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THE HILLS TIMES

26 YEARS OF DEDICATED JOURNALISM
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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Vol. No. XXVI

Issue No. 217

RNI-ASSENG/2000/12862

DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, THURSDAY, AUGUST 21, 2025

PAGES 12 PRICE ₹ 8

Shah tables Bills for removal of PM, CMs, ministers held for 30 days

LS witnesses uproarious scenes, Oppn attacks Govt

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday introduced in Lok Sabha three Bills for the removal of prime minister, chief ministers, and ministers under arrest for 30 consecutive days on serious charges, drawing fierce protests from opposition MPs who tore up copies of the draft law and marched close to his seat shouting slogans.

In a charged atmosphere, several opposition MPs spoke against the introduction of the Bills, claiming they violated constitutional principles, targeted federalism, turned the jurisprudence 'innocent until proven guilty' on its head, were open to misuse for political reasons and threatened to turn the country into a police state.

Shah, however, battled for an enhanced standing for moral values in

public life, saying, "We cannot be so shameless that we continue to occupy constitutional positions while facing serious charges".

On his proposal, the bills were sent by the House to a Joint Committee of Parliament comprising 21 members from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha for scrutiny.

The committee, whose members will soon be named, has been asked to submit its report to the House by the last day of the first week of the next session, expected in the third week of November.

As soon as the Bills were introduced soon after 2 pm, opposition members trooped into the well, raising slogans and some even tore copies in front of Shah for the sight to be captured by cameras broadcasting the home minister's remarks. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Parliament passes Bill to establish India's 22nd IIM in Guwahati ● ₹ 550 cr to be invested

Student enrolment to start from current academic year 'Historic day' for Assam: Himanta

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: The country's 22nd Indian Institute of Management (IIM) is set to be established in Guwahati with an investment of ₹ 555 crore, as Parliament cleared a Bill in this regard on Wednesday, with Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan saying the new institution will start admitting students from the current academic year itself.

The Indian Institutes of Management (Amendment) Bill, 2025 was passed by the Rajya Sabha with a voice vote even as the Opposition staged a walkout soon after the bill was introduced.

It was cleared by the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

The bill to set up an IIM in Guwahati will go for Presidential assent after its passage in both Houses of Parliament. Assam goes to the polls early next year.

Introducing the bill in the Rajya



Sabha, Pradhan said setting up of IIM-Guwahati, with a central outlay of ₹ 555 crore, will contribute towards making India the third largest economy in the world.

Later, replying to the discussion on the bill, Pradhan said this will be the 9th IIM to be established since Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister in 2014.

"From 1961, IIMs are functioning in the country. From 1961 to 2014, in the span of 53 years, successive governments could create only 13 IIMs," the minister said.

In 2013-14, across all 13 IIMs the number of students was 3,500. Today the number of students in 2024-25 is 9,800, which shows the commitment (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 20: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on the Congress, accusing the party of being "anti-Assam" after its MPs opposed the setting up of a new Indian Institute of Management (IIM) in the state.

Speaking to reporters, Sarma alleged that the Congress has repeatedly resisted developmental initiatives in Assam. "Whether it was the establishment of a semi-conductor facility or the proposal for a new IIM campus, Congress has always stood against Assam's growth. So, I was not surprised when they opposed the IIM Bill in the Lok Sabha. But the people of Assam have seen their actions and will not accept this attitude of ob-

struction," he said.

At the same time, the Chief Minister welcomed the passage of the Indian Institutes of Management (Amendment) Bill, 2025 in the Rajya Sabha, describing it as a "historic day" for Assam. The legislation clears the way for the state's first IIM, which will be set up at Palasbari, near Guwahati.

On social media platform X, Sarma credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "unwavering commitment" and the support of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for making the project a reality. He also thanked MPs across party lines who endorsed the bill, calling it a significant step forward in Assam's development journey. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Centre invites UNC for talks

IMPHAL, Aug 20: Manipur's apex Naga body, the United Naga Council (UNC), on Wednesday received an invitation from the Ministry of Home Affairs to attend a meeting with the Centre at New Delhi on August 26 to discuss its concerns on fencing of the India-Myanmar border and scrapping of the Free Movement Regime (FMR), officials said.

The development comes four days after a UNC delegation met Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at the Raj Bhavan in Imphal over the two issues.

A letter sent by A K Mishra, Advisor (North East) to the Ministry of Home Affairs, to UNC president Ng Lorho formally requested the presence of UNC team at the meeting.

Naga groups in Manipur have been opposing the India-Myanmar border fencing in Naga-majority areas and the scrapping of the FMR. Manipur shares a 398-km-long border with the neighbouring country. Lorho, after meeting the governor on August 16, had told reporters that a Naga (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Lok Sabha passes bill to ban online games played with money

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed a bill to ban the operating, facilitating and advertising of online games played with money, as the government looks to check rising instances of addiction, money laundering and financial fraud through such applications.

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025, introduced this noon, was passed without a debate as opposition members raised slogans demanding a discussion on the special intensive revision of electoral rolls in Bihar by the Election Commission.

Once the legislation is passed by both Houses of Parliament, offering or facilitating online money gaming will be punishable by imprisonment of up to 3 years and/or a fine of up to ₹ 1 crore.

In his opening remarks, Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the government seeks to encourage e-sports and online social gaming and

will set up an authority for the purpose.

He said online money gaming has become a matter of concern as such platforms have led to addiction and have also been used for fraud and cheating.

The minister underlined that it has also led to financial losses to people.

Urging opposition members to participate in the discussion on the bill, Speaker Om Birla said online money gaming has ruined several families and damaged the future of youth.

He reminded the opposition that several MPs had in the past demanded a ban on such money gaming sites, but the protests continued. Amid the din, the bill was passed by a voice vote.

The House was then adjourned for the day amid sloganeering by the opposition.

The bill also seeks to prohibit advertisements related to online

money games as well as bars banks and financial institutions from facilitating or transferring funds for any of such games.

Online money game is one played by a user by depositing money in expectation of winning monetary and other enrichment.

Union Minister Vaishnaw introduced the bill in the Lok Sabha amid sloganeering by MPs belonging to opposition parties against alleged irregularities in the electoral roll revision in Bihar.

The bill outlaws all online betting and gambling (satta and jua) activities – from online fantasy sports to online gambling (like Poker, Rummy and other Card games) and online lotteries.

Advertising of money games can attract imprisonment up to two years and/or a fine up to ₹ 50 lakh. Facilitating financial transactions related to money games can lead to imprisonment of up to three years and/or a fine (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

CM lays foundation for ₹ 5 crore project to transform Sootea Police Station into tourist spot

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 20: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday paid tributes to the martyrs of the freedom movement on the occasion of Sootea Divas and laid the foundation for a ₹ 5 crore project to transform Sootea Police Station into a tourist destination.

It was on August 20, 1942, during the Quit India Movement, that local freedom fighters in Sootea hoisted the Tricolour atop the police station, making it the first government office in India to do so.

Sarma paid homage to the brave freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the nation.

According to an official statement, the chief minister said that the incident at Sootea was a defining moment in the freedom struggle, as smaller towns played pivotal roles in challenging colonial rule.

He observed that Sootea Divas is a reminder of collective courage and a source of inspiration for the younger generation.

He also announced that the state government would provide financial and other support to produce a film depicting the 1942 event.

Referring to discussions held in New Delhi, Sarma said he had underlined that Sootea was the first police station in the country where the National Flag was hoisted during the freedom struggle, a fact recorded in several historical works including Freedom Movement



in Assam by Heramba Kumar Borpujari, Quit India Movement in Assam by Surya Kumar Bhuyan.

The Quit India Movement in Assam by Amalendu Guha, as well as government archives.

Highlighting the government's developmental initiatives in Sootea, the chief minister mentioned promotion of Baresahariya Bhaona, construction of Bhumidhar Bordoloi Memorial Stadium and hospital, infrastructure development in Tyagbir Hem Baruah College, and creation of a co-district.

He said these projects fulfilled the aspirations of the people of the region.

He also announced that an industrial plant for tile manufacturing would soon be set up on 2,000 bighas of land in Sootea, as part of efforts (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

NDA's Radhakrishnan files nomination

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: NDA candidate C P Radhakrishnan on Wednesday filed his nomination papers for the vice presidential election in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah and other senior leaders.

Modi, flanked by Radhakrishnan and senior NDA leaders, handed over four sets of nomination papers to Rajya Sabha Secretary General P C Mody, who is the returning officer for the vice presidential election.

The four sets of nomination papers have Modi, Singh, Shah and JD(U) leader Rajiv Ranjan Singh as lead proposers.

A prospective vice-presidential candidate is required to get his nomination paper subscribed to by at least 20 electors as proposers and at least another 20 electors as seconders. The NDA has ensured representation of all its constituents as proposers and (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

MZP urges Mizoram govt to tighten security along Assam border

AIZAWL, Aug 20: Mizoram's apex student body, the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), has urged the state government to beef up security and tighten vigilance along the border with Assam to prevent potential influx from the neighbouring state, a MZP leader said on Wednesday.

The appeal came after a large number of non-tribals reportedly attempted to enter Mizoram and agitated after a prolonged wait for inner line permits (ILP) at Vairengte gate near the Assam border on Monday night.

MZP president H Lalthianghlina said that the recent incident has sparked apprehension that non-tribals, particularly Bangladeshi immigrants, are trying to flee to Mizoram due to the eviction drive launched by the Assam government against illegal immigrants.

He said that they have urged the state government to deploy additional police and security personnel along the state border with Assam to prevent any illegal influx from the neighbouring state.

A senior police officer, however, said that the sudden surge in people from Assam trying to enter Mizoram is probably due to a recruitment rally being held in Aizawl at the Assam Rifles battalion headquarters at Zokhawasang for Central Armed Police Force (CAPF).

Some of the non-tribal people, while trying to enter Mizoram at Vairengte gate on Monday night, agitated, questioning why ILP has to be obtained while Mizoram is a part of India, he said.

However, the police officers on duty at the check gate explained and calmed them down without any untoward incident, he said. Lalthianghlina said that the organisation leaders on Tuesday met state Home minister K Sapdanga and urged him to ramp up surveillance along the inter-state border in view of the ongoing eviction drive by the Assam government.

According to the MZP president, a total of 2,573 ILPs were issued in August, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Indian envoy discusses trade and energy with US Congressmen

WASHINGTON, Aug 20: India's Ambassador to the US Vinay Mohan Kwatra on Wednesday held a meeting with US Congressman Warren Davidson to discuss bilateral relationship between Washington and New Delhi and briefed him on the recent developments on trade and energy. The meeting with Davidson, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on National Security, Illicit Finance and International Financial Institutions, comes after a "productive discussion" with Representative Pete Sessions, Chairman of the Congressional Sub-Committee on Governmental Operations in the US House of Representatives.

After his meeting with Davidson, Kwatra in a social media post said, "Welcomed his support on many facets of India-US partnership, and briefed him on recent developments

on trade and energy aspects."

In the discussion with Sessions, Kwatra in an X post said he briefed him on India's position on recent developments, including trade, and exchanged views on energy security and the growing hydrocarbon partnership between both countries.

