. The formation was a radical assertion of our human rights. We declared that Dalit women were not just victims, but leaders, thinkers, organisers, visionaries and agents of change.

Achamma John, BM Leelakumari, Jyoti Lanjewar, Jyothi Amala, Jyothi Raj, Kumud Pawde, Martha Gladstone, Meera Velayudhan, Prema Shantakumari, Rajni Tilak, Ramakumari Panchal, Resley Abraham, Swarnalatha, Vimal Thorat were founding task force members of the National Federation of Dalit Women across states. So too were our fierce allies Aasha Ramesh, Anita



Reddy and core members of our sister network, the National Alliance of Women.

The pre-and post-Beijing processes gave us the legitimacy and political space to collectively assert our rights at the national and global level. The Beijing process across the globe threw up the need for diversity within the feminist movement, and we, Dalit women, leveraged this opportunity. We used this moment to insert caste into the national and global feminist agenda and build transnational solidarities.

Seen but not adequately supported

In the years following the Beijing Conference in 1995, "gender mainstreaming" became a buzzword across governments and civil society. Men-led organisations began to "discover" women leaders and feminist organisations increasingly started raising funds to work with "marginalised" women at the grassroots. The Dalit men-led organisations were not far behind.

It became a trend to have a "women's wing/ Dalit women's wing" or to be seen as working with marginalised women. Our presence became part of a donor requirement but it was hardly a commitment towards our political emancipation.

This shift led to a scramble for resources within the sector. The funding pie was limited. Elite organisations, feminist groups, Dalit women's organisations, newly formed diverse NGOs, Dalit men-led platforms, and donor-favoured initiatives were all competing for the same pool of funds.

It was a cruel joke. The same structures that had historically excluded us were now appropri-



ating our voices and struggles. They were tokenising our identities while sidelining our politics. Inclusion came, but only on their terms. Recognition came, but never with redistribution or reparations for Dalit women.

Everything is about power

In the post-Beijing years, the work on women's rights was relatively better funded and women's funds began to emerge. Yet, our demand for a dedicated Dalit feminist fund was systematically ignored through the years. Despite the progressive politics displayed, there was no political will to invest in our leadership and autonomy. We were only good enough for their reports and rallies, but never trusted with the resources to lead on our own terms.

Dominant-caste feminists in donor agencies spoke about "decolonising" funding and shifting power, yet remained largely silent on the urgent need to "debrahminise" it. Less than a handful of dominant caste women in influential positions ever moved resources to the National Federation of Dalit Women.

Power within the feminist movement was carefully guarded. The elites could not tolerate how some of us from marginalised communities with our "broken" English and presumed "lack of intellect" were beginning to lead and shape "mainstream" feminist agendas. I sure did not fit their mould of a "helpless Dalit woman" or of someone who gets to represent feminism and that made me a nuisance to them. Even a competitor, in some sense.

A renowned Brahmin feminist economist, from an illustrious family, served alongside me on several government of India committees, from the Ninth to the 12th Five-Year Plans. She would often say: "Ruth, you are an activist. I am an intellectual, I can articulate issues better, leave it to me."

But while she brought data and pedigree, her measured voice rarely stirred the power corridors like mine did. My voice carried the fire and realities of my people's struggles. And anyone who knows me, knows I was never one to be silenced – no matter who sat across the table.

Governments and bureaucrats, across party lines, knew me as a leader of the masses. And I was loud and unapologetic. Even when the resistance came from within, I stood my ground.

The fight for resource justice

A few years ago, a dominant caste feminist, who also happens to be a funder, said to me very candidly, "Ruth, we want to support new groups. Younger Dalit feminists. Fresh energy."

"Great!" I said. "And what is your grant size per group, per year?"

She mentioned an annual amount – one that I knew was equivalent to what she earned in a month.

"So this is what funders mean by resource justice?" I asked

She went on to explain constraints of funding new Dalit feminist groups. "It is a capacity issue," she said. "Many Dalit feminist groups start with enthusiasm but do not last, due to internal problems and lack of capacity."

I replied: "You call it a capacity issue. I call it disinvestment." If you want capacity, then build

it. Stand with us for the long haul.

Supporting young Dalit feminists is undoubtedly important. There is no contesting that. But if you do not also fund the older organisations that created the very conditions for these young leaders to emerge, then you are not supporting a movement. Without sustained support, how will older organisations continue their work, pass on their knowledge and nurture the next generation?

Building the capacities of historically marginalised women takes time: years, sometimes decades. It requires consistent support, deep trust and the space to make mistakes and grow. Most of our organisations do not have the privilege of hiring graduates from elite institutions. We also intentionally make a political choice to hire from within our own communities: women with limited formal education and little exposure, but rich lived experience. This means we invest time and effort in strengthening capacity with every hire.

Unlike elite-led NGOs, which for decades have hired from top institutions and accessed world-class training, we start with far less. Their caste privilege is a web of advantages: socio-economic-cultural-political capital, with the ability to name-drop and navigate power, from the police station to the panchayat to Parliament.

Dalit women's organisations are expected to perform miracles with crumbs. We are expected to do the most radical grassroots work, build a second line of leadership and sustain ourselves with no intergenerational investment.

It is time to radically revisit the idea of resource justice from the standpoint of historically marginalised women. Resource justice to us means recognising historical injustices and redistributing resources with urgency, depth and political intent. For us, resource justice is reparative justice. It means long-term, core, flexible support to those who have been kept out of power structures for generations. Without this shift, the promise of transformation will remain unfulfilled.

No neutral ground

We celebrate how far we Dalit women have come: our courage, our organising, our undeniable impact from the local to the global level. Through our relentless efforts, we have contributed to deepening the global discourse on inequality and intersectionality. However, I am also painfully aware of the work that remains.

Dalit women have always faced repression from state forces and social structures alike. But today, the space to organise is increasingly surveilled and silenced faster than we can reclaim. This political moment demands more from all of us than ever before.

So 30 years later, we ask again: who will stand with us?

The future of any transformative movement, feminist or otherwise, depends on how it stands with those at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. Will it rise to defend our right to co-exist, co-organise, and co-lead? Or will it remain comfortable in its complicity? Because in this political moment, there is no neutral ground. You either invest in transformation or you stand in its way. It is high time for the caste elites to share power, resources and solidarities. It is the only way forward! (Courtesy: Scroll)

Girls dropping out of school: Lack of resources or social failure?

By: Priyanka Saurabh

The slogan 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' shines on every street corner, government buildings and banners, but this slogan does not reach the villages and settlements where daughters are dropping out of school every day. A recent report has revealed that 39.4% of girls in the age group of 15 to 18 years are out of school. This figure is not just a number, it is a harsh comment on our social structure.

Distance from home to school, lack of safe transport, lack of higher secondary schools, condition of toilets and social insecurity – all these things are not the subject of any research paper, but are the ground realities with which thousands of girls are struggling every day. And ultimately they have to give up education. Government figures may show increased enrollment, but the reality is that girls are not able to stay in school after enrollment.

