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Bill tabled in LS to make IIM Guwahati institution of national importance

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: A bill to include IIM Guwahati to the schedule of the Indian Institutes of Management Act to make it an institution of national importance was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan introduced the Indian Institutes of Management (Amendment) Bill, 2025 amid din created by the Opposition over the issue of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar.

According to the draft law, the Centre, the Assam government and representatives of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) signed a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) for all-round development of the state.

According to the MoS, a number of developmental projects are to be implemented by the Union government under a Special Development Package (SDP).

Establishment of an IIM at Guwahati as an institution of national importance is one of the projects under the SDP.

At present, there are 21 IIMs that are declared as institutions of national importance and each of those are specified in the Schedule to the IIM Act.

The Assam government has requested for establishment of an IIM in the state, keeping in view the geographical location of the state and its all-round development.

"Assam is one of the very few states with more than three crore population which does not have an IIM. As per latest published results of the All-India Survey of Higher Education, more than five and a half lakh students are enrolled in higher education institutions in Assam," *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

CM slams Cong for obstruct in laying of IIM-G bill

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday criticised the Congress for allegedly obstructing the introduction of a bill in Parliament to set up an Indian Institute of Management (IIM) in Guwahati by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

"Today, the anti-Assam attitude of the Congress has once again been exposed in Parliament. When Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @dpradhanbjp Ji rose to lay the Bill for establishing the first ever Indian Institute of Management in Assam, the entire INDI bloc, led by Cong, attempted to obstruct the process by shouting and creating disruption", the Chief Minister posted on 'X'. Sarma strongly condemned 'this anti-Assam stance of Congress' and congratulated Pradhan for *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

NCHDAC directed to place allotment policy before court

'Is this a joke': HC on allotting 3,000 bighas of land to cement factory

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: The Gauhati High Court has slammed the Assam government for allotting 3,000 bighas of land to a private cement factory in the state's tribal-majority Dima Hasao district, and observed whether this is a "joke".

The court directed the North Cachar Hills District Autonomous Council's (NCHDAC) standing counsel to obtain and place before the court the records containing the policy to allot "such a huge chunk of land" to the company.

Justice Sanjay Kumar Medhi said in his order that a cursory glance at the facts of the case reveals that the land which has been allotted is about 3000 bighas "which itself appears to be extraordinary".

During the hearing of the petition, the judge said, "3,000 bighas!… What is going on? 3,000 bighas allotted to a private company?… What kind of decision is this? Is this some kind of joke or what?"

"This could be the area of the entire district," the judge said in an observation, while hearing two sets of writ petitions last week.

One petition was filed by 22 people against the Assam government, the NCHDAC and other departments concerned, alleging that they are being evicted from their lawfully possessed land in Dima Hasao district.

The other petition was filed by the Mahabal Cement Company which has been allotted 3000 bighas (around 991.73 acres) of land for construction of the plant.

Justice Medhi observed that both these writ petitions were connected and would be heard simultaneously.

He also pointed out in his order that the respondent's counsel has, however, submitted that such an allotment has been made pursuant to a mining lease granted under a tender process.

"This court directs standing counsel of NCHAC to obtain the records containing the policy to allot such a huge chunk of land measuring 3000 bighas to a factory," the judge said.

The direction has been given by taking into account that the area concerned is under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution where priority has to be given to the rights and interest of the tribal people residing there, Justice Medhi said in his order.

The area in Umrangso is also known as an environmental hotspot containing hot spring, stop over for migratory birds, wildlife etc.

In October last year, 2,000 bighas of land were allotted to the company with its registered address in Kolkata, while an additional plot of 1000 bighas, adjacent to the earlier one was given to it the next month. *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

2nd phase of eviction at Rengma forest begins

GOLAGHAT, Aug 18: The Assam government on Monday started the second phase of eviction inside Rangma reserve forest in Golaghat district to remove encroachments from around 26 hectares of land, displacing 41 families, an official statement said.

The administration had completed a five-day first phase of the massive eviction drive at Rengma in Uriamghat along the Assam-Nagaland inter-state boundary in Sarupathar sub-division on August 2 and cleared around 9,000 bighas (over 1,200 hectares) of land of encroachments, affecting around 1,500 families, mostly from the Muslim community.

"The second phase of the eviction drive in the Rengma reserve forest commenced today, focusing on encroached areas in Haldibari," the statement said.

During the exercise, the authority removed 41 households, demolished 65 illegal structures and cleared nearly 26 hectares of notified forest land from encroachments, it added.

The operation, carried out by the Forest Department in close coordination with the Golaghat district administration and Assam Police, is part of *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Putin dials Modi to brief on Alaska summit

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday conveyed to President Vladimir Putin India's consistent position for a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict when the Russian leader apprised him on the summit talks he held with US President Donald Trump.

Trump and Putin met in Alaska for nearly three hours on Friday but the much-anticipated summit ended without a ceasefire deal.

Following the phone conversation with Putin, Modi said India has consistently called for a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict and supports all efforts in this regard.

"Thank my friend, President Putin, for his phone call and for sharing insights on his recent meeting with President Trump in Alaska," the prime minister said in a social media post.

"India has consistently called for a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict and supports all efforts in this regard. I look forward to our continued exchanges in the days to come," he said.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said Putin shared his assessment of his meeting with President Trump.

"While thanking President Putin, the prime minister underlined India's consistent position for a peaceful resolution of the conflict through diplomacy and dialogue. He reiterated that India supports all efforts in this regard," it said.

The PMO said the two leaders also touched upon a number of issues of bilateral cooperation with a view to further strengthen the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between India and Russia.

Friday's talks between Putin and Trump was the first US-Russia summit since Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Saturday welcomed the summit and commended Putin and Trump for initiative to bring peace to Ukraine. *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

EC makes public names of 65 lakh people deleted during SIR

PATNA, Aug 18: The Election Commission (EC) on Monday came out with the names of 65 lakh people who were removed from the draft electoral rolls published as part of the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise, officials said.

The development came after the Supreme Court directed the EC to publish the deleted names by August 19 and file a compliance report by August 22.

The EC published the names of 'ASD' (Absentee, Shifted, and Dead) voters across polling booths, and also online as directed by the apex court, they said.

According to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Bihar, ASD lists have been displayed at polling booths in Rohtas, Begusarai, Arwal, Siwan, Bhojpur, Jehanabad, Lakhisarai, Banka, Darbhanga, Purnea and other places.

A statement issued by Bihar CEO Vinod Singh Gunjiyal said, "In light of the interim order passed by the Supreme Court on August 14, 2025... it is hereby notified that the list of such electors whose names were included in the Electoral Roll of the year 2025 (before the draft publication) but are not included in the draft roll published on August 1, 2025, along with reasons (Deceased/Permanently Shifted/Absent/Repeated Entry), has *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Earthquake of 4.3 magnitude hits parts of state

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: An earthquake of 4.3 magnitude hit Assam's Nagaon on Monday, making it the seventh quake in the state this month and the third in the district, an official said.

There was no immediate report of any loss of life or damage to property, he said.

According to the National Center for Seismology, the latest tremor of 4.3 magnitude on the Richter scale was recorded at 12.09 pm at a depth of 35 kms.

The quake was felt in Nagaon and adjoining areas, the official said.

This is the third quake epicentred in Nagaon this month, with a 3.8-magnitude tremor recorded on August 7 and a 2.8-magnitude quake the next day.

Altogether seven earthquakes have been recorded in the state this month, ranging from 2.8 to 4.3 on the Richter scale, according to the National Center for Seismology data.

The northeastern states fall in the high seismic zone, and earthquakes frequently hit the region. *(PTI)*

Differences must not become disputes: EAM to Wang

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: India and China should adopt a "candid and constructive" approach in moving ahead in the ties that must be based on mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar conveyed this to his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Monday.

In his opening remarks at a meeting with Wang, the external affairs minister pitched for taking forward the de-escalation process in the border areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh that witnessed over a four-year face-off between the militaries of the two nations.

Jaishankar held wide-ranging talks with the Chinese foreign minister shortly after he landed in Delhi on a two-day visit that came days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned trip to China to attend the annual summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Wang's visit is largely seen as part of ongoing efforts by the two neighbours to rebuild their relationship after it came under severe strain following the deadly Galwan Valley clashes in 2020.

In his remarks, Jaishankar also mentioned fighting against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations as another major priority.

"Having seen a difficult period in our *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

4-day-old infant dies in GMCH, govt forms inquiry panel

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: A four-day-old infant died at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) here on Monday morning after being found hanging from the wires of a medical device inside the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). With the newborn's family members alleging negligence against the on-duty staff, the Assam government ordered an inquiry into the incident.

The GMCH authorities are also conducting their probe into the matter. Terming the incident unfortunate, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said a thorough inquiry will be conducted into the incident.

He said the probe will be conducted by a three-member committee, comprising additional chief secretary S Sangson, the director of medical education and an AIIMS doctor.

GMCH principal Dr Achyut Baishya said the baby was born in the hospital on Friday and diagnosed with an infection. "The baby had developed jaundice, which is common in newborns. Accordingly, she was being given photo-therapy at the NICU when the unfortunate incident occurred this morning," he said. Dr Baishya said the on-duty *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Meitei organisation seeks clarification from APSC over Manipur crisis question

IMPHAL/GUWAHATI, Aug 18: Manipur-based Meitei Heritage Society (MHS) has requested the Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) to issue a clarification regarding a question related to the Manipur crisis that was allegedly included in the recently held Agricultural Development Officer Examination.

In a statement on Monday, MHS said a "mischievous question on the Manipur crisis to malign the Meitei community" was asked during the August 10 examination conducted by the APSC.

Expressing concern, the MHS also urged the APSC to "declare the question null and void, ensuring it is not used for evaluation purposes."

"Such a one-sided portrayal is unbecoming of a public service commission, whose mandate is to recruit public servants committed to fairness, impartiality, and service to the nation without prejudice", it said.

MHS asserted that the question and the "subsequent answers" did not reflect the role played by Kuki-Chin militants and Kuki-Zo civil society organisations in the ongoing Manipur crisis.

"We submitted a strong representation highlighting our serious concern for selectively targeting one community while ignoring publicly available data (including reports by NIA, CBI and Supreme Court appointed committee) on the role of Chin Kuki militants and their CSOs", it added.

"We have been told that our representation is under evaluation by the examination committee," it said. Asserting it has "full faith in the wisdom *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Breakthrough study reveals how black hole corona changes shape and energy with gas flow

IIT-G, ISRO scientists decode flickering X-ray signals from distant black hole

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati, in collaboration with UR Rao Satellite Centre, ISRO and Haifa University, Israel, have uncovered a mysterious X-ray signal pattern emitted from a blackhole, located nearly 28,000 light-years from the Earth, according to officials.

Using the data from India's space observatory AstroSat, the researchers observed the X-ray brightness from the black hole alternated between bright and dim phases, each lasting several hundred seconds, they said.

The findings of this research have been published in the prestigious journal, Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Researchers from across the world are working towards understanding the phenomena of black holes. While drawing gas from the outer layers of their companion stars, they produce

extreme heat and emit X-rays. By studying these X-rays, scientists can learn about the environment near the black hole.

According to Santabrata Das, Professor at the Department of Physics, IIT Guwahati, "We have found the first evidence of rapid X-ray flickering, repeating nearly 70 times per second, occurring during the high-brightness phases of the source. Interestingly, these fast flickers disappear during the low-brightness phases. This new understanding was made possible by AstroSat's powerful, unique observational capabilities."

The researchers observed that the X-ray brightness from the targeted black hole alternated between two distinct phases -- one bright and one dim. During the brighter phases, when the flickers are strongest, the corona becomes more compact and significantly hotter. In contrast, during the dimmer phases, it expands and cools, causing the flickers to disappear.

"This clear correlation points to the compact, oscillating corona as the likely source of these fast signals. While each phase lasted several hundred seconds and *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

State govt, Army deliberate on furthering cooperation, welfare measures in state

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: The Assam government on Monday held discussions with a delegation of the Indian Army to deepen cooperation, strengthen welfare measures and foster a spirit of service and patriotism among the state's youth, Chief Secretary Ravi Kota said.

The issues taken up during the discussion ranged from proposal to increase existing quota for government jobs for ex-servicemen to veteran employment to absorption of Agniveers to basic military grooming in schools, he added.

"Chaired an important meeting today with Major General Hartej Singh Bajaj, VSM, Headquarters 4 Corps, along with a delegation of the Indian Army," the CS said in a post on his official X account.

The meeting was attended by senior officials from the home and political department, Assam Police, general administrative department, and personnel department, and focused on charting a roadmap for enhanced collaboration and deeper partnership between the Indian Army and the state government, he added.

Sharing the key areas reviewed and outcomes, Kota said a proposal to increase the reservation for ex-servicemen in Assam from the existing 2 per cent to 5 per cent was discussed.

"The personnel department will collect inputs from select states and prepare a statement for further processing of the matter," he added.

Regarding employment of veterans, a plan was deliberated upon for engaging 1,576 qualified and readily available veterans, including the possibility of a waiver in government jobs as per prescribed guidelines and eligibility criteria.

The home department was directed to assess the vacancy position.

Till December 2024, 332 veterans have been employed by Assam Police, and 284 have been engaged by *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

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Sensex jumps 676 pts as GST reform bid sparks rally in auto, consumer durable shares

MUMBAI, Aug 18: Stock markets rose sharply on Monday, with Sensex closing higher by 676 points and Nifty climbing 1 per cent on heavy buying in auto and consumer durables stocks, buoyed by plans for big bang reforms in the GST regime by Diwali.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 676.09 points or 0.84 per cent to settle at 81,273.75. During the day, it zoomed by 1,168.11 points or 1.44 per cent to 81,765.77.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 245.65 points or 1 per cent to end at 24,876.95. Intra-day, it surged 390.7 points or 1.58 per cent to 25,022.

The global rating agency S&P's upgrade of India's sovereign credit rating, as well as US-Russia talks over the Ukraine war, also boosted market sentiment, analysts said.

Among Sensex firms, Maruti zoomed the most by 8.94 per cent. Bajaj Finance rallied over 5 per cent, UltraTech Cement by 3.71 per cent, and Bajaj Finserv by 3.7 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever and Trent were also among the gainers.

However, ITC was the biggest loser, dropping by 1.26 per cent. Eternal, Tech Mahindra and Larsen & Toubro also declined.

"The proposed rationalisation of GST is a sentiment booster for the domestic market. Additionally, the recent conclusion of the US and Russia summit, without any escalation in geopolitical tensions, has helped ease investor anxiety," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. "The automobile sector outperformed, emerging as a key beneficiary of the anticipated tax reforms," Nair added.

The BSE auto index jumped 4.26 per cent to 56,233.33. Hyundai Motor India jumped 8.45 per cent, Ashok Leyland by 8.12 per cent, TVS Motor by 6.58 per cent and Hero MotoCorp by 5.9 per cent. The Centre has proposed a 2-tier GST structure of 5 per cent and 18 per cent, besides a 40 per cent special rate on a select few items to the GoM on GST rate rationalisation.

The proposal, which entails removing the current 12 per cent and 28 per cent tax slabs, will be discussed at the two-day meeting of the state ministerial panel on August 20 and 21 in the national capital, according to sources.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the proposal to reform the GST law in his Independence Day speech on August 15 from the ramparts of the Red Fort.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1.39 per cent while midcap index climbed 1 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, auto surged 4.26 per cent, consumer durables (3.08 per cent), consumer discretionary (2.74 per cent), realty (2.19 per cent), commodities (1.96 per cent), metal (1.95 per cent) and services (1.30 per cent). IT, power, teck and BSE Focused IT were the laggards.

As many as 2,560 stocks advanced while 1,629 declined and 176 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"Markets staged a strong rally on Monday and ended with gains of over a per cent. The positive sentiment was driven by GST reform proposals, easing concerns over crude oil prices, and a sovereign rating upgrade, which together lifted investor confidence," Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

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

European markets were trading in negative territory.

The US markets ended mostly lower on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.62 per cent up to USD 66.25 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,926.76 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

On Thursday, the Sensex climbed 57.75 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 80,597.66. The Nifty rose by 11.95 points or 0.05 per cent to 24,631.30. Equity markets were closed on Friday for Independence Day. (PTI)

Infinix GT 30 5G+ launched on Flipkart at limited-time price

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: Infinix has announced that its new gaming smartphone, the Infinix GT 30 5G+, has gone on sale on Flipkart, with limited units available at a special launch price of ₹17,999 for a limited time until stocks last.

The company stated that the GT 30 5G+ is positioned as one of the most competitive gaming smartphones in the sub-₹20,000 segment, offering a blend of design and performance features aimed at mobile gamers. The phone comes with a Cyber Mecha 2.0 design, available in Cyber Green, Pulse Blue, and Blade White, featuring programmable white LED lighting that reacts to charging, music, and notifications.

Powered by a 5500mAh battery with 45W fast charging, bypass charging to minimize heating during gameplay, and wired reverse charging, the GT 30 5G+ is designed for long and intensive gaming sessions.

A notable highlight is the segment-first GT Shoulder Gaming Triggers, which provide console-like control and can be mapped to in-game actions or everyday shortcuts.

The device runs on the MediaTek Dimensity 7400 processor with an AnTuTu score of 779K+, paired with up to 16GB LPDDR5X RAM (including virtual RAM). It also carries Krafton-certified BGMI 90FPS support and a 6-layer 3D Vapor Chamber Cooling System for improved heat dissipation. The phone features a 6.78-inch 1.5K AMOLED display with a 144Hz refresh rate, 2160Hz touch sampling rate, 4500nits peak brightness, 93.7% screen-to-body ratio, TÜV Rheinland Eye Care certification, and Corning Gorilla Glass 7i protection. On the software front, it runs XOS 15 based on Android 15, with AI-driven tools such as AI Note, Writing Assistant, and Folax Voice AI, along with two Android OS upgrades and three years of security updates.

Amazon creates over 1.5 lakh seasonal work opportunities nationwide for festive season

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: Amazon India has announced the creation of more than 1,50,000 seasonal work opportunities across its operations network of fulfilment centres, sort centres and last-mile delivery stations, as it prepares to serve millions of customers during the upcoming festive season.

The opportunities span more than 400 cities across the country, including Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Cochin, Coimbatore, Indore, Raipur, Jalandhar, Jodhpur, Ranchi, Anantnag and Jalgaon, among others.

The company stated in an official release that thousands of women associates and over 2,000 persons with disabilities have also been onboarded, with a majority of them already joining Amazon ahead of the festive demand surge.

Abhinav Singh, Vice President – Operations, India and Australia, Amazon, said in the statement that the company has strengthened its fulfilment and logistics network with the addition of more than 1.5 lakh people to ensure fast and reliable deliveries across every serviceable pin code in India.

He noted that many of these associates continue with Amazon even beyond the festive season, with a significant number returning year after year.

Singh emphasised that the safety and wellbeing of all associates remain a top priority, with the company committed to providing a safe, equitable and empowering work environment supported by social security benefits.

Manisha Singh, an associate who recently joined Amazon at a fulfilment centre in Bengaluru, was quoted as saying that the company's safety measures gave her confidence at work and that it was fulfilling to deliver happiness to families across India during the festive period while being part of a respectful workplace. Amazon also highlighted that it has expanded its associate welfare initiatives.

Among them is the Ashray programme, which has scaled up to 100 rest centres nationwide in 2025. Additionally, over 80,000 delivery associates have benefitted from free health check-ups provided under its health and wellbeing initiative across major cities.

These camps bring essential healthcare services such as eye, dental, BMI and physician consultations directly to last-mile delivery stations.

The company further stated that its facilities are designed with industry-leading infrastructure to provide associates with safe drinking water, clean washrooms and air-conditioned cafeterias with amenities like vending machines and microwaves at larger sites.

On-site first aid centres known as AMCARE offer beds, resting spaces, oral hydration, heating pads and qualified nursing support, with referrals to hospitals when necessary.

Amazon has also implemented weather-related safety protocols, including the use of forecasting tools to prepare for extreme heat or severe weather events, ensuring comfortable and safe working conditions.

Financial well-being programmes for associates include the Early Access to Pay scheme, which allows withdrawal of up to 80 per cent of accrued basic salary between the 1st and 20th of each month. Amazon has also rolled out initiatives such as Samriddhi financial wellbeing camps to bridge knowledge gaps on financial planning and government support schemes.

Associates benefit from a five-day work week, mandatory holidays, sick leave and casual leave as per law, along with social security coverage under provident fund, ESIC and gratuity.

Insurance protection has also been extended beyond statutory requirements through group mediclaim, personal accident and term insurance coverage.

The company added that it remains committed to maintaining an inclusive workplace with positive experiences for all associates.

Its nationwide fulfilment and delivery network now supports more than 1.6 million sellers, with fulfilment centres spread across 15 states offering 43 million cubic feet of storage space, sortation centres in 19 states, nearly 2,000 Amazon-operated and partner delivery stations, 28,000 "I Have Space" partners and thousands of Amazon Flex partners.

Blenders Pride Four Elements wins silver at International Whisky Competition 2025

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: Blenders Pride Four Elements, the latest premium innovation from the house of Seagram's Blenders Pride, has been awarded the Silver Medal in the Best Blended Indian Whisky category at the prestigious 2025 International Whisky Competition (IWC).

According to an official statement, the International Whisky Competition, often described as the "Olympics of whisky competitions," is regarded as one of the most respected and exacting global contests.

It follows a rigorous double-blind, single-sample tasting format, where each entry is evaluated in isolation with no indication of its brand, origin, style, or strength.

According to the statement, Blenders Pride Four Elements' recognition in such an intense global contest is a strong endorsement of Pernod Ricard India's commitment to excellence, blending mastery, and product quality.

The achievement comes amid a rapidly evolving premium whisky segment in India, which has recorded a 14.8 percent CAGR over the past three years, reflecting consumers' increasing preference for quality and diverse drinking experiences.

Ishwindar Singh, General Manager–Marketing, Pernod Ricard India, said, "As a true icon, Blenders Pride continues to set the benchmark for quality and craftsmanship in a market shaped by the evolving tastes of discerning Indian consumers. Our newest release, Blenders Pride Four Elements, is an expertly crafted blend with four different styles of Scotch malts and select Indian grain spirits, offering a refined harmony of complexity and brilliance. This global recognition is a moment of immense pride for us as we expand the brand's footprint into new geographies across India."

Blenders Pride Four Elements draws inspiration from the elemental forces of nature—Air, Fire, Water, and Earth.

Crafted with four styles of Scotch malts blended with select Indian grain spirits, it offers a balance of mellow woody sweetness and fresh fruity vibrancy.

The brand stated that the new expression is currently available in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Rajasthan, Assam, Tripura, and Meghalaya, with nationwide expansion underway.

No. MDB/6™ ASFC/ 781 /2025-26/487 *Date .09/08/2025*

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tender affixing a non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs.8.25 (Rupees eight & twenty five) only with a validity period of 180 days, which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the printed of F-2 form are invited from the registered Contractors of Class-II and Class-I(A,B & C) category of Assam PWD (Building) and BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the works under 6th -ASFC for the year 2024-2025 during 2025-26 as stated below. The tender will be received by the undersigned unto 1.00 PM of 02-09-2025 will be opened on the date & Dlaceat 1.30 P.M.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Tender Amount (Approx)	Cost of Tender Paper	Time of Completion of work
1	Construction of Earth filling & Sand Gravelling road from Shabul Ali house to Ashraf Ali house	7.00 Lakh	350	3 months from the issue of FWO

Detail N.I.T. may been seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agents from 09-08-2025 to 02-09-2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Demand Draft/Banker's cheque from any Nationalized Bank, duly pledged in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC Kokrajhar, payable at Kokrajhar.

Sd/-Block Dev. Officer
Mazbat Dev. Block

Sitharaman to attend GoM meeting on Aug 20

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will attend a crucial meeting of a state ministerial panel on August 20 to put forth the Centre's proposal for sweeping GST reforms that will slash tax rates and lead to reduction in prices of common use items.

The two-day meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on GST rate rationalisation is scheduled on August 20-21 here, sources said.

The meet will deliberate on the Centre's proposal for GST reforms of reducing the number of tax slabs in Goods and Services Tax (GST) to two -- 5 and 18 per cent, and a 40 per cent special rate on a select few items. Sources said apart from the rate rationalisation panel, the two-day meeting would be attended by members from GoMs on compensation cess and also health and life insurance. "The idea is to put forth the Centre's view point behind the GST reform proposal. Although the Centre is not a member of the GoM, Union Finance Minister's presence and her address will give the GoM a better understanding of the idea and thought process behind the Centre's proposal," a source told PTI.

The GST reforms proposed by the Centre come against the backdrop of the levy period of GST compensation cess nearing an end and also the impending rate rationalisation to deal with the industry problem of duty inversion in various sectors. Also, a rate tweak in both health and life insurance premiums were being worked out by a GoM to give relief to the common man.