On Tuesday, Kwatra held a "fruitful discussion" with Representative Marc Veasey, Vice Co-Chair of the India Caucus in the US House of Representatives.

Kwatra said he briefed him on India's position on recent developments and underlined the importance of "fair, balanced, and mutually beneficial trade to further strengthen our partnership".

The ambassador also spoke to Congressman Michael Baumgartner on Tuesday and the two leaders discussed the India-US partnership

and New Delhi's perspectives on mutual trade and energy ties.

The series of meetings come amid strain in India-US relations after US President Donald Trump imposed tariffs totalling 50 per cent on India. This includes 25 per cent for New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil that will come into effect from August 27. India has called the tariffs "unjustified and unreasonable". India said that, like any major economy, it will take all necessary measures to safeguard its national interests and economic security.

Meanwhile, Russian charge d'affaires Roman Babushkin said on Wednesday in New Delhi that Moscow has a "special mechanism" to confront any challenge arising out of the US slapping punitive measures against India for its procurement of Russian crude oil. (PTI)

Two prisoners escape from jail

MORIGAON, Aug 20: Two convicted prisoners have escaped from the Morigaon District Jail in Assam on Wednesday by scaling a wall, police said.

The escape of the prisoners was discovered during the morning roll call and the police were informed, an official said.

The prisoners had broken the rods of the windows of their cell and used bedsheets and towels to escape by scaling the prison wall, he said.

They have been identified as Jiyarull Islam, who had escaped from jail once earlier and was subsequently arrested again in Andhra Pradesh. The other one was Subrata Sarkar who was convicted in connection with a Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act case. Both the convicts were serving 20 years sentences in jail (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Justice for every citizen ensured through legal aid, mediation: CJI B R Gavai



NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Chief Justice of India B R Gavai on Wednesday said traditional litigation in the country cannot bear the burden alone and justice for every citizen

can be ensured through legal aid and mediation.

The CJI was inaugurating the lecture titled "Justice for all- Legal Aid and Mediation: The collaborative

role of Bar and the Bench".

The path to justice for the marginalised and vulnerable communities can be complex and filled with obstacles, he said.

CJI Gavai added, "Our constitution enshrines promise of justice for every citizen. Yet in practical terms, the path to justice can be long complex and fraught with obstacles. For many, especially those from the marginalised the journey and vulnerable communities the journey to a fair hearing is hindered by social, economic and geographical barriers." He was speaking at the event organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA).

"Courts may be distant, proceedings intimidating and access to competent legal (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Bears transferred to the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC) in Kaziranga

Two orphaned Asiatic black bear cubs rescued, after rehabilitation released in wild

GUWAHATI, Aug 20: Two orphaned Asiatic black bear cubs, rescued from Dissoi Reserved Forest in Assam's Jorhat district, have been translocated to Dehing Patkai National Park and released in the wild, a forest official said on Wednesday.

The cubs, estimated to be between four and six weeks old at the time, were discovered alone by a local youth in February this year and handed over to the Na-Kachari Beat Office under Jorhat Forest Division.

As subsequent surveys found no trace of their mother, they were transferred to the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC) in Kaziranga, for specialised care, the official said.

The cubs were treated at CWRC for mild dehydration and nurtured in the small mammal nursery under



the close supervision of veterinarian Bhaskar Choudhury and his team.

They were reared on a canine milk replacer and gradually introduced to conditions that would prepare them for survival in the wild, Chudhury said.

The rehabilitation of orphaned

Asiatic black bear cubs in CWRC focused on ensuring proper nutrition, maintaining natural behaviours, and minimising human imprinting to secure their chances of successful reintegration.

A scientific survey was subsequently undertaken to determine a

suitable release site.

The Dissoi Reserved Forest was initially considered, but its proximity to human settlements and high disturbance made it unsuitable for bear rehabilitation.

A systematic evaluation based on natural cover, distance from habitation, prey availability, and local community awareness identified Dehing Patkai National Park as the most suitable release site.

Offering rich vegetation, abundant natural resources, minimal human interference, and committed support from forest staff and local communities, the park emerged as the ideal new home for the cubs, the official said.

Formal permission to proceed with this site selection and release was granted on June 4 by the Office of the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Economy presents picture of strength: RBI Gov at MPC

MUMBAI, Aug 20: Indian economy presents a picture of strength, stability, and opportunity, said Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra at the MPC meet earlier this month while stressing that the monetary policy needs to remain watchful as uncertainties of US tariffs are still evolving.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday released the minutes of the Monetary Policy Committee Meeting held from August 4 to 6.

Malhotra and five other members of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted for keeping the short-term lending rate at 5.5 per cent.

"Overall, our economy presents a picture of strength, stability, and opportunity. India's strong fundamentals, growth-inducing policies, and forward-looking economic strategy clearly place it in a strong position," the Governor said as per the minutes. While growth has remained steady, inflation outcomes have been far more benign on account of higher food price moderation, he said.

"Although we are likely to see inflation undershooting the target in the near term, with a likelihood of monthly numbers even crossing the lower tolerance band of 2 per cent, headline inflation is projected to inch up from Q3 onwards. The uncertainties of tariffs are still evolving," Malhotra said.

Given the current state of uncertainty on the external front, monetary policy needs to remain watchful, he opined.

The MPC consists of three RBI



officials -- Governor Malhotra, Deputy Governor Poonam Gupta and Executive Director Rajiv Ranjan; and three external members -- Nagesh Kumar, Saugata Bhattacharya, and Ram Singh.

Malhotra also said the CRR cut, which is likely to kick in from next month, will facilitate further monetary transmission and stimulate economic activity. Deputy Governor Gupta, while voting for status quo on repo rate, said taking into account the growth-inflation outlook, past actions, the state of the domestic economy, and the global dynamics, "I do not see the scope or rationale for a further policy rate cut at this point".

She also favoured a neutral monetary policy stance so that future actions could be data dependent, i.e., conditioned by the relative dynamics of growth and inflation, while also internalising the impact

of policy actions from other relevant countries. According to the minutes, Rajiv Ranjan said overall, growth remains resilient, supported by public capex, rural demand, and steady services activity, although industry shows some unevenness.

"An additional rate cut at the current juncture could also reduce our policy space should global or domestic risks materialise. After weighing these considerations, I conclude that the balance of risks calls for no action in this meeting, and accordingly, I vote for the policy repo rate to be kept unchanged at 5.50 per cent," he said.

External member Singh said that to respond to an unpredictable set of events, it is crucial to maintain policy options, in terms of the number of policy tools that can be used as well as their force.

"Only the incoming data can

help in assessing the inflation with the precision required under the current global economic order. Moreover, the MPC needs to watch the pass-through of the 100 bps rate cut to ascertain its effects on inflation and growth. We need to monitor the sectoral impacts of direct and indirect effects of tariffs on Indian exports," he said.

Bhattacharya said the MPC has been proactive in easing monetary policy since February 2025, in conjunction with multiple RBI measures to reinforce transmission and ease lending conditions.

"...given the fluidity of the macro-financial environment, coupled with the ambiguities in the information set presently available, I believe that a pause in monetary policy decisions, both on the repo rate and the stance, is appropriate. Hence, I vote for the status quo in this MPC meeting," he said.

MPC member Kumar said while the case for stimulating private investments and urban demand remains, and the benign inflation outlook provides policy space, "we may wish to wait and watch" as the transmission of the existing actions takes place and how the trade policy uncertainties play out before considering policy actions at the October meeting of the MPC.

He said the MPC held its August meeting against the backdrop of continued challenges to the sustainability of economic growth, especially in the manufacturing sector, posed by the trade policy uncertainties and subdued private investment, while inflationary pressures have eased further. (PTI)

Army veteran Captain Jyoti Bisht (Retd) brings military excellence to Amazon India

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 20: Marking the 79th year of Independence, Amazon India has highlighted the contribution of military veterans who have transitioned into second careers with the company, bringing resilience, discipline, and leadership skills honed in the armed forces.

Among them is Captain Jyoti Bisht (Retd), Operations Manager at Amazon Sort Center in Kolkata, whose journey from high-altitude battlefields to complex logistics operations reflects the impact veterans make in the corporate sector, according to an official statement.

A former Army Captain, Jyoti

served in Kargil, Drass, and Siachen, leading logistics operations and managing a sub-depot of 350 personnel. At the age of 23, she became the only woman among a thousand troops, a milestone that shaped her journey of grit and leadership.

She later pursued academic excellence with a Certificate in Business Management from IIM Ahmedabad and a specialised course in Supply Chain Analytics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Her military and academic background now strengthens her leadership role at Amazon, where she heads operations across six sites in the East Cluster and men-

tors future leaders.

Reflecting on Amazon's peak Great Indian Festival, Jyoti likens the event to a military operation, noting that the intensity, teamwork, and mission-oriented approach mirror her Army experience.

"The Army taught me to stay calm under pressure, think on my feet, and lead with purpose -- skills that translate seamlessly to Amazon," she said. Beyond her corporate responsibilities, Jyoti is an avid trekker, reader, and motivational speaker.

She also serves as an honorary board member of Warriors at Amazon, an employee-led group supporting veterans.

HCLTech launches TechBee program in Guwahati for high school graduates

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 20: HCLTech has announced the launch of its flagship TechBee Early Career Program in Guwahati to provide high school graduates an opportunity to build careers in the technology industry. According to an official statement, TechBee follows an 'earn while you learn' model, combining hands-on technology training with access to higher education.

The program equips students with industry-relevant skills while allowing them to pursue academic advancement.

The company said specialized tracks in Generative AI and Cybersecurity will be introduced in collaboration with leading institutions.

TechBee graduates have already contributed to advanced areas like AI and cloud computing for HCLTech's Fortune 500 clients.

With stipends provided during training, participants can support their families within months of joining. "TechBee is more than a skilling initiative—it's a launchpad for ambitious youth to build meaningful careers in tech," said Subbaraman B, Senior Vice President, HCLTech. He added that partnerships with institutions including BITS Pilani, IIT Guwahati, Sastra University, Amity University Online, IIIT Kottayam, and IIM Sirmour enable trainees to pursue higher education locally, reducing relocation costs and fostering financial independence.

According to the company, TechBee attracts a diverse group of participants, including first-generation learners and women, and aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 as well as state government initiatives to promote inclusion in education and employment.

Contd. from Page 1...

Student enrolment to start

of our government towards creating new institutions and giving an opportunity to many students in our country, said Pradhan.

The minister further said in 2017, the government took a historic decision on IIMs when they were not competent to award degrees and gave a PG Diploma.

He asserted that as a result of PM Modi's vision, IIMs became an institution of national importance.

"Now with enactment of 2017 Act by Parliament, IIM became a full-fledged university-like institution. IIM Guwahati, when it starts functioning, (will be) as good as a university, an institution of national importance," said Pradhan.

"India's 22nd IIM will be set up in Guwahati at an investment of Rs 555 crore," informed the minister.

He alleged that Assam's worst days were during 2004-14 when it was completely ignored by Congress under then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as he did not have the decision-making powers, which lay with someone else.