Look at a common rural scenario. Schools up to fifth standard are nearby, but after eighth standard the school is far away. There is no transport facility. No bus, no bicycle, no female companion or guide. Parents are afraid to send their daughter alone for five kilometers. They worry that there may be some molestation on the way, some accident may happen. Due to that worry, the girl stops going to school.

Talking about toilets, it is not just a matter of convenience but also of self-esteem and health. Girls go through a period of transition during adolescence where a clean and safe toilet can determine the continuity of their education. But most government schools either do not have toilets or if they do, they are dirty, unsafe, or damaged. This becomes another reason for parents to withdraw

their daughters from school.

Security is a big issue. Sending teenage girls to schools where there are no female teachers, no CCTV cameras or guards is still a risk for parents. This fear does not only arise from chaos but also from the insensitivity of society. The daily incidents and news of molestation in the news deepen this fear.

Apart from all this, society's priorities regarding education are also not clear. If a boy studies, it creates the 'future of the family', but if a girl studies, it creates the 'fear of missing the marriageable age'. This mentality is still deeply prevalent in rural areas. Girls' education is considered more of an 'expense' than a 'benefit'.

Now if a daughter leaves school under these circumstances, is it her fault? Or is it a collective mistake – of the system, of society, and of us?

The solution to this situation will not be only government schemes but concrete implementation. First of all, it has to be ensured that there is a higher secondary school within a radius of three kilometers from every village. This basic educational infrastructure is the right of every child. Transport facilities are as important as the presence of a teacher. If girls cannot reach school, how will they study? The government will have to ensure options like school vans, girl student bicycle scheme or 'school pass' in public transport.

The necessity of clean and usable toilets in every school should not be just a part of the 'Clean India Mission' but should be the basis of the true essence of 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao'. The local administration should be made responsible for the appointment of female staff, regular inspection and cleanliness.

For security, the presence of women teachers should be increased in every school. Security guards, CCTV cameras

and parents' participation in the school premises should be encouraged. This step will not only give assurance of safety to the daughters but also mental peace to the parents.

Along with this, the buildings and infrastructure of schools should be developed with quality and not just for the sake of formality. Library, computer room, science laboratories, playground – all these should be standard parts of the school.

Another important point is digital education. The pandemic has shown that those who do not have mobile, internet and electricity are left out of studies. Digital literacy and availability of equipment in rural schools is no longer a luxury, but a necessity.

The education department should make a regular list of girls who have dropped out of school. It should be the responsibility of the administration to visit their homes to find out the reason, motivate them to come back, and take the parents into confidence.

At the same time, society too will have to introspect. Why do we want to educate our daughters – for jobs, for marriage or for self-reliance? As long as society's answer remains unclear, the solution will also remain incomplete.

The administration, society and the family will have to take the responsibility to ensure that no girl is deprived of education. This does not only mean opening schools, but also taking full responsibility to ensure that the girl goes to school and stays there.

If 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' is not to remain just a line on a banner, then it has to be transformed into a joint effort of panchayats, school committees, teachers' organizations, parents and students. Only then will a society be created where no daughter will be deprived of education.

Tips to sail through rainy days

By: Shahnaz Husain

Are you one of those who enjoy the rain?

Monsoon is here with the soothing sounds of raindrops, the refreshing scent of wet earth and a cool, calming breeze that rejuvenates the soul.

After the dreaded season of sunburn and tan, the rainy season brings a refreshing change in the weather, but it also poses challenges for maintaining a flawless makeup look. Change of season affects your skin and hair more than you think.

As the weather changes, a drastic increase in humidity can pose significant challenges for your skin and hair.

Our skin and hair can suffer damage from humidity, moisture, and repeated exposure to rainwater, which can cause several issues, including breakouts, blackheads, whiteheads, and excessive oiliness.

However, with a few essential tips and tricks, you can master the art of creating a flawless rainy-season makeup look.

Always remember, the basic rule is to cleanse, tone, and moisturise your skin during the monsoon season.

1. **Smell good**

To maintain a pleasant scent during the monsoon season, opt for fresh, clean, and invigorating fragrances like citrus or aquatic notes, and layer them with light musks or delicate florals.

Use & carry a deodorant or a body mist/ spray and try keeping your items & yourself as dry as possible. If you are looking for a perfume that stays through the day.

Embrace lighter scents that won't get weighed down by the damp air.

I will recommend notes like citrus, green tea, aquatic accords or even light

floral.

These lighter options can evoke a sense of airiness and last longer in hot weather.

Morning fragrances like Eucalyptus or Tulsi are particularly effective. Just what you need to set the tone for the day, they are sharp, light, and energising.

2. **Use anti-frizz hair products**

Many professionals around the world swear by anti-frizz shampoos and conditioners to get the ultimate smooth results. To keep your hair strands smooth and deal with frizzy hair in monsoon, Hair care products specially formulated for frizzy hair allow the nourishing ingredients to penetrate the hair cuticle better for deep hydration.

Using a hair serum can be a great option to protect your tresses from humidity.

Apply a lightweight anti-frizz serum or spray that forms a protective layer over your strands. Go for serums enriched with argan oil or keratin to smooth hair without weighing it down.

Besides this, a leave-in conditioner can also go a long way in locking in the moisture and making your hair soft.

Use a leave-in conditioner after every wash. Ingredients like aloe vera, shea butter, or coconut milk help lock in moisture and make your hair manageable. Make sure to also avoid very harsh shampoos, especially ones containing alcohol.

3. **Cleansing**

Increased humidity causes an increase in sebum secretion, which attracts dust and pollution particles that cause clogged pores and breakouts. To prevent clogged pores and breakouts, opt for a gentle cleanser that removes dirt, pollutants, and excess oil without stripping away your skin's natural moisture.

cleanse your face at least twice a day using a mild, chemical-free cleanser which will help remove excess oil, dirt, and impurities from your skin. Natural ingredients like seaweed extracts in your face wash help maintain the skin's PH balance and ensure it stays nourished despite the changing weather.

4. **Choose lightweight and water-proof products**

The skin may feel sticky during the monsoon season due to high humidity. Heavy makeup can clog pores and lead to breakouts. Opt for oil-free formulas for foundation, concealer, and powder.

Look for waterproof makeup products that will last throughout the rainy and humid days. You can use a waterproof setting spray instead of powder to set the makeup. Choose lightweight formulas like tinted moisturisers or BB creams. Finding the right moisturizer for the monsoon is essential, especially for acne-prone skin. A lightweight, waterproof or oil-free moisturizer can keep your skin oil and grease-free that can prevent acne and keep the skin hydrated.

5. **Include Vitamin C in the Diet**
Vitamin C is an antioxidant that keeps the skin healthy during the monsoon season.

Citrus fruits like lemons, oranges, and grapefruits are excellent sources of vitamin C. Kiwis, bell peppers, and broccoli are also rich in this essential nutrient. Vitamin C helps in the production of white blood cells, which are crucial for fighting off infections and boosting your body's defenses.