The GST Council had earlier set up three separate GoMs on the three issues. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Bill tabled in LS to

the Bill noted. "Assam is at the centrestage of all round development of the region. Establishing an IIM at Assam shall boost the overall education and development of the region and open up significant opportunities for the students of North Eastern Region of India to develop managerial skills," it said. (PTI)

CM slams Cong for

standing firm and not yielding to their pressure. The laying of the bill is a 'significant development for Assam', he added. 'My gratitude to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi Ji and Hon'ble Education Minister Shri @dpradhanbjp ji for their leadership in this matter', he said.\ 'Look forward to the support from Parliamentarians across the political spectrum for this key endeavour', he added. The Union cabinet had approved the setting up of IIM-Guwahati last week. IIM-Guwahati will be the 22nd Indian Institute of Management (IIM) in the country and the second in the Northeast.

The institute will be mentored by IIM-Ahmedabad and efforts are being made to begin classes from this year at a temporary campus to be provided by the state government, Sarma had said at a press conference last week. The permanent campus will be set up at Palasbari near Guwahati in Kamrup district. With the setting up of the IIM, Guwahati will have all flagship institutes with IIT, National Law University, AIIMS already functioning and Forensic University in the process of being set up, he said. The first IIM in the Northeast was set up in Shillong in 2007. (PTI)

NCHDAC directed to place

The allotment order, issued by the NCHAC's Additional Secretary, Revenue, states that the purpose of the allotment is the installation of a cement plant. The matter will be heard again on September 1. (PTI)

2nd phase of eviction

the state government's continued effort to remove encroachments from the forests. "The action followed the issuance of due notices to the occupants and every step was executed in compliance with prevailing legal norms and environmental safeguards," the administration claimed in the statement. The drive was monitored by senior functionaries, including Special Chief Secretary (Forest) M K Yadava, and senior representatives from the Forest Department, CRPF, Assam Police and district administration.

"During the earlier phase, extensive drives were carried out across stretches of both the Rengma and Doyang reserve forests, successfully clearing large tracts of land from encroachments. In total, more than 1,400 hectares of protected forest land were reclaimed in that phase," the statement said. The government also carried out an eviction drive at Nambor South reserve forest in Golaghat earlier this month and cleared alleged encroachment from nearly 1,000 bighas (over 133 hectares) of forest land, displacing more than 350 families.

"This initiative is part of the Assam government's sustained mission to restore encroached forest land, strengthen ecological security and safeguard the integrity of reserved forests across the state," it added. (PTI)

Putin dials Modi

"India welcomes the Summit meeting in Alaska between US President Donald Trump and President Vladimir Putin of Russia," the MEA had said.

"Their leadership in the pursuit of peace is highly commendable," it had said. India has been consistently calling for ending the Russia-Ukraine conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. (PTI)

Differences must not become

relationship, our two nations now seek to move ahead. This requires a candid and constructive approach from both sides," the external affairs minister said. "In that endeavour, we must be guided by the three mutuals - mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest. Differences must not become disputes, nor competition conflict," he said. The Chinese foreign minister is in India primarily to hold a fresh round of Special Representatives (SR) dialogue on the boundary question with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. The SR talks will be held on Tuesday.

Wang and Doval are the designated special representatives for the boundary talks.

"This (SR talks) is very important because the basis for any positive momentum in our ties is the ability to jointly maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas. It is also essential that the de-escalation process move forward," Jaishankar said.

The talks covered economic and trade issues, pilgrimages, people-to-people contacts, river data sharing, border trade and connectivity. "I would like to follow up on some particular concerns that I had brought up with you, when I visited China in July," Jaishankar said without elaborating. (PTI)

4-day-old infant dies

nurse was inside the glass room in the NICU, preparing milk for the babies as it was feeding time. "Some of the mothers came to feed their babies, and it was one of them who apparently spotted one infant lying on the floor and the other hanging by the wires of the photo-therapy machine. Doctors and nurses were immediately alerted, but the second infant could not be resuscitated. The infant who was found on the floor was unharmed," the principal said. He claimed that this was the first such incident of an infant falling off from the cot in the NICU of the GMCH, and an inquiry has been ordered into the matter.

"The head of department has been instructed to ensure the inquiry is conducted in a thorough manner. Doctors from the paediatric as well as other departments will be carrying out the probe. The role of doctors, nurses, cleaners, and all on duty will be checked. CCTV footage will also be used," he said.

"If negligence is found on the part of anyone, most stringent measures will be taken," he added. The deceased's father raised allegations of neglect on the part of the NICU staff, leading to the death of his child. "She was my firstborn. Till yesterday, she was responding to us and today she is no more. My child could not have died of only infection. The GMCH authorities have told me that an inquiry has been ordered," he said.

Another family member said, "It was the negligence of the staff which led to this incident. We will not rest till we get justice." (PTI)

Meitei organisation seeks

of the committee and hope that the commission will clarify on this issue", MHS said it has requested the APSC to "issue a clarification acknowledging the biased nature of the question and declare the question null and void, ensuring it is not used for evaluation purposes." When contacted, Assam Public Service Commission chairman Debaraj Upadhaya told PTI, "We don't set the question papers as it is given to different setters. Then it is sent to moderators. Question setters and moderators are not our people, but all from different universities and reputed colleges. We cannot see the questions as these are locked by the moderators." He added, "We do not have any mala fide intention, everything is bona fide. We don't have any view on any community because we are a neutral body. There is no politics involved in it. I cannot comment on the particular question as I have not seen it. The principal controller of examination will be able to talk about it." (PTI)

EC makes public names

been published on the websites of the Chief Electoral Officer, Bihar, and all District Election Officers of the State of Bihar."

All such electors, whose names are not included in the draft roll, may obtain information about their entry and the reasons thereof by using their EPIC number in the published list, he said. The list relating to such electors not included in the draft roll published on August 1, 2025 has also been displayed at all block offices, panchayat offices, urban local body offices, and at the polling stations. Through these, such electors can obtain information regarding their entries along with the reasons, the CEO said.

Any person dissatisfied may file a claim along with a copy of their Aadhaar card, he said.

The Supreme Court, in an order on August 14, directed the Election Commission to publish an enumerated, booth-wise list of around 65 lakh electors not included in the draft electoral roll, published on August 1, during the ongoing SIR exercise in Bihar, where assembly elections are due later this year.

Leader of the Opposition in Bihar Assembly, Tejashwi Yadav, slammed the EC over the ongoing SIR and wrote in a post on X on Monday, "The current Chief Election Commissioner wants to perform better than Anil Masih, who was the Presiding Officer in the Chandigarh Mayor election. The responsibility of saving the Election Commission's credibility now lies not with the officials but with the public..

More than 65 lakh enumeration forms were 'not included' in the draft electoral rolls prepared as part of the first phase of SIR by the EC in Bihar, bringing down the total number of around 7.9 crore registered voters to 7.24 crore.(PTI)

State govt, Army

the Indian Army across sectors such as finance, security and PSUs. The Directorate of Sainik Welfare has been tasked with submitting a district-wise profile of all veterans, Kota said. An initiative implemented since 2023 to provide necessary support to the next of kin (NoK) of soldiers (Army/Navy/Air Force) who made the supreme sacrifice was reviewed. A proposal for extending government jobs to the NoK of martyred Central Armed Police Forces personnel was examined, the CS said. For absorption of Agniveers, the Assam Police Headquarters was asked to submit a comprehensive report on recruitment norms to the home department. (PTI)

IIT-G, ISRO scientists decode

repeated in a regular pattern, a rapid flickering signal appeared only during the bright phase. This discovery shows that the corona around the black hole is not a fixed structure and changes its shape and energy depending on how gases flow into the black hole," he added. (PTI)

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Demand for urgent eviction gets louder

Encroachment threatens Sivasagar's Moribeel and Jamuna Canal

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Aug 18: The course of the Dikhow River in Sivasagar, known as Moribeel has lost a major portion of land to encroachment by residents of Melachakar and Amolapatty.

Frequent flash floods in Boarding Road, Muktinath Chariali, GNG Road, and other areas have intensified the public outcry against illegal settlements in low-lying areas and swamps that naturally serve as water reservoirs and habitats for aquatic life.

An RTI petition filed by Dulal Saikia, president of Amguri Navanirman Samity, revealed that nearly half of Moribeel in Melachakar has been illegally occupied by residents, in blatant violation of environmental norms.

The thriving swamp is covered with private buildings with no public access to the waterbody.

Sivasagar administration has served eviction notices over the years, residents continue to defy them.

The district authority has also allotted portions of Moribeel to public institutions like Sivasagar Jila Mohila Samity, Melachakar Primary School, and Sankardev Sangha Namghar, along with land grants to several individuals.

Hisstoric Jamuna canal, excavated during the reign of Ahom king SivaSingha faces severe degradation due to unchecked encroachment and garbage dumping.

Sivasagar Deputy Commissioner Ayush Garg recently indicated that a massive eviction and canal revival plan is under consideration.

Local organisations, including ATASU and Sangrami Sena, Asom, have demanded an urgent all-out eviction to save the canal from turning into a permanent dump yard.

Experts warn that if the Jamuna Beel, part of the Borpukhuri ecosystem, dries up, the water level of the Borpukhuri will drastically fall.

Despite this, government allotments inside the Jamuna canal were granted to individuals and organizations, including the Assam Co-operative Apex Bank, Tai Ahom Sanskritik Vikash Kendra, and Sulabh Public Toilet.

Instead of serving public needs, some of these have turned into commercial establishments.

A revival plan for Jamuna canal, drafted a decade ago under former MLA late Pronob Gogoi, failed to progress due to lack of follow-up.

With the crisis worsening, citizens and student groups are now intensifying their calls for eviction drives and scientific rejuvenation of Sivasagar's natural waterbodies.

AIUDF's ability to secure the presidency by gaining the support of an independent and Cong defectors is being viewed as significant political strategy

AIUDF takes control of Dhubri Zilla Parishad amidst allegations of Congress betrayal

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, Aug 18: In a major political development that has created ripples in Dhubri, the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), despite having limited strength, has taken control of the Dhubri Zilla Parishad.

The victory came with the election of independent member Farida Yasmin Miah as president, defeating Congress candidate Rejina Ahmed, Folimari ZPC, reportedly with full backing from the AIUDF.

The result has sparked speculation as the Congress, which held a clear majority with 10 members, failed to secure the top post.

In the Zilla Parishad results, Congress had secured 10 seats, the AIUDF 3, the BJP 5, the People's Party 1, and independents 1.

However, during the presidential election, out of 15 members present—10 from Congress, 3 from AIUDF, 1 from the People's Party and 1 independent—the Congress candidate received only 7 votes, while independent candidate Farida Yasmin Miah secured 8 votes to win the post.

The result indicated that at least three Congress members broke ranks and voted against their own party, which has been widely seen as betrayal.

The BJP, despite having five seats, abstained from voting, a decision that complicated the political calculations and paved the way for AIUDF's success.

The BJP's abstention has drawn attention, with observers noting that it indirectly facilitated the AIUDF's win.

With just three members in a house of 20, the AIUDF's ability to secure the presidency by gaining the support of an independent and Congress defectors is being viewed as a significant political strategy.

At Rajiv Bhavan, tension flared as frustrated workers declared the office would remain closed until Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi arrived to address their grievances.

The situation escalated when clashes broke out between two factions within the Congress, exposing internal divisions that may have contributed to the setback.

The outcome has also led to allegations that some Congress members were "sold" to the AIUDF, underscoring the volatile nature of local politics.

The incident marks a serious breakdown of party discipline within the Congress and a notable strategic gain for the AIUDF in the Dhubri Zilla Parishad.

Nagar Kirtan from Dhubri to mark 350th Martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib Ji

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: A grand Nagar Kirtan will be taken out from Gurdwara Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib Ji, Dhubri Sahib, on August 21 to commemorate the 350th Martyrdom of Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib Ji. According to an official statement issued by the organisers, the procession, being organised under the guidance of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), will pass through about 21 states across the country before reaching its final destination, Sri Anandpur Sahib in Punjab, on November 23, 2025.

On the eve of the Nagar Kirtan, a Gurmat Samagam will be held at Gurdwara Dhubri Sahib on August 20 from 6 pm onwards.

The programme will feature Gurbani Kirtan and Katha Vichar by Hajuri Ragi Jatha, Katha Vachak, Dhadi Jatha and Kavishri Jatha, highlighting the life and supreme sacrifice of the Ninth Sikh Guru.

The official statement mentioned that several eminent Sikh leaders will attend the programme, including Jathedar Akal Takhat Sahib, Singh Sahib Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaj, Head Granthi of Sri Harmandir Sahib, Singh Sahib Giani Raghbir Singh Ji, President of the SGPC Advocate Sardar Harjinder Singh Dhami, and Jathedar Shiromani Panth Akali Dashmesh Tarna Dal, "Ratan-E-Kaum" Baba Major Singh Ji Sodhi.

As advised by Baba Major Singh Ji Sodhi, the birth anniversary of Baba Jiwan Singh Ji (Bhai Jaita Ji) will also be observed on August 20.

On this occasion, Bhog Sri Akhand Paath Sahib and a Kirtan Darbar will be held at Gurdwara Dhubri Sahib from 10 am onwards, with participation from Hajuri Ragi Jatha and Katha Vachak of Sri Harmandir Sahib.

Bhupinder Pal Singh, Senior Chief Advisor of the Sikh Pratinidhi Board, Eastern Zone, in the official statement, appealed to the Sikh Sangat of the North Eastern states to participate in large numbers and take the blessings of Guru Sahib Ji through Gurbani Kirtan and Katha in the presence of Panthic personalities.

The Board has also urged all Gurdwaras in the region to spread the message widely so that the Samagam becomes a spiritually enriching event.

KAAC extends revised school timings in view of heat wave

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 18: The Department of School Education of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) has directed all schools and higher secondary schools in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts to continue with the revised school timings issued earlier.

In an order issued today by the Secretary of the Department of School Education, KAAC, it was stated that in continuation of Office Order No KAAC/EDN/Edn/Misc/23/1/122, dated 10/06/2025, and in view of the prevailing spell of scorching heat wave and persistent rise in temperature across both districts, the revised school timings will remain in force.

As per the revised schedule, the timing for lower primary schools will be from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., for middle English schools from 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon, and for high schools and senior secondary schools from 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

NFR records progress in service, punctuality and freight growth

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has reported significant achievements in passenger services and freight operations, according to an official statement issued on Monday.

To reduce queues at ticket counters and enhance passenger convenience, 145 Automatic Ticket Vending Machines (ATVMs) are being installed at 69 stations.

These ATVMs will operate as 24x7 unmanned kiosks, enabling passengers to purchase unreserved tickets using smart cards or QR codes.

The smart cards can be recharged at nominated ticket counters to ensure a hassle-free travel experience.

The statement informed that punctuality performance has improved, with Mail/Express trains recording a 0.93% rise against the Board's target of 85% and a 2.57% improvement compared to last year, placing NFR in the fifth position among all zonal railways.

This has been achieved through initiatives such as standardisation of 14 train pairs, speeding up 66 trains to save an average of 22 minutes per journey, and revising timings of 63 trains at major stations.

Four new train services — Bongaigaon–Guwahati Passenger, Tinsukia–Naharlagun Express, Guwahati–North Lakhimpur Jan Shatabdi Express and Sealdah–Jalpaiguri Road Express — have been introduced, while the frequency of the Silchar–Mahisasan Passenger has been increased to six days a week. Modernisation has also been undertaken with the conversion of Kishanganj–Ajmer Garib Nawaz Express to LHB coaches, conversion of 17 train pairs to end-to-end electric traction and permanent augmentation of 93 coaches providing 6,929 additional berths.

Freight loading has shown strong growth, rising by 6.9% to reach 6.819 MT during January–July 2025 compared to the same period last year.

Notable improvements include a 3,700% increase in bamboo traffic and 84.9% growth in stone. Operational records were achieved with the highest-ever interchange of 55 trains in a single day, the maximum Barsoi–Sudhani section run of 155 trains and the highest single-day loading of 960 wagons.

To expand freight capacity, new terminals have been commissioned at Nischintapur, Dhamalgaon, Mirza, Bishramganj and the Gati Shakti Cargo Terminal at Balurghat.

The official statement noted that these developments highlight NFR's commitment to improving passenger amenities, strengthening punctuality, and boosting freight operations for the economic growth of the region.

Nagaon police arrest four drug smugglers

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 18: In a major breakthrough, Nagaon police arrested four drug smugglers, including a woman, and seized a substantial quantity of suspected heroin in a raid conducted at Katimari Grant on the outskirts of Nagaon town last Sunday night.

The operation, carried out on the basis of a tip-off, led to the recovery of a significant amount of suspected heroin from the house of one Abdul Malek at Katimari Grant.

However, the exact quantity seized has not yet been disclosed.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Saiful Islam (22), Monshun Ali (29), Manowara Begum (55), and Sajida Khatun (36).

The raid was led by Debajit Das, Officer-in-Charge of Nagaon Sadar Police Station, assisted by officials Dipankar Chetia and Jichuma Haloi.

Police sources informed that the main accused, Abdul Malek, managed to escape during the raid, but search operations are underway to apprehend him. This operation forms part of Nagaon police's continued drive against drug trafficking in the region.

Police sources added that sustained efforts are being made to dismantle drug networks, and the latest success reflects their commitment to curbing the menace.

UPPL's rally for harmonious BTR draws massive support in Chirang

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 18: The ruling United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) on Monday organised a massive "Rally for Harmonious BTR" at Kajalgaon in Chirang district, highlighting the party's vision of peace, unity, and development in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

The rally was led by Bodoland Territorial Region Chief Executive Member (CEM) and UPPL president Pramod Boro, accompanied by party working president and Rajya Sabha MP Rwngwra Narzary, general secretaries Raju Kumar and Madhab Chetry, women's wing president Pratibha Brahma, along with several senior leaders of the party.

Thousands of supporters participated in the event, waving party flags and chanting slogans in favour of a progressive BTR.

Addressing the gathering, CEM Pramod Boro reiterated the UPPL's commitment to building a "harmonious and inclusive BTR" where every community can live with dignity, equal rights, and security.

He said that under UPPL's leadership, the region has witnessed a new era of peace and development, moving away from its history of unrest.

Boro appealed to the people to remain united, stating that the strength of BTR lies in unity, and urged them to reject divisive forces while working collectively for a peaceful and prosperous future for the younger generation.

NEMSU's general meeting concludes in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 18: The North East Minority Students' Union (NEMSU) has issued a fatwa against drug consumption, drug trafficking, and child marriage within the religious minority community.

The decision was taken at the general meeting of the Kokrajhar district unit of NEMSU, held at Prashanti Lodge in Kokrajhar on Sunday in the presence of student union members from different anchalik committees across the region.

Addressing the gathering, NEMSU president Badarul Islam expressed deep concern over the rising menace of drug abuse and trafficking in the state, particularly within the minority community in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

He warned that there would be no compromise on this issue, adding that the students' union had resolved several measures to eradicate drug abuse among citizens.

NEMSU resolved that no individual in the minority community would be allowed to engage in drug use or the drug trade.

Anyone found involved would be reported to the police and also socially boycotted from the Muslim community.

Islam further stated that families linked to such individuals would be barred from participating in marriages or any other social functions.

He added that NEMSU would maintain strict vigilance on child marriages and other anti-social activities, and take strong action with the help of the administration.

On the issue of peace in BTR, Islam said the region had achieved peace after long years of struggle and sacrifice, and stressed that this peace must not be disturbed under any circumstances.

However, he expressed concern that controversial remarks made by BJP state president Dilip Saikia could create unrest in the region, and appealed to him to refrain from making statements that hurt the sentiments of ethnic and religious communities.

Islam also criticised Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, alleging that his repeated use of the term "strangers" (Achinaki) in reference to certain communities had caused mental distress to many.

He recalled that in the past the Chief Minister had carried out evictions and persecution against minority Muslims, including forcing some into detention despite being Indian citizens.

"If the Chief Minister continues with such divisive politics, by 2026 even his chair may become 'unfamiliar' to the people," Islam stated.

On the upcoming BTC elections, the NEMSU president said the organisation would hold discussions with its members and intellectuals before taking the next political decision.

He also mentioned that the present UPPL-led BTR government was working for the welfare and development of citizens, and that all sections of people were now experiencing peace and tranquility.

IAS officer's project 'CareCan' selected for Seed Funding Initiative by CCL

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 18: Tejas Agnihotri, IAS officer of the 2024 batch, Assam cadre, currently posted in Nagaon, has been selected for the prestigious 'Seed Funding Initiative' of the Centre for Cooperatives and Livelihoods (CCL), Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA).

He is among the very few officers chosen from the 2024 batch, which consists of 183 IAS officers.

His project, CareCan, has been awarded seed funding of ₹2 lakhs under the initiative.

CEM Ronghang holds meeting with Karbi people residing outside KAAC

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 18: A meeting was convened by the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, with Karbi people residing outside the jurisdiction of KAAC at the conference hall of the CEM's bungalow here on Monday to deliberate on developmental matters concerning their welfare and future prospects.

The initiative aimed to strengthen community bonds and ensure inclusive growth for Karbis irrespective of geographical boundaries.

The discussion focused on the need for equitable development opportunities for Karbis living in different parts of Assam and beyond.

Issues such as cultural preservation, educational support, youth empowerment and welfare schemes were raised.

The meeting also stressed the importance of representation and policy measures to safeguard the interests of Karbi families living outside the KAAC region.

Leaders and representatives of the Karbi Cultural Society (KCS), including its president Humsing Bey, general secretary Sunil Tokbi, adviser Chandrasing Kro and senior members, actively participated in the deliberations.

The Karbi Lammet Amei (KLA) also extended its cooperation, emphasising the cultural and linguistic unity that binds the community despite geographical distances.

Speakers underlined the vision of creating a stronger support system for Karbi youths pursuing higher education and professional opportunities in cities while encouraging them to remain connected to their roots.

Suggestions included exploring cultural exchange programmes, scholarship support and advocacy for greater recognition of Karbi identity in the broader socio-political sphere of Assam.

The meeting concluded on a positive note with a collective commitment to continue such interactions in future, ensuring that no section of the Karbi community feels excluded from the ongoing developmental journey.

Nanda Utsav celebrated with devotion and book released in Guwahati

HT Correspondent

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: The sacred occasion of Nanda Utsav was celebrated with devotion and cultural fervour at the Noisthic Dance Academy, Basistha Pilingkata Road, Guwahati, in association with the Bhaktivedanta Holistic Healthcare Center.

Nearly 150 devotees and well-wishers joined the event to honour Lord Krishna and embrace the spirit of spirituality and yoga. The celebration began with a Hare Krishna Mahamantra Kirtan performed by ISKCON devotees, filling the hall with devotional chanting and collective prayer.

Many participants said the Mahamantra's vibrations instilled peace, joy and a sense of spiritual unity.

Marking the occasion, a new book titled "Change Life with Yogic Science" was formally released. Published by JNC Book Limited, the book has been edited by Amar Krishna Paul, with Dibya Jyoti Deka as associate editor.

The book was inaugurated by Amar Ali Ahmed and Ranjit Sinha, who emphasised the relevance of yoga in contemporary times.

The programme was anchored by Dibya Jyoti Deka, Chairman of Yogesvara Sansthan, who also spoke on how yoga and spiritual practices can transform lives and contribute to a healthier society.

Eminent guests present included Amar Krishna Paul, Director of JNC Book Limited, and Dhananjay Talukdar, Accounts and Programme Officer of Mera Yuva Bharat, Nagaon, who addressed the youth gathered at the event.

Other participants included Sikta Dev Kar, Yoga Therapist at GMCH, and yoga teachers Anil Deka and Kankan Deka, whose experience added depth to the celebration.

Presiding over the event, Yogacharya Subhasish, Founder-President of the Indian Yoga Culture & Yoga Therapy Centre, Guwahati, highlighted the importance of integrating yogic practices into daily life for holistic growth of body, mind and soul.

His address left the audience inspired to adopt yoga as a way of life.

The programme concluded with expressions of gratitude, as participants departed with renewed energy, spiritual wisdom and inspiration to follow the path of yoga and bhakti.

JJM contractors to stage sit-in-demonstration in Diphu tomorrow

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 18: The Jal Jivan Mission Contractor Association PHE Department (JJMCAPHED) of Karbi Anglong, supported by the All Assam Public Health Technical Contractors Association and the All Assam PHED Contractors Association, will hold a two-hour sit-in-demonstration in front of the office of the Executive Engineer, PHE, Diphu Rural Water Supply Division, on August 20 to press their demands before the department and the Government of Assam.

The demonstration will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Informing the media, JJMCAPHED Karbi Anglong district president Raj Engleng said that the PHE department has been withholding bills against JJM works already executed by contractors.

To pressurise the concerned department and the state government to meet the association's demands, the sit-in-demonstration has been organised.

The demands include immediate clearance of pending bill payments to all Jal Jeevan Mission contractors, withdrawal of new SOPs for JJM works, resolution of the issue of withheld bills on the ground of Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) through discussion with the director of management, and release of the unpaid 6% GST component.

The association has urged all JJM contractors under Diphu Rural Division, Howraghat, Hamren and Ulukunchi divisions of the PHE department to participate in the demonstration.