"We are granting permission to foreign universities to open (their campuses) in India. Today 15 foreign universities are making preparations to open (campuses) in India, some have already been established here. Similarly... in the last two years, two IITs have opened abroad in Abu Dhabi and Africa," said Pradhan.

He said IIM-Ahmedabad is known as the factory for producing unicorns. The establishment of an IIM in Guwahati as an institution of national importance is one of the projects under the special development package provided to Assam.

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

Participating in the debate on the Bill, members, including Goll Baburao (YSRCP), Niranjan Bishi (BJD) and M Thambidurai (AIADMK), expressed concern over vacant faculty posts at IIMs and the rising rate of students' suicides.

Niranjan Bishi (BJD) welcomed the bill with a request to establish more IIMs in Odisha. "About 500 faculty posts are vacant and it should be filled up. Ragging in IIMs and IITs should be stopped," he said.

M Thambidurai (AIADMK) said, "We are attracting more students for IIMs, but suicides are rising". He also demanded that the minister probe into vacant posts of vice-chancellors in 8-9 universities in Tamil Nadu as he slammed the DMK government in the state for the current situation.

Birendra Prasad Baishya (AGP) said Congress ignored the demand of people of Assam. Setting up of IIM will not only develop Assam but the entire Northeast, he said. He also requested the minister to give students from the Northeast a priority in admission into IIM-Guwahati.

Praful Patel (NCP) said it is a welcome step for many aspiring students of the Northeast. It is necessary to spread education in length and breadth of the country.

"There should be a day when people all over the world want to come to our IITs and IIMs to get the degree, with that vision the government is moving ahead," he added. K Laxman (BJP) said surprisingly, there was only one IIM set up during the UPA, and during the Modi regime nine such institutes have come up.

"I also feel the youth and students of Assam need not travel for better education. With support of ₹ 555 crore, Assam is going to one for centre of education," he said. He also demanded setting up of an IIM in Telangana.

Geetha, alias Chandrabha (BJP), said so far, there was no IIM in Assam and students were travelling to other cities. The setting up of an IIM in Assam is a good move and is in the interest of students. Ravichandra Vaddiraju (BRS) welcomed the bill and demanded that an IIM be set up in Hyderabad.

Kanad Purkayastha (BJP) said it will open vast opportunities for the youth and build strong ecosystem for startups and business. Naresh Bansal (BJP), Rambhai Harjibhai Mokariya (BJP) and Ramji (BSP) also participated in the debate. (PTI)

'Historic day' for Assam

The Lok Sabha had approved the bill a day earlier, paving the way for the new institute. The Union government has earmarked ₹550 crore as capital assistance for the project. Once operational, the Guwahati campus will become the second IIM in the Northeast, after IIM Shillong, and will hold the status of an institution of national importance. Officials said the upcoming institute is expected to boost higher education in management and strengthen the region's role as an emerging hub for learning and innovation.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who piloted the bill, saw it through the House by a voice vote. The proceedings, however, were marked by noisy protests from the Opposition over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar. Soon after the passage, the session was adjourned.

The new IIM forms part of a Special Development Package (SDP) for Assam, laid down under a Memorandum of Settlement signed by the Centre, the state government, and representatives of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). Assam had pressed for such an institute, citing its geographical significance and the need to spur regional growth.

LS witnesses uproarious

A few BJP members, including Union ministers Kiren Rijiju and Ravneet Singh Bittu, stepped out of their seats to prevent opposition members from coming near Shah and waded them to go back to their side of the aisle.

When Congress MP K C Venugopal questioned Shah about his claim of public morality by referring to his arrest in a criminal case when he was the home minister of Gujarat in 2010, the senior BJP leader hit back. He said he wanted to set the record straight as he had resigned on moral grounds before his arrest on "false" allegations and did not join a constitutional position till he was discharged by the courts.

"What are they (opposition) teaching us about morality? I had resigned. And I want moral values to rise. We cannot be so shameless that we continue to occupy constitutional positions while facing charges. I resigned before arrest," Shah said.

Opposition MPs, including AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi and Congress' Manish Tewari and Venugopal, and RSP's N K Premachandran, spoke against the introduction, terming the proposed law against the Constitution and federalism. The home minister also said that the Bills will be sent to the Joint Committee of Parliament, where members of both Houses, including those from the opposition, would get an opportunity to give their suggestions. The three Bills are the Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Bill

2025; the Constitution (One Hundred And Thirtieth Amendment) Bill 2025; and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill 2025.

The constitutional amendment bill will require the support of at least two-thirds of the members in both houses. The ruling alliance currently lacks such a majority on its own. The Bills have proposed that if prime minister, union ministers or chief ministers, are arrested and detained in custody for 30 consecutive days for offences that attract a jail term of at least five years, they will lose their jobs on the 31st day.

Demanding that Shah withdraw the Bills, Tewari said they were "squarely destructive" of the basic structure of the Constitution and turned the fundamental principle of the rule of law that a person is innocent till proven guilty on its head.

BJP leaders have linked the need for the Bills to the decision of then-Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to continue to hold the post for months after his arrest in a corruption case and the incidence of several ministers in different states, including V Senthil Balaji in Tamil Nadu, following a similar practice. (PTI)

CM lays foundation

to strengthen Assam's industrial ecosystem. He said the state's industrialisation drive under Advantage Assam 2.0 had attracted investment proposals worth ₹ 5 lakh crore, aimed at creating jobs and reducing youth migration for low-wage employment.

Sarma further announced that from November this year, centres for Japanese language training will be opened in Assam. He also declared a ₹ 2 crore project for constructing a complex at the Open Bihu field in Sootea.

Earlier in the day, the chief minister inaugurated two girls' hostels and the main gates of Tyagbir Hem Baruah College at Jamugurihat, marking a step forward in academic infrastructure and heritage preservation. MLAs Padma Hazarika, Ganesh Limbu, Promode Borthakur, Utpal Bora, Krishna Kamal Tanti, Diganta Ghatowar, family members of freedom fighters and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Lok Sabha passes bill

of up to ₹ 1 crore. Repeat offences attract enhanced penalties, including 3-5 years' imprisonment and fines up to ₹ 2 crore. Importantly, offences under key sections are sought to be made cognisable and non-bailable.

Endorsements by top cricketers and film stars have incited interest in real money gaming apps such as fantasy sports betting games offered by Dream11, Games24X7, and Mobile Premier League.

A senior government source said the bill has been brought as there is a realisation that online real money gaming has become a major problem for society. The government decided to keep the welfare of people above revenue loss from its ban.

Industry bodies representing real money game players -- India Gaming Federation (AIGF), the E-Gaming Federation (EGF), and the Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports (FIFS) -- in a letter to Home Minister Amit Shah raised concerns over the bill saying the online skill gaming industry is a sunrise sector with an enterprise valuation of over Rs 2 lakh crore and annual revenue exceeding ₹ 31,000 crore.

The bill also recommends a regulator for e-sports, educational platforms, and social games. It seeks to completely ban offering, operating, or facilitating online money games, irrespective of whether based on skill, chance, or both.

All advertising and promotion of money games across all forms of media will be banned and so will be financial transactions linked to online money games. Banks and payment systems will be barred from processing such payments.

The objectives of the legislation are "to promote and regulate the online gaming sector, including e-sports, educational games and social gaming" as also to "provide for the appointment of an Authority for coordinated policy support, strategic development and regulatory oversight of the sector".

It "prohibit(s) the offering, operation, facilitation, advertisement, promotion and participation in online money games through any computer resource, mobile device or the internet, particularly where such activities operate across state borders or from foreign jurisdictions; to protect individuals, especially youth and vulnerable populations, from the adverse social, economic, psychological and privacy-related impacts of such games".

The bill seeks to "ensure the responsible use of digital technologies", "maintain public order and protect public health" and "safeguard the integrity of financial systems and the security and sovereignty of the state".

The government believes that the harms of addiction, financial losses, and even extreme consequences such as suicides associated with online money gaming can be prevented by the prohibition of such activities. Additionally, online money gaming platforms are often misused for financial fraud, money laundering, terror financing, and messaging activities that compromise national security.

The legislation aligns the digital domain with existing laws for corresponding activities in the physical world, wherein betting and gambling are restricted or punishable -- such as in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, as well as various state government legislations. The bill recognised e-sports as a legitimate form of competitive sport in India, for which the Ministry of Sports will frame guidelines and standards for the conduct of such events.

For online social games, the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) will extend support to online games that foster educational and cultural values, skill development and social engagement. (PTI)

NDA's Radhakrishnan files

seconders in the four sets of nomination papers that were filed. The returning officer examined the nomination papers following which Radhakrishnan signed a register. The returning officer then handed over an acknowledgement slip of the nomination papers to the prime minister.

Modi, Shah, senior ministers Pralhad Joshi, Dharmendra Pradhan and other NDA leaders, including TDP leader and Union Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu, Shiv Sena leader. Shrikant Shinde, LJSP (RV) leader Chirag Paswan escorted Radhakrishnan to the office of the returning officer in Parliament.

Earlier, Radhakrishnan paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders at Prema Sthal, which houses statues of iconic personalities, in Parliament complex.

Radhakrishnan, whose election as vice president is a certainty, was accompanied by Union ministers and other leaders from the BJP-led alliance.

The electoral college for the vice presidential elections comprises members of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. Nominated members of the Rajya Sabha are also eligible to cast their votes.

The effective strength of the electoral college is 781 and the majority mark is 391.

The ruling NDA enjoys the support of at least 422 members and non-INDIA bloc parties such as YSRCP have already announced support to Radhakrishnan.

Described as a "Pachai Tamizhan" (true-blue Tamil) by well wishers, Maharashtra Governor Radhakrishnan (67) is a senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader who served as a two-term member of the Lok Sabha from Coimbatore during the tenure of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and later, went on to lead the party in Tamil Nadu.

The NDA is projecting Radhakrishnan as an untainted leader with rich political and administrative experience for the vice-president's office and maintaining that this would also prove useful as the chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

Radhakrishnan was the chairman of the All India Coir Board from 2016 to 2020, a period when coir exports witnessed a significant jump.

BJP president J P Nadra described Radhakrishnan as a "statesman" who commands respect across party lines. He belongs to the influential Gounder caste, an Other Backward Classes (OBC) community in Tamil Nadu. (PTI)

MZP urges Mizoram govt

with 544 permits granted on a single day on August 18. While the average ILP issued in a single day was 140, the issuance of 544 ILPs in a single day drew serious concern, he said. He said that Mizoram can face an influx of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants at any time due to a crackdown launched by the Assam government.

Lalthianghlama also said that the student body has issued stern warning to any Bangladeshi immigrants who entered Mizoram due to the eviction drive, cautioning them that the MZP will not take any responsibility if any untoward incident happens against them. The organisation also urged non-tribal migrants living in the state to find out any Bangladeshi immigrants in their respective areas, he said. Lalthianghlama further said that the organisation will assist the law enforcement agencies in checking people attempting to enter the state to prevent violation of ILP. (PTI)

Two prisoners escape

and were staying in the same barracks. A search operation has been launched to nab the escaped prisoners.