Vitamin C serum can maintain the skin's glow. It eliminates microorganisms, prevents the onset of age-related changes, and lessens scars and blemishes to give you clear, flawless skin

'Hegemonic conspiracy': Stalin on Trump's 50 percent tax

CHENNAI, Aug 12: US President Donald Trump "unilaterally" imposing a 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods was a "hegemonic conspiracy" that India should oppose strongly, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin said on Tuesday.

He was addressing an event to commemorate late Cuban leader Fidel Castro, and described him as a "keeper" of the "homet's nest" that stung US whenever it "touched Cuba." Stalin said there was an emergent need to "break the ongoing hegemonic conspiracies in the world." Such conspiracies necessarily don't mean war.

"The 50 per cent tax imposed by US on India is one such conspiracy. The BJP ruling at the Centre should strongly oppose this. The Central BJP government and Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi should provide a transparent response to this," he said. "Why should US President Trump unilaterally impose the tariff when five rounds of Indo-US trade talks had happened and the sixth one was scheduled. Trump is repeatedly saying he stopped the India-Pakistan war (Operation Sindoor). (PTI)

'Abhi picture baki hai': Rahul doubles down on his 'vote chori' allegations

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday accused the Election Commission of not performing its duty of enforcing the 'one man, one vote' principle and said "abhi picture baki hai", alluding to the claims of irregularities in the voters' list.

Gandhi asserted that his party was engaged in protecting the Constitution and would continue to do so. "There is not just one seat (where there is 'vote chori') but there are a number of seats. This is being done at a national level and systematically. The EC knows it and we know it too," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha told reporters in the Parliament House complex.

"Earlier, evidence was not there but now the evidence is there. We protect the Constitution. 'One man, one vote' is the foundation of the Constitution," Gandhi said.

It is the duty of the EC to enforce 'one man, one vote' and they have not done their duty, Gandhi said.

"So we are protecting the Constitution and will continue to do so. We will not stop," he said.

Asked about Minta Devi, a 124-year-old voter allegedly listed in the Election Commission's voter list from Bihar, Gandhi said, "There are unlimited cases like that. Abhi picture baki hai."

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also said there were several such cases in which addresses and names of relatives etc. are all fake.

Earlier in the day, several MPs of the INDIA bloc parties held a protest in the Parliament House complex on Tuesday against the Election Commission's voter roll revision in Bihar, with many of them wearing white T-shirts that had the name of the "124-year-old voter" allegedly found on the

Release prisoners who have completed sentence: SC

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed concern over prisoners languishing in jails despite having completed their sentence and directed all states and union territories to immediately release such convicts if not wanted in other cases.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and K V Viswanathan passed the direction while ordering the release of Sukhdev Yadav alias Pehalwan in the 2002 Nitish Katara murder case.

It noted Yadav completed his sentence of 20 years in March this year without remission.

"We hold that in all cases where an accused/convict has completed his period of jail term, he shall be entitled to be released forthwith and not continued in imprisonment if not wanted in any other case," the bench said.

The top court invoked Article 21 of the Constitution of India which states no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

"Copy of this order should be circulated by Registry to Home Secretaries of all states and UTs to ascertain whether any accused or convict has remained in jail beyond the period of sentence," the bench said.

The order went on to issue directions for release of such convicts if not wanted in



other cases. "A similar copy shall be sent to member secretary National Legal Service Authorities for onward transmission to all member Secretaries of state and UTs Legal Service Authorities for communication of District Legal Service Authorities in the states for

the implementation of judgement," it added.

The apex court said Yadav should have been released after he completed his sentence.

"There can't any further incarceration of appellant herein from March 9, 2025, on-

wards.... In fact on March 10, 2025, the appellant ought to have been released, as he completed his sentence," the bench said.

The top court had previously granted three months furlough to Yadav, noting his 20 years of uninterrupted incarceration without remission.

Furlough is a temporary release from prison, not a suspension or remission of the entire sentence, and is typically granted to long-term inmates who have served a portion of their sentence.

Yadav's plea challenged a November 2024 order of the Delhi High Court, which dismissed his petition for releasing him on furlough for three weeks.

On October 3, 2016, the Supreme Court gave a 25-year jail term without the benefit of remission to Vikas Yadav and his cousin Vishal Yadav for their role in the sensational kidnapping and killing of Katara.

Co-convict Sukhdev Yadav was given a 20-year jail term.

They were convicted and sentenced for kidnapping Katara from a marriage party on the intervening night of February 16 and 17, 2002 and then killing him for his alleged affair with Vikas' sister Bharti Yadav.

Bharti is the daughter of Uttar Pradesh politician D P Yadav.

The trial court observed that Katara was murdered as Vishal and Vikas Yadav did not approve of his affair with Bharti due to their different castes. (PTI)

Odisha CM launches marine biotech research centre to develop coastal areas

BHUBANESWAR, Aug 12: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Tuesday launched the Odisha Marine Biotechnology Research and Innovation Corridor (OMBRIC), an initiative to contribute to the field of environmental protection, science-based tourism, investment and employment of people in coastal areas.

On the occasion, an MoU was signed between Odisha's Science & Technology Department and the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Ministry of Earth Sciences, for R&D collaboration.

Six higher education institutions, including IIT Bhubaneswar, also signed MoUs with the Odisha Government to provide R&D support for the initiative.

"This unique platform will become a beacon of hope for the scientific community and innovation, not only for Odisha, but for the entire nation and the world," the chief minister said, adding that it can transform the state's blue economy and contribute significantly to the nation's economic growth.

Stating that Odisha is taking a "bold and visionary step forward", Majhi said the initiative was launched at a time when the world is "looking towards the oceans for solutions to some of the most pressing challenges, ranging from sustainable food systems to climate resilience".

The CM said the initiative is "designed not just as a research programme, but as a platform where young entrepreneurs of Odisha can build marine biotech startups grounded in local resources and global standards".

He said OMBRIC connects the lab to land and research to real-world impact.

"From gene discovery to bioactive molecules, from bioremediation to nutraceuticals, this initiative covers the entire pipeline of marine biotechnology innovation, culminating in job creation, environmental sustainability, and economic growth," he said.

The chief minister asserted that Odisha is no longer just a coastal state; it now seeks to be a coastal innovator.

"We are investing in nature-based solutions and harnessing our biodiversity not by exploiting it, but by preserving, understanding it, and responsibly utilising it," he said.

Taking note of the strength of academic and research institutes of Odisha, the chief minister said the state has initiated an alliance of knowledge, research, and innovation to identify threats to coasts with the help of biotechnology.

Science and Technology Minister KC Patra said that Odisha has huge potential in marine biotechnology and will make all efforts to explore this sector to promote growth.

OMBRIC is a blueprint for a prosperous future, he said.