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THE HILLS TIMES

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The most I can do for my friend is simply be his friend.
- Henry David Thoreau

Community dogs need compassion

Chief Justice of India (CJI) B R Gavai's assurance of giving a relook at the ban order passed on "Community dogs" on Monday, August 11, 2025 by a Supreme Court Bench comprising of Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan has given a cause to be happy for many people who have compassion towards dogs in particular, and all living beings in general. The bench has ordered shifting all "stray dogs" from residential localities to shelters in view of rising dog bites and rabies cases, which has drawn sharp criticism from animal lovers. It has created a great controversy since many, including Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), has welcomed the order. The issue was raised before the CJI this morning and was also apprised of a previous court order that barred the relocation and killing of "stray dogs" and mandated the following of existing laws. It was pointed out that a May 2024 order by a bench of Justice JK Maheshwari, had observed, "Exhibiting compassion to all living beings is a Constitutional value." The order immediately attracted sharp criticism, from civil society, politicians, and celebrities. An actor John Abraham even appealed to the CJP for immediate review of the order. Animal Welfare activist and former Union Minister Maneka Gandhi labelled the order against dogs "impractical", "financially unviable," and "potentially harmful" to the region's ecological balance.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) said that such a large-scale displacement is both unscientific and ineffective. PETA India's Senior Director of Veterinary Affairs Dr Mini Aravindan has said, "Communities think of neighbourhood dogs as family, and the displacement and jailing of dogs is not scientific and has NEVER worked...It will also ultimately do nothing to curb the dog population, reduce rabies or prevent dog bite incidents." Community dogs actually have been subjected to both compassion and cruelty by the human beings. Calling community dogs "stray dogs" or "street dogs" itself is a mild form of cruelty against them, though they actually need compassion of human beings.

Community dogs are a visible part of urban and rural landscapes in many countries, especially in South Asia, and more widespread in India across all the states. Our attitudes toward them usually fall somewhere between two extremes: compassion and cruelty. Both have deep roots in culture, law, economics, and public health concerns. Compassion towards community dogs arises from empathy, ethical beliefs, and sometimes religious or cultural values that emphasize kindness toward all living beings. Many people find it a moral and ethical duty to show compassion towards them. Many people believe dogs, like humans, have the right to live free from unnecessary suffering.

Trump's tariff policy and its impact on the Indian economy

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The recent changes in the tariff policy of U.S. President Donald Trump have significantly impacted the economies of various countries worldwide. In particular, this policy is likely to have a substantial effect on the Indian economy. The primary objective of this tariff policy is to safeguard American economic interests and reduce the country's trade deficit. The core principle of Trump's tariff policy is the concept of reciprocal tariffs. According to this concept, the United States will impose tariffs on goods from countries at rates equivalent to or close to those imposed by those countries on American goods. Through this policy, Trump aims to reduce the U.S. trade deficit. In the case of India, the increase in tariff rates has become a topic of significant discussion. Due to India's decision to import oil from Russia, the United States has decided to impose additional tariffs on Indian goods. Initially, these tariffs were set at 25 percent, which were later increased to 50 percent. This tariff hike is expected to significantly impact India's export sector. Behind this policy lie America's geopolitical and economic interests. Through these tariffs, the U.S. seeks to pressure India into reducing its trade relations with Russia. However, from India's perspective, this decision is highly complex, as importing oil from Russia at affordable prices has enabled India to ensure its energy security. This situation has created a challenging scenario for the Indian economy.

The impact of this tariff policy will affect various sectors of the Indian economy, particularly textiles, jewelry, leather, chemicals, frozen fish, and machinery, which are likely to suffer significant losses due to these tariffs. These sectors account for a substantial portion of India's exports to the United States. In the fiscal year 2024-25, the bilateral trade between India and the U.S. was approximately $131.8 billion, of which $86.5 billion consisted of goods exported from India to the U.S. The increased tariffs will make Indian goods more expensive in the American market, potentially leading to a 40 to 50 percent reduction in export volumes. This situation will pose a significant challenge for Indian exporters. In the textile sector, a crucial component of India's exports, tariff rates could exceed 50 percent, rendering Indian goods less competitive in the U.S. market. This sector supports the livelihoods of millions of workers, and the tariffs are likely to adversely affect their employment. The jewelry and gemstone sector will also face significant challenges. India's jewelry industry heavily relies on the U.S. market, with exports valued at approximately $12 billion. The increase in tariff rates will diminish the competitiveness of this sector.

The leather and footwear industry will face a similar situation. With exports valued at around $1.18 billion, the increased tariffs will make these products more expensive in the U.S. market. In the chemical sector, tariff rates could exceed 54 percent, significantly reducing export volumes. The frozen fish export sector, valued at approximately $2.24 billion, will also lose competitiveness due to higher tariffs. The impact of these tariffs across these sectors will reduce India's export revenue, potentially causing economic instability. This reduction in exports could strain India's foreign exchange reserves, further disrupting the country's economic stability. Moreover, the tariffs will adversely affect India's domestic manufacturing sector, as a significant portion of its production is geared toward the U.S. market.

The impact of these tariffs will not be limited to the export sector alone; it will also have indirect effects on India's domestic market. A decline in exports will negatively impact workers in these sectors, where millions depend on employment for their livelihoods. This could lead to job losses, reducing domestic demand and affecting India's overall economic growth. Additionally, the tariffs may increase the cost of goods imported from the U.S., placing an additional financial burden on Indian consumers. This situation could lead to inflationary pressures, raising the cost of living for ordinary citizens. The Indian middle class and lower-income groups will be particularly affected, as their purchasing power may decline. This economic strain could have long-term implications for India's social and economic fabric.

The tariff policy is also intertwined with America's geopolitical strategy. The U.S. has imposed additional tariffs on India due to its decision to import oil from Russia, aiming to pressure India into reducing trade ties with Russia. However, from India's perspective, this decision is critical, as importing affordable oil from Russia is essential for meeting the energy demands of its 1.4 billion population. This creates a complex situation for India. While India strives to maintain bilateral trade relations with the U.S., it is also compelled to prioritize its national interests. The tariff policy could also impact India's foreign policy, as the country seeks to maintain its economic and political independence.

To mitigate the effects of this tariff policy, India can adopt several strategies. Strengthening trade relations with countries outside the U.S., such as those in Latin America, Africa, and West Asia, could help India explore new markets. These regions offer potential demand for Indian goods, reducing India's dependence on the U.S. market. Additionally, India can enhance its domestic manufacturing capabilities to reduce reliance on imports. Initiatives like "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (Self-Reliant India) can bolster the manufacturing sector, mitigating the impact of tariffs to some extent. Furthermore, India could pursue bilateral trade agreements with the U.S. to negotiate lower tariff rates, offering reciprocal reductions on U.S. imports to secure favorable terms. These strategies could help India cope with the tariff's impact.

However, there are some positive aspects to this tariff policy. India's pharmaceutical industry has been granted some relief, as the U.S. has decided to reduce tariffs on imported medicines due to its reliance on India for generic drugs. This decision will strengthen the Indian pharmaceutical industry's position in the U.S. market. Additionally, India's service sector, including information technology and software services, will remain unaffected by these tariffs, as they are not subject to global tariffs. The strength of these sectors will help maintain some level of economic stability in India.

According to international organizations like Moody's Ratings, India's economy is relatively insulated from the full impact of these tariffs due to the strength of its domestic market, lower reliance on overall exports, and robust growth in the service sector. However, the tariffs could contribute to a global economic slowdown, indirectly affecting India. In this context, the Indian government bears a significant responsibility to support exporters in exploring new markets and mitigating the tariffs' impact. Government-backed export promotion schemes could enable exporters to access new markets.

In the short term, Trump's tariff policy will significantly impact India's economy, but its long-term effects may be limited. The resilience and diversity of India's economy will enable it to navigate these challenges. The strength of India's domestic market and the robust growth of its service sector will mitigate some of the tariff's impact. However, India must adopt new strategies to address this situation effectively. By diversifying its export markets and boosting domestic demand, India can maintain economic stability. Additionally, the tariff policy may influence India's foreign policy, as the country strives to balance its trade relations with the U.S. while maintaining ties with Russia for energy security. Through bilateral trade agreements, India could negotiate lower tariffs with the U.S., reducing the policy's impact. These strategies will enable India to address the challenges posed by the tariff policy while safeguarding its economic and political interests.

The Opposition is defeating Itself on its own chessboard

By: Lalit Garg

India is celebrated worldwide as the largest democracy on the planet. With nearly one billion voters, countless political parties, and a rich tradition of free elections, Indian democracy has been hailed as a miracle of diversity and resilience. Yet, the health of any democracy does not depend only on the ruling government. It equally depends on the quality, maturity, and constructive role of the opposition. In theory, the opposition is not an enemy of the state, nor merely a critic of the ruling party. It is a vital pillar of democracy—responsible for questioning the government's actions, voicing public grievances, and presenting alternative policies. A strong opposition makes the government accountable and ensures that power does not become absolute. However, in practice, the current Indian opposition seems to have lost its sense of direction. Instead of offering vision, it has fallen into a trap of negativity, baseless allegations, and disruptive politics. In doing so, it is not the ruling party that loses, but democracy itself.

The latest example of this downward spiral came when Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged large-scale "vote theft," EVM tampering, and manipulation of voter rolls. These charges, made without evidence, were not just political rhetoric; they were direct attacks on the credibility of the Election Commission of India, one of the most respected constitutional institutions of the country. Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, in a rare and firm intervention, responded point by point, dismissing Gandhi's accusations as baseless. He even issued an ultimatum: either submit an affidavit with proof or apologize to the nation within seven days. This incident highlights the danger of reckless opposition politics—when constitutional institutions themselves are painted as corrupt or biased without evidence, the very foundation of public trust in democracy begins to crack. Democracy survives on credibility. Political Parties may win or lose elections, but if citizens begin to doubt the fairness of elections, then the soul of democracy is endangered. The opposition, by making unverified allegations, is ironically undermining the very system that allows it to exist. This is not an isolated incident. Over the past decade, the opposition has repeatedly opposed reforms, not on rational grounds, but seemingly out of political compulsions. Consider a few examples: Linking Aadhaar with bank accounts: a measure aimed at reducing corruption and leakage in subsidies. Abrogation of Article 370: a historic step to fully integrate Jammu and Kashmir into India's constitutional framework. Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and NRC: aimed at providing refuge to persecuted minorities, yet turned into grounds for violent protests. Electoral reforms in Bihar: where voter verification exercises were portrayed as sinister conspiracies. In each of these cases, the opposition failed to provide a constructive counter-narrative. Instead, it resorted to fear-mongering, street agitation, and obstruction in Parliament.

Contrast this with the role of opposition in mature democracies. In the United States, for instance, while Republicans and Democrats often clash fiercely, bipartisan cooperation is seen during times of national crisis. In the United Kingdom, the "Shadow Cabinet" functions as a responsible alternative government, scrutinizing policies but also proposing clear alternatives. Unfortunately, in India, the opposition often seems more interested in blocking legislation than in shaping it. Parliament is meant to be the temple of democracy, where elected representatives deliberate on the nation's most pressing issues. Yet, in recent years, parliamentary sessions have increasingly been disrupted by the opposition's strategy of sloganeering, walkouts, and boycotts. Critical bills on women's safety, environmental protection, and economic reforms have been stalled not because of genuine disagreement but because the opposition has sought to embarrass the government at any cost. This approach weakens not only the government but also the institution of Parliament itself. When citizens watch televised sessions filled with chaos rather than debate, their faith in democratic processes diminishes.

India's democratic history offers important lessons. During the Emergency (1975–77), opposition leaders across ideological lines united to restore democracy, ultimately defeating authoritarianism at the ballot box. Again in 1989, a strong opposition coalition challenged the ruling Congress party, leading to an era of coalition politics that balanced power. These were times when the opposition acted not merely as a critic, but as a guardian of democracy. But since 2014, the opposition has struggled to present a Narrow vision.

A weak and irresponsible opposition also has international consequences. When Indian opposition leaders question the integrity of the armed forces or cast doubts on foreign policy, it provides propaganda opportunities to hostile neighbors like Pakistan and China. For instance, dismissing India's military actions or questioning its global diplomacy weakens India's standing in international forums. Democratic disagreement is natural. But when disagreement turns into disruption, it emboldens foreign adversaries and damages national unity.

Of course, responsibility does not rest on the opposition alone. The ruling party must also recognize that democracy is not sustained by majority rule alone but by consensus and transparency. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly emphasized that criticism is essential in a democracy. His government has often shown patience in addressing questions, but true democratic maturity demands continuous dialogue and openness to scrutiny.

The strength of democracy lies not only in a powerful government but also in a strong, creative, and credible opposition. By confining itself to obstruction and negativity, the current opposition is not just harming its own credibility—it is endangering India's democratic fabric. The time has come for deep introspection. The opposition must abandon the politics of "opposing for the sake of opposition" and instead reinvent itself as a responsible stakeholder in the nation's future. Only then can Indian democracy shine as a model for the world. Democracy is not a battle between enemies—it is a dialogue between partners in nation-building. Unless the opposition realizes this truth, it will continue to lose not only elections but also its relevance. In that case, it will not be the ruling party that triumphs—it will be democracy itself that suffers defeat.

POST BAG

Career Guidance Table Books – A Step Towards Empowering Students

Sir/Ma'am

Through your esteemed daily, I would like to draw attention to an important initiative undertaken for the benefit of school students in Assam by Samagra Shiksha Axom, Government of Assam. Four volumes of Career Guidance Table Books, developed in collaboration with UNICEF, have recently been brought out for students aspiring to pursue careers in STEM, Non-STEM, Arts, Media & Entertainment, and Vocational sectors. These comprehensive guides, distributed to thousands of schools across the state, provide detailed information on more than 400 career options. The fields covered include Engineering, Information Technology, Health & Wellness, Science, Fishery, Government Services, Defence, Legal Studies, Social Sciences, Education, Banking-Finance-Insurance, Management, Sports, Media, Fine Arts, Design, Logistics, Tourism, Hospitality, and various vocational trades. This initiative is a timely and crucial step toward helping students make informed career choices based on their interests, aptitude, and future aspirations. In today's rapidly evolving job market, access to authentic and structured career guidance is indispensable, and these guides serve as an invaluable resource.

I commend Samagra Shiksha Axom and UNICEF for this effort and urge wider publicity of this initiative so that maximum students can benefit from it. Such proactive measures can significantly contribute to shaping a skilled, confident, and future-ready workforce in Assam.

Dr. Buljit Buragohain
Airport Road, Azara

What Does Donald Trump's Import Tariff Policy Indicate?

Sir/Ma'am

Donald Trump has effectively initiated a trade war against India by imposing a 25% tariff on goods imported from India. This policy means that Indian products in the American market will become costlier, as sellers will be forced to sell them at a price 25% higher than before. As a result, Indian goods will face increased difficulty competing with similar American-made products, potentially leading to a decline in imports from India.

Typically, a country imposes high import tariffs when it seeks to promote domestically produced goods by making foreign alternatives less attractive or more expensive to consumers. When Trump announced this policy, he even referred to India as the "tariff king," indicating his disapproval of India's existing trade practices. It became evident that Trump was not interested in continuing the same level of trade relationship with India as before.

Trump believes that imposing tariffs on imports will strengthen the U.S. economy and help maintain its status as a global superpower. However, a critical question arises: Why is Trump initiating a trade war with India despite the historically strong and friendly relations between the two countries? Is there a deeper motive behind this policy?

Several factors have contributed to Trump's stance. The first reason is the growing closeness between India and Russia. When the Russia-Ukraine war broke out, Western countries imposed economic and trade sanctions on Russia, aiming to cripple its financial capacity to continue the war. In response, Russia began selling its crude oil at highly discounted prices in the international market. India, along with China, started buying large quantities of this cheap oil. This development deeply concerned Trump.

The second reason is India's membership in BRICS—a group originally formed by Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Though it began with five countries, the organization has expanded to ten members. The expansion of BRICS has raised concerns for Trump, who suspects that BRICS members are attempting to replace the U.S. dollar with a new global currency. Fearing a decline in the dollar's global dominance, Trump has issued threats of higher import tariffs on BRICS countries. His concern is also rooted in the fact that U.S. adversaries like China and Russia are key members of BRICS.

Previously, when Trump imposed tariffs on China, China responded with counter-tariffs. Eventually, when China refused to bow down, Trump was compelled to engage in talks to resolve the issue. However, recent discussions between the U.S. and India have not led to a resolution, prompting the U.S. to officially impose the 25% import tariff on Indian goods.

It's important to note that although the U.S. has imposed tariffs, it has also expressed hope that a solution can be reached through dialogue. This suggests that even though Trump is engaging in a trade war with India, he is uncertain about achieving a clear advantage and is keeping the door open for negotiation.

Trump has left no stone unturned in trying to win this trade war, using threats and pressure tactics to force other nations to accept American trade policies. Despite having previously labeled India's economy as "dead," Trump still doesn't have the confidence to ignore India completely. He continues to support India's rivals, such as Pakistan and Bangladesh, in various ways as part of his strategy to prevail in this trade war. But India is standing firm and has refused to yield to Trump's pressure.

The real outcome of this trade war remains to be seen. It is likely that India, too, will suffer some economic losses. Therefore, how India responds to Trump's aggressive trade tactics will be closely watched. If India manages to handle the situation diplomatically and effectively, it could ultimately turn the situation in its favor and be seen as a significant diplomatic win.

Deborshi Gautam
Nalbari (Assam)

Democracy at stake

Sir/Ma'am

Vote chori — this very phrase should never have existed in the vocabulary of the world's largest democracy. And yet, here we are, staring at a wound so deep that it bleeds trust. The Election Commission of India, the very institution sworn to safeguard the sanctity of the vote, now stands under a cloud. Why? Because they refuse to release the data.

This is not their personal diary. This is not some locked chest of secrets. This data belongs to the people of India. It is our vote, our voice, our right. If there is no anomaly, there should be no fear in showing it. Hiding it only fuels suspicion. And in matters of democracy, suspicion is poison.

We are told to "trust the system." But trust is not commanded — it is earned. And it is earned through transparency, not silence. Let the ECI remember — the Constitution does not give them the right to treat the people like bystanders in their own election.

We will not tolerate a scratch on democracy. Not a blot, not a whisper, not a single dishonest fingerprint. And if a warning is what it takes for truth to emerge, let this be it. Because silence now will not be met with patience later.

Yours etc.,
Noopur Baruah,
Tezpur

Disheartening move

Sir/Ma'am

It is disheartening to read about the discontinuation of Registered Post services in India. While merging it with Speed Post may seem efficient, it overlooks the significant role Registered Post has played, particularly for the rural populace. For decades, it has been a trusted means for sending important documents and goods securely, a lifeline for farmers, small traders, and others in rural areas.The unique security feature of Registered Post, where only the addressee could receive the parcel, was a vital safeguard. With the increasing shift towards technology, many in rural India, often without reliable internet access, may find this transition difficult and costly. This change will burden them with higher fees and unreliable alternatives, especially when it comes to critical government communications and legal matters.The government must reconsider this decision and ensure that the needs of the common man, especially in rural regions, are met without compromise.

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India@79: From Survival to Global Stature

By: Dipak Kurmi

As the tricolour unfurled across the nation on India's 79th Independence Day, it did more than mark the passing of years since 1947—it stood as a testament to a country that has survived sanctions, wars, and economic turbulence, only to re-emerge each time with greater resilience. Few nations have had to weather as many storms and still keep faith in their democratic ethos. From the United States sending its Seventh Fleet to the Bay of Bengal in 1971 during India's war with Pakistan, to the sanctions following the Pokhran nuclear tests in 1998 under Atal Bihari Vajpayee's leadership, India has repeatedly faced geopolitical and economic pressure. Yet, instead of being subdued, each challenge reinforced its determination to carve out an independent path. Today, the narrative is clear: India's rise is no longer a question of if, but of how far and how fast.

The economic transformation of the past two decades provides the bedrock of this confidence. India's GDP, which hovered around $30 billion at the time of Independence, has today expanded into trillions, reflecting not merely economic output but the collective aspiration of over a billion people. By 2025, the country is projected to touch $4.19 trillion in GDP, positioning itself as the fourth-largest economy, behind only the United States at $30.5 trillion, China at $19.2 trillion, and Germany at $4.74 trillion. In purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, India is already ranked third with an economy worth $17.65 trillion, trailing only China's $40.72 trillion and the US at $30.51 trillion. These figures signify not only wealth creation but also a growing ability to influence global systems, supply chains, and institutions. India's achievements are not limited to macroeconomic indicators. Since Independence, poverty levels have plummeted. Where once 80 percent of the population lived in deprivation, today the poverty rate has fallen to just 5.3 percent when measured at the $3 per day threshold in 2021 PPP terms. Literacy, which stood at an abysmal 18.3 percent in 1951, has climbed to 77 percent, while life expectancy has more than doubled from 32 years at independence to 72 years in 2023. These are not mere statistical victories—they are the contours of a transformed society that has seen education, health, and human potential flourish in a democratic framework.

The transformation is equally striking in the agricultural sphere, the lifeline of India's economy for much of its history. At Independence, India's foodgrain production stood at a meagre 50 million metric tonnes (MMT). Famine and food shortages were recurrent, forcing reliance on foreign aid such as the infamous PL-480 wheat imports from the United States. Today, India produces 353.9 MMT of foodgrains annually, making it self-sufficient and even a surplus nation. In fact, it has become the world's largest rice exporter, shipping 20.2 MMT in FY25, and maintains government foodgrain stocks above 90 MMT, well above buffer norms. Horticulture output has multiplied fifteen times since 1947, milk production has grown elevenfold, and egg production has skyrocketed seventy-seven times. These gains are not accidental but the result of deliberate policies, from the Green Revolution to more recent technological and irrigation initiatives. Despite these remarkable strides, challenges persist. Nutritional security, particularly for children under five, remains a pressing concern. Malnutrition, stunting, and micronutrient deficiencies continue to haunt the developmental story. The Modi government's achievement in making India open defecation-free (ODF) has improved sanitation and will yield long-term dividends for child health, but greater emphasis on maternal health and women's education is still crucial for sustaining improvements in nutrition and life outcomes.

Equally significant is the question of subsidies in the agricultural economy. India's annual expenditure on food and fertiliser subsidies is projected at nearly Rs 3.71 lakh crore in the 2025–26 Union Budget, with Rs 2.03 lakh crore for food and Rs 1.67 lakh crore for fertilisers. While subsidies provide critical support to vulnerable populations, they are plagued with inefficiencies—studies suggest that at least 20 to 25 percent of these subsidies do not reach their intended beneficiaries. The persistence of leakages makes it clear that rationalisation is overdue. The challenge for policymakers lies in balancing welfare with efficiency: subsidies should protect the vulnerable but

not at the cost of diverting resources away from investments in agricultural research, rural infrastructure, and value chains.

Economic strength has been complemented by technological ambition. India's journey into space is emblematic of this rise. From the humble beginnings of ISRO launching sounding rockets in the 1960s, the country has reached the lunar surface with Chandrayaan and has sent a spacecraft to Mars with Mangalyaan, achieving interplanetary exploration at a fraction of the cost of other spacefaring nations. These missions are more than symbolic—they have inspired an entire generation and positioned India at the frontiers of global science. Similarly, the meteoric success of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which now processes over 10 billion transactions monthly, has showcased India's digital prowess. The platform is not only a domestic revolution but also an international model, with several countries seeking to replicate it. This intellectual and technological rise has been accompanied by the growing global footprint of Indian talent. Figures such as Sundar Pichai at Google, Satya Nadella at Microsoft, and Indra Nooyi in corporate leadership reflect India's ability to produce leaders who influence the world's most powerful organisations. Their success speaks to the strength of India's educational institutions, entrepreneurial spirit, and adaptability.

Yet India's ascent is not without comparison. China, which embarked on its development journey at around the same time, has pulled ahead in terms of per capita income. By 2025, China's per capita income stands at $13,690, with a PPP figure of $28,980, while India's per capita income is at $2,880 and $12,130 respectively. The gap remains large, but India's democratic model, despite being slower and noisier, offers resilience, accountability, and inclusivity that authoritarian systems cannot. While China's achievements are undeniable, India's growth story remains more relatable and aspirational for many developing countries in Asia and Africa, particularly for those striving to combine rapid economic development with democratic freedoms.

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, articulated by the Modi government, sets the course for the centenary of Independence. To achieve this goal, India must focus on accelerating inclusive growth, cutting bureaucratic hurdles, and embedding a culture of science, technology, and innovation in its policymaking. Vajpayee's assertion that information technology (IT) is for India what biotechnology (BT) is for Bharat remains strikingly relevant. With artificial intelligence, biotechnology, renewable energy, and advanced manufacturing redefining the global economy, India must invest in research and development while simultaneously skilling its vast workforce.

Environmental sustainability must also be central to this vision. The quality of India's soil, water, and air is under severe strain, threatening the very foundations of future growth. Rationalising subsidies, adopting water-efficient farming, investing in renewable energy, and enforcing stricter environmental safeguards are non-negotiable if India is to achieve sustainable development. Without addressing ecological degradation, economic progress will prove fragile.

As India stands in 2025, it embodies both pride in past achievements and awareness of future challenges. It has surpassed Pakistan and Bangladesh in per capita income, and in many sectors competes with the best globally. But the task ahead is formidable: to ensure that growth translates into widespread prosperity, that inequality does not widen, and that democratic values continue to guide its journey.