This incident comes nearly 10 months after five inmates escaped from the same jail with two of them yet to be apprehended. (PTI)

Justice for every citizen

representatives limited. In such a context, justice remains an abstract ideal rather than a live reality," the CJI said. Underlining the collaborative role of the bar and the bench, he outlined the role of lawyers who were said to be not only the representatives of individual clients, but also the custodians of justice.

"Judges in turn are entrusted with the solemn duty to ensure fairness, equity and due process. With the operative partnership guided by professionalism, integrity and empathy justice can reach the remotest corners of the country," he said.

Gavai underscored the harmony between judges and lawyers to pull the "chariot of justice" smoothly.

"Legal aid schemes have been a cornerstone of this collaborative effort. Legal aid ensures that those who are economically disadvantaged or socially marginalised are not denied their representation, guidance or support in navigating the complexities of our legal system," he said. The CJI, however, noted many eligible citizens were unaware of their rights under legal aid schemes.

"In a country with rapidly expanding population and ever increasing case load, traditional litigation alone cannot bear the burden. Mediation offers a path that is not adversarial. It is restorative rather than punitive. It encourages parties to seek solution in a collaborative manner. I would encourage senior advocates to actively guide the parties to settle their disputes through mediation," he said.

The CJI said both court litigation and arbitration often involve lengthy procedures, complex formalities and significant financial expenditures.

"Legal aid and mediation are the instruments through which we translate the ideals of the Constitution into lived reality for the people. Lectures such as today remind judges that empathy, outreach and accessibility are not optional virtues but essential components of judicial service," Gavai said. SCBA president and senior advocate Vikas Singh said justice for all and mediation go hand in hand.

He said there were no losers in mediation as both sides got justice.

"If bar and bench both play a role in mediation and legal aid process, it will be a big opening in this subject. Today we have 5.36 crore pending cases in the country. If mediation succeeds in this country it will drastically and overnight reduce the pendency of cases in this country. It can unclog the system and ensure people in this country gets justice," Singh said. (PTI)

Two orphaned Asiatic

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam. Following this approval, the CWRC team successfully translocated the cubs to Dehing Patkai National Park on August 17, giving them a genuine chance to thrive in the wild.

CWRC, established in Kaziranga in 2002, is a joint initiative by the Assam Forest Department, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI). (PTI)

Centre invites UNC

delegation shared its views and concerns on matters related to FMR and border fencing, and requested the governor to take it up with the Centre.

Naga bodies in Manipur had on July 22 submitted a memorandum to the Centre demanding an immediate halt to the fencing of the India-Myanmar border and restoration of FMR within 20 days.

The Naga bodies, which included the United Naga Council, All Naga Students' Association, Manipur, Naga Women's Union and Naga People's Movement for Human Rights SOUTH, submitted the petition through Bhalu.

The Ministry of Home Affairs in February last year decided to scrap FMR, which allowed people residing close to the India-Myanmar border to venture 16 km into each other's territory without any documents, and also fence the entire 1,643-km-long international boundary. People from several northeastern states, particularly Nagas from Nagaland and Manipur, Kukis from Manipur and Mizos from Mizoram, have opposed the move stating it will disconnect them from their kin across the border. (PTI)

Spring shed management Programme at Lunse Ronghang village



HT Correspondent

DIPHU, Aug 20: Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang launched the Spring Shed Management Programme at Manai Terang village under Singhason MAC constituency on Wednesday.

For the first time the government of Assam has launched the Spring Shed Management Programme for revival of springs, where pits

called as discharge points in recharge areas on the hill's slopes are dug to allow water to enter the subsurface.

The implementing agencies are the Public Health Engineering Department and Panchayat and Rural Development Department (P&RD) through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). In Karbi Anglong three sites have been selected for implementation of the spring

shed management in Lunse Ronghang PWSS, Ramsapathar PWSS and Thekarajan PWSS falling under Singhason MAC constituency.

Launching the spring shed management programme the CEM said water sources like springs, ponds and rivers get depleted during the lean period between December to April. Spring shed management is the best way to revive springs, which is the main source of water.

The programme is on experimental basis by PHED and P&RD, and if successful will be introduced in the 26 MAC constituencies in both Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, the CEM said. He also stated that budget allocation will be made from next financial year for the implementation of spring shed management programme in other areas. The CEM also released a booklet on spring shed management. A pledge by the villagers for revival of spring was taken up which was led by the CEM.

The programme was attended by Executive Member (EM), KAAC in charge PHED, Mongolsing Timung; EM, KAAC in charge P&RD, Lunsing Teron; EM, KAAC Kache Rongpigi; EM, KAAC Tiluttima Hasnu; MAC Headings Rongphar; Executive Engineer, PHE Diphu, Rural Water Supply Division, Biman Baruah; Hydrogeologists from Guwahati Dr. Bijoy Krishna Chetia and Marshal Pegu and Assistant Executive Engineer, PHE Diphu, Urban Water Supply Sub-Division, Diphu, Bhargav Jyoti Das.

APHLC rally in Diphu demands protection of Tribal and



HT Correspondent

DIPHU, Aug 20: Thousands of supporters of the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) staged a mass rally in Diphu on Wednesday, demanding the implementation of an Autonomous State under Article 244(A) of the Constitution. The rally culminated in the submission of a memorandum to Prime Minister Narendra Modi through District Commissioner Nirola Phangchopi, ACS.

The rally, led by APHLC president Jones Ingti Kathar, began at Sarada playground, Birla, and

marched through Diphu town amid slogans against the BJP-led administration. Leaders from like-minded organizations, including AJP president Lurinjyoti Gogoi and forest rights activist Pakhiraj Rabha, extended their support.

Kathar accused KAAC Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang of corruption, alleging that he was "tied by the rope of RSS and Bongosena." He urged indigenous communities to resist corporate land grabs by the BJP government.

AJP president Gogoi called on people to oust corrupt leadership in

the 2026 Assembly elections, warning against KAAC's agreements to lease tribal land for projects by Ambani, Adani, and Ramdev. He said, "The BJP is the enemy of scheduled tribes, taking away our coal, forests, minerals, and now even our land."

The memorandum demanded the creation of an Autonomous State, strict implementation of the Sixth Schedule, eviction of encroachers from PGR and VGR lands, restoration of ceded land to West Karbi Anglong, and halting of corporate projects that threaten indigenous land rights.

'Nagaon District to launch eviction drive on encroached land'

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 20: Nagaon district administration will soon conduct an eviction drive on encroached land across the district, Minister Krishnendu Paul informed on Tuesday.

Speaking to the media after a review meeting at the DC office, Paul said notices have already been issued to clear nearly 20,000 bighas of encroached land across revenue circles. He also reviewed ongoing development projects in the district. Paul further informed that Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Assam on August 29 to attend a Panchayat Sammelan in Khanapara, Guwahati.

Delhi Public School, Tezpur hosts first-ever CBSE zonal yogasana competition 2025

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 20: Delhi Public School (DPS), Tezpur, hosted the first-ever CBSE Zonal Level Yogasana Competition 2025 on Wednesday under the aegis of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). The event provided a prestigious platform for young athletes to display their discipline and skills in the ancient art of yogasana.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by officials from CBSE and the Assam Yoga Association. Distinguished guests included Ashok Dhawan, Yoga Expert from Delhi, and Prabhat Chandra Bora, Vice President of the Yoga Federation of India. The competition was supervised by Namita Lahkar, Vice President of the Assam Yoga Association, with a panel of experienced judges evaluating the participants.

Fifty-seven schools from CBSE's Guwahati and Bhubaneswar regions participated, with over 350 students showcasing their yogasana talents. The program featured a ceremonial team walk symbolizing unity, and a captivating Yoga Dance performance by DPS Tezpur students.

Massive protest in Diphu against KAAC and CEM Tuliram Ronghang over land allotment to corporates

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Aug 20: On Wednesday, Diphu town, the headquarters of Karbi Anglong District, witnessed a massive protest led by All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) President Jones Ingti Kathar. The demonstration targeted the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and its Chief Executive Member (CEM) Tuliram Ronghang, accusing the BJP-led administration of undermining the Sixth Schedule provisions and allocating tribal and indigenous land to corporate entities.

The protest, which began at Birla and culminated at the Karbi Anglong District Commissioner's Office, saw significant participation from local residents and was joined by Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) President Lurinjyoti Gogoi. Protesters voiced their outrage through placards and slogans such as "Tuliram No - Tribal CEM," "BJP Go Back," and "Tuliram Go Back," reflecting deep discontent



with the KAAC leadership.

Gogoi sharply criticized CEM Tuliram Ronghang, alleging a conspiracy to hand over tribal and indigenous lands to corporate houses for personal gain. He accused the BJP of failing to honor its election promise to fully implement the Sixth Schedule, which grants autonomy and safeguards land rights for tribal communities in Karbi Anglong.

"While Tuliram builds a lavish home worth two hundred crores, the tribal and indigenous people of the hills are forced to live in katcha houses," Gogoi stated, branding

Ronghang as "anti-tribal and anti-indigenous." He further claimed that thousands of bighas of protected land under the Sixth Schedule are being allocated to corporate entities, threatening the region's cultural and economic heritage.

The protest underscores growing tensions between the KAAC and local communities, who demand the protection of their constitutional rights and an end to land allotments favoring corporate interests. The demonstration signals a unified stand by APHLC and AJP to safeguard Karbi Anglong's tribal identity and autonomy.

Sadbhavana Diwas celebrated in Nagaon and Hojai

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 20: Mera Yuva Bharat, Nagaon and Hojai, under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, organized a celebration of Sadbhavana Diwas on Wednesday. The event was held at Batadroba Jnan Deep Senior Secondary School in Nagaon and Jogijan Higher Secondary School in Hojai.

The celebration aimed to promote unity, national integration, and communal harmony among the people. Noted speakers addressed the gathering, emphasizing the importance of these values in today's society. A painting competition was held for students, followed by a pledge-taking ceremony to reaffirm commitment to national integration and communal harmony. The winners of the painting competition were awarded prizes and certificates.

The event was attended by prominent figures, including Abdur Aziz, president of the Managing Committee of Batadroba Jnan Deep Senior Secondary School; Dr. Sajan Kumar Nath, health officer; Anwar Hussain, President of Jogijan Gaon Panchayat; and social worker Sahib Ali. Speakers urged the youth to work towards building a harmonious and inclusive society. The celebration successfully fostered awareness about communal harmony and unity, leaving participants inspired to work for national integration.

Fresher's Social held at Prayash Academy

HT Correspondent

GOLAGHAT, Aug 20: The Fresher's Social 2025 of Prayash Academy Senior Secondary School was held on recently with a day-long programme. The event began with lighting of the lamp by academy president and rector Prof Mohendra Nath Saikia, followed by the Prayash Sangeet. Inaugural and welcome speeches were delivered by lecturer Rashmita Saikia and student Thomas Hazarika respectively.