Recognising the state's vast coastline, packed with unexplored rich marine bio-resources, Odisha Science & Technology Department has conceptualised OMBRIC as a pioneering initiative aimed at transforming and positioning the state into a global leader in marine biotechnology and Blue Economy development in future, an official note said. (PTI)

BENGAL VOTER LIST REVISION ROW

EC summons CS to Delhi to explain non-removal of 'tainted' officers

KOLKATA, Aug 12: A day after the West Bengal government wrote to the Election Commission of India that it doesn't intend to suspend just yet its officers alleged to have committed "irregularities" in electoral roll revision, the poll panel on Tuesday summoned state Chief Secretary Manoj Pant to Delhi to explain the decision, sources said.

The state's top bureaucrat was directed to report in person to Nirvachan Sadan, the ECI headquarters in the national capital, by 5 pm on August 13.

The move came in response to Pant's communication to the ECI on Monday, stating that suspending the identified officers and filing FIRs against them, as directed by the poll panel, would be "disproportionately harsh" and have "demoralising impact" on the officers' community in Bengal. The government, instead, chose to remove two of the five ECI-identified officials from active election duty for now and initiate an "internal inquiry" into the matter.

It is interpreted by observers as a fresh flash point in the ongoing face-off between the Mamata Banerjee government and the ECI. Sources in the state secretariat 'Nabanna' said that the chief secretary was likely to fly to Delhi on Wednesday and meet the Commission, as directed.

Pant on Monday had responded to an EC-set deadline to execute a suspension order against five officials - two Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and two Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs) - and a casual data entry operator for allegedly committing irregularities while preparing electoral rolls in



Baruipur Purba and Moyna assembly constituencies in South 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur districts respectively.

The poll panel had also directed the chief secretary to lodge FIRs against all five accused and sought an action taken report from the top bureaucrat at the earliest.

Any disciplinary measure without holding a thorough inquiry on state government officers who have "consistently demonstrated sincerity and competence" would be "disproportionately harsh", the chief secretary wrote to the ECI

in his response.

The government informed the Commission that it had removed two personnel - Sudipta Das, AERO, Moyna AC, and Surajit Halder, data entry operator at Baruipur Purba AC - from electoral revision and poll-related duties as "a first step" in its process of assigning responsibility for the alleged irregularity.

The state's response did not mention any action taken against the three other officers identified by the ECI, two of whom are officers of WBCS (Executive) rank, and stated that "further action taken report will be submitted post completion of enquiry".

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had questioned the Commission's jurisdiction and legality of the move while alleging that the BJP was using the ECI to "intimidate state government officers".

"We will not suspend them; We will protect you. I will continue to be your 'pehedar' (guard)," Banerjee said at a public meeting in Jhargram last week, while tearing into the poll panel, and accusing it of functioning like "bonded labourers" of the BJP. (PTI)

41 lakh school students in Gujarat getting nutritious breakfast under state govt scheme

AHMEDABAD, Aug 12: Nearly 41 lakh students from pre-primary to Class 8 at more than 32,000 government schools in Gujarat are getting nutritious breakfast everyday under a scheme launched last year to ensure children get an adequate share of nutrition along with education.

The scheme, Mukhyamantri Paushtik Alparah Yojana, was launched in 2024 by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel as a part of the 'Suposhit Gujarat Mission', said an official release on Tuesday. The breakfast yojana is in addition to mid-day meals provided to students under a separate government scheme.

Under the mid-day meal scheme, full lunch is provided to students during school recess. Under the Alparah Yojana, nutritious breakfast is given in the morning to students of pre-primary and primary schools run by the government, said the release.

The Alparah Yojana's objective is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi' (nutrition along with education). This scheme is currently benefiting nearly 41 lakh students from Balvatika (pre-primary) to Class 8 across 32,277 government schools, it said.

Before the classes begin, these

41 lakh students are served a nutrition-rich breakfast everyday at their respective school. The rotating menu includes protein and energy-rich traditional foods like sukhdhi, chana chaat, mixed lentils, and 'Shri Anna' - a mix of millets known for their high protein and energy content, according to the release.

For the financial year 2025-26, the state government has allocated Rs 616.67 crore for the scheme, which has made a noticeable impact in not only boosting school attendance, but also significantly enhancing the physical and mental development of students, it stated.

"School students are now en-

joying their breakfast. The menu has been designed to be nutritious and special attention has been given to make sure that the food is rich in protein and calories," said Joint Commissioner, PM Poshan Yojna, Neha Gupta.

The initiative is boosting school attendance, enhancing student well-being, and setting a national example in the fight against malnutrition, said the release.

"As soon as children arrive at school in the morning, they receive a protein-rich breakfast under this scheme," said head teacher of a primary school in Ahmedabad, Rajendra Prajapati. (PTI)

Priyanka Gandhi slams Indian govt for 'silence' on 'Israel committing genocide'; envoy hits back

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday said the Israeli state is committing "genocide" and it is "shameful" that the Indian government is standing "silent" as Israel unleashes this devastation on the people of Palestine.

Hitting back at the Congress leader, Israeli Ambassador to India Reuven Azar said, "What is shameful is your deceit. Israel Killed 25,000 Hamas terrorists. The terrible cost in human lives derives from Hamas's heinous tactics of hiding behind civilians, their shooting of people trying to evacuate or receive assistance and their rocket fire."

"Israel facilitated 2 million tonnes of food into Gaza while Hamas tries to sequester them, thereby creating hunger. Gaza population has grown 450 per cent in the last 50 years, no genocide there. Don't buy Hamas numbers," Azar said on X, tagging Priyanka Gandhi's post on the microblog-

ging platform.

The Congress slammed the Israeli ambassador's remarks as "unacceptable" and condemned the words used by him in response to the "pain and anguish" expressed by Priyanka Gandhi.

Priyanka Gandhi said the Israeli state is "committing genocide" and has "murdered over 60,000 people, 18,430 of whom were children." "It has starved hundreds to death including many children and is threatening to starve millions," she said in a post on X.

In her post, the Congress general secretary also asserted that enacting these crimes by silence and inaction is a crime in itself.

"It is shameful that the Indian Government stands silent as Israel unleashes this devastation on the people of Palestine," she said.

In another post on X, Priyanka Gandhi said the "cold blooded murder" of five Al Jazeera journalists is another heinous crime committed on Palestinian soil and



asserted that the immeasurable courage of those who dare to stand for the truth will never be broken by the violence and hatred of the Israeli state.

Al Jazeera journalist Anas al-Sharif has been killed, along with four colleagues, in a targeted Israeli attack on a tent housing jour-

nalists in Gaza City, according to the Al Jazeera media network.

"The cold blooded murder of five Al Jazeera journalists is yet another heinous crime committed on Palestinian soil," Priyanka Gandhi said. The immeasurable courage of those who dare to stand for the truth will never be broken by the

violence and hatred of the Israeli state, she added.

"In a world where much of the media is enslaved to power and commerce, these brave souls reminded us of what true journalism is. May they rest in peace," she said. After the Israeli envoy attacked Priyanka Gandhi, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The Indian National Congress condemns the words used by Israel's Ambassador to India in response to the pain and anguish expressed by Smt. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, MP, on Israel's continuing genocide in Gaza."