Independence Day is therefore not only a celebration but a moment of reflection. It is a time to recall that in 1947, India was a fragile nation, burdened by poverty, illiteracy, and famine. Today, it is a rising power, a laboratory of democracy, and a nation whose aspirations resonate globally. The road to 2047, the centenary of Independence, is still under construction. Yet, if history is any guide, India will not just endure—it will lead. ***(the writer can be reached at dipakkurmiglpltd@gmail.com)***

78 years after freedom: India's glory, Pakistan's grit

By: Satyabrat Borah

As India and Pakistan commemorate their 78th year of independence in August 2025, the journey from their shared history under British colonial rule to their present trajectories offers a compelling study in contrast. Born from the partition of 1947, these two nations have carved distinct paths shaped by their political choices, economic policies, military strategies, and social transformations. While New Delhi radiates confidence as a rising global power, Islamabad grapples with persistent challenges that have slowed its progress. A comparative analysis of their economic, military, social, and other parameters reveals the divergent fortunes of these South Asian neighbors, with India surging ahead and Pakistan struggling to find stable footing.

India has emerged as a powerhouse economically, while Pakistan lags significantly. India's GDP in 2025 is estimated at approximately $3.5 trillion, making it the fifth-largest economy globally, with a purchasing power parity (PPP) of $13.1 trillion, ranking third worldwide. This economic heft is underpinned by a robust services sector, burgeoning technology industry, and increasing manufacturing capabilities through initiatives like Make in India. The country's foreign exchange reserves, standing at $627 billion, provide a cushion for economic stability and strategic investments. India's per capita income, though modest at around $2,731, reflects steady growth, supported by a young, dynamic workforce and a labor force of 593 million. The nation's economic reforms, initiated in 1991 under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, have borne fruit, fostering a market-driven economy that attracts global investment. India's startup ecosystem, one of the largest in the world, thrives with unicorns in fintech, edtech, and healthtech, signaling innovation and adaptability.

Pakistan's economy faces structural challenges. With a GDP of roughly $290 billion and a PPP of $1.34 trillion, Pakistan ranks far lower on the global stage. Its per capita income, around $1,500, is lower than India's, and economic growth is hampered by high inflation, a ballooning external debt of $92 billion, and meager foreign reserves of $13.7 billion. Pakistan's economy remains heavily reliant on agriculture and textiles, with limited diversification. Political instability, coupled with security concerns, has deterred foreign investment, while dependence on foreign aid, particularly from China and Gulf nations, underscores its economic fragility. Posts on X reflect this disparity, with some noting that individual Indian states now surpass Pakistan's GDP, a remarkable shift from 1947 when Pakistan was economically ahead.

India holds a commanding edge over Pakistan militarily, reflecting its strategic ambitions and financial muscle. According to the Global Firepower Index 2025, India ranks fourth globally with a Power Index score of 0.1184, while Pakistan stands at 12th with a score of 0.2513. India's defense budget for 2024–25, estimated at $86.1 billion, dwarfs Pakistan's $10.2 billion, enabling significant investments in modernization. India's military manpower is formidable, with 1.46 million active personnel, 1.15 million reserves, and 2.52 million paramilitary forces, drawing from a population of 1.41 billion, with 23.9 million reaching military age annually. Its air force, with 2,229 aircraft including advanced Rafale and Su-30MKI jets, and a navy with 293 vessels, including two aircraft carriers, cement India's status as a blue-water naval power capable of projecting force across the Indian Ocean. India's nuclear arsenal, estimated at 172 warheads, adheres to a No First Use policy, supported by a developing nuclear triad involving land, air, and sea-based delivery systems like the Agni-V missile and INS Arihant submarine.

Pakistan, while maintaining a credible military, operates on a smaller scale. Its 654,000 active personnel, 550,000 reserves, and 500,000 paramilitary forces are drawn from a population of 252 million, with 4.79 million reaching military age annually. Pakistan's air force, with 1,399 aircraft including JF-17 Thunder jets, is smaller but tactically focused, benefiting from Chinese and Turkish partnerships. Its navy, with 121 vessels and no aircraft carriers, is limited to green-water operations, primarily for coastal defense. Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, roughly 170 warheads, adopts a first-use doctrine, with tactical nuclear weapons like the Nasr missile aimed at countering India's conventional superiority. Despite its battle-hardened forces and strategic alliances, Pakistan's military capabilities are constrained by its limited budget and economic challenges, relying heavily on foreign suppliers, particularly China, for 82% of its arms imports.

India's diversity and scale present both opportunities and challenges. With a population of 1.41 billion, India is a mosaic of languages, religions, and cultures, striving for inclusivity despite occasional tensions. Its Human Development Index (HDI) score, around 0.644, reflects progress in education, healthcare, and life expectancy, though disparities persist between urban and rural areas. India's literacy rate hovers near 80%, and initiatives like Digital India have expanded internet access to over 700 million users, fostering digital inclusion. Women's participation in the workforce and politics is rising, though gender gaps remain. India's global cultural influence, through Bollywood, cuisine, and yoga, enhances its soft power, while its diaspora, numbering over 18 million, contributes significantly to remittances and global advocacy.

Pakistan, with a population of 252 million, faces steeper social hurdles. Its HDI score of 0.540 trails India's, reflecting lower life expectancy, education levels, and income. Literacy stands at around 60%, with significant gender disparities, particularly in rural areas. Pakistan's social fabric is strained by sectarian divides and security issues, which hinder development. Urban centers like Karachi and Lahore show pockets of progress, but rural areas lag, with limited access to quality education and healthcare. Social media sentiment on X highlights Pakistan's challenges, with some users attributing its struggles to prioritizing security over public welfare, a contrast to India's broader developmental focus.

In terms of infrastructure, India's vast network of 6.37 million km of roadways, 311 airports, and 56 major ports supports its economic and military ambitions. Its merchant marine fleet of 1,859 vessels ensures robust trade connectivity, while investments in high-speed rail and smart cities signal forward-thinking development. Pakistan's infrastructure, with 264,175 km of roadways, 116 airports, and three major ports, is less extensive, limiting its logistical capacity. Its merchant marine fleet of 60 vessels underscores its smaller global trade footprint. India's logistical superiority enhances its ability to sustain military operations and economic growth, while Pakistan's constrained infrastructure reflects its economic limitations. India has cultivated strategic alliances with the United States, France, Russia, and the QUAD, positioning itself as a counterweight to China in the Indo-Pacific. Its leadership in forums like the G20 and BRICS amplifies its global voice. Pakistan, aligned closely with China through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and with Turkey, maintains regional influence but struggles with international isolation due to terrorism concerns and economic woes. India's diplomatic outreach, backed by its economic and military strength, far outpaces Pakistan's, which relies on strategic partnerships to offset its limitations.

Sports and cultural achievements further highlight the divergence. India's cricketing dominance, with stars like Virat Kohli and a thriving Indian Premier League, contrasts with Pakistan's inconsistent performance, despite talents like Babar Azam. India's Olympic medal tally, though modest, is improving, while Pakistan's remains negligible. Culturally, India's global footprint through films, literature, and technology overshadows Pakistan's, which, while rich in heritage, struggles to project influence amid internal challenges.

The nuclear dimension adds complexity to this comparison. Both nations' arsenals deter full-scale conflict, but India's strategic restraint contrasts with Pakistan's first-use posture, raising the stakes in any escalation. Recent tensions, such as the 2025 Pahalgam attack and India's Operation Sindoor, underscore the fragile balance, with India's superior conventional forces offset by Pakistan's nuclear deterrence and asymmetric tactics.

As India and Pakistan mark 78 years of independence, their trajectories reflect starkly different choices. India's investment in economic liberalization, military modernization, and global integration has propelled it toward superpower status. Pakistan, constrained by economic instability and security-centric policies, struggles to match its neighbor's pace. While India shines on the global stage, Pakistan's challenges underscore the need for reform to harness its potential. The path forward for both nations lies not in rivalry but in fostering stability and cooperation to ensure a peaceful South Asia.

NISAR Satellite: A new milestone in space research

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) satellite, a collaborative endeavor between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the United States' NASA, stands as a monumental achievement in modern space science. Through the successful launch of this satellite, two of the world's leading space agencies have ushered in a new era in the study of Earth's environment, climate, and natural resources. On July 30, 2025, the satellite was successfully placed into orbit from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, India, with the aid of ISRO's GSLV-F16 rocket. This event is not only a historic moment for India's space research but also a remarkable testament to international cooperation. The primary objective of the NISAR satellite is to collect precise data on various aspects of Earth's environment, enabling unprecedented contributions to disaster management, climate research, and sustainable resource planning. The advanced technology and data collection capabilities of this satellite have opened new avenues for scientists to understand the dynamic changes in Earth's environment.

The orbital design of the NISar satellite is meticulously planned and scientifically precise. Currently, the satellite is positioned approximately 747 kilometers above Earth in a Sun-synchronous orbit. The distinctive feature of a Sun-synchronous orbit is its synchronization with Earth's rotation, allowing the satellite to pass over the same region at the same time each day. With an orbital inclination of 98.5 degrees, it falls under the dawn-to-dusk orbit category. This orbital configuration enables the satellite to regularly traverse nearly all of Earth's landmasses and ice-covered regions. Its ability to capture high-quality images and data from these areas every 12 days is one of the satellite's most powerful attributes. This consistent data collection method aids scientists in closely monitoring subtle environmental changes on Earth. The data gathered facilitates in-depth insights into glacier movements, the potential for landslides, and changes in forest biodiversity. Such information is crucial for disaster management, as it supports the forecasting and management of natural calamities. Furthermore, the orbital design allows the satellite to collect data from various geographical regions, creating a comprehensive picture of environmental conditions across the globe. Through this data, scientists can monitor long-term environmental trends and formulate future strategies.

The advanced radar system of the NISAR satellite is one of its most notable features. The Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) system enables the satellite to collect highly detailed data from Earth's surface, a feat unachievable through traditional optical imaging. A significant advantage of this radar system is its ability to gather data through cloud cover, dust, or nighttime darkness. This system allows for the precise collection of data on land deformation, such as changes in terrain due to earthquakes or landslides. This data aids in predicting earthquake risks and identifying areas prone to landslides. Additionally, the collection of data on glacier movements facilitates research on the impacts of climate change. This data enables predictions about glacier melting rates and potential sea-level rise. Such information is invaluable to climate scientists, as it supports the formulation of critical environmental conservation policies. The dual-frequency capability of the radar system provides additional advantages in collecting diverse data types. Through this system, data on soil moisture, vegetation density, and glacier structure can be gathered, enabling comprehensive research on various environmental aspects and providing a new direction for environmental protection.

The role of ISRO's GSLV-F16 rocket in the launch of the NISAR satellite is of paramount importance. The Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) is one of ISRO's most powerful launch vehicles, capable of placing heavy satellites into high orbits. The design and construction of this rocket represent a significant achievement in India's space technology. The successful launch of the GSLV-F16 further demonstrates that India is now among the world's leading nations in space research. The launch was conducted from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, India's primary space research hub. Located in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh, this center benefits from geographical advantages that facilitate satellite launches. Numerous successful launches have already been conducted from this center, showcasing India's space research capabilities. The launch of NISAR has further elevated the significance of this center. The success of this launch is underpinned by the tireless efforts and dedication of ISRO's scientists and engineers. Through this project, a new milestone has been established in India's space research, highlighting the nation's technological excellence.

The data collection capabilities of the NISAR satellite also play a critical role in researching changes in forest biodiversity. By collecting data on forest biomass and its changes, environmental scientists can study deforestation rates and their impact on the environment. This data supports the formulation of strategies for forest conservation. It also provides insights into forests' carbon storage capacity, which is vital in the fight against climate change. Furthermore, the data collected by this satellite facilitates important decisions in agricultural and land-use planning. For agriculture, data on soil quality and irrigation needs can be gathered, enabling farmers to adopt more productive agricultural practices. Additionally, this data provides deeper insights into environmental sustainability, contributing significantly to long-term environmental conservation. By maintaining a balance among various environmental aspects, this data supports the achievement of sustainable development goals.

The data from the NISAR satellite is considered crucial for predicting natural disasters such as landslides, floods, and earthquakes. The satellite's radar system collects data on subtle changes in land structure to identify areas prone to landslides, enabling local administrations to prepare in advance. Moreover, for flood forecasting, the satellite's data provides insights into river flow patterns and rainfall volumes, facilitating timely warnings to the public and reducing loss of life and property. The satellite's data also plays a vital role in post-disaster recovery efforts, as accurate information about affected areas enables the preparation of effective recovery plans. Through this data, new strategies for disaster management can be developed, strengthening disaster management systems in various countries worldwide.

The collaboration between NASA and ISRO is a key factor in the success of the NISAR satellite. Scientists and engineers from both organizations have worked together for years to design, construct, and launch this satellite. The combination of NASA's technological expertise and ISRO's launch capabilities has propelled this project to the pinnacle of success. This collaboration has facilitated the exchange of knowledge and technology between the two nations, laying a strong foundation for future space missions. Through this partnership, new technologies have been introduced to India's space research, enhancing the expertise of Indian scientists. Furthermore, this project reaffirms the importance of international cooperation, inspiring collaborative efforts in space research among various nations. This collaboration has created new possibilities in India's space research, positioning the country prominently in global space exploration.

The future prospects of the NISAR satellite are vast. The data collected by this satellite will enable long-term research on various aspects of Earth's environment. It will be crucial for studying the impacts of climate change and contributing significantly to achieving sustainable development goals. The data will support the formulation of new policies in agriculture, forest conservation, and natural resource management. Additionally, it will create new opportunities in education and research, enabling scientists from universities and research institutions worldwide to undertake new projects, expanding our understanding of Earth's environment. The satellite also paves the way for future space missions, further broadening the boundaries of human knowledge.

The Synthetic Aperture Radar system used in this satellite is a cutting-edge technology that has achieved unprecedented success in collecting high-quality images and data. This system enables the creation of three-dimensional maps of Earth's surface, providing scientists with accurate insights into changes in land structure. Additionally, the dual-frequency radar system aids in collecting various types of data, including soil moisture, vegetation density, and glacier structure. This data will enable in-depth research on various environmental aspects, playing a significant role in environmental protection. Through this technology, maintaining a balance among different environmental aspects and building a sustainable future will become feasible.

The success of the NISAR satellite marks the dawn of a new era in India's space research. ISRO's achievement has secured India a prominent position in global space exploration. The data collected by this satellite will not only benefit scientists but also enhance the quality of life for the general public. In disaster management, this data will aid in saving lives, while in agriculture and environmental conservation, it will create new possibilities. Furthermore, through this collaboration with NASA, Indian scientists have gained opportunities to play a more significant role in international space research. The success of this project has sparked enthusiasm for space research among India's young scientists, fostering new possibilities for future research.

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Zelenskyy brings Europe's top leaders with him to meet Trump on ending Russia's war

WASHINGTON, Aug 18: Ukraine's future could hinge on a hastily assembled meeting Monday at the White House as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy brings with him an extraordinary cadre of European leaders to show US President Donald Trump a united front against Russia.

The European political heavyhitters were left out of Trump's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin last Friday, and they are looking to safeguard Ukraine and the continent from any widening aggression from Moscow.

By arriving as a group, they hope to avoid any debacles like Zelenskyy's February meeting in the Oval Office, where Trump chastised him for not showing enough gratitude for American military aid.

The meeting also is a test of America's relationship with its closest allies after the European Union and United Kingdom accepted Trump's tariff hikes partly because they wanted his support on Ukraine.

Monday's showing is a sign both of the progress and the possible distress coming out of the Alaska meeting as many of Europe's leaders are descending on Washington with the explicit goal of protecting Ukraine's interests, a rare and sweeping show of diplomatic force.

"It's important that America agrees to work with Europe to provide security guarantees for Ukraine, and therefore for all of Europe," Zelenskyy said on X.

The night before the meeting, however, Trump seemed to put the onus on Zelenskyy to agree to concessions and suggested that Ukraine could not regain Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, setting off an armed conflict that led to its broader 2022 invasion.

"President Zelenskyy of Ukraine can end the war with Russia almost immediately, if he wants to, or he can continue to fight," he wrote Sunday night on social media. "Remember how it started. No getting back Obama given Crimea (12 years ago, without a shot being fired!), and NO GOING INTO NATO BY UKRAINE. Some things never change!!!"

Zelenskyy appeared to respond with his own post late Sunday, saying, "We all share a strong desire

to end this war quickly and reliably."

He went on to say that "peace must be lasting," not as it was after Russia seized Crimea and part of the Donbas in eastern Ukraine eight years ago, and "Putin simply used it as a springboard for a new attack."

The sitdown in Alaska yielded the possible contours for stopping the war in Ukraine, though it was unclear whether the terms discussed would ultimately be acceptable to Zelenskyy or Putin.

Upon arrival in Washington, Zelenskyy said in another social media post: "We all equally want to end this war quickly and reliably. And the peace must be lasting."

He expressed hope that together with the US and European countries Ukraine will be able to force Russia to "true peace".

European heavyweights in Washington

Planning to join Zelenskyy in America's capital are European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, Finnish President Alexander Stubb and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte.

On the table for discussion are possible NATO-like security guarantees that Ukraine would need for any peace with Russia to be durable. Putin opposes Ukraine joining NATO outright, yet Trump's team claims the Russian leader is open to allies agreeing to defend Ukraine if it comes under attack.

Trump briefed Zelenskyy and European allies shortly after the Putin meeting, and details from the discussions emerged in a scattershot way that seemed to rankle the US president, who had chosen not to outline any terms when appearing afterward with Putin.

"BIG PROGRESS ON RUSSIA," Trump posted Sunday on social media. The president also bemoaned media coverage of his summit with Putin, saying on Truth Social: "I had a great meeting in Alaska."

Following the Alaska summit, Trump declared that a ceasefire was not necessary for peace talks to proceed, a sudden shift to a position favoured by Putin.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Sunday that a ceasefire was still possible but that "the best way to end this conflict is through a full peace deal".

'A very big move'

European officials confirmed that Trump told them Putin is still seeking control of the entire Donbas region, even though Ukraine controls a meaningful share of it.

And Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, said the US and its allies could offer Ukraine a NATO-like commitment to defend the country if it came under attack as the possible security guarantee.

"How that's constructed, what we call it, how it's built, what guarantees are built into it that are enforceable, that's what we'll be talking about over the next few days with our partners who are coming in from overseas," Rubio told NBC's "Meet the Press".

Rubio said on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures" that such a commitment "would be a very big move" by Trump. He expects the delegations will "spend six, seven hours talking about these things, maybe more, and try to get to a point where we have something more concrete". (AP)

Gaza war death toll surpasses 62,000, says Palestinian Health Ministry

CAIRO, Aug 18: The Palestinian Health Ministry said on Monday that more than 62,000 Palestinians have been killed in the 22-month war in Gaza.

At least 60 people were killed in the past 24 hours, bringing the death toll from the Israel-Hamas war that started on Oct 7, 2023, to 62,004. Another 156,230 have been wounded, it said. The Health Ministry said 1,965 people have been killed while seeking aid from aid convoys or killed close to aid distribution sites. At least seven Palestinians were killed attempting to access aid on Monday morning.

The ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count, is staffed by medical professionals. The United Nations and other independent experts view its figures as the most reliable count of casualties. Israel has disputed its figures, but hasn't provided its own account of casualties.

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Strike by 10,000 Air Canada flight attendants declared illegal

TORONTO, Aug 18: The Canada Industrial Relations Board declared a strike by 10,000 Air Canada flight attendants illegal Monday and ordered them back on the job after they ignored an earlier order to return to work and submit to arbitration.

The strike at Canada's largest airline entered its third day on Monday and is affecting about 130,000 travellers per day during the peak summer travel season. The two sides remain far apart on pay and other issues. Air Canada suspended plans to restart operations Sunday after the union defied a return-to-work order and said workers would not go back to work.

"The members of the union's bargaining unit are directed to resume the performance of their duties immediately and to refrain from engaging in unlawful strike activities," the Canada Industrial Relations Board board, or CIRB, said in a written decision. The board, an independent administrative tribunal that interprets and applies Canada's labour laws, said the union needs to provide written notice to all of its members by noon Monday that they must resume their duties.

It was not immediately clear what recourse the board or the government has if the union continues to refuse.

The panel previously ordered airline staff back to work by 2 pm Sunday after the government intervened and Air Canada said it planned to resume flights Sunday evening. But when the workers refused, the airline said it would resume flights Monday evening instead.

Air Canada said in a statement that the union "illegally directed its flight attendant members to defy a direction from the Canadian Industrial Relations Board."

Canadian Union of Public Employees national President Mark Hancock on Sunday had ripped up a copy of the initial back-to-work order outside Toronto's Pearson International Airport, and said members wouldn't go back to work this week.

"Our members are not going back to work," Hancock said. "We are saying no."

Picketing flight attendants chanted "Don't blame me, blame AC" outside Pearson.

Jennifer Kozelj, a spokeswoman for Federal Jobs Minister Patty Hajdu, said Sunday that the minister was closely monitoring the situation.

Hajdu had ordered the 10,000 flight attendants back to work, saying now is not the time to take risks with the economy and noting the unprecedented tariffs the US has imposed on Canada. Hajdu referred the work stoppage to the Canada Industrial Relations Board.

The airline said the CIRB has extended the term of the existing collective agreement until a new one is determined by the arbitrator.

Air Canada operates around 700 flights per day. Flight attendants walked off the job around 1 am EDT on Saturday. Around the same time, Air Canada said it would begin locking flight attendants out of airports.

The bitter contract fight escalated Friday as the union turned down Air Canada's prior request to enter into government-directed arbitration, which allows a third-party mediator to decide the terms of a new contract.

Last year, the government forced the country's two major railroads into arbitration with their labour union during a work stoppage. The union for the rail workers is suing, arguing the government is removing a union's leverage in negotiations.

Passengers whose flights are impacted will be eligible to request a full refund on the airline's website or mobile app, according to Air Canada.

Air Canada and CUPE have been in contract talks for about eight months, but they have yet to reach a tentative deal. Both sides have said they remain far apart on the issue of pay and the unpaid work flight attendants do when planes aren't in the air.

The airline's latest offer included a 38 per cent increase in total compensation, including benefits and pensions, over four years, that it said "would have made our flight attendants the best compensated in Canada."

But the union pushed back, saying the proposed 8 per cent raise in the first year didn't go far enough because of inflation. (AP)

Chinese FM Wang Yi to visit Pakistan this week: Report

ISLAMABAD, Aug 18: China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi will arrive in Islamabad this week to attend the Pakistan-China strategic dialogue and hold meetings with the civil and military leadership to discuss bilateral ties as well as key regional and international developments, a media report said on Monday.

The top Chinese diplomat will undertake a two-day visit beginning on August 21, The Express Tribune newspaper reported, citing official sources.

In Islamabad, Wang will review the current state of bilateral ties between the two countries and discuss key regional and international developments, the paper said.

His visit comes against the backdrop of a host of developments, including the India-Pakistan four-day conflict in May, the Iran-Israel war in June and the recent warming of ties between Pakistan and the United States.

Given the current geostrategic environment, both sides are expected to explore ways to deepen cooperation, the paper said.

During Wang's visit, the agenda of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's upcoming trip to China is also expected to be finalised, it added. (PTI)

Hong Kong court begins hearing final arguments in Jimmy Lai's national security trial

HONG KONG, Aug 18: A Hong Kong court began hearing final arguments Monday in the landmark national security trial of former pro-democracy newspaper founder Jimmy Lai, who could be sentenced to up to life in prison if he is convicted.

Lai, 77, was arrested in 2020 under a national security law imposed by Beijing following anti-government protests in 2019. He is being tried on charges of colluding with foreign forces to endanger national security and conspiring with others to issue seditious publications.

Lai founded Apple Daily, one of the local media outlets that was most critical against Hong Kong's government. His high-profile case — which has already stretched nearly 150 days, far beyond the original estimate of 80 days — is widely seen as a trial of press freedom and a test for judicial independence in the Asian financial hub.

Prosecutors allege that Lai asked foreign countries, especially the United States, to take actions against Beijing "under the guise of fighting for freedom and democracy."

On the first day of his testimony, he denied he had asked then-Vice President Mike Pence and then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to take action against Hong Kong and China during the 2019 protests.

Later, when Lai's lawyer questioned him about an Apple Daily report saying he had asked the US government to sanction Beijing and Hong Kong leaders, he said he must have discussed it with Pompeo, as he had no reason to doubt the accuracy of the report by the now-defunct newspaper he founded.

But Lai said he would not have encouraged foreign sanctions after the national security law was enacted on June 30, 2020. The closing arguments have been delayed twice, first due to weather then to concerns over Lai's health. On Friday, his lawyer, Robert Pang, said Lai had experienced heart palpitations while in prison. The judges wanted him to secure a heart monitor and medication first.

After Friday's hearing, the Hong Kong government alleged foreign media outlets had attempted to mislead the public about Lai's medical care. It said a medical examination of Lai found no abnormalities and that the medical care he received in custody was adequate. It is unclear when the verdict will be delivered. Lai's yearslong detention, especially in solidarity confinement, has drawn concerns from foreign governments and rights groups. US President Donald Trump, before being elected to his second term in November, said he would talk to Chinese leader Xi Jinping to seek Lai's release: "One hundred percent, I will get him out."