Engineer and entrepreneur Kishore Kumar Dutta, attending as chief guest, lauded the institution's student-teacher bonding and academic results. Retired principal Prodip Sonar inaugurated the wall magazine Prayash, dedicated to Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhupen Hazarika.

Lecturers felicitated meritorious students with awards and certificates, while the Makon Saikia Memorial Award was presented by vice principal Tarulata Saikia to HS final topper Rimangshu Konwar.

Student orientation on conservation and coexistence at Pobitora wildlife sanctuary

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 20: Premier biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak (www.aaranyak.org), in collaboration with its partner organisations, has been conducting a series of awareness programmes over the last few years around Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary under the theme "Conservation and Coexistence."

As part of this initiative, Aaranyak, in collaboration with the wildlife sanctuary authority, local NGO SHIPA and with support from IUCN CAG, organised another programme on August 18 at various locations within Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary. The event featured two key components—outdoor exposure and indoor interactions—aimed at helping students explore local natural resources and reflect on their roles and responsibilities in conservation.

During the outdoor session, students were introduced to the seasonal flora and fauna of Pobitora, including the iconic Greater One-horned Rhino. They learned about the impacts of ris-



ing temperatures, floods, and erratic rainfall on the ecosystem and local livelihoods. The discussions also high-

lighted how unplanned road construction, bridge building, and landscape alterations threaten rhino habitats and

pose challenges to the long-term sustainability of the sanctuary.

The indoor session featured interactive activities, including drawing and quiz competitions, designed around the students' observations from the outdoor exposure.

A total of sixty students from Mayang High School, Minerva Academy, Lokapriya GNB High School, and Shankardev Shishu Niketan participated in the programme, accompanied by six teachers, along with ten local villagers and tourist guides.

Resource persons included Aaranyak's Deputy Director of Rhino Research and Conservation Division Dr. Deba Kumar Dutta; NGO SHIPA officials Binod Deka and Nripen Nath; Forest officials Naurattam Deka and Mitul Das; and local tourist guide Umesh Deka. Aaranyak official Ujjal Bayan coordinated the event, while Aaranyak's K9 unit handler Rupak Bora and volunteers Ayush Debnath and Jomi Ronchar assisted in making the programme successful.

Donation box looted

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Aug 20: A theft incident took place at the Demow Sitala Mandir, located near NH-37, late Monday night when miscreants broke the lock and stole the temple's donation box.

The incident came to light on Tuesday morning when a devotee arrived to offer puja and discovered the donation box missing. Later, the box was found a few metres away from the temple premises, but the cash inside had been looted. Following the incident, the Sitala Aai Mandir Management Committee lodged a formal complaint at the Demow Police Station on August 19, 2025.

NTPC Bongaigaon donates sanitary napkin incinerators to Universities in Bodoland Region

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 20: NTPC Bongaigaon, Salakati, under its CSR initiative and in collaboration with the Kokrajhar District Administration and Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, donated seven sanitary napkin incinerators five to Bodoland University and two to Kokrajhar University.

The programme was attended by ADC Kabita Deka, Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club President Kasturi Maitra, Bodoland University Registrar Dr. Subung Basumatary, and NTPC DGM (HR) Debaleena Das.

Speakers stressed that sanitary napkin incinerators would ensure hygienic and eco-friendly disposal of menstrual waste, break taboos, and promote dignity for young women. Bodoland University Vice Chancellor Prof. B.L. Ahuja expressed gratitude for NTPC's support.

This initiative highlights NTPC's continued efforts to improve women's health and education through sustainable CSR programmes in the Bodoland Territorial Region.

Assam initiates flagship program CSAY, set to ease lives of Cachar's tea workers

HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, Aug 20: The Cachar district administration has stepped up efforts to implement the Cha Shramik Aashray Yojana (CSAY), a flagship initiative of the Assam government's Tea Tribes and Adivasi Welfare Department. The scheme, aimed at providing rest shelters with toilets for tea workers. The initiative is being taken forward under the supervision of District Commissioner Mridul Yadav.

On Tuesday, DC Yadav chaired a review meeting at the new conference hall of DC's office to accelerate the scheme's progress. The meeting was attended by Assistant commissioners, Neihat Haolai, Bonnykha Chetia, Silchar Sadar Circle Officer, and stakeholders.

Highlighting the importance of the scheme, DC Yadav said that CSAY represents a direct step towards improving the daily lives of tea workers. "The government has designed this project to address a long-standing need of the tea community, and the Cachar administration is fully committed in implementing it swiftly and transparently," he mentioned, adding

that the administration will keep a close watch on every stage of the process to ensure quality and timely execution.

It is pertinent to mention that the Cha Shramik Aashray Yojana provides rest shelters equipped with toilets in tea estates. Each shelter will be built at a cost of ₹5.16 lakh, with the number of shelters determined by the size of the estate, one for gardens up to 500 hectares, two for those between 500 and 700 hectares, and three for estates above 700 hectares. These facilities, officials said, will offer hygienic resting spaces for workers, addressing a long-felt gap in the welfare infrastructure of tea gardens.

Meanwhile, to ensure smooth execution, the Cachar administration is forming construction committees and finalising bank account details necessary for quick fund transfer from the state government. By putting these mechanisms in place early, the district administration aims to prevent procedural hurdles that often slow down welfare projects. Officials attending the review expressed confidence that Cachar

would be among the first districts to demonstrate visible progress under CSAY.

Tea cultivation has long been central to Cachar's economy, with its estates providing livelihoods for thousands of families across the district. The administration's proactive push to implement CSAY is being viewed as a vital step not only for improving worker amenities but also for reinforcing the district's position as a key tea-producing hub of Assam. By ensuring that basic facilities like rest shelters and toilets are available in gardens, the initiative is expected to uplift living standards and strengthen the social fabric of tea communities.

The Cachar district administration's strong monitoring and hands-on approach are seen as pivotal in turning the scheme into a success story. Once completed, the rest shelters will stand as a visible sign of the government's commitment to grassroots welfare, while also reflecting the administration's resolve to translate policy into meaningful change on the ground.

No. TE(Ex) Admn-1/2025/494

EDUCATIONAL NOTICE

(REVISED SCHEDULE)

In partial modification to earlier notification vide letter No. TE(Ex) Admn-1/2025/459, dated 11/08/2025, a A Spot round of Counselling for provisional admission into Jorhat Engineering College through JMEE-2025 will be conducted as per the schedule mentioned below :-

- Venue: Jorhat Engineering College, Jorhat.
- Date of Counselling: 26/08/2025
- Reporting Time: 10.00 A.M. to 11.00 A.M.
- Admission Time: 11.AM. onwards.

Note (1) Vacancy and eligibility criteria etc. will be notified in the college website (2) All vacant seats will be filled up as per merit.

Interested candidates having JMEE-2025 score may visit the website of the concerned college for detailed information or contact the Admission Co-coordinator.

Spot round is open for both registered and non-registered candidates. However, unregistered candidates will have to pay the Non-refundable Registration Fee amount of Rs. 800/- (Rupees Eight Hundred) only to the under mentioned Account Number.

In favour of: Controller of Examination, SCTE, Assam, Guwahati
Account No.- 33334506570
IFSC: SBIN0004420

Note:- As per Order eCF No. 500152/1 dated 5th June 2024, vacant seats at the time of the Spot Counselling round will be de-reserved to the unreserved category.

All candidates appearing for Spot round must fulfil the eligibility criteria as per the information brochure for JMEE-2025 which is available in the website: <https://dte.assam.gov.in>

DIPR /D/HLT/129/21-Aug-25

Sd/-
Director of Technical Education, Assam,
Kahilpara: Guwahati-19.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Nobody ever drowned in his own sweat.
- Ann Landers

A significant I-Day speech

On Independence Day, Chief Justice of India B. R. Gavai offered a reminder that struck at the heart of India's constitutional order. "The Supreme Court is not a superior court to the High Courts. Both are equal constitutional courts," he said, pulling back the veil on a long-standing public misconception. For decades, the Supreme Court has been seen as the final word in law, towering above the High Courts. But in Gavai's framing, the apex court is not a master but a partner in the constitutional project. The statement was more than a technical clarification. It was a deliberate reassertion of equality within the judiciary, part of a broader pattern that has come to define his short tenure as Chief Justice. Only a few days ago, Justice Gavai made it clear that even the CJI's pronouncements carry no extra judicial weight compared to those of his colleagues. "The Chief Justice's position is just as important as any other judge of the Supreme Court," he said, reminding the public that authority in courtrooms flows not from titles but from the Constitution. This stripping away of hierarchy has been his hallmark. Where some of his predecessors sought to cloak the office in grandeur and ceremonial importance, CJI Gavai has cultivated an image of restraint. No pomp, no overreach, no effort to magnify the office beyond its constitutional role. His realism, coupled with an absence of self-importance, has won quiet admiration both inside the legal community and beyond it.

Lawyers who have appeared before him speak of a judge who listens more than he speaks, who encourages colleagues to dissent rather than steers them to consensus by force of position. His court has been less about pronouncements from the bench and more about deliberation among equals. To many, that is not just refreshing but transformative: a reminder that the judiciary's strength lies in collective wisdom, not in the authority of one individual. His Independence Day message was equally significant for what it said about the High Courts. In practice, the Supreme Court's visibility often overshadows the constitutional authority of High Courts. Citizens tend to view Delhi as the only forum where rights are ultimately safeguarded. Gavai's intervention sought to correct that perception, restoring dignity to High Courts as equal partners in the constitutional scheme.

The implication is profound: justice does not reside only in the capital but is dispersed across states, closer to citizens, through courts empowered to protect fundamental rights. For a federal democracy like India, that assertion matters. It strengthens the idea that constitutional values are not guarded by a single institution at the top but by a network of courts, each carrying equal responsibility. In a political environment where centralisation of authority is often on the ascendance, the Chief Justice's federal instinct could not have been more timely.

Tariff tactic may backfire Trump's US

By: Er. Rajesh Pathak

Strict provisions incorporated in WTO compelled the countries to pave escape route out of it. And this culminated into the form of different mutual trade agreements. As one being Free Trade Agreement (FTA), under which the member countries impose least or no tariff on each other.

Second comes the Custom-Union (CU); under it the countries bound with FTA may collectively engage into trade deal with any other non-FTA country or countries under the provisions of similar tariff-regime.

Third comes the Common-market; such a custom union is this where for the member nations - more beyond goods and service- the provisions of all the parameters of factor of production like purchasing the land; the investment of labour or capital; the entry of the entrepreneur or running the company to be applied inside any member country like any outfits of its own without distinction or restriction.

Last of them is Economic-Union; it is such a common market where prevails among the member countries the complete coordination regarding macro-economics and exchange rate. Such as, on the issue of employment of any one country, all the countries make deliberation coming together for the resolution. The residents could cross-over each other's boundaries for the employment. Inflation could be controlled with unified concerted measures. Exchange rate policy should not be subject to volatility. Likewise, the rules and regulations of free movement of goods and services should be binding uniformly to all the countries.

This is broadly all about what is called FTA. However, see what the Film industry's Shekhar Kapoor has to say about recently signed Indo-British FTA. According to him, this agreement is the one to contain the Starmer's labour party government from getting scuttled. Today one former colony that is India is offering the support to that colonial power to be called British which once had destroyed its economy.