"It is too much to expect the Modi government, which has shown extreme moral cowardice when it comes to speaking out on Israel's destruction of Gaza over the past 18-20 months, to take serious exception and objection to the Ambassador's response. We do and find it totally unacceptable," Ramesh said. (PTI)

Allegations of voters' list manipulation: Kerala Minister urges for repoll in Thrissur LS segment

THRISSUR (KERALA), Aug 12: Kerala General Education Minister V Sivankutty on Tuesday urged the Election Commission of India (ECI) to carry out a re-election in the Thrissur Lok Sabha constituency, in the wake of reports of widespread voters' list manipulation. The BJP had gained a landslide victory in this constituency in the 2024 general election.

Actor-turned-BJP leader Suresh Gopi, now serving as Union Minister of State for Petroleum and Tourism, won the Thrissur seat by a significant margin of over 74,000 votes, defeating CPI's V S Sunil Kumar and Congress candidate K Muraliedharan in a closely fought three-cornered contest.

While talking to reporters here, senior CPI(M) leader Sivankutty said there have been allegations of widespread manipulation of voters' lists in the constituency before and after the Lok Sabha polls.

He claimed that even those who oppose Gopi within the BJP are

saying that there was a possibility that 30,000 to 60,000 votes had been added to the electoral roll.

It has now come to light that eight to 15 votes were included in several apartments in the district, the minister said, quoting media reports. "Actually, what the Election Commission should do is to conduct a re-election in Thrissur Lok Sabha constituency. A genuine and justifiable voters' list should be prepared for the same," Sivankutty said. Vehemently criticising Suresh Gopi's continuing silence over the matter, the Left leader said he is keeping mum as he could not give a truthful reply on the matter.

"Gopi is scared to face the media and people. That means he had won the election by manipulating the voters' list and spending lakhs of rupees," he alleged.

The minister also asked Gopi to resign as Thrissur MP, taking responsibility for the alleged malpractices. "He should resign and contest a fresh election if interested," Sivankutty added. (PTI)

Identification, deportation of illegal immigrants vital for Manipur: Biren Singh

IMPHAL, Aug 12: Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh said that identification and deportation of those who came from Myanmar and Bangladesh illegally is vital to ensure security and demographic balance in the north-eastern state.

He also thanked lone Rajya Sabha MP from Manipur, Leishemba Sanajaoba, for raising the issue in Parliament.

In a post on X on Monday evening, Singh said, "I thank Hon'ble MP @MaharajaManipur for boldly raising in Parliament the urgent need to detect, identify and deport illegal immigrants from Myanmar & Bangladesh, an issue vital to Manipur's identity, security and demographic balance."

Singh also said, "While other MPs have remained silent, you have spoken with courage and clarity, voicing our people's con-



cerns without hesitation. This is not just an administrative necessity, but a matter of safeguarding the rights, culture, and future of the people of Manipur."

Singh's statement came after Sanajaoba told the House, "It will be very unfortunate for Manipur if

the census is carried out before the detection, identification and deportation of illegal Myanmar and Bangladeshi immigrants who have already settled in different parts of the state."

The MP said that the Ministry of Home Affairs had already asked

states and union territories to identify and deport illegal Myanmar and Bangladeshi within one month, effective from May 19, 2025.

But no concrete step from the state government was noticed till date, he alleged.

Sanajaoba also said, "Conducting a census before the illegal immigrants issue is settled will cause social unrest and will also lead to forfeiture of constitutional rights for the indigenous people of Manipur."

He also said that the census reports of 2001 and 2011 are very controversial due to an abnormal increase in population.

"And...in three sub-divisions of Senapati district, an extraordinary quantum jump of population of around 202.88 per cent was recorded between 2001 and 2011 census in the state," he added. (PTI)

Ten endangered monitor lizards rescued, one arrested in Tripura

AGARTALA, Aug 12: Ten monitor lizards, an endangered species, were rescued in South Tripura district, and a 21-year-old man was arrested for allegedly being involved in wildlife trafficking, a forest official said on Tuesday.

During a routine check along the Belonia-Sonamura road near Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary in Belonia subdivision, a team of forest guards, with the help of BSF personnel, accompanied by thundershorts and lightning, is very likely at isolated places in Pakke Kessang district.



Officials have urged residents in the affected areas to remain vigilant, avoid unnecessary travel during peak rainfall hours, and strictly follow state disaster management authority guidelines.

The advisory also warns of potential disruptions such as waterlogging, localised flooding, landslides, and possible damage to infrastructure in vulnerable zones.

Local administrations in both districts are on alert, with emergency response teams prepared to handle any eventualities, officials said.

The IMD has advised farmers and outdoor workers to take necessary precautions, and urged residents living near rivers, streams and landslide-prone slopes to move to safer locations if required. (PTI)

two-wheeler was intercepted, the official said.

"During the search, ten monitor lizards concealed in three sacks were recovered. All the monitor lizards were seized and the youth was arrested for carrying the endangered species, a scheduled I animal, according to the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972," Trishna sanctuary wildlife warden Bimal Das told PTI.

During interrogation, the accused claimed that he had collected monitor lizards from a person and had planned to take these endangered species to Manubazar in South Tripura district, he said.

"After interrogation, the accused was produced before a court in Belonia, which granted him bail conditionally. We have started an investigation to identify those involved in the animal trafficking racket", he said.

According to him, this was the first time that ten monitor lizards were seized from Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary, considered a natural habitat of the species.

Following the court's directive, all the rescued monitor lizards were released inside the sanctuary after examining their condition by a veterinary doctor, he added. (PTI)

Arunachal Cong protests over 'assault' on democratic rights

ITANAGAR, Aug 12: Congress activists in Arunachal Pradesh on Tuesday staged a protest here, voicing solidarity with Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, and denouncing what they termed as a "systematic assault" on democratic rights by the BJP-led government.

The demonstration outside the party's state headquarters, Rajiv Gandhi Bhawan, was held under the banner "Let's raise our voices for the truth, justice, and democracy".

They also protested the detention of several INDIA bloc MPs during a rally in New Delhi on Monday over the special intensive

revision of electoral rolls in Bihar. More than 30 MPs were detained on their way to the Election Commission office in the national capital to voice their protest against the revision of electoral rolls.

Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) leaders alleged that the detentions were part of a broader attempt to "muzzle opposition voices and prevent legitimate political questioning".

Addressing the gathering of party workers, senior Congress leader and former state minister Tanga Byaling said Gandhi, as the leader of the opposition, has a constitutional mandate to question the

government on issues of public interest.

"Instead of answering the questions, the BJP government is trying to intimidate the opposition, stifle farmers' rights, and erode the foundations of democracy," Byaling alleged.

The APCC also took a dig at the Election Commission of India (ECI) for directing Gandhi to submit an affidavit regarding his statements on alleged manipulation of electoral rolls. State Congress leaders claimed that the directive was a "calculated move to discredit Gandhi's assertions and deter him from raising concerns about election integrity". (PTI)

Nagaland launches campaign to take on country's second-highest HIV prevalence rate

KOHIMA, Aug 12: A two-month awareness campaign on AIDS was launched on Tuesday in Nagaland, which has the second highest HIV-prevalence rate in the country.