In a Fox News radio interview released last Thursday, Trump denied saying he would "100 per cent" save Lai, but rather that he would bring the issue up. "I've already brought it up, and I'm going to do everything I can to save him," he said. China has accused Lai of stirring a rise in anti-China sentiments in Hong Kong and said it firmly opposes the interference of other countries in its internal affairs.

Dozens of people waited in the rain Monday for a seat in the main courtroom to see Lai. Former Apple Daily reader Susan Li said she worried about Lai's health as he looked visibly thinner, and she would continue to pray for him.

"I wanted to let him know we are still here," she said.

When Hong Kong, a former British colony, returned to China in 1997, Beijing promised to retain the city's civil liberties for 50 years. (AP)

AFFIDAVIT

I, Mohammed Jamal Uddin, S/o- Nasir Uddin and Reshmana Begum, Vill - Rani Pukhuri, P.O. - Bhalukmari, P.S.– Lanka, Dist - Hojai(Assam) shall henceforth be known as Jamal Uddin as declared before the Executive Magistrate, Lumding, Dist - Hojai(Assam) vide Affidavit No. IN-AS71002257041261X, dated 10-07-2025.Mohammed Jamal Uddin and Jamal Uddin are one and the same person.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Reshma Khatun, D/o- Arzan Ali and W/o- Nasir Uddin, Vill- Rani Pukhuri, P.O.- Bhalukmari, P.S.- Lanka, Dist- Hojai (Assam) shall henceforth be known as Reshmana Begum as declared before the Executive Magistrate, Lumding, Dist - Hojai (Assam) vide Affidavit No. IN-AS71002257041261X.dated 10-07-2025Reshma Khatun and Reshmana Begum are one and the same person.

LOST

I lost my following documents on my way home from Diphu Government College on 18th August, 2025 (Monday). The documents include original admit card and marksheet of Higher Secondary First year of 2003, No Objection Certificate (NOC) of Diphu Government College and medical certificate issued by a doctor. Any finder (s) finding it may kindly contact at the address and mobile Number given below.

Name: Jaya Mech
C/o Pranab Mech Daimary
Address: Rongtheang (B)
P.O. & P.S., Diphu
District: Karbi Anglong, Assam.
Mobile No. 88220-38917.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Nazir Hussain Laskar, S/O- Late Faizur Rahman, Vill- Pachim Nilbagan, P.O- Nilbagan, P.S-Hojai, Dist-Hojai(Assam) That, my wife actual and correct name is Sabina Yeasmin. That, in my Passport Vide Passport No-GUWA02417411and The file No- L238836, wherein my wife name has been recorded as Mina Begum, instead of Sabina Yasmin, that aforesaid Sabina Yasmin and Mina Begum, are the names of one and same person. Nazir Hussain Laskar Nilbagan,Hojai(Assam)

GOVT.OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER::EAST KARBI ANGLONG DIVISION (IRRIGATION) HANJANGLANGSO:: KARBI ANGLONG:: ASSAM

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

No. EKADIH/T-2/Pt.-11/2023-24/987 Dt. 18/08/2025

The Executive Engineer, East Karbi Anglong Division (Irrigation) Hanjanglangso on behalf of Governor of Assam invites sealed Tender from registered contractor of Class I, II & III category for Improvement/Renovation/Construction etc. of 08(Eight) Nos. Schemes under East Karbi Anglong Division (Irrigation) Hanjanglangso, under the administrative control of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu for the year 2025-26. Details may be seen at the office of the undersigned during office hours from 19-08-2025 to 02-09-2025.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
East Karbi Anglong Division (Irrigation)
Hanjanglangso

Memo No. EKADIH/T-2/Pt.-II/2023-24/987 (A) Dt. 18/08/2025

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, P.W.D. (R&B), DIPHU CIRCLE-1, DIPHU

No. C/S-10,145/2025/1224 Dated: 16/08/2025

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Superintending Engineer PWD(R&B), Diphu Circle-1, Diphu, on behalf of Governor of Assam invites tender for the work "Construction of retaining wall and drain at Diphu lake under SOPD (KAAC) for the year 2025-26" under PWD, Diphu Roads Division, Diphu at the estimated amount of Rs. 1,25,00,000.00 from class-1 (A,B,C) contractors of PWD(R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu. Details may be seen at the office of the undersigned during office hours from 18/08/2025 to 08/09/2025. The last Date/Time for receipt of tender will be upto 3.00 PM on 08/09/2025.

The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender without assigning any reason thereof and no claim whatsoever will be entertained.

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer, P.W.D(R&B)
Diphu Circle-1, Diphu

Memo No. C/S-10,145/2025/1224-(A) Dated: 16/08/2025

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CM calls for collectively fighting 'money culture' in elections

ITANAGAR, Aug 18: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday warned that the growing "money culture" in elections is a major menace threatening the democratic fabric of the state, urging legislators and citizens alike to collectively fight the practice.

"Money culture (distributing money to woo voters) in elections is a big menace for the state. We should work collectively to shun this practice, which affects our state. This should be discussed in the public forum and people must be made aware of its negative impact through community participation," Khandu said while addressing the special session of the state assembly convened to mark the golden jubilee of its existence.

Linking the issue to the state's larger democratic journey, the chief minister said the assembly's 50 years were "not just a milestone, but a testament to the strength of our democracy, to the voices that have been heard, and to the progress we have made together".

Tracing the assembly's history, Khandu recalled that proceedings began on August 18, 1975, with 33 members under the leadership of the first Chief Minister P K Thungon, Speaker Nokmey Namati, and Deputy Speaker Padi Yube.

Since then, the House has conducted 137

sessions spanning 457 sitting days and passed 273 important Acts.

He acknowledged that the number of sittings was relatively low compared to the years gone by.

"Our efforts should be to ponder how the number of sessions could be increased in the coming days," he added.

The chief minister highlighted milestones, including the adoption of the e-Vidhan system, which made Arunachal Pradesh the first state in the Northeast and the third in the country to go paperless.

He also pointed to the assembly's growing national and international profile, having hosted the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's India Zone-III conference in May 2022 and the G20 Summit in March 2023.

"Despite opposition by China, Prime Minister Modi gave us a go-ahead with the G20 summit, which we organised successfully," he said.

Khandu also cited historic state-specific regulations adopted by the assembly, such as the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, now known as the Inner Line Permit (ILP), along with the NEFA Regulation of 1965 and the NEFA Panchayati Raj Regulation of 1967.

"These old regulations adopted in the state are still protecting us," he noted.

Emphasising the motto 'unity in diversity', the chief minister said, "Despite having various tribes with diverse culture and traditions, we are one. We need to carry forward this legacy in the days to come, in which the assembly will play an important role."

Khandu urged lawmakers to work with consensus to identify and address challenges ahead, stressing that with political will, the state could achieve wonders.

"In the last decade, we have proven it as Team Arunachal. If we have political will, nothing is impossible. We should convert our resources into policies for the development of the state," he added. *(PTI)*

Edu Minister warns teachers against seeking political influence in transfer

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 18: Education and RWD Minister P D Sona has cautioned teachers under transfer not to play politics with the careers of students and to immediately join their new places of posting in the interest of the education system.

The Minister, while addressing the media on Monday on the sidelines of the golden jubilee celebration of the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly, made it clear that the transfer and posting of teachers have been carried out in a fair and transparent manner.

He warned teachers against approaching political and public leaders to influence transfer or retention orders, stating that such practices will not be entertained.

According to an official statement, Sona emphasised that the government is committed to ensuring transparency and fairness in transfer procedures, adding that teachers must fulfil their responsibilities since the state is paying a significant amount of money towards their salaries.

"Teachers should not compromise with the future of students by seeking undue advantages in transfer and posting. They should dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to the promotion and strengthening of education in the state, as teachers are the main pillar of education," he said.

The Minister clarified that applications for reconsideration and retention will generally not be entertained.

However, cases involving incomplete tenure, joint postings, serious medical issues, or other

genuine humanitarian grounds may be considered.

Highlighting the government's efforts, Sona said that many teachers are being provided orientation and training programmes to improve their skills and adapt to changing times.

"I urge all teachers to join their places of posting without delay. The future of children lies in their hands, and it must not be compromised for vested interests," he added.

The Minister also underlined the government's priority to ensure balanced distribution of teachers across schools, particularly in remote and underserved areas, to guarantee quality education for all.

He expressed gratitude to chief minister Pema Khandu and deputy chief minister Chowna Mein, who also holds the finance portfolio, for allocating substantial funds to the education sector.

Referring to the closure of hundreds of schools in the state, Sona explained that institutions located close to each other with very few or no students have been merged with nearby schools.

In the first phase, infrastructure development is being undertaken, including the construction of teachers' quarters and hostel facilities, he added.

The Education Minister reiterated that the government is fully committed to improving the education system of Arunachal Pradesh and called upon the teaching community to cooperate with departmental initiatives for building a stronger academic environment.

District Admin conducts re-orientation training for Gaon Burahs in Upper Siang

HT Correspondent

YINGKIONG, Aug 18: In a significant step to strengthen grassroots governance and reinforce the statutory roles and responsibilities of village authorities, the District Administration of Upper Siang on Monday organised the first phase of the Re-orientation Training Programme for Head Gaon Burahs (HGBs) and Gaon Burahs (GBs) at the Multi-Purpose Hall, Yingkiong.

According to an official statement, altogether 61 HGBs and GBs from Yingkiong, Jengging, Pobe, Geku circles, and Likor village under Palling Circle participated in the training. The initiative was undertaken in accordance with the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation, 1945, and the Guidelines for Appointment of GBs, 2005, which define the powers, duties, conduct, and responsibilities of HGBs and GBs.

The objective was to familiarise existing HGBs and GBs with the legal framework governing their appointment and conduct, as well as their pivotal role in village-level administration and justice delivery.

Deputy commissioner Talo Jerang, in his welcome address, underscored the importance of HGBs and GBs as the frontline functionaries of the Government at the village level.

He stressed that they must thoroughly understand their responsibilities as they play a crucial role in maintaining law and order and supporting development initiatives in their jurisdictions.

He categorically directed that as per the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation, 1945, all HGBs and GBs must maintain absolute loyalty and integrity towards the Government, promote and advocate Government policies, and refrain from participating in agitations or criticising Government policies in public or on social media.

He warned that strict disciplinary action would be taken against defaulters.

The training featured detailed deliberations by resource persons. Assistant Commissioner of Geku, Aniyang Ratan, explained the appointment, roles, and responsibilities of village authorities, highlighting legal provisions and the dos and don'ts for GBs.

ADC (HQ) Natek Nonang and SDO Toni Mitkong jointly elaborated on the administrative and quasi-judicial responsibilities of HGBs and GBs under the AFR, 1945, and the Guidelines for Appointment of GBs, 2005.

ADC Mariyang, Nongkong Borang, conducted a session on Kebang procedures and the role of HGBs and GBs under the Arunachal Pradesh Civil Courts Act, 2021, in conjunction with the AFR, 1945, emphasising how lawful traditional forums complement the state's justice delivery mechanism.

Participants were briefed on their statutory powers, functions, and responsibilities.

As per Section 5(1) of the Regulation, the Deputy Commissioner is the appointing and disciplinary authority empowered to take action, including issuing show-cause notices, suspension, or dismissal for misconduct, negligence, disqualification, or unsatisfactory performance.

The statement reiterated that HGBs and GBs, as public functionaries, are entrusted with maintaining peace and order, assisting in crime detection and reporting, supporting development programmes, acting as quasi-judicial authorities in civil and certain criminal matters under customary law, and promoting Government policies at the grassroots.

They are barred from political affiliations, prohibited from engaging in agitations, and must not criticise Government policies publicly.

It was also highlighted that GBs are deemed public servants under Section 2(28) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, while discharging official duties, and are entitled to monthly honorarium of ₹2,000 for HGBs and ₹1,500 for GBs.

The District Administration urged all HGBs and GBs to uphold the dignity of their posts by performing duties with honesty, discipline, and commitment, warning that any deviation or involvement in anti-Government activities would invite strict action.

Awareness programme on Natural Farming held in Tawang under National Mission

HT Correspondent

TAWANG, Aug 18: An Awareness-cum-Orientation Training Programme on Natural Farming under the National Mission on Natural Farming was conducted on Monday at Tawang with the active participation of PRI members, farmers, SHG members, community resource persons, KVK scientists, officials of the Agriculture Department, and representatives from ArSRLM.

Welcoming the participants, District Agriculture Officer Pema Dechhen highlighted the harmful effects of excessive chemical usage in crop production and stressed the importance of adopting natural farming practices for sustainable agriculture.

Addressing the gathering, public leader Tenzin Monpa emphasized the need to preserve local germplasm and called for the effective implementation of project activities in a mission-oriented manner through the collective involvement of all stakeholders.

District-level NCORD meeting held in Tawang

HT Correspondent

TAWANG, Aug 18: The District-level Narcotics Coordination (NCORD) meeting was held on Monday at the Conference Hall of the Deputy Commissioner's office, Tawang, under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Namgyal Angmo, IAS.

According to an official statement, the meeting was attended by Superintendent of Police Dr DW Thongon, I/C Additional DC Sangey Wangmu Mosobi, DMO Dr Thutan Lhamu, representatives from the Army, SSB, intelligence agencies, Market Welfare Committees, WWA, Hoteliers Association of Tawang, and other stakeholders.

In his address, Dy SP Tawang Tasso Kato highlighted the ongoing initiatives of Tawang Police, which include awareness programmes in schools, joint drives with villagers and the SSB to uproot wild cannabis, and promotion of the UMANG app for reporting illegal activities.

He also informed about the use of the MANAS portal and shared that 77 Inner Line Permit (ILP) violators with expired permits had been apprehended.

The Deputy Commissioner reiterated government instructions for stricter vigilance on ILP violations and stressed the importance of coordination among departments to avoid repetition of awareness programmes in schools, thereby minimising classroom disruptions.

Arunachal guv hails Assembly's journey, calls for transparent and inclusive governance

ITANAGAR, Aug 18: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik on Monday lauded the state legislative Assembly for upholding the spirit of democracy over the past five decades, while urging lawmakers to ensure transparency, discipline, and people-centric governance as the state moves towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Addressing the special session of the Assembly to mark its Golden Jubilee, the governor said the legislature has consistently promoted participatory governance, transparent law-making, and inclusive development.

Despite the challenges of geography and diversity, it has carried out its constitutional duties with dignity, making the Assembly a vibrant forum for debate and policy-making, he said.

Parnaik underlined that the House has brought people closer to governance, strengthened the rule of law, and fostered dialogue while celebrating the state's rich tribal identity by protecting traditions, languages, and customs alongside inclusive growth.

He noted its contributions across education, health, agriculture, tribal welfare, connectivity, entrepreneurship, and conservation, balancing local needs with national interests. *(PTI)*

LS Speaker hails Arunachal Assembly's Golden Jubilee, calls for consensus

ITANAGAR, Aug 18: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday congratulated the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly on completing 50 glorious years of its journey. In a virtual message, Birla described Arunachal as the finest example of unity in diversity, noting that the Assembly has kept alive the aspirations of the people by enacting over 600 legislations so far through healthy debates.

"Healthy debate is one of the hallmarks of the Arunachal Pradesh Assembly and being a temple of democracy, the lawmakers should continue to keep the aspirations of the people alive," Birla stressed.

Urging the members to work for the state's progress, the Speaker said the Golden Jubilee must serve as a strong reminder for legislators to work with diligence for the prosperity of the state.

"There may be differences in political lines, but inside the Assembly, which is the living soul of our democracy, efforts should be made by all members, irrespective of party affiliations, to take consensus decisions in the interest of the people and the state," Birla said.

He praised the House for going paperless with the e-Vidhan initiative, the third in the country, and urged members to remain the voice of the people while working for the welfare of women and youth for Arunachal's holistic development.

Birla also thanked all past and present members for their contributions to the Assembly's glorious fifty-year journey.

Speaking on the occasion, state Legislative Assembly Speaker Tesam Pongte said the state has witnessed a dynamic interplay of indigenous traditions, colonial legacies, and post-independence aspirations.

"The region's resilience in overcoming challenges and conflicts underscores its determination to chart its own course towards progress and prosperity within the framework of the Indian Union," Pongte said. *(PTI)*

Galo Youth Organisation reiterates three-point charter of demand

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 18: The Galo Youth Organisation (GYO) has reiterated its three-point charter of demand, calling on the state government to take urgent steps for the socio-economic and cultural upliftment of the Galo community.

This was stated in an official statement issued by the organisation on Monday.

According to the statement, the first demand is the establishment of an IRBN/APPBN Battalion Headquarters at Kangku Circle in Lower Siang District, which the organisation said would strengthen law and order, provide employment opportunities, and ensure security for the local people of the area.

The GYO pointed out that the border with Assam has repeatedly witnessed disputes and law and order issues, making such a security establishment vital. The second demand is the official declaration of the Likabali-Bam two-lane corridor road as a National Highway.

The organisation stated that such a declaration would facilitate its smooth completion, repair, and maintenance while also improving connectivity, boosting trade and commerce, and fostering overall development in the region.

The third demand is the allocation of ₹5 crore for the construction of a GYO Office-cum-Dormitory at the Galo Heritage Centre-cum-Mopin Ground, Tarajuli, Naharlagun.

Arunachal Assembly completes 50 years

Deputy CM calls for making state developed by 2047

ITANAGAR, Aug 18: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Monday urged members of the assembly to take a pledge to work towards making the state developed by 2047.

Participating in a discussion during a special session of the assembly on its golden jubilee celebration, Mein said the state government under Chief Minister Pema Khandu is committed to tapping the immense potential of the state to make it developed by 2047.

"The state government is working in this line through the mantras of reform, perform and transform. We have brought many reforms in governance with political will for a 'swachh' (clean), 'swasthya' (healthy), 'sikshit' (educated), 'sashakt' (empowered) and 'sundar' (beautiful) Arunachal," Mein said.

He highlighted key ongoing and completed projects, stating that the government is working hard to accelerate development of the northeastern state.

"Today, we are here to discuss our 50 years of glorious chronicle of the assembly, the journey of which reflects the toil of all the former chief ministers and members. The state witnessed massive development in the last 50 years due to contributions of all the former and present lawmakers of the state," he added. Mein further noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi took various initiatives to honour freedom fighters and contributors to the nation's growth.

"Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav is one such

movement under which the state government identified more than 220 unsung heroes of the state who made sacrifices for the country's Independence. Tiranga Yatra is another movement launched by the PM to honour the freedom fighters," he said.

The deputy chief minister, who has served as a lawmaker for the last 30 years, recalled that the first session of the Provisional Legislative Assembly began on August 18, 1975, with only 33 members.

The present 60-member house, he said, stands as testimony to the 50-year journey of evolution.

Earlier, initiating the discussion, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona said that the assembly, since its inception, had conducted 137 sessions covering 457 days of business.

"The assembly has, so far, witnessed 18 members being appointed as Speakers and 20 as deputy speakers, with Nokmey Namati as the first Speaker. The present building is one of the best in the country and the main purpose of the assembly is to enact laws for the benefit of the people and the state," Sona said.

He claimed that Arunachal Pradesh is the only state where assembly sessions are held without any disruption.

"We play development politics within the House, which is unique in nature and every member contributed to the growth of the assembly," he noted.

Joining the discussion, NCP member Toko Tatung said the evolution of the state from a remote tribal tract to a full-fledged Indian state is of strategic importance.

"The former leaders have made the assembly a ground to speak for the people. It is not the building but the people who represented it, to make the assembly better," Tatung observed.

People's Party of Arunachal (PPA) legislative party leader Oken Tayeng lauded the sacrifices of former leaders who shaped the assembly, while NPP legislator Thangwang Wangham described it as "a living chronicle of the state's evolution".

"The visions of the former leaders have laid the foundation of the assembly from ancient traditions to the modern democratic system, which is the uniqueness of our political history and a pride for us," Thangwang added. Congress MLA Kumar Waii, the lone member from his party, called for equitable development of all constituencies, cautioning that without it, the vision of a 'Viksit Arunachal' (developed Arunachal) would remain a distant dream.

Former chief ministers, including the first CM P K Thungon, as well as former ministers and MLAs, also attended the special session.

A documentary tracing the assembly's journey was screened, while Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik released the Golden Jubilee souvenir and a commemorative journal. *(PTI)*

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Opposition stages walkout in Rajya Sabha

Oppn demands discussion on electoral rolls revision in Bihar

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Opposition MPs on Monday staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha demanding discussion on electoral rolls revision in Bihar.

As the House reassembled at 2 pm, BJD's Sasmit Patra, who was in the Chair, informed the legislators that the Business Advisory Committee had decided to allot three hours for discussion on the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2025.

He also said that the committee has allotted one hour for consideration and passage of the Indian Institutes of Management (Amendment) Bill 2025, after it is approved by the Lok Sabha.

Patra then asked Union Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to introduce the Indian Ports Bill, 2025, which was mentioned in the listed agenda of the House.

Sonowal moved the bill amid the din.

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge stood up and demanded discussion on the

Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar.

He was joined by other Opposition members demanding a discussion on the issue.

"Any matter which is subjudice or is part of the judicial process right now cannot be taken on record and second, anything that is not part of the listed business, will not go on record," Patra said before giving the floor to the Leader of Opposition.

Kharge then demanded a discussion on SIR. However, the Chair declined to take up the matter, which led to noisy protests by the Opposition members.

In between, Leader of the House J P Nadda slammed the Opposition's "irresponsible behaviour" for regularly disrupting the House proceedings by resorting to "anarchism" and "obstructionism".

He said that the government is ready to discuss any subject, which is permitted in the rules.

"They (Opposition) have got no interest in discussion. And I would like to say on the record, that they have wasted 69 hours one minute of this House," Nadda said.

He said the country was watching the "irresponsible behaviour of the Opposition". Nadda said the Opposition was not interested in any discussion and "the more they are condemned the less" for their behaviour.

"As I had said earlier, they believe in anarchism and obstructionism... I would like to reiterate that we are willing to have discussion on each and every issue which are under the (relevant) rules and regulations," he said, adding that the House discussed Operation Sindoor as well.

"From opposing a party (referring to the ruling dispensation), they have started opposing the country," Nadda said.

While he was speaking, slogan-raising MPs staged a walkout in the House.

Earlier, the Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned till 2 pm after the House assembled at 11 am, following protests by Opposition members over the rejection of their 19 adjournment notices on various issues. *(PTI)*

SIR is 'new weapon' of 'vote chori', will protect 'one person, one vote': Rahul

AURANGABAD (BIHAR), Aug 18: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls is a "new weapon" of "vote chori" and vowed to protect the 'one person, one vote' principle. He made the remarks in a post on his WhatsApp channel while talking about his meeting with a group of people who had cast their vote in the previous Lok Sabha election but their name had been deleted in the SIR exercise in Bihar.

Gandhi met the group at the launch of his Vote Adhikar Yatra in Sasaram on Sunday.

In his post in Hindi along with a picture of the meeting, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said, "SIR is a new weapon of vote theft. Coincidentally, these people standing with me in this picture are 'living' proof of this theft."

"All of them had cast their vote in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections - but by the time Bihar assembly elections came, their identity, their existence was erased from the democracy of India," he said.

"Do you know who they are? Raj Mohan Singh (70): Farmer and retired soldier; Umravati Devi (35): Dalit and labourer; Dhanjay Kumar Bind (30): Backward class and labourer; Sita Devi (45): Woman and former MNREGA labourer; Raju Devi (55): Backward class and labourer; Mohmuddin Ansari (52): Minority and labourer," he said.

The "collusion" of BJP and Election Commission is punishing them for being 'Bahujan' and poor - even our soldiers were not spared, Gandhi said. Neither will they have a vote, nor identity or rights, he added.

"Due to social discrimination and economic conditions, they are unable to fight against the conspiracy of the system.We stand here with them to protect the most basic right of 'one person, one vote'," he said.

This is a question of rights and of everyone's participation in a democracy, he said, adding that "we will not let it end under any circumstances".

Meanwhile, Rahul Gandhi, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav along with Vikassheel Insan Party's Mukesh Sahani prayed at the Devkund Surya Mandir here as their Voter Adhikar Yatra entered its second day.

Travelling from Kutumba, the Yatra is expected to reach Gaya this evening.

Embarking on a 1,300 km 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' from Sasaram, Gandhi on Sunday had accused the Election Commission of "stealing" elections in collusion with the BJP and asserted that the INDIA bloc will not let their "latest conspiracy" to steal Bihar polls through SIR of electoral rolls succeed. After 16 days, the yatra will conclude with a rally in Patna on September 1. The yatra is being undertaken in a hybrid mode, on foot and by vehicle, as was Gandhi's Manipur to Mumbai Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. *(PTI)*

Radhakrishnan named by BJP for VP office eyeing mileage in TN polls, alleges DMK

CHENNAI, Aug 18: Senior DMK leader TKS Elangovan on Monday said the BJP is nominating Maharashtra Governor CP Radhakrishnan as its nominee to the post of vice president, "considering its own electoral gain," since the Assembly election is less than a year away in Tamil Nadu, and it is aimed at "deceiving the people."

The DMK leader gave a clear hint that his party would not back Radhakrishnan's candidature.