Leaving it aside, bilaterally this is going to serve India's interest no less. From this not only the farmers and MSMEs but also over thousands of professionals like Chefs, musicians and yoga-teachers will get the

chance to have jobs in Britain. Not only this, those having expertise in IT, finance, health, tourism, entertainment and in such other professions they henceforth could offer their services in digital mode also.

On the other side when Trump has shown more interest in tariff than FTA, India is said to have begun to opt export diversification with making approach to over 50 countries. Besides, world knows maritime-trade has begun to shift from Pacific-Ocean to Indian-Ocean. The way ASEAN, West Asia, Latin America and Japan seem to be eager to strike FTA deal with India is reflexive of this. Japan makes the import of \$ 23 billion of textile; whereas with India too little, which it is too ambitious to increase it now. And from the same Japan, Trump wants to establish industry in US and, above this, to leave 90% of the profit there only (US), too. Under the pressure government though might have accepted this shear indiscriminate demands, it is said that its parliament will never ratify it.

Though Trump doesn't seem to deflect from his obstinate posture, yet he is not unaware of the fact that his country will get mobile phone either from China or India. So also that from India, US gets 50% of its required pharma product, and critical-care accessories far more. Hence he kept them free from the recent tariff hike. And the commodities that fall under the provision, for them the countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, UK and others have made back channel approach to India. What the experts in global trade even speculate that from these countries the goods from India might make inroad into US ultimately. The same as world sees China's tactic of dumping its products through Vietnam, Malaysia and such countries' routes.

Trump might think that the amount accrued with increased tariff could be put into easing out the taxes on US corporates, alluring them to be switching over to be investing in the country.

However, it is possible to be producing the high end products in the country itself. But to be managing the pool of cheap manpower for the cost-effective domestic commodities for the common Americans is still not going to be easier in the society like that of US despite making hell of pursuits.

NRC in Assam: Between Borders, Identity, and Belonging

The three letters NRC have become almost a household name in Assam—sometimes uttered with apprehension, sometimes with weary resignation, and sometimes with outright anger. The National Register of Citizens, despite its official sounding title with the word "National" prominently attached, remains a document peculiar to Assam, designed and updated with the sole purpose of identifying the citizens of this state and distinguishing them from so-called "illegal migrants." Its story stretches back to Partition, winds through decades of agitation, political negotiation, and judicial intervention, and today still hangs unresolved, balancing on the uneasy scales of national security and humanitarian responsibility.

The first census of independent India was carried out in 1961, a time when the subcontinent was still reeling from the traumatic consequences of Partition. Millions were on the move, uprooted from ancestral homes, resettling in hastily drawn borders. Assam, because of its geographical location and porous boundaries with East Pakistan (later Bangladesh), bore the brunt of this migration. The then Chief Ministers of Assam, Gopinath Bordoloi and Bishnuram Medhi, were forced into frequent confrontations with the Central leadership over the issue of settling refugees in a state that lacked both land and resources to absorb them. Their protest was not rooted in a lack of empathy for displaced people but in the stark reality that a small state like Assam simply could not sustain the demographic and economic burden of such a massive influx.

At that time, the Census Superintendent for Assam, Manipur and Tripura, R. B. Vaghaiwalla, took an unusual initiative. Alongside the main census of 1951, he manually prepared a supplementary list of over 60 lakh names and family details. The underlying intention was clear: to create a record of those who had entered Assam from East Pakistan after Partition and to present this record to the Centre as evidence for seeking assistance. That supplementary list eventually came to be known as the first National Register of Citizens. Vaghaiwalla could scarcely have imagined then how significant his foresight would become decades later, when the NRC would be both a tool and a battlefield for Assam's most contentious identity struggles.

Initially, the NRC documents were preserved in the offices of Deputy Commissioners and Sub-Divisional Officers. But after 1951, no government—state or central—made any attempt to update them. Nor did the Centre take adequate steps to seal the Assam-East Pakistan border. Migration continued unchecked through the porous frontier, altering Assam's demographic composition in ways that ignited anxieties among its indigenous population. The crisis worsened during the conflict between West Pakistan and East Pakistan, culminating in

the creation of Bangladesh on 25 March 1971. In the run-up to Bangladesh's birth and immediately afterward, waves of people crossed into Assam to escape the repression of the West Pakistani military. Many remained even after Bangladesh stabilized, further complicating Assam's demographic fabric.

The simmering tensions exploded in 1977 when Hiralal Patowary, the newly elected MP from Mangaldoi constituency, died, leading to a by-election. Allegations surfaced that the electoral rolls contained the names of thousands of illegal migrants. The All Assam Students' Union (AASU), led by its young president Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, demanded the cancellation of the by-election, revision of the state's electoral rolls, and the detection and deportation of foreigners. What began as an electoral controversy quickly snowballed into the epoch-making Assam Movement of 1979. For six years, the AASU and its ally, the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP), led mass protests, often violent, demanding that Assam be rid of illegal immigrants. This agitation culminated in the signing of the historic Assam Accord on 15 August 1985, in the presence of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The Accord laid down that anyone who had entered Assam after 26 March 1971, the date of Bangladesh's liberation, would be detected and deported in accordance with law.

The Accord satisfied no one entirely. While it provided a cut-off date, it did not establish clear modalities for identifying or deporting migrants. The task of detection was left vague and unenforced. Nevertheless, it propelled AASU leaders into politics. The hastily formed Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) contested the subsequent assembly elections and swept to power, turning protest leaders into ministers overnight. Yet, the central dilemma remained unaddressed. Deportations were minimal, infiltrations continued, and the Accord's promises became ritualistic talking points in meetings rather than realities on the ground.

It was only in 2005, during a tripartite meeting attended by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, and AASU leaders, that a fresh decision was taken: the NRC would be updated by including the names from the 1951 NRC and the electoral rolls up to 1971. But like earlier decisions, this too languished, trapped in bureaucratic indifference and political hesitations. The real breakthrough came not through politics but through the judiciary. Frustrated by governmental inaction, socially conscious citizens such as Abhijit

Sharma of Assam Public Works, supported by technocrat-turned-philanthropist Pradip Kumar Bhuyan, filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court on 25 July 2009. After years of delays, it was under the watch of Justice Ranjan Gogoi, later the Chief Justice of India, that the NRC case gathered decisive momentum.



The Court set 26 March 1971 as the definitive cut-off date, aligning with the Assam Accord. This meant both Hindus and Muslims who had entered Assam after this date were to be excluded from the NRC. The process of verification, however, was herculean. Over 52,000 government officials, 7,000 data entry operators, and nearly 1,200 contractual employees were pressed into service. The financial cost ballooned to approximately Rs 1,600 crore. Applicants had to furnish reams of documents—legacy papers, land records, birth certificates, electoral rolls—often decades old, to establish citizenship. For ordinary people, especially the poor and unlettered, this was a nightmare. Many spent years running from pillar to post, scouring government offices, and still failing to trace the required documents. Stories abounded of families divided, with some members included and others excluded. Even veterans of the Indian armed forces found themselves left out of the draft list, caught in bureaucratic error.

Finally, on 31 August 2019, the final NRC was published. Out of 3.11 crore applicants, 3.11 crore were included, while 19,06,657 names were excluded. These excluded individuals now faced the specter of statelessness, consigned to endless legal battles before Foreigners Tribunals. But the list satisfied neither the Assamese nationalist organizations nor the central government. The former alleged that the number of exclusions was far too low and that lakhs of illegal migrants had slipped through. The latter, led by the BJP, was reluctant to accept the NRC as final because it conflicted with its political project of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), enacted the same year.

The CAA fundamentally altered the debate by introducing two different cut-off dates: 26 March 1971 for Muslims, but 31

December 2014 for Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, and Parsis from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In other words, a Hindu migrant from Bangladesh who had entered India even decades after the Assam Accord would be eligible for citizenship, but a Muslim migrant after 1971 would not. This dual standard contradicted the NRC's framework, further polarizing Assam's already fraught society. For many Assamese, the CAA was a betrayal of the Accord and an erosion of the hard-won safeguards of the Assam Movement. Mass protests erupted in 2019 and 2020, some violent, as students and activists once again poured onto the streets.

The story of the NRC in Assam, then, is not merely about documents and dates. It is about the collision of memory and identity, the clash between humanitarian compassion for displaced people and the existential fears of a small state trying to preserve its culture and resources. It is about political expediency overriding principled solutions, and about the judiciary stepping in where the executive faltered. Above all, it is about ordinary people—rickshaw pullers, farmers, daily wage laborers, widows—being asked to prove their belonging to a land where they have lived for generations.

More than four years after its publication, the NRC remains in limbo. The state government has not notified it, the central government does not endorse it, and the excluded remain in uncertainty. Foreigners Tribunals groan under the weight of cases, detention centers exist but remain controversial, and the human cost of this bureaucratic exercise continues to mount. What was supposed to be an instrument of clarity has instead left Assam more divided, more anxious, and more entangled in legalities than before.

The NRC of Assam reflects the uneasy balance between national security imperatives and humanitarian responsibilities. It highlights the difficulty of addressing migration in a region scarred by colonial partitions, porous borders, and decades of political neglect. The NRC may have been conceived as a solution, but without transparency, political will, and a humane approach, it risks becoming yet another wound in Assam's long history of identity struggles. If the lessons of Partition and the Assam Movement teach anything, it is that solutions imposed without consensus and compassion rarely endure. Assam's quest for a just and fair register of citizens is far from over, and until it is resolved with honesty and humanity, the letters NRC will continue to haunt conversations in tea stalls, classrooms, and political rallies across the Brahmaputra Valley. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)*

Oil and Natural Gas as Assam's economic backbone

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The story of Assam's economy cannot be told without acknowledging the central role of oil and natural gas. From the drilling of the first oil well at Digboi in 1889, long before oil exploration began in most other parts of India, to the massive gas-based industries of the present, hydrocarbons have been the lifeline of the state's industrial, social, and economic trajectory. They have not only shaped Assam's economy but also contributed significantly to the national energy grid, becoming a critical part of India's self-sufficiency in energy. Yet, the narrative is not merely one of resource extraction and economic output but also of the struggles, complexities, and socio-political tensions that have surrounded this sector for decades.

The discovery of oil in Assam transformed the region from a largely agrarian society into a state with industrial promise. Digboi, often referred to as the "oil city of Assam," is celebrated as the birthplace of the Indian oil industry. The colonial administration recognized the immense strategic importance of petroleum and established refineries and infrastructure to exploit it. For Assam, this meant the creation of one of the earliest industrial hubs in eastern India. The Digboi refinery, which continues to operate even today, stands as a testament to this pioneering legacy. However, while the foundation of Assam's industrial economy was laid through this discovery, it also marked the beginning of a history where local aspirations and national imperatives often collided.