Launching the two-month campaign, Health Minister P Paiwang Konyak said that while the epidemic is showing a steady decline, still 1.37 per cent of the adult population (15-49 years) of the state is affected by it.

"Transmission is primarily through unprotected sex (85 per cent), followed by injecting drug use (8.7 per cent), and from infected parents to unborn children (5.4 per cent)," he said, citing official data.

As of June, 15,323 people living with HIV are receiving anti-retroviral treatment in the state, he said. Konyak said the campaign must become a movement where "knowledge travels faster than disease, hope travels farther than fear, and action speaks louder than ignorance".

He said the campaign would reach communities across Nagaland, both urban and rural, spreading not just information, but hope.

Health Secretary Anoop Khinchi said the campaign would focus on promoting safe practices, reducing stigma, and encouraging testing and treatment.

Nagaland State AIDS Control Society (NSACS) Project Director Aho Sekhose said the campaign will cover 520 schools, 110 colleges, and 520 villages, targeting 5,200 households through folk shows, flash mobs, awareness sessions, and community outreach programmes.



"The campaign will also raise awareness on the HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Act 2017, prevention among pregnant women, and available services such as testing, STI treatment, condoms, and the national AIDS helpline (1097)," he said.

Kohima College's Red Ribbon Club member Mezhuonuo-u Thira called for "breaking the silence and removing stigma" around HIV/AIDS, stressing

that young people must lead the fight.

The campaign will culminate on October 12, 2025, with the aim of ensuring that no one in Nagaland is left uninformed or unsupported.

The event organised by NSACS on International Youth Day was attended by students from 66 institutions, including colleges, universities, and schools. (PTI)

Gas reserves dwindling, future lies with solar energy: Tripura power min



AGARTALA, Aug 12: Tripura Power Minister Ratan Lal Nath asserted that the future of the northeastern state lies with solar energy as power generation from natural gas-based plants is witnessing a steep decline due to a shortage of supply.

He said four of the five gas-based power plants in the state have witnessed a dip in production.

Speaking at a programme in Durgachowmuhani in Dhalai district on Monday, he said, "The Palatana power plant, which is supposed to produce 726 MW of power daily, is now producing only 520 MW, while Manarchak power plant is producing 60 MW out of its installed capacity of 100 MW. At RC Nagar plant, NEEPCO is producing 80 MW out of its installed ca-

capacity of 135 MW, while Rokhia is producing 80 MW against its installed capacity of 63 MW."

Currently, the northeastern state requires an average of 370 MW of power daily, which will go up to 700 MW by 2030.

All the gas power plants also send power to neighbouring states.

"Power generation is reducing due to a shortage of gas supply to these plants. We have to understand that the gas reserves in the state is dwindling with every passing day," he said.

Urging people to embrace solar energy, the minister said the state government has already launched PM Surya Ghar scheme.

Nath said the PM Surya Ghar scheme will not only meet the energy demands of a consumer but also turn him or her into "energy seller".

"The Tripura Electricity Corporation (TSECL) will buy the excess power, which will be generated on rooftop solar plants. People must grab the opportunity," he said. The minister said the state has taken the initiative to renovate the Gomati hydro-power project in order to generate 15 MW of power in future. The state's lone hydro-power project suffered serious damage in last year's floods.

Nath said a plan has been envisaged to set up a pump storage power generation unit in Dhalai district to meet the state's future energy demand. (PTI)

More than 1,000 motorcyclists participate in 'Har Ghar Tiranga Bike rally' in Imphal

IMPHAL, Aug 12: More than 1,000 motorcyclists, including 137 from the police, on Tuesday participated in the 'Har Ghar Tiranga Bike rally' in Imphal, covering a distance of around 33 km, officials said.

The rally, which is part of the upcoming Independence Day celebrations, was flagged off by Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel and Security Advisor Kuldip Singh from Hapta Kangjeibung area in Imphal.

Organised by the Manipur Police and the state's Youth Affairs and Sports department, the rally covered a distance of nearly 33.5 km till Khongjom War Memorial complex, officials said.

A total of 1,017 motorcycles took part in the rally, including more than 130 from the police and more than 800 from biker clubs.

"The rally symbolises the spirit of unity, patriotism and pride as the nation gears up for the 79th Independence Day celebrations," a state government post on X said.

On the occasion, Manipur DGP Rajiv Singh



thanked all the participants, including the bikers' club and police personnel.

He said, "We are all energised with the thoughts of serving the country."

In Jiribam district, bordering Assam's Cachar district, the district administration, in coordination with police, CRPF, and Assam Rifles, also organised a 'Tiranga Bike Rally'

as part of the ongoing nationwide 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign.

Around 90 bikers participated in the rally, spreading the message of patriotism and nationalism between the civilian and armed forces.

The rally, which commenced from Irawat Square, concluded at Dibong Khunou. (PTI)

Army showcases Operation Sindoor's success

ITANAGAR, Aug 12: The Indian Army's success in Operation Sindoor took centre stage at an outreach programme at Tuting in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Siang district on Tuesday.

Organised by the Spear Corps under the 'Seemaon ke Rakshak, Gaon ke Saathi' initiative, the two-day programme was a part of the Army's ongoing efforts to connect remote border areas with the national mainstream, a statement said.

The programme sought to strengthen civil-military cooperation while instilling the ideals of patriotism in the border community, it said.

The event, which started on Monday, featured a series of community-focused activities for students, youth, women, veterans, and entrepreneurs, it said.

Modern weapons and equipment were displayed as part of the programme. Young participants were encouraged to consider careers in the armed forces, it added.

Information was provided on local economic opportunities in crops, spices, and bamboo-based industries.

The programme concluded with the felicitation of veterans and community leaders for their contributions to regional development, the statement said. (PTI)

Meghalaya CM launches public bicycle sharing system in Shillong

SHILLONG, Aug 12: In a move to promote green and sustainable mobility, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Tuesday launched Shillong's first Public Bicycle Sharing (PBS) system in the presence of actor and fitness enthusiast Milind Soman.

The initiative, part of the Shillong Urban Mobility Policy 2024, aims to promote non-motorised transport (NMT) and reduce the city's dependence on fossil fuel-driven vehicles.

The policy envisions that at least 35 per cent of transport in Shillong will be through non-motorised means such as walking and cycling.

The CM, who took a short inaugural ride on one of the electric bicycles to the bustling Khyn-dailad area, said the project marks a step towards a "greener and healthier Meghalaya".

"I encourage all our residents to take part in this initiative. Let's make Shillong a walking

and cycling city," Sangma said after the launch event.

The PBS system has rolled out with more than 20 electric bicycles across key points in the city. These bikes will be available to the public through an app-based system, officials said.