Radhakrishnan is a BJP man, and his nomination by the saffron party for the second top Constitutional office is an elevation to him, and "it is not going to do anything good" to Tamil Nadu, he said.

Former Rajya Sabha MP, Elangovan, wondered why the DMK should support Radhakrishnan's candidature and said his party would abide by the decision of the INDIA bloc, in which his party is a major partner.

Meanwhile, Vaiko, general secretary of MDMK, a DMK ally, said he was extending his party's "happy wishes" to Radhakrishnan, transcending "party lines" since the Maharashtra Governor is "a Tamilian and a cultured man who respects everyone cutting across political parties".

Criticising what he dubbed the BJP's intention in fielding Radhakrishnan in the vice presidential battle, DMK leader Elangovan claimed his nomination comes against the background of the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, due by March-April 2026.

"The BJP did not name Radhakrishnan for the sake of the Tamil Nadu people, but it was considering their own gains in the election since Assembly polls are round the corner, due by March-April 2026. They want to deceive the TN people by going to people with the claim that we have made a Tamilian the vice president."

He also alleged that, BJP regime at the Centre was insulting Tamil Nadu in all ways.

What have they done for Tamil Nadu state and its culture? he asked.

"What happened to Keeladi findings, and why was an ASI archaeologist Amarnath Ramakrishnan transferred when he said Keeladi was the "oldest civilisation in India?

Why do they not want to accept Tamil civilisation as the oldest civilisation? Is it not an insult to Tamils?" Elangovan questioned.

Further, he alleged: "They claim as if they have done something very great to Tamil Nadu; tell them to first recognise Keeladi findings, will they do it? Why are they refusing to do it? They are insulting Tamil Nadu itself and the Tamils themselves and the people have understood this and that is why they have not accepted the BJP at any time."

The BJP leadership has nominated a Tamilian to make a claim that it has done good for the Tamils, Elangovan told PTI Videos.

"Also, the tenure (of the new vice president) is going to be only for about 2 years, which is the remainder of Jagdeep Dhankar's term," he said.

According to official rules, the vice president, when elected, would have a full term. According to Article 67 of the Constitution, the term of office of the vice president would be for a term of five years from the date on which he assumes office. Elangovan said there are many Tamilians in the BJP who are "ignored by the BJP leadership" itself.

Reiterating allegations such as the Centre does not provide funds to the state for education, he alleged Tamil Nadu is sidelined and that the state was not accepted by the BJP.

Whenever BJP leaders visit the state, they praise Tamil Nadu and every Tamilian knows that the BJP government is insulting them and that they do not want to do good to the people of Tamil Nadu. *(PTI)*

CEC did not answer our questions, acting like a BJP spokesperson: Oppn

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Accusing Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar of acting like a BJP spokesperson, opposition parties on Monday said he failed to answer their questions on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and issues related to voter list irregularities.

Addressing a joint press conference here after a meeting, representatives of eight prominent opposition parties like the Congress, TMC, SP, DMK and RJD hit out at the CEC, alleging that instead of responding to questions raised by them, he chose to attack them at his presser on Sunday.

"The right to vote is the most important right given by the Constitution to a common citizen. Democracy depends on it. EC is the body meant to protect it... But we can see that the CEC did not reply to the important questions being raised by the political parties, and is running away from its responsibility," Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi said.

He should have answered valid questions asked by the Opposition. "On the contrary, he raised questions on political parties and attacked them," he alleged.

"It would have been better if they had told why SIR was done in such a hurry, when elections are just three months away, without discussing with political parties; why are they in a rush to announce SIR?" he said.

He reminded the EC that its constitutional duty is to ensure free and fair elections and claimed that the officials at the helm are not allowing an inquiry into the Opposition's allegations.

" It's clear that EC is in the hands of some officials who are taking sides. Such officials are against any inquiry," he alleged.

Samajwadi Party leader Ramgopal Yadav said that while the EC is asking Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi to give an affidavit with his complaint, his party SP had submitted affidavits with complaints of around 18,000 voters being removed from the list in 2022, but no action was taken.

"In the 2022 UP polls, when Akhilesh Yadav said names of SP supporters have been removed from the voter list, we gave affidavits, but no action has been taken," he said. Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Mahua Moitra said that if the voter list, on which the last general election was conducted, is not correct, the Lok Sabha should be dissolved.

"Is the list on which the Lok Sabha election was done fraudulent? If that is true, the current and previous Election Commissioners should be prosecuted, and this Lok Sabha should be dissolved immediately," she said.

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Manoj Jha attacked the CEC, saying, "Yesterday we were looking for our CEC, we found a new BJP spokesperson".

Arvind Sawant of Shiv Sena (UBT) also accused the CEC of "behaving like a BJP spokesperson". *(PTI)*

Oppn should have risen above party politics on issue of nation pride: Rajnath Singh

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday slammed the Opposition for its protest during a discussion in Lok Sabha on astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla's journey to the International Space Station, which led to the House's adjournment, saying it should have risen above party politics on an issue linked to national pride and achievement.

The discussion remained inconclusive as the House was adjourned due to vociferous protests by the opposition over the issue of Special Intensive Review of electoral rolls by the Election Commission in Bihar.

"It was very unfortunate the way the Opposition created a ruckus in the House and did not allow it to function," Singh said on X.

The senior BJP leader said the discussion was on "India's first astronaut aboard the International Space Station -- Critical role of the space programme for Viksit Bharat by 2047", an issue which was linked to the country's pride and achievement and the scientific and national security possibilities of the future.

The Opposition's conduct has been deeply disappointing, Singh said, adding that these parties should have risen about partisan conduct on the issue of space, which is very important in the 21st century for India's strategic and scientific interests.

He said that the heights India is reaching in its space sector development under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership are unprecedented. The Opposition could have offered constructive criticism and suggestions by participating in the discussion, Singh said.

Initiating the discussion, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said amid the din of opposition's protest that an Indian astronaut will herald 'Viksit Bharat' by landing on the moon in 2040. *(PTI)*

Search for missing enters fifth day in cloudburst-hit Kishtwar village despite heavy rain

CHISOTI (JK), Aug 18: Braving heavy rains and difficult terrain, rescuers pressed on with the large-scale search operation to trace those buried under debris in this cloudburst-hit remote village of Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar on the fifth day on Monday, officials said.

Donning rain coats, the rescue

teams were seen working at multiple locations, especially the major impact spot near a langar (community kitchen) site, despite the downpour, sifting through the rubble using heavy machinery, including earth movers and sniffer dogs.

Cloudburst struck Chisoti, the last motorable village en route to the Machail Mata temple, on August 14, killing 61 people, including three CISF personnel and one Special Police Officer, and leaving over 100 others injured. The number of missing people has been reported as around 50 after a fresh revision of the list.

The flash-floods triggered by the cloudburst left a trail of destruction, flattening a makeshift market, a langar site for the annual Machail Mata yatra, damaging 16 houses and government buildings, three temples, four water mills, a 30-metre-long bridge, besides over a dozen vehicles.

"Today is the fifth day of the operation, and combined efforts are underway to recover the mortal remains of the missing persons. The weather is challenging in view of the rain. We also have a warning (of heavy rains) for the day, but still we are trying our best," a CISF officer said. The joint teams of police, army, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), CISF, Border Roads Organisation (BRO), civil administration, and local volunteers are engaged in the rescue efforts.

Army engineers on Sunday built a Bailey bridge over Chisoti nullah, providing much-needed connectivity to the village and the Machail Mata shrine. The Army has also inducted a couple of all-terrain vehicles as part of the efforts to intensify the rescue and relief operation, officials said.

The rescuers conducted about half a dozen controlled explosions over the last two days to blow up giant boulders hampering the search.

The annual Machail Mata yatra, which began on July 25 and was scheduled to conclude on September 5, remained suspended for the fifth consecutive day on Sunday.

The 8.5-km trek to the 9,500-foot-high shrine starts from Chisoti, located about 90 km from Kishtwar town.

The rescuers are utilising over a dozen earth-movers and other heavy equipment, while the NDRF mobilised its resources, including dog squads, to speed up the rescue operation. *(PTI)*

Local trains, flights hit in Mumbai

Rain fury: 5 missing, 200 stranded in Nanded

MUMBAI, Aug 18: More than 200 villagers were stranded in Maharashtra's Nanded district amid incessant rains on Monday, prompting authorities to deploy the army for rescue and relief efforts, officials said.

Five persons are reported missing from Mukhed taluka of Nanded district, around 600 km from Mumbai, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said.

There has been a significant rise in the water level of Lendi dam, an inter-state irrigation project between Maharashtra and Telangana located in the taluka, while a large amount of water is flowing into the area from Latur, Udgir and neighbouring Karnataka, he said.

In Mumbai, people woke up to very heavy rainfall on Monday, while the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a 'red' alert, forecasting extremely heavy rains, prompting the civic body to declare a holiday for schools and colleges, officials said.

Roads in several areas got inundated after the heavy downpour for the third consecutive day.

Many flights were affected due to poor weather conditions, with some executing "go-arounds" and one flight diverted.

The heavy downpour led to low visibility and increased congestion on access roads, causing inconvenience to both arriving and departing passengers, an airport official said.

A Mumbai airport spokesperson said nine flights conducted "go-arounds" before finally landing, while one flight was diverted to Surat till 12 noon due to the heavy rains. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) appealed to residents to step out only if necessary, and the IMD asked fishermen not to venture into the Arabian Sea.

Fadnavis said Mumbai received 177 mm rain in 6 to 8 hours on Monday and asked citizens to observe all precautions since more is expected through the day along with high tides.

District collectors of Nanded, Latur, and Bidar are coordinating with each other to carry out rescue operations, he said.

"One NDRF team, one military unit, and a police team are working in coordination for the rescue efforts. A military unit from Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar has also been dispatched. The local administration has been instructed to stay in the affected areas and coordinate continuously," Fadnavis said.

Nanded collector Rahul Kardile told PTI that the district administration has called in a unit of the army to rescue people stranded in the floods.

The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) rescued 21 people stranded in Ravangaon and Hasnal villages of Mukhed taluka amid heavy rains on Sunday, he said. Local trains, considered the lifeline of the metropolis, were running late by around 10 minutes. However, there was no suspension of services, according to officials.

The suburban services on the Central Railway route were affected as water accumulated on tracks in a few low-lying areas on the Harbour Line, and due to failure of track changing points between Kurla and Tilak Nagar stations, the officials said.

As heavy rains lashed Mumbai on Monday, waterlogging was reported in several pockets, leading to slow moving traffic.

Airlines such as Akasa Air and IndiGo issued advisories for travellers, asking them to keep additional time in hand as some routes leading to the Mumbai airport witnessed traffic congestion.

Owing to waterlogging, both lanes of the Andheri subway were shut for vehicular movement for the day. The Mumbai Traffic Police informed that traffic will be routed via Thackeray bridge and Gokhale bridge.

Waterlogging was also reported along the Vakola bridge, Hyatt Junction as well as Khar subway, leading to slow traffic movement, police said.

In light of the incessant showers lashing Mumbai, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) declared a holiday for all schools and colleges in the city operating in the second shift (post 12 pm).

"Keeping in mind the safety of students due to the continuous rains that have been continuing since morning, Municipal Commissioner and Administrator Bhushan Gagrani has declared a holiday for all schools and colleges in Mumbai in the second semester i.e. after 12 noon on Monday, August 18," the BMC posted on X.

Mumbai Police Commissioner Deven Bharti advised citizens to exercise caution as heavy rainfall continued to lash the city.

"Dear Mumbaikars, Caution is advised as heavy rainfall continues under Orange Alert, incidents of water-logging and reduced visibility are being reported from multiple areas. Please avoid non-essential travel, plan your commute with care, and step out only if necessary," the CP posted on X.

In a post on X, Akasa Air wrote: "Due to heavy rainfall in certain parts of Mumbai, Bengaluru, Goa, and Pune, we anticipate slow moving traffic and congestion on roads leading to the airport. To ensure a seamless travel experience, we request you to plan for additional travel time to reach the airport well in time for your flight."

IndiGo said its airport staff will help the travellers along the way.

"If you are catching a flight today, we recommend heading out early and keeping an eye on your flight updates via our app and website. Our airport teams are standing by and ready to help you along the way," IndiGo posted on X. *(PTI)*

Man from UP killed in blast in Bengal

KOLKATA, Aug 18: A man, hailing from Uttar Pradesh, was killed in a bomb blast at Madhyamgram in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, police said on Monday.

The blast took place in front of the main gate of Madhyamgram High School at 12.57 am on Monday, they said, resulting in the death of one person, identified as Sachiddananda Mishra.

"He was injured and admitted to Barasat Medical College and Hospital. After a surgery, he was taken to a hospital in Kolkata, where he breathed his last this morning," a senior police officer of Barasat Police District said.

The man, in his mid-twenties, had suffered injuries on his left hand, abdomen and upper parts of the left leg, he said.

Forensic experts collected evidence from the spot, while a team from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) also visited the spot and carried out necessary probe into the matter. Preliminary investigation revealed that the deceased was carrying a black bag, which exploded, he said.

"We have seized torn pieces of the bag. Some wire, two mobile phone numbers, and photocopies of two Aadhaar cards were also found. The mobile phone numbers were of his family members in Uttar Pradesh," he said. *(PTI)*

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Students' body warns demographic shift poses existential threat to North East identity

NESO leads coordinated protests across North East against illegal immigration

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: The North East Students' Organisation (NESO), an umbrella body of major students' unions of the region, staged simultaneous sit-in demonstrations across several state capitals on Monday demanding urgent steps to detect and deport illegal immigrants and protect the identity of indigenous people.

In Tripura, the Twipra Students' Federation (TSF), a constituent unit of NESO, held a sit-in near Circuit House in Agartala protesting against the continuous influx of illegal migrants.

TSF vice president John Debbarma said that for over four decades, Tripura and other North Eastern states have been facing problems arising from illegal immigration.

He urged the state government to strictly enforce the directives of the Ministry of Home Affairs and to coordinate with neighbouring states, pointing out that people evicted from Assam during eviction drives might attempt to relocate in Tripura.

In Meghalaya, hundreds of students gathered in Shillong as NESO chairman Samuel B Jyrwa described the agitation as a "call to action" to address an issue that has altered the demography and stability of the region.

He said that since the Prime Minister had acknowledged the large-scale immigration problem in his Independence Day address, the Centre should now act decisively.

The Khasi Students' Union (KSU), one of NESO's strongest units, announced it would intensify "ILP-style checks" in the state, claiming that the government was not serious about tackling the issue.

KSU general secretary Donald V Thabah said that volunteers had already stepped up vigil along the border areas in South West Khasi Hills and demanded creation of a territorial army for Meghalaya to safeguard its borders.

In Nagaland, the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) held a sit-in at Naga Solidarity Park in Kohima, where students and NESO leaders warned that illegal migration posed one of the gravest threats to the region's socio-cultural fabric and political stability.

NESO general secretary Mutsikhoyo Yhobu and NSF president Medovi Rhi submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio through Chief Secretary Sentiyanger Imchen, demanding immediate detection and deportation of migrants, sealing of the Indo-Bangladesh border, strengthening of security with modern surveillance, and legal safeguards to protect indigenous rights, language and land ownership.

They also called for a Special Review Committee to examine abnormal population growth in vulnerable areas, warning that demographic changes were pushing the North East towards an existential crisis.

In Manipur, the All Manipur Students' Union under NESO's banner staged a sit-in at Keisamthong in Imphal West district.

The protesters demanded implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state, resettlement of internally displaced persons, and creation of a review committee to check abnormal population rise.

A memorandum was submitted to Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, urging immediate deportation of illegal immigrants, sealing of the Indo-Bangladesh border, and stronger border management.

NESO also stressed that the Centre and state governments must resolve the ongoing conflict in Manipur and bring lasting peace, noting that at least 260 lives have been lost and thousands displaced since May 2023.

NESO said that Monday's coordinated demonstrations in Agartala, Shillong, Kohima and Imphal reflected the urgency of the problem, which has affected Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur and other parts of the region for decades.

The apex body maintained that without immediate and sustained measures by both the Centre and state governments, the indigenous identity of the North East could be irreversibly altered. *(With Inputs from PTI)*

GNF condemns forced conscription of Naga youths by KIA, backs NSO Myanmar

KOHIMA, Aug 18: The Global Naga Forum (GNF) has expressed its "unequivocal support" for the Naga Students' Organisation (NSO) Myanmar (Burma) and their "principled stand concerning the recent abductions and forced conscription of Naga youths in Shinbwiyang by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and its allied group, the Eastern Naga Defense Army (ENDA).

The GNF, in a statement issued today, commended the NSO for its "measured and dignified response, which upholds the ideals of truth, unity, and justice, the very foundations upon which the Naga political movement rests".

Historically, the bond between the Kachin and the Naga peoples has been one of deep solidarity, forged through shared experiences of marginalisation, resistance, and aspirations for self-determination, said the GNF. This long-standing fraternity has been built on mutual respect, cultural affinity, and political cooperation, it also said. Therefore, the recent shift in KIA's approach, marked by coercion and violations of individual dignity, is not only disappointing but deeply painful for the Naga people, the GNF lamented.

The GNF then said it was concerned that this change in posture by the KIA may be influenced by larger geopolitical forces that are playing out across the Indo-Myanmar region. The strategic interests of powerful actors, including the military junta in Myanmar, the Government of India, the People's Republic of China, and the United States have significantly altered the dynamics on the ground, the GNF also said.

The statement then said, "It is plausible that the KIA, operating in a complex battlefield of survival and diplomacy, is being compelled to make decisions that serve short-term tactical interests but risk long-term damage to the trust and solidarity between indigenous communities". The GNF further said it fears that such decisions may be part of a broader game plan to divide ethnic resistance movements, co-opt genuine revolutionary struggles, and suppress indigenous aspirations under the guise of regional stability and strategic cooperation.

In particular, the GNF questioned whether the KIA's recent actions may be linked to shifting alliances and covert strategies employed by the Government of India to weaken Naga unity and resistance, especially in the context of the Indo-Naga political negotiations and the scrapping of the Free Movement Regime (FMR). Such developments must be critically examined, it added.

The GNF then urged KIA to return to its founding revolutionary ethics based on respect, empathy, and the will of the people and to cease all acts of forced conscription and intimidation. "Let history not remember the KIA as an oppressor of fellow oppressed peoples, but as a principled ally in the collective struggle for dignity, justice, and freedom", it added.

The GNF then called upon all indigenous movements in the region to resist being pawns in the power games of dominant regimes and imperialist forces. "Our true strength lies in unity, not submission, in mutual support, not coercion".

In solidarity with the NSO and the Naga people, the GNF reaffirmed its commitment to peace, justice, and the preservation of fraternal ties between the Naga and Kachin communities. *(NNN)*

Two-day Mizoram monsoon session on August 27-28

AIZAWL, Aug 18: The monsoon session of the Mizoram legislative Assembly will be held on August 27 and 28, an official said on Monday. The session schedule was finalised at a recent meeting of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) chaired by Speaker Lalbiakzama, the official added.

The official said the Assembly secretariat has so far received one fresh bill, 'The Mizoram Local Body Ombudsman Bill, 2025, and an amendment bill from the land revenue department to be tabled during the session. In addition, the secretariat has received one official resolution from the forest department, along with 350 starred and 124 unstarred questions, which are expected to be addressed by the ministers concerned.

The upcoming session will be the fifth of the present 9th state legislative Assembly after the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) came to power in December 2023, the official said. *(PTI)*

Heroin worth over ₹ 4 cr seized in Meghalaya, 3 women from Manipur held

SHILLONG, Aug 18: Three women from Manipur were arrested in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district after heroin worth ₹ 4.4 crore was seized from their possession, police said on Monday. Acting on a tip-off, a team of the anti-narcotics task force (ANTF) and the district police intercepted a car at Umkiang patrolling post on Sunday and conducted a search operation at the vehicle, a senior officer said.

"Three travel bags were recovered during the search. The police seized 961.33 grams of heroin, packed in 80 soap boxes," East Jaintia Hills Superintendent of Police Vikash Kumar told PTI. The three women — all residents of Khongjom in Manipur — were arrested and a case was registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act at Lumshnong police station, he said.

They were travelling to Shillong from Churachandpur in Manipur when their car was intercepted, the officer said.

In another operation on the same day, the police intercepted a bus at Byndihati village under the Khliehriat police station limits and apprehended a person from Shillong after 91.86 grams of heroin, packed in nine soap boxes, were recovered from his possession, the SP said.

The seized contraband item was valued at ₹ 40 lakh, he said, adding that the bus was also coming from Manipur.

The SP said investigations are underway to identify the linkages of the inter-state drug syndicate.

He appealed to the public to share information on supplies of narcotics, assuring confidentiality and suitable rewards for credible inputs. *(PTI)*

Carbon credits can revolutionise farmers' income: Tripura Minister

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 18: Tripura Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath on Monday said that carbon credits can be a revolutionary step to combat the effects of climate change and create new avenues of income for farmers.

The Minister said this after saplings of various fruit trees were planted on the premises of Swami Vivekananda College in Mohanpur through a program organized by the Rotary Club of Aspiring Agartala.

"We must ensure to work to protect the environment. We are now modernising, and because of that, global warming is increasing. Modernisation is responsible for global warming. If carbon dioxide is excessive in the air, the environment is destroyed, but if the amount is high in soil, then it is good for agriculture and production will be better. So, we must plant more trees to decrease the amount of carbon dioxide in the air. Rise in carbon dioxide causes global warming, and we must plant more and more trees to make the world cool," said the minister. He said that in the next few years, the demand for selling carbon credits in India will increase by 30% from Monday, and farmers, along with the government, can sell carbon credits in the international market and earn additional income through the use of modern agricultural systems and renewable energy.

"In fact, not all of us are aware of carbon credits. It may take us some time to understand that carbon can also be sold. One carbon credit is the equivalent of absorbing 1 metric ton of carbon dioxide and storing it in the soil. Basically, carbon credits can be a revolutionary step to combat the effects of climate change and create new avenues of income for farmers. Sustainable agricultural practices such as organic farming, climate-smart agriculture, planting trees, and afforestation can store carbon in the soil and sell it. Through this, farmers will not only protect the environment but will also be able to earn additional income by selling carbon credits in the international and domestic markets. This initiative will not only help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and environmental temperatures but will also pave the way for farmers' economic self-reliance and social development," said the minister.

He also lauded the role of the Rotary Club of Aspiring Agartala for their initiative in various social works.

9 state master trainers from Nagaland trained in Guwahati

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 18: A nine-member team of state master trainers from Nagaland attended a seven-day regional process lab for the Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan, designed to facilitate a collaborative and immersive learning experience, in Guwahati from August 11 to 17, an official report said on Monday. The nine state master trainers, along with others, were trained to impart training and disseminate knowledge in creating district master trainers and block master trainers for the successful execution of the Aadi Karmmayogi Abhiyan, which is part of the broader vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The programme, organised for officers from Sikkim, Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland, aimed to equip the state master trainers with the necessary skills and knowledge to drive positive change in their respective domains and contribute to the overall development of tribal communities through a bottom-up approach.

The lab featured a range of interactive sessions, workshops, group discussions, group activities and presentations, with the participants sharing their experiences and best practices of their respective state.

The Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan is a movement of the Union ministry of tribal affairs aimed at building a cadre of two million trained grassroots change leaders to deliver last-mile governance and development across one lakh plus tribal villages of the country.

No. DME/Recruitment/23/2023/Pt.11/1683

NOTICE

In continuation to the advertisement vide No.DME/Recruitment/23/2023/2845, Dated: 26/12/2024, it is for general information of all concerned candidates of the written examination for recruitment of Grade-III. (Non-Technical) posts, who belong to Tea Tribes or Adivasi community and appeared in the written examination which was held on 30/03/2025, are directed to login to their respective accounts available in the link which will be provided in the official website of Directorate of Medical Education, Assam (www.dme.assam.gov.in) from 19/08/2025 to 25/08/2025 and submit their claim for reservation under Tea Tribe & Adivasi community.

All other terms and conditions will remain same.

Sd/-
Director of Medical Education, Assam

DIPR /D/HLT/123/19-Aug-25

CANCELLATION OF TENDER NO. C-LMG-08-2025 & C-LMG-09-2025, DATED: 13-08-2025

This is to inform you that e-tenders for the following stalls invited by Lumding division in the IREPS e-tender Module on 12-08-2025 vide NIT nos **C-LMG-08-2025** & **C-LMG-09-2025** have been **CANCELLED** by competent authority. Fresh e-tenders have been invited vide new NIT no. as mentioned below.

SL. No.	NIT No.	Details of the e-tender
1	C-LMG-10-2025	Provision of Milk Stall at General Minor Unit, GHYMS-1 at PF -1 between pillars 16-17 of Guwahati railway station.
2	C-LMG-11-2025	Provision of Catering Services at General Minor Unit, GHYTS-13 at PF 1 between pillars 14-15 of Guwahati Station.

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Tripura MLA flags misuse of ST facilities through inter-Community marriages

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 18: Tipra Motha Party MLA Ranjit Debbarma on Monday wrote a letter to the Chairperson of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), seeking cancellation of all Scheduled Tribe (ST) facilities granted to tribal women of Tripura who marry non-tribals.