Post-independence, the oil and natural gas sector in Assam assumed even greater importance. With the establishment of Oil India Limited (OIL) and the expansion of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), exploration and production reached new heights. Oilfields in places like Dulaijan, Moran, and Lakwa became critical contributors to India's energy security. Natural gas, once flared away as waste,



began to be utilized systematically in industries such as fertilizers, power plants, and petrochemicals. Assam emerged not just as a state producing crude oil but also as a hub for downstream industries. The setting up of refineries in Guwahati, Bongaigaon, and Numaligarh ensured that Assam was firmly integrated into India's refining network, with products reaching both national and international markets.

The economic significance of oil and natural gas for Assam cannot be overstated. The hydrocarbon sector generates a substantial share of the state's revenue and contributes heavily to employment, both directly in oilfields and refineries and indirectly through ancillary industries, transport, and services. The royalties and taxes from crude oil and natural gas have historically been a major source of income for the state government, although disputes over revenue sharing between the Centre and the state have been recurring points of contention. These disputes highlight the paradox of resource-rich regions that often fail to reap proportional benefits due to centralized control and policy imbalances. For Assam, the demand for a fair share of oil royalties has been an enduring political theme, with successive governments and civil society organizations emphasizing the need for greater autonomy over natural resources.

The industrial ecosystem built around oil and gas has provided

Assam with opportunities that few other sectors could match. The Assam Gas Company Limited, for instance, has pioneered the distribution of natural gas for industrial and domestic purposes, creating a relatively unique network compared to other Indian states. Fertilizer plants, thermal power stations, and chemical industries in Assam owe their viability to the steady supply of hydrocarbons. In many ways, the presence of oil and gas infrastructure has cushioned Assam's economy from the vulnerabilities of a purely agrarian framework. It has provided skilled employment opportunities to local youth and fostered an environment of technical advancement and industrial specialization.

Yet, the narrative is not without challenges. Oil and gas extraction in Assam has also been accompanied by environmental degradation and ecological risks. The recent incident of the Baghjan gas well blowout in 2020 exposed the fragile balance between industrial extraction and ecological sustainability.

Situated near the Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, the blowout not only caused displacement of communities but also inflicted severe damage on biodiversity. Such events remind us that while hydrocarbons have powered Assam's economy, they have also carried with them high environmental costs that demand urgent mitigation. Oil spills, deforestation, and soil degradation are persistent issues in oil-pro-

ducing regions of Assam, threatening livelihoods dependent on agriculture, fishing, and forests.

There is also the socio-political dimension of oil and gas that complicates Assam's economic story. For decades, the sense of alienation among local communities has stemmed from the perception that despite producing vast amounts of energy for the rest of India, Assam itself remains economically underdeveloped. This paradox of resource wealth and underdevelopment has been a central theme in regional politics, fueling movements that have demanded greater control over natural resources and better redistribution of revenues. The Assam Movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s, while primarily centered on the issue of illegal immigration, also drew from deeper frustrations regarding economic exploitation and neglect. Oil and gas became symbols of this disconnect—resources flowing out of the state, but benefits accruing elsewhere.

Despite these tensions, Assam's hydrocarbons continue to remain indispensable for India's energy landscape. The state contributes about 15 percent of India's total crude oil output and significant reserves of natural gas. Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL), often hailed as the "pride of Assam," has been pivotal in boosting refining capacity and expanding market reach, especially with its current expansion project aimed at transforming it into a mega refinery. The strategic location of Assam's refineries also makes them critical for supplying fuel to the landlocked northeastern states, thereby ensuring connectivity and energy availability across a difficult terrain.

In recent years, the discourse around oil and gas has shifted to questions of sustainability and diversification. The global push towards renewable energy, coupled with India's commitments to reduce carbon emissions, poses both challenges and opportunities for Assam. On one hand, the gradual transition away from fossil fuels threatens to reduce the

long-term centrality of hydrocarbons. On the other, Assam's established infrastructure, skilled workforce, and experience in energy production position it well to diversify into cleaner alternatives such as biofuels, solar energy, and green hydrogen. Initiatives are already underway to integrate Numaligarh Refinery into ethanol production and other green energy ventures, signaling a possible redefinition of Assam's economic backbone in the coming decades.

The future of Assam's economy will depend on how it navigates this transition while preserving the vital role oil and natural gas continue to play. The state needs policies that balance economic growth with environmental protection, ensuring that disasters like Baghjan are not repeated. There must also be greater equity in revenue distribution so that local communities directly benefit from the resources beneath their soil. Investing in social infrastructure, healthcare, and education using oil and gas revenues can create a virtuous cycle of development, reducing the sense of alienation that has historically plagued the region. Moreover, the oil and gas sector itself must adapt technologically, embracing cleaner methods of extraction and production to align with global environmental standards.

At its heart, the story of oil and natural gas in Assam is a story of both pride and paradox. It is a sector that has given the state an identity as the energy hub of eastern India, contributing massively to the national economy. At the same time, it has exposed deep contradictions of development, where local communities often feel left behind even as their land fuels industries far away. Moving forward, the challenges lie in resolving these contradictions, making oil and gas not just the backbone of Assam's economy but also a catalyst for inclusive and sustainable growth. If harnessed judiciously, hydrocarbons can continue to power Assam's economic journey, while also creating pathways for a greener and more equitable future.

Taiwan's Path to True Energy Resilience

By: Milena de Andrade

Taiwan is at a critical point in terms of its energy security: despite its global importance in semiconductor manufacturing, the island is highly vulnerable due to its heavy reliance on energy imports and centralized grid infrastructure. In short, Taiwan's current energy set-up exposes it to significant risks, both from potential external coercion and from natural phenomena.

In this context, some have argued that Taiwan should resume production of nuclear energy to ensure a secure power supply. While the reactivation of nuclear power plants may provide a stable energy base, it carries unacceptable risks and offers limited strategic advantage in the face of Taiwan's challenges. Instead, shifting to decentralized microgrids powered by diverse renewable energy sources and supported by a robust energy storage represents the most viable path to ensuring Taiwan's energy security and national resilience.

It is important to understand that a robust and decentralized energy infrastructure constitutes a strategic deterrent for the country. If Taiwan is perceived as capable of withstanding a prolonged blockade due to its energy resilience, the perceived effectiveness of such a blockade as a coercive tool is diminished. This perception plays a crucial role in the cost-benefit analysis of initiating a conflict, as it turns energy resilience into a component of "asymmetric defense" and "deterrence by denial" – making Taiwan a harder target and increasing the risks for any potential aggressor.

The Energy Achilles' Heel

Taiwan's current energy landscape is defined by an overwhelming dependence on imports, with the island importing around 96 percent of its total energy supply. Fossil fuels dominate the electricity generation matrix, accounting for approximately 80 percent of the total electricity produced in 2024. Of this share, natural gas makes up 42.4 percent, while coal contributes 39.3 percent.

Taiwan holds a critical position as the world's sixth-largest importer of liquefied natural gas (LNG), as of 2025. This heavy reliance is further exacerbated by a strategic energy reserve estimated to last only 11 to 14 days under normal consumption conditions.

Such vulnerability exposes the island to sharp fluctuations in global energy prices, as seen in 2022 when fuel costs surged due to the war in Ukraine. In a scenario marked by geopolitical tension this energy dependency becomes Taiwan's "Achilles' heel," posing an existential risk to the island's security.

Defense and security experts have pointed out that a maritime blockade would likely be among the People's Liberation Army (PLA)'s strategies in a conflict over Taiwan, directly targeting these supply lines and potentially crippling Taiwan's energy infrastructure within weeks. Therefore, moving away from imported fossil fuels toward domestically sourced energy is not merely an environmental priority, but a matter of national security.

In addition, Taiwan's historically centralized electrical grid presents another major challenge to its resilience. With power generation largely concentrated in the center and south and heavy consumption in the northern urban centers, the centralized transmission system creates vulnerable chokepoints. This means that isolated failures can rapidly cascade into widespread blackouts across the island, as demonstrated by incidents like the major "303 blackout" in 2022 which was triggered by an equipment malfunction at the Hsinta Power Plant in Kaohsiung, where a switchyard failure caused a sudden imbalance in the southern grid. That fault tripped an ultra-high-voltage substation, triggering cascading shutdowns that left over 5.5 million households without power island-wide.

Distributed Resilience

A key shift in Taiwan's path to energy resilience is the adoption of distributed power systems, particularly microgrids, as an alternative to centralized energy infrastructure. These systems integrate local power generation, battery energy storage, and smart controls, allowing for autonomous operation when disconnected from the main grid. Microgrids are designed to function modularly, with automatic and seamless "islanding" capabilities, enabling them to continue supplying electricity during disruptions.

Battery storage lies at the heart of this architecture, playing a vital role in stabilizing intermittent renewable inputs, absorbing excess energy, and redistributing it during peak demand. It also enhances system reliability during

grid failures. The strategic benefits of combining decentralized energy with storage include not only greater efficiency, sustainability, and cost savings, but also critical backup capacity for essential infrastructure – such as hospitals, data centers, and military facilities.

The very features that protect against typhoons, such as distributed energy and islanding capabilities, are precisely those needed to withstand military threats, whether conventional, cyber, or electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attacks. This "dual-use" nature makes the microgrid strategy inherently robust and politically justifiable across multiple threat vectors. In this way, the energy transition is framed not only as an environmental initiative or disaster preparedness effort, but as an integral part of Taiwan's broader national defense strategy.

Recognizing these advantages, Taiwan's government has already pledged to invest NT\$564.5 billion (\$19.2 billion) in grid modernization, with emphasis on decentralization, energy storage, and system redundancy. These efforts have been shaped by previous crises, such as Typhoon Danas and major blackout events, which exposed vulnerabilities in the traditional grid model.

As part of its push toward a more resilient and flexible energy system, Taiwan is actively developing its battery storage infrastructure. The government has set a target of reaching around 590 megawatts (MW) of installed battery storage by 2025, combining efforts from both public initiatives and private sector investments. Although relatively small in scale compared to Taiwan's overall electricity demand, this capacity would play a crucial role in managing fluctuations from renewable sources and ensuring backup power during emergencies.

Looking further ahead, Taiwan plans to expand its energy storage capacity significantly, aiming for up to 20 gigawatt-hours (GWh) by 2030. This long-term goal reflects the country's commitment to integrating distributed storage into its broader strategy for energy security and national preparedness.

Complementing these developments is Taiwan's considerable potential in renewable energy, particularly in solar and offshore wind. Geothermal energy also offers significant promise, though it remains largely untapped due to

location constraints, regulatory complexity, and land use conflicts.

Considering the national needs, the government has set ambitious renewable energy targets: 20 percent renewables by 2025 (up from 5 percent in 2020), including 5.7 GW of offshore wind power and 20 GW of solar capacity by 2025. By the end of 2024, Taiwan's total installed renewable energy capacity reached 21,067 MW, led by solar photovoltaic with 14,281 MW and wind energy with 3,905 MW.

Despite Taiwan's remarkable potential and its ambitious goals, the rollout of solar and wind projects has so far fallen short of expectations. This is not a matter of technology or resources. Rather, issues such as corruption scandals and local opposition have hindered progress, and for Taiwan's renewable-centered energy resilience strategy to succeed, these internal barriers must be addressed and overcome. This will require strong political will and effective public engagement.