The initiative is led by the state's Urban Affairs Department in collaboration with GIZ India under the Sustainable Urban Mobility 'Air Quality, Climate Action & Accessibility (SUM-ACA) project, supported by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).

Milind Soman, known for promoting fitness and endurance sports, expressed delight at being part of the campaign. He also joined local cycling groups for a short ride and praised the city's commitment to healthier living and environmental responsibility. (PTI)

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Sports Bill will end stagnation; bring in transparency: PT Usha in Rajya Sabha

WI cricket identifies hundred things to improve following meeting with legends



NEW DELHI, Aug 12: Indian Olympic Association President PT Usha, who is also a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha, on Tuesday offered her unequivocal support to the National Sports Governance Bill, saying that it will end decades of "stagnant status quo" to usher in "transparency, and accountability" in country's sports administration.

that was passed by Lok Sabha on Monday, Usha lauded its provisions including the setting up of a National Sports Board (NSB), which will have overriding powers to recognise sports federations (NSFs). Affiliation to the NSB would be mandatory for access to central funds.

Sports Election Panel to oversee NSF polls. "Today is a day of immense personal and national significance. I have long awaited this moment," Usha, who sat alongside another nominated member Sudha Murthy, said in her address to the House.

She had opposed the bill last year, describing it as government interference and warned that India might end up copping a ban from the International Olympic Committee. However, she has since revised her views after extensive consultations with Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya. "Let me take you back to 1984. I was just 20 when I missed an Olympic medal in Los Angeles. That day my heart broke... there was no comprehensive sports law to support the dreams that we carried in our hearts."

there was nothing done to address the stagnant status quo... Today the hope has transformed into action and legislation. It is a visionary and long overdue bill," she said.

"This bill will usher in transparency, accountability, and gender parity. It will empower athletes and build confidence among sponsors and federations. It is about justice and fair-play," she added.

Usha said the bill's thrust on creating a structured administrative set-up will be helpful for India's 2036 Olympics bid.

"This legislation comes at a time when India is dreaming big, dreaming for its rightful share in global sporting fraternity by hosting the 2036 Olympics. For Bharat, it is not just a bill, it is a clarion call for action," she said.

"This bill is a critical pillar of a grand vision. Let us see this as a moral promise, a promise that athletes will no longer be let down by an apathetic system. As someone who ran bare foot on clay tracks... I can say that this bill will change lives," she said.

She also backed the National Anti-Doping (Amendment) bill which reasserts National Anti-Doping Agency's operation independence, while setting up a National Anti-Doping Board to advise on procedural issues.

"It is through such effective legislation that we can bring a new culture of clean sports. This bill will illuminate the athletes' path with clarity," Usha said. (PTI)



ST. JOHN'S (ANTIGUA), Aug 12: Cricket West Indies (CWI) have "identified about a hundred things" that need improvement, including inculcating a sense of pride among young players, raising the standard of domestic tournaments, and bringing in more money, said the board after an emergency meeting with the island's past players.

cult to change habits when you are getting somebody who has made so many runs at regional level but clearly has deficiencies when it comes to international level.

"It's very difficult to change in a couple of weeks. There are issues concerning strength and conditioning, which again points back to facilities which are available to youngsters and emerging players and 'A' teams, etc," Dehring was quoted as saying.

He said that, among other things, CWI also planned to have "a proper high-performance centre established in the region, a prototype that will then be modelled and imitated across the region, in other countries, (and) academy systems to ensure that the West Indies way of playing cricket is both documented and taught from very early."

"The meeting comes close on the heels of the West Indies getting bowled out for 27, the second-lowest innings score in Test history and the lowest since 1955, against Australia at Sabina Park in Kingston recently. "It's been that case for years, where we are not in the same level-playing field as other playing countries," Lara said after the meeting.

"Back in the days when skill was the prominent factor, we excelled, we were the best team in the world. But the game has evolved, and technology and analytics, and we now have to see a new way of finding ourselves back to being very competitive."

"I said not a level-playing field because a lot of the countries are far ahead in these sorts of areas. The skill factor of the game is still there, but not as prominent as it was in the past." (PTI)

The two-day meeting in Trinidad, which was held for the betterment of the sport in the region, comprised legends such as Viv Richards, Brian Lara, Clive Lloyd, Desmond Haynes, Shivnarine Chanderpaul and current head coach Daren Sammy.

"We have identified a list of about a hundred things that we have to improve, but probably among the top five: facilities at every level for our cricketers; practice pitches across the region; the quality of our domestic tournaments."

"There's definitely a skills deficiency at various levels that don't get highlighted till they reach international levels and then you see the glaring deficiencies vis-a-vis our international counterparts, which again is systemic," Chris Dehring, the CWI chief executive, was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

Those who have attended the meeting believed that the West Indies are currently "not on the same level playing field as other cricketing nations" before coming up with a roadmap to revitalise the region's cricket.

At the same time, they agreed that that "it's a long road, it's not going to happen overnight."

"As the batting coach (Jimmy Adams) pointed out, it's very diffi-

Spanish league kicks off with Barcelona wanting to keep its momentum and Madrid aiming to reset

MADRID, Aug 12: The Spanish league begins with the top teams arriving with different expectations. Defending champion Barcelona wants to keep its momentum and show it will be the team to beat again in Spain. Real Madrid is aiming to reset after a lackluster last season and with the arrival of coach Xabi Alonso. Atletico Madrid hopes a revamped squad will help keep pace with its rivals.

ons League, reaching the semifinals for the first time since 2019. In its second year under coach Hansi Flick, the Catalan club will try to add to its success from last season by boosting its squad with English forward Marcus Rashford, who will be teaming up with Lamine Yamal and Robert Lewandowski in an attacking front that was one of the best in Europe last season. It led the scoring charts both in the Spanish league - with more than 100 goals - and in the Champions League.

and Ansu Fati, who went on loan with Monaco after not playing much last season.

Brazil job and former player Alonso arriving as widely expected.

Milan after more than a decade with the Spanish club. Lucas Vazquez also departed, and there were still doubts about whether Rodrigo would return. Madrid's first match is at home against Osasuna on Aug. 19. Atletico Madrid had great expectations last season, but it couldn't make a run for the Spanish league title - finishing behind Barcelona and Madrid - and again was eliminated by the city rival in the Champions League. The team will still be led up front by Antoine Griezmann and Julian Alvarez.

At the same time, they agreed that that "it's a long road, it's not going to happen overnight."

At the same time, they agreed that that "it's a long road, it's not going to happen overnight."

SUBROTO CUP TO KICK OFF ON AUG 19

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: A total of 106 teams across three categories, including four international sides, will vie for honours when the 64th Subroto Cup kicks off here on August 19.

The prestigious tournament will witness players competing across three categories -- Junior Boys (U-17), Junior Girls (U-17) and Sub-Junior Boys (U-15).

The tournament, organised by the Subroto Mukerjee Sports Education Society (SMSES) under the aegis of the Air Force Sports Control Board, will be held across venues in Delhi NCR and Bengaluru till September 25.