In his letter, Debbarma alleged that a section of non-tribal men were intentionally marrying tribal women to illegally avail ST benefits and avoid paying government taxes.

"I would like to draw your kind attention to the fact that a considerable number of non-tribal boys are marrying Scheduled Tribe girls with the intention of escaping legitimate taxes of the government. After marriage, they transfer their properties in the name of their tribal wives only to evade taxes," the MLA stated.

He further pointed out that many non-tribal grooms, engaged in businesses such as petrol pumps, gas agencies, ration shops, and other institutions, run them in the names of their ST wives to take advantage of subsidies and tax exemptions provided by both the central and state governments.

Debbarma alleged that such practices have also led to large-scale land acquisitions in TTAADC areas through tribal brides, which are then used for rubber plantations, gardening, brick kilns, and other commercial activities, often causing deforestation.

"In every sphere of life, they are misusing government benefits by marrying tribal girls. Even in the health sector, such exemptions are being taken undue advantage of," he said.

The MLA urged the Commission to take urgent steps to prevent such marriages and to immediately withdraw all ST facilities from tribal women who have married non-tribals in the state.

Mizoram gets its first 'Health ATMs'

AIZAWL, Aug 18: In a landmark initiative in public healthcare, 'Health ATMs' were inaugurated at two medical establishments in Mizoram on Monday, an official said.

The 'Health ATMs', equipped with modern diagnostic tools, will enable citizens to instantly get their vital health parameters such as blood pressure, blood sugar, BMI and oxygen levels checked by health officials.

The facilities were unveiled at Lunglei Civil Hospital and Primary Health Centre (PHC) at Lungsen village under the district administration's 'Healthy Lunglei Initiative', Health Minister Lalrinpuii said.

The Health ATMs will offer 35 varieties of diagnostic tests, covering general health, diabetes, hematology, cardiac, ear, eye, and mental health parameters, officials said.

These include vital checks such as blood pressure, blood sugar, BMI, ECG, lipid profile, vision and hearing assessments, as well as a depression and anxiety screening tool, they said.

A personalised diet plan feature is also available to support preventive healthcare, they said.

All tests can be done free of cost in less than half an hour, with instant results delivered directly to the user's mobile phone.

Besides the health minister, Lunglei High Powered Committee vice chairman and MLA V Malsawmtluanga, Lunglei South MLA Lalramliana Papuia, Lunglei Municipal Council chairman and councillors, representatives of companies, churches and NGOs, party leaders and students attended the inaugural event. Speaking on the occasion, Lalrinpuii described the occasion of launching Mizoram's first 'Health ATMs' as a "proud and historic moment" for the state.

She highlighted the progress made under the 'Healthy Lunglei' campaign, launched in June 2024, which has expanded preventive healthcare through screenings, awareness drives, and active community participation.

Speaking on the 'Health ATMs', she said the IoT-enabled kiosks will generate digital health records for timely follow-up, helping bridge the gap between rural and urban healthcare facilities while reducing time and cost for patients.

Lalrinpuii also commended the Lunglei deputy commissioner's office for holistic public health initiatives such as Project LEAP (for Persons with Disabilities) and Project BLOOM (focused on improving maternal and child health in Lungsen aspirational block).

She thanked MVS India, ABCI Infrastructures Pvt Ltd, and BRN for their CSR support and collaboration, calling the project "a shining example of government, private sector, and civil society working together to achieve lasting change".

Lunglei Deputy Commissioner Navneet Mann gave a brief description of the Health ATM initiative and other activities under the Healthy Lunglei District Campaign.

The Health ATM initiative was made possible following a tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between Manav Vikas Sanstha (MVS India), Lunglei DC's office and ABCI Infrastructures Pvt Ltd, officials said.

Under the MoU, ABCI and BRN funded the procurement and maintenance of the Health ATMs through its CSR programme, while the MVS India was responsible for installation, training and technical support, they said.

The DC's office will provide administrative facilitation and ensure sustainability.

With the introduction of Health ATMs, Lunglei district has taken a pioneering step in integrating technology into healthcare delivery, improving access to preventive services, and strengthening the vision of a Healthy Lunglei, officials added.

They said that the installation of a Health ATM at PHC Lungsen is expected to greatly strengthen ongoing health initiatives to improve health indicators under the NITI Aayog's aspirational blocks programme in Lungsen block. *(PTI)*

অসম লোকসেৱা আয়োগ
ASSAM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022.
No. 81PSC/DR-23/2/2024-2025

NOTIFICATION

This is for information to all concerned that the Assam Public Service Commission will hold the Written Examination (Conventional & OMR based) for recruitment to the post of **Inspector of Statistics in the Directorate of Economics & Statistics under Transformation and Development Department, Government of Assam. (Advt. No. 03/2025, dated 22/01/2025)** as per programme given below:

PROGRAMME OF WRITTEN EXAMINATION (CONVENTIONAL & OMR BASED)

Name of Post	Date & Day	Time	Subjects
Inspector of Statistics in the Directorate of Economics & Statistics under Transformation and Development Department, Government of Assam	06-09-2025 (Saturday)	9:00 AM to 12 Noon	English (Paper-I) (Conventional)
		1:30 PM to 3:30 PM	General Knowledge (Paper-II) (OMR based objective type)
	07-09-2025 (Sunday)	9:00 AM to 12 Noon	Optional Subject (Paper-III) (Conventional)

No intimation letter to the eligible candidates shall be sent separately by post. The list of candidates shall be uploaded on **21-08-2025** and e-Admission Certificate shall be uploaded on **01-09-2025** in the Commission's official website **(www.apsc.nic.in)**. The candidates shall have to download their own e-Admission Certificate from the aforesaid website.

The Commission would like to clarify that the Commission reserves the right **to cancel the candidature of any candidate on verification of their application form** at any time or stage even after the Written Examination, if it is found that they do not fulfill any of the eligibility criteria/conditions as per terms of the **aforementioned advertisement.**

PwBD candidates willing to apply for scribe for the said Written Examination may inform in writing with supporting documents to the Commission or send mail to apsc-asm@nic.in on or before 26-08-2025.

Sd/-
Deputy Secretary,
Assam Public Service Commission
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati – 22

DIPR /D/HLT/124/19-Aug-25

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PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS CALLS 'KAMINEY' A 'TURNING POINT' OF HER CAREER

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas says the 2009 film "Kaminey", which also marked her first collaboration with the filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj, remains a turning point in her career.

Jonas went down memory lane and shared a picture from the film on her Instagram handle on Monday. Also starring Shahid Kapoor in the dual role, the film was released on August 14, 2009. It followed a rivalry between a pair of twins, Charlie and Guddu, both played by Kapoor. Jonas essayed the role of Sweety Bhope in the film. The 43-year-old actor said she was shooting for her film "Dostana" in Miami when she got a call from the filmmaker. The actor admitted she had been eager to collaborate with him for a long time but always thought he wouldn't cast her because of her "commercial" image. After the conversation, Bhardwaj visited her in Miami.

"I was filming for Dostana in Miami, Florida...One cool evening after we wrapped shoot, I saw a missed call from Vishal Bhardwaj. What?? I had wanted to work with him forever and never thought he would cast me because of my "commercial" image at the time...He said he'd like to come see me, and he did. To Miami," she wrote in the post.

The "Mujhse Shaadi Karogi" actor said the director promised to "make something incredible" for her after doing the part, is it had just eight scenes in total. "I remember him telling me the story and I said, 'Well, she has approximately 8 scenes.' And he said, 'With us working on it, it will end up being so much more. Trust me.' And I did...He promised he would make something incredible for me after this in appreciation for doing the part. But honestly, I was just greedy to work with him." (PTI)

Janhvi Kapoor reacts to trolls criticising her for saying 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' at Dahi Handi event

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Actress Janhvi Kapoor slammed the trolls after her video surfaced on the internet, where she is heard chanting the "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" slogan at Dahi Handi event during the Janmashtami celebration, and said there will always be an issue no matter what she does.

The video, which has been circulating on the internet, shows Kapoor at an event in Mumbai, as part of the promotion for her upcoming film "Param Sundari".

In the video, the 28-year-old actor was heard saying the slogan, for which she has been trolled on social media. The event was held Saturday in Mumbai.

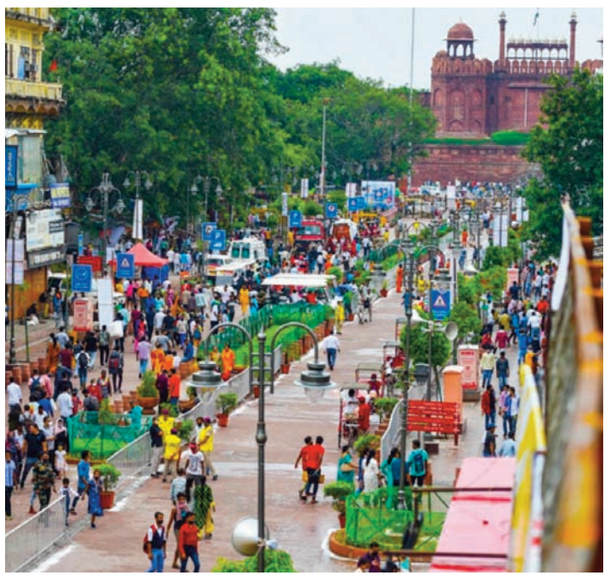
Kapoor reacted to the same by sharing the full video from the event on her Instagram story Sunday. "Just for context, full video lol. If I didn't repeat it after them, there would have been a problem. And if I do say it, the video gets edited and turned into meme material," she wrote.

The actor added she will keep saying the slogan every day. "By the way, not just on Janmashtami, I'll keep saying Bharat Mata Ki Jai every day."

Kapoor's upcoming film "Param Sundari" is set to release in theatres August 29. Also starring Sidharth Malhotra, the film is directed by Tushar Jalota. Dinesh Vijan has produced the film under his production banner, Maddock Films

Besides "Param Sundari", Kapoor will also star in "Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari" with Varun Dhawan. The film is slated to hit the big screen October 2 and has been written and directed by Shashank Khaitan. (PTI)

Chandni Chowk, Connaught Place top picks for filmmakers under Delhi Film Policy



NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Nearly 95 per cent of movies filmed in the national capital are shot at Chandni Chowk and Connaught Place, according to a DTTDC official who hopes the Delhi Film Policy, introduced in 2022, will encourage more filmmakers to cinematically explore the historic landmarks of the city.

Since its launch, around 39 films and web series have been shot under the policy framework till 2025, according to the official from Delhi Transport and Tourism Development Corporation, which looks after the policy. Akshay Kumar-starrer "Kesari 2" was filmed across Red Fort, Sunder Nursery, and Delhi University's North Campus and Rani Mukerji's "Mardaani" showcased the leafy lanes of Chittaranjan Park in South Delhi, and the upcoming third installment is also expected to feature key portions of the city, he added. Not only films but popular web series, be it "Special Ops" or "Paatal Lok", also had many portions set in Delhi. Under the policy, about 20 applications are expected to be accepted for film shooting permissions through its e-Film Clearance portal in 2025-26. In 2024-25, the portal received 10 applications. At least 15 of the new applications are likely to be cleared within 30 days.

Plans are also underway to link the e-Film Clearance system with the Information and Broadcasting Ministry's India Cine Hub. Publicity material will be rolled out to raise awareness about the initiative, as per the official. The Delhi Film Policy 2022 also established Delhi Film Fund for branding Delhi as a tourist destination. Under the ₹ five crore Dilli Film Fund, two applications have been received for performance-based funding. (PTI)

'OTP': A short film on the menace of cybercrime by DLSA, Chirang

HT Bureau

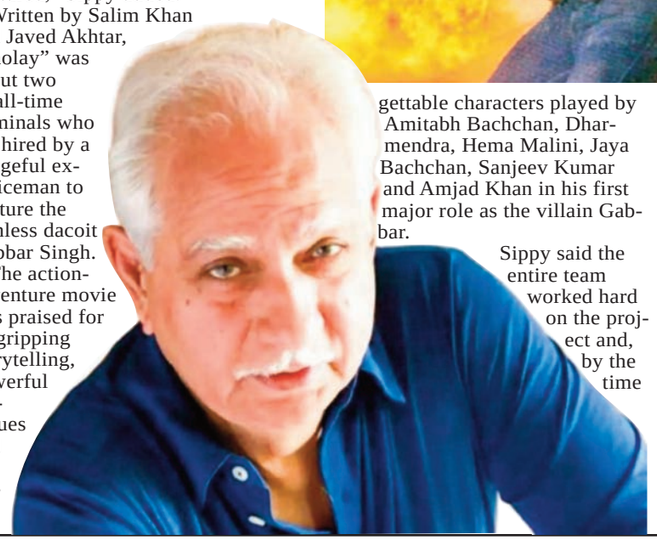
GUWAHATI, Aug 18: Cyber crime has resulted in the loss of about Rs 23,000 crore in 2024 alone and this amount is likely to increase manifold in the years to come. Pre-emptive measures have become imminent to prevent further loss. The District Legal Services Authority, Chirang has taken this initiative to create awareness about the various forms of cyber crime affecting people of all economic levels.

Through the release of a short film titled "OTP" on August 15 and available in both Assamese and Bodo languages, with English sub-titles, the DLSA, Chirang aims to raise awareness about the menace of cyber crime among the people in the society.

Through this film, we hope to bring about a positive change in our society by spreading awareness about the menace of cyber crime. The DLSA, Chirang urges all members of society to watch and share 'OTP', contributing to the effort of DLSA, Chirang for spreading awareness about the various forms of cyber crime on a broad scale.

The short film 'OTP' is available in both Assamese and Bodo languages with English sub-titles in YouTube channel of DLSA Chirang and can be viewed by clicking at: http://www.youtube.com/@dlsachirang.

If 'Sholay' could be made, something better can also be made: Filmmaker Ramesh Sippy



MUMBAI, Aug 18: Fifty years since "Sholay" appeared on screen, it has been seen by generations of audiences as perfection personified, with every frame emblazoned in their memory.

Yet the man who made the magic says "Sholay" is not a perfect film.

Really? Why do you say that, we asked Ramesh Sippy.

"I think you always want to better 'Sholay'. That's how you keep your spirits up. Otherwise, how will you carry on?" Sippy told PTI in an interview at his office.

He said if he had told himself "Oh, I can't" make another film like "Sholay", then that would have been the end of it. "(But) there is no end of it. Otherwise 'Sholay' would not have been made if there was an end to it."

"The fact that 'Sholay' was made, that means something better than 'Sholay' can also be made and people will learn to like that kind of film as well," he said.

Whatever Sippy might feel, the Indian audiences over generations don't think anything better than "Sholay" has been made.

Setting aside the modesty, the 78-year-old concedes that the audience's enduring love for every frame of the classic is nothing short of amazing.

Be it Gabbar Singh's evil laughter, Jai-Veeru's undying friendship, Thakur's quest for vengeance, Soorma Bhopali's boastful banter or Basanti's exuberant defiance, the film lives in the memories of those who watched it for the first time when it released on August 15, 1975. It stayed on in the hearts of generations who discovered it later.

"It feels good that people still love everything about it, and I'm amazed that we're talking about it after 50 years. It's still not gone. It's there in everyone's heart. We have a new generation and a new generation coming up.

"All that has also happened, but that's the beauty of masterpieces and those beautiful moments that are captured," Sippy added.

Written by Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar, "Sholay" was about two small-time criminals who are hired by a vengeful ex-policeman to capture the ruthless dacoit Gabbar Singh.

The action-adventure movie was praised for its gripping storytelling, powerful dialogues and unforgettable characters played by Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Hema Malini, Jaya Bachchan, Sanjeev Kumar and Amjad Khan in his first major role as the villain Gabbar.

Sippy said the entire team worked hard on the project and, by the time shooting was completed, he knew he had a "fine film" in hand.

"You can't think of any of these characters being played by any other actor or actress. It was just simply so good. They did their best. I was able to get performances which were amazing because they are such fine artists and because as a script it was very satisfying and promising and everybody worked towards achieving what they could in their own capacities."

"At the end we had a fine film in our hand which till today we are here talking about it 50 years later, it's amazing," he said.

The role of Gabbar changed Amjad Khan's life, paving the way for hits like "Inkaar", "Satte Pe Satta", "Hum Kisise Kum Nahin" and "Naseeb". But he was not the first choice for the iconic part -- it was initially offered to actor Danny Denzongpa.

"Danny Denzongpa was to play Gabbar; he could not make it to the shoots because at that time he was in Afghanistan shooting for 'Dharmatma'. We had to make a last-minute dash for another actor and fortunately we found Gabbar in Amjad Khan, the son of another fine actor, Jayant.

"So, it was wonderful to have him in. And I think the way Amjad worked for Gabbar, it's a completely historic thing now. I don't think anybody can imagine anybody else but Amjad Khan in that role," he said.

He remembered Khan, who passed away 1992 at the age of 51, as a dedicated, eager actor who wanted to prove himself and earn the director's approval.

"In the beginning he couldn't get it right. It happened because when he spoke his lines, he had to rub tobacco in his palm and get it right. But while he spoke his line, he would stop this action and he would say the line and it seemed incorrect for the character who has this habit.

"So, we stopped shooting for two three days while he rehearsed properly to speak the lines along with the action. And then he finally got into it and we started shooting. It did take time, but once he got into it, he was on fire," Sippy recounted.

Amitabh's character Jai has a special fan following due to his camaraderie with Dharmendra's Veeru and his quiet and restrained demeanour. Many consider his death as one of the most heartbreaking moments of "Sholay".

Sippy said he was advised against killing off Jai and even discussed it with the writers Salim-Javed.

"People told me that your film will be a bigger hit if he doesn't die. And I said, 'Well, that's the story. You can't change the story like that'. People loved him so much that his death affected them. So that's good for the film and the story... When you feel that the hero should not have died, then that's what storytelling is all about."

Sippy's filmography also includes other hit titles such as "Seeta Aur Geeta", "Shaan", "Shakti" and "Saagar" but the popularity of Sholay stands on an altogether different level.

"I have tried my best to make good films before and after 'Sholay' and I have succeeded as well, but somehow nothing stands out like 'Sholay'. "I do hope that one day there comes a film that beats 'Sholay'. That's the way the world is. You need to be better than what was. So everybody has to strive to do that, and I'm sure one of these days, one will come across that kind of film that everybody would love to see," Sippy said. (PTI)

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PSG begin Ligue 1 title defense with a scrappy win at Nantes, Giroud scores for new club Lille

PARIS, Aug 18: Vitinha broke the deadlock with the aid of a lucky deflection as Paris Saint-Germain began its Ligue 1 title defense with an unconvincing 1-0 win at Nantes.

Champions League winner PSG looked short of ideas, just as it had for long spells against Europa League champion Tottenham during the UEFA Super Cup final on Wednesday.

Portugal midfielder Vitinha collected the ball about 20 meters out and his strike clipped defender Chidozie Awaziem as he tried to duck under the ball, before wrong-footing goalkeeper Anthony Lopes in the 67th minute. That proved enough for coach Luis Enrique's side, which was again without goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma. The Italy No. 1 wants to leave PSG after it bought Lucas Chevalier from Lille and has been linked with a move to Manchester City. PSG

A scrappy first half saw little creativity, and neither Chevalier or Lopes had much to do.

Nantes coach Luis Castro may regret leaving his best striker Matthis Abline on the bench until the 60th minute. Abline is pursuing a move away from Nantes, which looked much sharper when he came on.

Other matchesVeteran striker Olivier Giroud took only 11 minutes to score on his return to Ligue 1, but it was not enough as his new side Lille drew 3-3 at Brest. Giroud was picked out by Felix Correia's clever pass behind the defense and finished with a left-footed shot under the goalkeeper. The 38-year-old Giroud became Lille's oldest scorer in Ligue 1 and he lasted the whole game. “It was a special moment for me and I'm happy to be back in Ligue 1,” Giroud told broadcaster DAZN. “The coach asked me several times how I was feeling and I said I wanted to play until the end.”

Midfielder Hakon Arnar Haraldsson made it 2-0 before Kamory Doumbia scored twice to level the match. Lille regained the lead midway through the second half when Ngal'ayel Mukau scored following a corner, but Julien Le Cardinal equalized.

Striker Esteban Lepaul's early goal was enough for Angers to win 1-0 at home to newly promoted Paris FC despite having midfielder Louis Mouton sent off in the 57th. Striker Lassine Sinayoko scored early in the second half as Auxerre won 1-0 at home against Lorient, which was promoted as Ligue 2 winner.

Metz started with 16-year-old prospect Brian Madjo in attack but conceded a late goal in a 1-0 home loss to Strasbourg. New signing Joaquin Panichelli scored for the visitors. Back to FranceGiroud joined Lille after a disappointing spell with Los Angeles FC.

He previously made his name with AC Milan, Chelsea and Arsenal — the club he joined from Montpellier after winning the French title in 2012 and scoring 21 league goals that season.

Giroud is France's all-time leading men's scorer with 57 goals and won the 2018 World Cup with Les Bleus.

“I wanted to challenge myself one more time,” Giroud said. (AP)

FIFA hit with $76M claim by Lassana Diarra in decade-long soccer transfer rules case

EUPEN (BELGIUM), Aug 18: Lawyers for former France international Lassana Diarra said Monday he is claiming 65 million euros ($76 million) from FIFA and the Belgian soccer federation after a landmark legal win about transfer rules.

Diarra's decade-long challenge to FIFA after a breakdown in relations with his former club Lokomotiv Moscow led to a ruling at the European Union's top court last October that some aspects of soccer's transfer rules do not comply with the 27-nation bloc's labor and competition laws.

Lawyers for the 40-year-old former Chelsea, Arsenal and Real Madrid midfielder cited “unsuccessful settlement negotiations with FIFA” for the financial claim for damages throughout his career.

“Lassana Diarra is claiming €65 million gross (€35 million net) in compensation from FIFA and the Belgian Football Association,” his legal firm Dupont Hissel said in a statement. FIFA was approached for comment about the latest high-stakes legal challenge to its authority. Diarra's case, which is back in court in Belgium, is supported by the global players' union FIFPRO, its European division and their national member union in France.

The legal case started in the home country of Charleroi, the Belgian club that wanted to sign Diarra after his contract in Moscow was terminated.

FIFA transfer rules at the time made the player and the potential signing club liable for paying the former club when a contract was ruled to have been broken without “just cause.” The Court of Arbitration for Sport upheld FIFA's ruling in favor of Lokomotiv.

The case was sent to the European court which said the FIFA rules “hinder the free movement of players and competition between clubs.”

Diarra's dispute with Lokomotiv and FIFA forced him to miss the 2014-15 season. He then signed for Marseille and ended his career at Paris Saint-Germain six years ago.

“I am doing this for myself,” Diarra said in a statement Monday published by his lawyers. “And if I have been able to hold out against the FIFA steamroller, it is because I had a good career.”

“But I have also done it for all the up and coming, lesser known players who do not have the financial and psychological means to challenge FIFA before real judges,” he said.

Diarra's lawyers also are working on a class action suit filed this month against FIFA and some national soccer federations in Europe which claims could benefit 100,000 players over more than two decades. (AP)

Bhatia squeezes into last spot for elite Tour C'ship; Scheffler wins again

OWING MILLS (USA), Aug 18: Akshay Bhatia endured an anxious wait after dropping four bogeys in his last six holes of the BMW Championship, but eventually squeezed into the 30th and final spot for the season-ending Tour Championship.

Bhatia, who had started the week ranked 29th in the FedEx Cup standings, shot 75-69-66-72 for a two-over total and finished tied-26th in the 49-player field.

He looked set to slip outside the top-30, but late results confirmed his place, giving him a second straight appearance at the elite finale.

The Hero Golfer had provided one of the highlights of the week with a hole-in-one in the third round, which earned him a car.

Scottie Scheffler produced another stunning performance, erasing a four-shot deficit in five holes before chipping in from 82 feet on the par-3 17th to seal his fifth PGA TOUR title of the year.

He closed with a 3-under 67 to finish at 15-under 265, two shots clear of Scotland's Robert MacIntyre. Scheffler thus became the first player since Tiger Woods (2006-07) to win at least five times on the PGA TOUR in consecutive years.

Scheffler has 18 career titles in the last three years and six months since his first PGA TOUR title in Phoenix.

MacIntyre pulled within one shot of the lead going to the 17th, the toughest hole at Caves Valley.

Scheffler went just left in the rough, the ball sitting up nicely but the shot was very tough. He landed it some 60 feet short and watched it trickle, and then roll, and then slow again until it dropped into the cup.

MacIntyre stared at it totally stunned. MacIntyre, who made 18 birdies in the first 45 holes of the tournament, made only two over the last 27 holes. He shot 73.

Scheffler leads the 30 players who advanced to the TOUR Championship at East Lake with a chance to become the first repeat FedExCup champion since the series began in 2007.

All 30 players at East Lake can win the USD 10 million first-place prize money. (PTI)

Mohun Bagan refuse to release players, slam AIFF over 'injury neglect'

KOLKATA, Aug 18: Reigning Indian Super League champions Mohun Bagan on Monday bluntly refused to release their players for the ongoing national camp, stressing that it is "not mandatory" outside a FIFA window and accusing the All India Football Federation of "negligence" over player welfare.