"We will have international teams from Sri Lanka and Nepal participating, which speaks volumes about the tournament's global reach and rising stature," Air Marshal S Sivakumar told reporters.

"As we continue to pursue our ultimate goal of nurturing young talent, this tournament provides an ideal platform for school

children to showcase their talent, gain exposure and prepare for progression into senior-level football."

As part of the "Indian Tigers and Tigrasses" talent identification campaign, seven players will be selected during the tournament for advanced training in Germany. Indian women footballer Dalima Chhibber graced the occasion as Guest of Honour.

"This is where my journey started in 2011 and I am privileged to be a part of this and sitting here life has come a full circle for me," she said.

"We are heading towards a golden future. Recently, our U20 team also qualified for the Asian Cup. It is a sport that every country plays, we are taking steps in the right direction and it is a matter of time that we achieve success."

The tournament, first held in 1960, was conceptualised by Air Marshal Subroto Mukerjee to promote grassroots football in India. Over the decades, it has become one

of the most sought-after inter-school tournaments in the country.

The tournament will begin with the Junior Girls (U-17) category in Delhi NCR on August 19, followed by the Sub-Junior Boys (U-15) category in Bengaluru starting September 2. The final phase, featuring the Junior Boys (U-17) category, will commence in Delhi NCR from September 16.

In Delhi NCR, matches will be held at Ambedkar Stadium, Tejas Football Ground, Subroto Park Football Ground, and Pinto Park Football Ground. In Bengaluru, matches will be hosted at Air Force School Jalahalli, Air Force School Yelahanka, and the HQ Training Command Football Ground.

The 106 participating teams will represent various states, union territories, and educational bodies, along with four international teams. More than 200 matches are scheduled to be played across all three categories. An age-determination test will be conducted for the Sub-Junior Boys category in Bengaluru to ensure fair play and transparency. (PTI)



FIFA moves ahead with new human rights strategy for World Cup games, but advocates are skeptical

ATLANTA, Aug 12: Human rights scandals have marred World Cup tournaments for years, but FIFA is testing a new protocol requiring all host committees to develop action plans to protect human rights for the 2026 games in North America. With the games less than a year away, though, FIFA's commitment to upholding human rights is still under scrutiny. Human rights advocates who wanted more enforceable standards and clearer directions for local officials say FIFA wavered down a more robust model for the plans. "Even though where we landed is very different than what we had consulted them on, the existence of the framework is in many ways unprecedented. Sports bodies have not had human rights frameworks that reflected the breadth of issues covered across so many jurisdictions. But the plan is just a plan. It's not self-executing," said Jennifer Li, director of the O'Neill Institute's Center for Community Health Innovation at Georgetown Law and national coordinator of the Dignity 2026 Coalition, which is working with FIFA on human rights. Adding to advocates' unease, several U.S. host commit-

tees said they couldn't meet a March deadline for an early draft of their plans. A FIFA spokesperson said the governing body has been working closely with host cities and counties, which they say are on track to develop final action plans by the Aug. 29 deadline. Sixteen North American sites will host games, including 11 in the U.S.

Human rights concerns in North America look different from those in other countries where FIFA has come under fire, which had few protections for workers and massive stadium and transportation construction projects.

Migrant workers labored in Qatar's scorching heat for more than a decade before the 2022 World Cup there, and human rights advocates worry migrant workers' lives are again at risk in Saudi Arabia, which will host the games in 2034. FIFA's suggestions for the 2026 plans include guidelines on nondiscrimination, security, preventing trafficking, protecting unhoused people and workers' rights, including for migrant workers.

up," said labor rights expert Deborah Greenfield, who is in an expert advisory group supporting FIFA's human rights work for 2026.

U.S. President Donald Trump has ramped up immigration enforcement across the country, stirring fears that federal law enforcement officers will arrest workers and even travelers during the games. Trump imposed a travel ban on 12 countries in June, and seven face restrictions. FIFA President Gianni Infantino has close ties to Trump. A FIFA spokesperson said it is working with a White House task force to "bring millions of people from different nations and communities" together in the U.S.

Protesters in Miami-Dade County gathered outside FIFA's offices in June to demand that the governing body protect travelers and workers and speak out against Trump's immigration moves.

That came after a Club World Cup event hosted in the area by Spanish-language TV network Telemundo was canceled after an unexpected Coast Guard inspection involving at least one Border Patrol agent, local outlets reported. (AP)

Sengkan Ronghang, Waisong Bey named for prestigious Karmapan Awards 2025

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 12: For their contribution to the promotion of sports, particularly football in Karbi Anglong, and their dedication to social service, two individuals from Karbi Anglong district will receive the prestigious Karmapan Awards, constituted by News Darpan.

Sengkan Ronghang, who became the youngest president of a professional football club, Karbi Anglong Morning Star Football Club (KAMSFC) in Karbi Anglong, will be conferred with the Karmapan Award for Best Social Activist for the year 2025.

Another recipient, Waisong Bey, the founding member, coach, and manager of KAMSFC, who has been actively working to promote professional football in the region, has been selected for the Karmapan Award for Best Sports Organizer.

It may be noted that KAMSFC is the only professional football club in Karbi Anglong to date. The club has earned several local league championship titles and has now been promoted to the I-League. The awards will be presented on August 24, at the Durga Mandir Conference Hall, Lalmati, Guwahati, during the News Darpan Conclave 2025, organized by News Darpan. Along with the two distinguished awardees from Karbi Anglong, 20 other personalities from various fields will also be honored.

About Sengkan Ronghang: He is the current president of KAMSFC, having assumed the post in 2011. Under his leadership, the club has won numerous local and state-level tournaments. In both 2015 and 2023, the club clinched the Assam State Premier League (ASPL) title. Other notable

achievements include victories in the Greater Diphu Sports Association (GDSA) League, the CEM Gold Cup, and the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) Club League. The club played in the I-League 3rd Division during the 2024 season and has now been promoted to the I-League 2nd Division for the 2025-2026 season.

KAMSFC was the first professional football club from Assam to represent the state in the I-League, the official tournament of the All India Football Federation (AIFF). Moreover, the club has been invited to participate in the 134th edition of the Durand Cup 2025, Asia's oldest football tournament. In the Durand Cup, KAMSFC was placed in Group D, competing against ITBP FT, Bodoland FC, and the ISL side Punjab FC at SAI Stadium, Kokrajhar.

About Waisong Bey:

He is the founding member, coach, and manager of KAMSFC, and has always been passionate about promoting the spirit of sports, particularly football. A former captain of the club, he holds UEFA and All India Football Federation (AIFF) coaching licenses and is also an international athlete. Under his leadership, KAMSFC has won many prestigious tournaments locally and across the state, including the Greater Diphu Sports Association (GDSA) League, CEM Gold Cup, KASA Club League, and the Assam State Premier League (ASPL) in 2015 and 2023.

The club's recent promotion to the I-League 2nd Division is a testament to his dedication. Bey also guided KAMSFC to participate in the Durand Cup 2025 at SAI Stadium, Kokrajhar.

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