The senior India squad began its preparatory camp in Bengaluru on August 15 ahead of next month's CAFA Nations Cup, but 13 players, including seven from Mohun Bagan, are yet to join the camp.

Initially, their absence was attributed to the club's Durand Cup commitments. But even after the Mariners crashed out with a 1-2 derby defeat to East Bengal in the quarterfinals here on Sunday, the club has stood firm, citing their upcoming AFC Champions League Two opener against Turkmenistan's Ahal FC at Salt Lake Stadium on September 16.

Hitting out at the federation, a Mohun Bagan official pointed to the case of skipper Subhasish Bose, who has been sidelined since suffering an injury during India's Asian Cup qualifier against Bangladesh in March this year.

"Every time they take our players, three-four of them return injured, and the AIFF is least bothered to communicate, compensate, or even check on them," the official told PTI.

"Look at Bose... He is under rehab, has missed the entire season so far, we are paying his salary, and yet the federation hasn't even called once to inquire about him."

He further added: "Unless it is a FIFA international window, it is not mandatory for the club to release its players as there is no compensation in case of injury. Hence, we are not releasing anyone for this camp."

The seven Mariners missing from the camp include Anirudh Thapa, Deepak Tangri, Lalengmawia, Liston Colaco, Manvir Singh, Sahal Abdul Samad and Vishal Kaith. Forward Manvir is already nursing an injury.

Mohun Bagan have also denied the release of four youngsters -- Dippendu Biswas, Suhail Bhat, Priyansh Dubey and T Abhishek Singh -- who are with the India U-23 side preparing for next month's AFC U-23 Asian Cup qualifiers in Qatar.

"Abhishek is a vital cog in our defence in the absence of Bose, and so are Dippendu, Suhail and Priyansh. We will not release them either," the official said.

Mohun Bagan's defiance comes even as the AIFF, in its statement, thanked Jamshedpur FC for releasing coach Khalid Jamil "in the national interest" despite the ongoing season, and appealed for "cooperation" from all clubs. (PTI)

Atletico Madrid squanders lead and loses its opening Spanish league match for 1st time under Simeone

MADRID, Aug 18: Despite debuting most of its new signings, Atletico Madrid couldn't avoid conceding two late goals and losing its opening Spanish league match for the first-ever time under coach Diego Simeone.

Host Espanyol's 2-1 win on Sunday was Atletico's first opening defeat since Simeone took over in late 2011. It hadn't previously lost an opening league game since 2009.

It was a good start for Espanyol under the ownership of Engand-based group Velocity Sport Limited and its American shareholders.

“What a wonderful way to start the season, with a win against Atlético Madrid!” U.S. businessman Alan Pace posted on Instagram after attending the match in Barcelona.

Simeone started the match with five of the club's new signings for the season — Álex Baena, Thiago Almada, Johnny Cardoso, David Hancko and Matteo Ruggeri. Giacomo Raspadori also made his debut coming off the bench in the second half.

Atletico took the lead with Julián Alvarez's free kick in the 37th minute but conceded goals by Miguel Rubio in the 73rd and Pere Milla in the 84th.

“It happens,” Simeone said. “The result hurts, but it's going to make us improve and grow. I'm left with all the good things the team did.”

Last season, Atletico only twice lost a league match that it was leading.

“We played a very good first half and we had the match under control in the second,” Atletico midfielder Koke said. “But after their first goal they turned things around.”

Barcelona began the defense of its Spanish league title with a comfortable 3-0 win at nine-man Mallorca on Saturday. Real Madrid hosts Osasuna on Tuesday

Nico leads AthleticWith transfer rumors in the past, Nico Williams led Athletic Bilbao to a 3-2 win over Sevilla in its opening Spanish league match.

Williams, who had been linked with a move to Barcelona in the offseason but seems set to stay with his boyhood club, put the hosts ahead by converting a 36th-minute penalty kick. (AP)

After 'venting' his frustration, Hamilton could come back stronger from F1's mid-season break

LONDON, Aug 18: Lewis Hamilton's dream of an eighth Formula 1 title with Ferrari is spinning off track.

His comments at the Hungarian Grand Prix in early August sparked concern among fans of Hamilton and Ferrari as the seven-time champion called himself “absolutely useless”, suggested Ferrari should consider replacing him, and hinted at deeper issues. “There's a lot going on in the background that is not great,” Hamilton said.

Having a four-week break before next week's Dutch Grand Prix offers a much-needed reset, argues Michael E. Sawyer, author of a biography of Hamilton, “Sir Lewis," published this year.

“I think he's venting, I think he's down. I think the summer break couldn't have come at a better time for him," Sawyer told The Associated Press. “It gives him a chance to reflect and think through exactly what the approach is going to be.”

Hamilton certainly seems to be getting away from it all. He posted pictures on social media last week in the countryside with his beloved bulldog Roscoe and the caption “DND” — seemingly short for “do not disturb”.

Priority problemsFerrari has said it still has faith in Hamilton, though F1's former boss Bernie Ecclestone has urged him to call time on his record-breaking career. Hamilton “would be cheating himself if he goes on,” Ecclestone told the Daily Mail newspaper this month.

So how might Hamilton find his way back to the front of the F1 field?

All too often, he's been off the pace in qualifying on Saturday and down the grid, meaning his typically better race pace is wasted on working his way through the midfield.

“Every time, every time,” was Hamilton's groan of frustration when he qualified 12th for the Hungarian Grand Prix. Teammate Charles Leclerc was on pole.

Qualifying is the area where the break might help Hamilton most, argues Sawyer. He has competitive pace — as he showed while carving through the field on a wet track in Belgium last month — but hasn't brought it on Saturdays.

The big picture Hamilton's move to Ferrari was never all about 2025.

The team made clear that signing Hamilton was a long-term project despite his age — he turned 40 in January — and backed him when he said he needed time to adapt to a different car.

When he hasn't been venting about his results on track, Hamilton has emphasized his role in creating Ferrari's car for 2026, when new F1 regulations will shake up the running order.

Making Hamilton a core part of the 2026 car's design philosophy means “there's reason for him to be really optimistic about the possibilities because there's going to be so much shifting around on the grid,” Sawyer said. “There's going to be opportunity for someone as savvy and experienced as him to take advantage of that.”

Chasing the 'greatest' titleThe worst-case scenario for Ferrari would likely be an unexpected Hamilton retirement, denting the brand's image and leaving the team without a high-level driver to partner Leclerc next season.

Of its two reserve drivers, Zhou Guanyu has a career-best race finish of eighth at Sauber and Antonio Giovinazzi's last F1 race was in 2021. Ferrari could also call on Oliver Bearman, the Haas rookie.

Still, if Ferrari's big bet pays off, Hamilton has the potential to redefine what F1 success means once again.

He turns 41 in January and will be racing for an eighth world title to break a tie with Michael Schumacher and stand alone in the record books. Hamilton could become the oldest race winner since 1994 and oldest champion since 1966. Sawyer believes it would best all of his other titles.

“I don't think there's any doubt about that," said Sawyer. “I think it would be the greatest of them all. The comeback story would be amazing.” (AP)

Pilik Choudhury Memorial Inter District School Football Tournament (U-15 Boys) begins

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 18: The Department of Sports & Youth Welfare, Government of Assam, on Monday inaugurated the Pilik Choudhury Memorial Inter District School Football Tournament (U-15 Boys) 2025-26 with a grand opening ceremony at Nehru Stadium, Ulubari, here.

The event was graced by the esteemed presence of Nabo Kumar Basumutary, Assistant Director, Sports & Youth Welfare, Assam, Dr. Bishnu Ram Nunisa, General Secretary, Assam SepakTakraw Association, Pushpendra Das, DSO In-charge, Kamrup (M), along with senior officials and staff of the Directorate, members of the media fraternity, and other distinguished dignitaries.

The opening ceremony witnessed enthusiastic participation and highlighted the commitment of the department towards nurturing young sporting talent across the state. The tournament, dedicated to the memory of football legend Pilik Choudhury, aims to promote grassroots football and provide a competitive platform for school-level players under 15 years of age.

Marking the beginning of the tournament, the inaugural match was played between Kamrup and Majuli, where Kamrup emerged victorious in an exciting contest. The spirited performance by both teams reflected the passion and growing football culture among the youth of Assam.

Speaking on the occasion, officials reiterated the Government of Assam's focus on strengthening the sports ecosystem and encouraging youth engagement in physical activities, thereby shaping future champions for the state and the nation.

The tournament will continue with wide participation from various districts, carrying forward the legacy of Pilik Choudhury and fostering sporting excellence across Assam.

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Gill mystery continues as selectors spoilt for choice

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: How to fit in a brilliant batter like Shubman Gill in a well-oiled T20 set up will be the biggest challenge for India's national selection committee when it gathers on Tuesday to pick the 15-member squad for next month's Asia Cup in UAE.

As of now, the prolific Test captain, who had a dream run in England recently, is not organically fitting into the side which will play the continental showpiece from September 9 to 28.

For Ajit Agarkar and his colleagues, the major point of deliberation will be how to fix something that doesn't need to be mended.

It's a "scary" conundrum for the selectors but Indian cricket right now is a T20 talent factory with at least 30 players who are ready to come into the national squad with three to four options available for one slot.

For the top three positions, there are six cricketers of similar pedigree available.

Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson and Tilak Varma have been phenomenal in national colours through last season but then the ones who are equally good, if not better, happen to be Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Sai Sudharsan (the IPL Orange Cap winner).

In bowling, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarthy and Ravi Bishnoi are jostling for one slot. And the craftiest of them all Yuzvendra Chahal has been ignored for longest time. But then selectors can pick only 15 and those in decision-making positions of T20 team have an interesting perspective.

One important member of team management feels that it would be unfair on anyone who has been a first XI regular during the past season to be deprived to accommodate a bigger brand name or star.

The other school of thought is that Indian cricket works well with one all-format captain who also becomes the biggest marketing brand -- in this case Gill, who is an obvious choice for a lot of stakeholders going forward.

But then to assume this will happen smoothly is oversimplification of the issue.

Under Suryakumar Yadav's able leadership, the Indian T20 squad has a phenomenal 85 per cent record, winning 17 of its last 20 games. None of these games featured Gill and Jaiswal.

But there's a catch too.

Before Gill and Jaiswal became busy with Test commitments in the past one year, they were playing T20 Internationals s and were doing well including impressive IPLs.

Gill was in fact vice captain to Surya before he had to forego T20Is due to Tests. Axar Patel, the Delhi Capitals skipper, became Surya's deputy and performed decently even though he is not considered a long-term leadership candidate.

However, Axar will certainly feel shortchanged if Gill supercedes him as Surya's deputy.

On Tuesday, if selectors pick Gill in the 15, then they have to play him in the eleven which means one among Sanju, Abhishek or Tilak will have to compromise their batting slots.

To include Shubman in the 15could also means dropping Rinku Singh. The big-hitter hasn't done much in head coach Gautam Gambhir's era either for Kolkata Knight Riders or India.

In Gambhir's book there's nothing called a designated finisher. So choices won't be easy.

With Hardik Pandya being as good a frontline pacer as one can get and Jasprit Bumrah along with Arshdeep Singh being automatic choices in the line-up, there are three options for the reserve seamer's slot.

Harshit Rana looks the favourite as both Prasidh Krishna and Mohammed Siraj are being considered red-ball specialists.

With hoem series against the West Indies starting October 2, it is understood that Bumrah might not be required against the relatively weak visitors side as Prasidh and Siraj will be fresh and raring to go.

Axar Patel, Varun Chakravarthy and Kuldeep Yadav are first three choices and Gambhir's affinity for all-rounders is likely to ensure Washington Sundar in the side.

The pitches in Dubai and Abu Dhabi won't be as worn out and slow as they were during the Champions Trophy but there is reasonable help for spin bowlers.

Nitish Kumar Reddy and Rishabh Pant are yet to recover from their respective injuries. As a result, Shivam Dube will be the second seam bowling all-rounder after Pandya.

The second keeper's slot is a fight between Jitesh Sharma and Dhruv Jurel.

Jitesh played some good knocks as a finisher for Royal Challengers Bengaluru in their IPL-winning campaign and is more suited for a lower-order role. *(PTI)*

Ahmedabad Marathon to be held on November 30

AHMEDABAD, Aug 18 The ninth edition of the Ahmedabad Marathon will be held on November 30 and will start from the Sabarmati Riverfront, the organisers announced on Monday.

The event will feature four race categories -- full marathon, half-marathon, 10 km run, and 5 km run -- appealing to participants across age groups and fitness levels.

Organised by Adani Sportsline, the marathon will once again be flagged off from the Sabarmati Riverfront, weaving through some of the city's most iconic landmarks, including the Atal Bridge, Gandhi Ashram, and Ellis Bridge.

#Run4OurSoldiers continues to be the central theme, as the organisers will honour the extraordinary efforts of the country's defence forces during critical moments earlier this year when they played a vital role in ensuring the nation's safety. *(PTI)*

Champions NEUFC face tough challenge from Shillong Lajong in Durand Cup semis

SHILLONG, Aug 18: Defending champions NorthEast United FC will face impressive hosts Shillong Lajong FC in the first semifinals of the Durand Cup, an encore of 2024 final match, here on Tuesday.

The winner will meet either East Bengal or Diamond Harbour FC in the final on August 23 at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan in Kolkata.

NorthEast, who defeated the Shillong side 3-0 in last year's final, had also overcome Lajong 2-1 in the group stages of this edition before dismantling Bodoland FC 4-0 in the quarterfinals.

Their strength is an efficient striker line-up consisting of Moroccan Alaaeddine Ajaraie, the tournament's top scorer, Jithin MS and Lalrinzuala.

"We have given our 100 per cent and we will continue to do the same tomorrow (Tuesday). Pressure is always there, but we know how to manage it." said Michel Zabaco, captain of the Highlanders.

On the other hand, Lajong have also enjoyed a strong run into the semifinals.

The Red Dragons finished runners-up in Group E behind NEUFC and in the last eight stage, Birendra Thapa's young brigade staged a thrilling comeback, edging Indian Navy FT 2-1.

They were helped by goals from Damaitphang Lyngdoh and Everbrightson Sana.

The trio of Phrangki Buam, Sana and Figo Syndai have scored nine of Lajong's 12 goals and the Red Dragons will look for another productive outing from them.

"The team is more confident compared to last year. We have lost to them twice, but our approach will be different in tomorrow's match. It will be a tough contest," said Lajong coach Thapa.

Spaniards Andy Rodriguez and Chema Nunez will look to control NEUFC's rhythm, but Thapa's high-press led by Gladdy Kharbuli and Treimiki Lamurong could disrupt the champions.

NorthEast coach Juan Pedro Benali was aware of the task at hand.

"Shillong Lajong are a much better team this year. It's always tough to play against them, and tomorrow won't be any different," said Benali. *(PTI)*

Chetan Sharma backs Bumrah, says players should go by physios' advice

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah may have drawn criticism for playing only three Tests during the series against England to manage his workload, but former BCCI chairman of selectors Chetan Sharma has backed the bowler, saying players should go by the physios' advice as they are the "better judges".

The injury-prone Bumrah played the first, third and fourth Tests in the Anderson-Tendulkar five-match series, skipping two matches with Mohammed Siraj leading the pace-bowling attack.

Sharma, himself a former pace bowler, said it was akin to a patient having to follow the doctor's advice.

"If the medical team advises, if the doctor tells me that I have to take antibiotics, then I have to consume them.

"If our physios is telling a player to manage workload, I think we should listen to them because they are the better judges," said Sharma on the sidelines of the country's public service broadcaster Prasar Bharati signing a deal with London-based cricket analytics company CricViz on Monday for the telecast of 104 episodes of "The Great Indian Cricket Show" on Doordarshan.

Sharma, who forged a potent partnership with Kapil Dev for nearly half-a-decade and went on to take more than 125 wickets in Tests and ODIs before becoming the chairman of selectors, added that the team's performance in the England Test series gave him confidence that it will win the Asia Cup, which begins in the UAE next month.

"I know that whoever is selected will be the best for the country. And the kind of cricket we are playing right now, I'm really proud with the way India played in England.

"And I'm very confident that we are definitely going to win the Asia Cup (to be played in T20 format) because soon after that we are playing the T20 World Cup (in 2026) in India.

"It's a very big thing when you are playing (the World Cup) in you own backyard. If the intent is right, the results will also be good," said

Sharma after the event, which also had the likes of Madan Lal, a member of the 1983 World Cup-winning side, and former India players Murali Kartik and Aakash Chopra and Prasar Bharati Chairman Navneet Kumar Sehgal.

On whether Test skipper Shubman Gill, who smashed four centuries during the drawn Test series against England recently, should be included in the Asia Cup side to be led by charismatic batter Syuryakumar Yadav, Sharma said, India should select its best possible 15-member squad for the continental showpiece.

"Look, that is up to the selectors what they see. My opinion does not matter because I am no longer the chairman (of selectors), so I will only say that the best possible team should be selected.

"We have such good cricketers that not just the top-15 but even if the top-30 are selected, they are all very good. Really proud of them," he added. *(PTI)*

Bangladesh likely to replace Pakistan in Asia Cup hockey

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Bangladesh is likely to replace Pakistan in the men's Asia Cup hockey tournament to be held in Rajgir, Bihar from August 29 if the latter fails to confirm participation in the next couple of days, a top Hockey India official told PTI on Monday.

The Indian government had already said that it will provide visas to the Pakistani players for Asia Cup, but the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has refused to travel citing security concerns.

The organisers have already approached Bangladesh to fill up Pakistan's place in the eight-team tournament, but Hockey India said the exact scenario will be clear in the next 48 hours.

"The Indian government has already said that it is will willing to provide visas to Pakistani players but if they don't want to come to India, it's not our problem. Bangladesh has already been invited to participate in case Pakistan doesn't come but we will have to wait for two more days to get the confirmation," the HI official said when quizzed about the situation.

"Neither Pakistan or Bangladesh have confirmed anything to us till now. But Bangladesh are likely replacement for Pakistan," he added. *(PTI)*

Ladakh Marathon returns for 12th edition in September

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: The Ladakh Marathon, featuring over 6,000 runners from 30 countries and six races ranging from a 5km community run to two Ultra-marathons, will return for its 12th edition from September 11 to 14. The organisers of the event stated that the world's highest AIMS-certified (Association of International Marathons and Distance Races) event's gruelling Ultra-marathons will cover the 72km Khardung La Challenge and "the pinnacle of endurance racing", the 122km Silk Route Ultra.

"Spanning Leh and beyond, participants will race alongside the Indus River, through the high-altitude passes of Khardung La and Nubra, and across some of the most striking Himalayan scenery," a press release said. The full schedule includes the Full Marathon (42.195km), Half Marathon (21km), an 11.2km run, and the 'Run Ladakh for Fun' 5km. The Silk Route Ultra will set off on September 11, sending runners on a 122km course from Kyagar Village at 10,000 ft, over the Khardung La at 17,618 ft, and into Leh Market. "Nearly 300 athletes will take on the Khardung La Challenge on September 12, a 72km route from Khardung Village at 13,000 ft, over the pass, and into Leh. Over 60km of the route are charted above 13,000 ft, making this the highest ultra-marathon in the world and a true test of human potential." *(PTI)*

Akash Deep, skipper Ishan Kishan to miss Duleep Trophy; Easwaran to lead East Zone

KOLKATA, Aug 18: India pacer Akash Deep and wicketkeeper batter Ishan Kishan, the East Zone captain, will miss the Duleep Trophy quarterfinal match against North Zone as both the players are recovering from their respective injuries.

The season-opening Duleep Trophy matches are scheduled to be held in the BCCI Centre of Excellence grounds in Bengaluru from August 28, but Akash is yet to recuperate fully from a back injury that forced him to miss two Tests on the recent tour to England.

The 28-year-old has been replaced by Bihar's Mukhtar Hussain in the East Zone squad.

Bengal pacer Akash, who had an impressive series against England taking 13 wickets, including a 10-wicket match-haul at Birmingham and a maiden Test half-century in the fifth Test at the Oval, has informed the zonal selection committee of his unavailability as per medical advice. He is currently going through rehabilitation at the CoE, and is likely to return to action during the home Test series against the West Indies, beginning from October 2.

Meanwhile, Kishan is recovering from a hand injury.

"Ishan has a few stitches on his hand after falling off an e-bike and he is currently recovering at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru," a source close to Kishan told PTI. "It's not serious, but as a precaution he has been advised to rest. He is expected to be fit for the India A squad for the two four-day fixtures at home against Australia next month."

In his absence, Bengal top-order batter Abhimanyu Easwaran, who was part of India's five-Test tour to England, has been named the East Zone captain, while Assam all-rounder Riyan Parag will be his deputy. *(PTI)*

From 2 terms, new sports bill lowers eligibility rule to one term in EC for NSF leadership aspirants

Change intended to encourage infusion of new perspectives, foster healthy competition and reduce the concentration of power

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Aspirants for the top positions in national federations will be required to serve just one term in the Executive Committee, instead of the "overly restrictive" eligibility rule of two terms prescribed earlier, as the Sports Ministry wants to encourage "younger administrators and athlete-leaders".

The National Sports Governance Bill, which was passed by the Parliament last week and now awaits the presidential assent to formally become an act, lays down the criteria for seeking election to the positions of President, Secretary and Treasurer in the National Sports Federations (NSFs).

It originally mandated two terms in the Executive Committee for anyone aspiring for the top three posts. This provision has been relaxed through an amendment, making it a minimum of one term after consultations with stakeholders.

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, in an interview to PTI after the passing of the amended bill last week, said the change creates the balance needed to ensure a bigger competitive field of administrators.

"The decision to reduce the minimum prior term requirement for contesting federation elections was guided by the principle of broadening the pool of eligible and capable candidates, while still ensuring they have sufficient experience to serve effectively,"

he reasoned.

"In consultations, several stakeholders, including athlete representatives and smaller federations, highlighted that overly restrictive eligibility rules tended to entrench incumbents and limit opportunities for fresh leadership," Mandaviya pointed out.

The relaxation ensures that current Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President P T Usha and All India Football Federation chief Kalyan Chaubey will be able to seek a re-election if they decide. Both have served one term in the Executive Committees of their respective bodies.

The revised provision also makes room for presidents, secretaries and treasurers in state bodies to stake claim for leadership roles in the NSFs, widening the scope of competition at election time.

The Minister said reducing the minimum term requirement in the EC would ensure that a wider talent base is available without compromising on the principles of continuity and experience.

"In some cases, talented administrators and former athletes with strong governance potential were unable to contest simply because they had not served a full earlier term on the Executive Committee.

"The amendment strikes a balance by keeping an experience requirement to preserve continuity and institutional memory, but lowering the threshold so that federations can draw from a wider range of candidates, including younger administrators and athlete-leaders," he said.

"This change is intended to encourage infusion of new perspectives, foster healthy competition in leadership contests, and reduce the concentration of power that often comes from closed eligibility rules," he added.

The sports bill, which had been waiting in the wings for over a decade, was passed after extensive consultations held over one year.

It not just lays down governance criteria but also mandates the creation of a National Sports Tribunal for speedy dispute resolution. In addition, it also calls for the creation of a National Sports Election Panel to oversee NSF polls that are often mired in controversies. *(PTI)*

Top Indian archers to compete in inaugural franchise league

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: India's top archers, including Deepika Kumari, Dhiraj Bommadevara, Jyothi Surekha Vennam and Abhishek Verma, will compete in the inaugural Archery Premier League (APL), the national federation said on Monday.

As reported by PTI earlier, the six franchise-based competition, billed as a first-of-its-kind global initiative, will bring together leading recurve and compound archers from across the world for an 11-day event in October at the Yamuna Sports Complex, here.

Apart from the Indian archers, the inaugural APL, which has got the backing from World Archery and the Asian federation, will also see participation from the top-ranked international archers, who will be divided among the six franchises but their names are yet to be announced.

The inaugural season is likely to follow a draft system instead of an auction, with each squad comprising eight members -- four men and four women. Teams can include up to two foreign archers, with at least one of them required to be part of the playing four.

The recurve and compound archers will shoot 70m and 50m respectively in a unique team format under floodlights.

The Indian archers were picked based on world rankings as well as Archery Association of India's recent selection trials.

In recurve, world No. 3 Deepika and world No. 14 Dhiraj headline the field, alongside veterans Tarundeep Rai and Atanu Das.

Other women recurve archers include Ankita Bhakat and Bhajan Kaur, while the men's line-up features Neeraj Chauhan, Rahul, Rohit Kumar, Mrinal Chauhan, Sachin Gupta and Krish Kumar.

In compound, world record-holder Jyothi Surekha Vennam (No. 3) and world No. 9 Rishabh Yadav lead the charge.

They are joined by veteran Abhishek (No. 10), Prathamesh Bhalchandra Fuge (No. 11), Priyansh (No. 16) and Parneet Kaur (No. 17).

Among others, Aman Saini, Ojas Deotale, Sahil Rajesh Jadhav and Chittibomma Jignas will represent the men, while Prithika Pradeep, Avneet Kaur and Madhura Dhamangaonkar are part of the women's field.

"We are delighted to have the presence of India's best archers in the first season of the Archery Premier League," AAI president Arjun Munda stated in a release. *(PTI)*

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