What About Nuclear Energy?

Taiwan's nuclear energy policy has been politically contentious for decades, culminating in the decommissioning of its last reactor in May 2025, as part of its ambition to become a "nuclear-free homeland." However, the more vulnerable the population feels, the more divided public opinion has become regarding nuclear power in the country.

The 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan deeply impacted public perceptions of nuclear safety in Taiwan. In its aftermath, widespread protests broke out across the island, reflecting growing anxiety about the risks of nuclear power. By 2014, this rising public concern had translated into strong majority support for phasing out nuclear energy, leading the government to suspend work on the almost-finished Lungmen (Fourth) Nuclear Power Plant.

Another key factor contributing to public opposition is the historical mishandling of nuclear waste, particularly the storage of low-level waste on Orchid Island (Lanyu) without fully informing the indigenous Tao people. This event left a deep trauma and fostered structural distrust in government assurances regarding nuclear safety and waste management. As a result, reaching public consensus for reactivation is extremely difficult, regardless of technical arguments.

Amid the shutdown of nuclear facilities, the debate has resurfaced due to rising energy demand driven by the semiconductor and AI industries, blackout concerns, financial losses at Taipower due to fuel costs, and the broader global narrative of a "nuclear renaissance." Pro-nuclear groups advocate for its stability and potential benefits to national security. However, even if nuclear energy were technically feasible or strategically appealing, the social cost and political capital required to overcome this deeply rooted distrust could prove prohibitive, diverting valuable resources and attention away from more effective resilience strategies.

Reactivating nuclear power plants in Taiwan would be a strategic miscalculation – one that both fails to address the nation's core vulnerabilities and also introduces new, unacceptable risks that further compromise its resilience.

The Limits of Nuclear Energy

China's "joint blockade campaign" is a central strategy of the PLA in a Taiwan contingency. This approach seeks to integrate military, cyber, space, and economic measures to isolate Taiwan and compel its surrender without the need for a full-scale invasion. A key component of this strategy is "network-centric coercion," which aims to sever Taiwan's connections with the outside world.

Closely related to a blockade is the possibility of a "quarantine," a gray zone operation led by China's coast guard and other law enforcement forces rather than the PLA. This type of operation offers China several strategic advantages: it is more politically reversible, not immediately considered an act of war, and could still compel foreign companies and governments to comply with their demands.

From an energy resilience standpoint, however, the differences between a blockade and a quarantine are subtle. A well-enforced quarantine could still heavily disrupt Taiwan's access to international shipping routes, including those necessary for importing fuel, uranium, and maintenance components essential to nuclear power plants.

Simultaneously, the economic and logistical uncertainty caused by such operations would suppress industrial activity, which accounts for over 50 percent of Taiwan's total power use, leading

to a steep decline in overall energy demand. Under these reduced-demand conditions, existing coal plants, combined with an expanding portfolio of renewable energy sources, could sustain the island's electricity needs for over a year. This directly challenges the argument that nuclear baseload energy would be "essential" for survival in such a situation.

Furthermore, one of China's key strategic objectives in implementing a blockade or quarantine would be to avoid provoking a direct military response from the United States and its allies. To achieve this, China would aim to force the Taiwanese government to surrender – or at least lose its capacity to resist – as quickly as possible, ideally before any external intervention becomes feasible. If China can impose enough economic and logistical pressure on the island for a sustained period, it may either coerce Taiwan into negotiations or create favorable conditions for a full-scale invasion.

In this context, Taiwan's ability to sustain itself energetically, especially through independent and resilient systems, becomes a critical deterrent. The longer Taiwan can endure without external support, the more time it buys for its defense forces to mobilize and for potential allies to intervene, undermining China's initial objective of a swift and contained campaign.

Nuclear Energy as a Dangerous Liability in an Open Conflict

In the event of a military conflict, China may prioritize seizing control of Taiwan's critical infrastructure – particularly its nuclear power plants – rather than destroying them outright. Direct strikes on these facilities could risk a catastrophic radiological disaster, rendering parts of the island uninhabitable. However, nuclear plants remain highly vulnerable in wartime. Even if not deliberately targeted, they can suffer collateral damage, accidental hits, or be used as strategic leverage during a struggle for control.

The case of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, captured by Russian forces in March 2022, underscores this risk. Since its occupation, the site has faced repeated shelling and drone strikes, sparking global concern over nuclear safety. Similarly, Chinese military exercises have included simulated attacks on Taiwan's energy infrastruc-

ture, suggesting that such facilities are seen as viable targets for disruption, if not total destruction.

The inherent risks of operating nuclear facilities in a seismically active, densely populated, and geopolitically volatile region are significantly magnified in wartime. During such periods, safety protocols may be compromised, and external power supplies may be disrupted. The possibility of a nuclear incident whether due to direct attack, collateral damage, or loss of control, is so catastrophic that it transforms nuclear energy into a dangerous liability in a warzone, regardless of China's initial intentions. The risk-reward analysis for Taiwan strongly favors avoiding such a potential disaster. The consequences of even a minor failure are so severe that the risk becomes simply unacceptable.

Therefore, it becomes evident that the issue is not merely that nuclear power is unnecessary or dangerous in isolation, but rather that it fails to address the root causes of Taiwan's energy vulnerability, and introduces new, uncontrollable risks in the process.

Charting a Truly Resilient Future for Taiwan

In light of the multiple challenges Taiwan faces, it is clear that energy resilience is a strategic imperative for national survival. In this context, the most realistic, secure, and effective solution does not lie in reactivating highly centralized and politically divisive nuclear power plants. Instead, it lies in building a decentralized energy system based on microgrids supported by energy storage. This approach enables the continuous, localized supply of electricity and dramatically reduces exploitable vulnerabilities for hostile actors.

Moreover, by being powered through renewable sources, these microgrids would enhance the island's self-sufficiency, gradually eliminating its reliance on imported fossil fuels. The integration of battery storage ensures grid stability and reliability, transforming the intermittency of renewables into a strategic advantage.

Therefore, if Taiwan truly seeks to ensure its energy security, protect its population, and preserve its sovereignty in the face of current and future threats, the most coherent response would be to invest in decentralization, storage, and renewable energy. This is the architecture of a truly resilient future. (Courtesy: The Diplomat)

How a Breakthrough in Physics can revolutionise climate models

By: Prateek Tripathi

At the dawn of the 20th century, David Hilbert propounded his famous 23 problems on fundamental mathematics, one of which, in particular, would have profound consequences for theoretical physics if it were ever to be solved. A solution proposed recently has claimed to do just that. If it turns out to be true, it would not only be a major step forward in physics but could also have a sizeable impact on a wide variety of other fields, including the possibility of significantly more accurate climate models. Furthermore, in an era dominated by technological breakthroughs in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the geopolitical elements surrounding it, the importance of fundamental scientific research often gets overshadowed. A theoretical breakthrough of this magnitude could aid significantly in addressing this issue.

Hilbert's Sixth Problem

At the second International Congress of Mathematicians held at Sorbonne University, Paris, in 1900, David Hilbert, one of the greatest mathematicians in history, unveiled 23 unsolved problems in mathematics which would define the future of the subject. These included fundamental mathematical problems such as the famous Riemann hypothesis and the Diophantine Equation. While some of these have been solved over the preceding century, several continue to remain elusive.

Though Hilbert's problems are technically mathematical, a few of them do have implications for other fields. A case in point is his sixth problem, "The Axiomatization of Physics," in which he pondered whether it was possible to determine the basic mathematical principles from which all physical theories stem. While this is a particularly ambitious problem, which may never truly be solved, a subset of this problem has gained particular traction in the physics community over the years: the prospect of unifying three seemingly disparate theories explaining the motion of fluids at different scales.

The current understanding of fluid motion exists on three scales: microscopic, mesoscopic, and macroscopic. At the microscopic level, we utilise Newton's laws of motion to determine the behaviour of individual point particles. At the mesoscopic or intermediate scale, the equations of statistical mechanics take over, with the Boltzmann equation serving as its foundation. Statistical mechanics essentially uses the principles of probability and statistics to smooth over the dynamics of individual particles in favour of their collec-

tive behaviour and properties. Finally, at the macroscopic level, we no longer track the behaviour of particles, focusing instead on the properties of the fluid as a whole. This is determined by the Euler and Navier-Stokes equations. While all three theories work remarkably well in their own respective domains, it is not quite evident what exactly serves as the unifying element, connecting vastly different equations and theories across all three divergent scales.

However, in March 2025, researchers at the University of Michigan published a paper claiming to have finally united the three different theories under a unified scheme. While it has not been peer-reviewed yet, the analysis appears promising and may finally resolve a longstanding fundamental issue in theoretical physics.

What it Means for Physics

While uniting three different theories across multiple scales is in itself a remarkable achievement, the paper also has implications for a much more fundamental issue in physics, the arrow of time or why time passes in only one direction. At the microscopic level, the laws of physics are reversible in time, meaning that at the level of atoms, forward in time works essentially the same way as backwards in time as far as the theory is concerned.

While uniting three different theories across multiple scales is in itself a remarkable achievement, the paper also has implications for a much more fundamental issue in physics, the arrow of time or why time passes in only one direction. Presently, the laws of thermodynamics justify the arrow of time using the principle of increase of entropy, which roughly states that natural phenomena proceed in the direction which increases the overall disorder within the system, thereby giving rise to what we perceive as the forward flow of time. However, there is no actual proof for why this perceived unidirectional flow of time takes place. Hilbert's sixth problem highlights the importance of understanding how the macroscopic equations of fluid mechanics emerge from the microscopic behaviour of atoms. Therefore, its potential solution will significantly aid in further understanding why the arrow of time exists and how irreversible behaviour emerges from reversible physical laws.

Potential Applications

One of the main challenges impeding accurate climate models is the vast number of parameters involved in their computation. This makes it particularly difficult to run simulations even for the most advanced super-

computers. Models must account for a gamut of macroscopic and microscopic parameters, including wind and water circulation, air molecules, and substrates, while incorporating equations from kinetic theory, statistical physics, and fluid mechanics. A connection between macroscopic and microscopic equations will allow these models to bridge the gap while eliminating redundant parameters, thereby significantly increasing accuracy and efficiency. A connection between macroscopic and microscopic equations will allow these models to bridge the gap while eliminating redundant parameters, thereby significantly increasing accuracy and efficiency.

The same applies to other fields that use these equations, including chemistry, biology, aerodynamics, condensed matter physics, and materials science.

The Importance of Fundamental Scientific Research

Virtually all technological breakthroughs that have emerged in the 20th century, including semiconductors, lasers, and more recently, AI chips, are unanimously founded on fundamental research in mathematics and physics. For instance, quantum theory, which is currently celebrating 100 years of continued success, played a major role in paving the way for almost all current technologies. While there are significant efforts to scale up research and training in technologies such as AI, quantum computing, and semiconductors, the same does not seem to be true for fundamental scientific research, as highlighted by the recent federal research funding cuts in the United States. This is further exemplified by the fact that, despite significant achievements in multiple areas of physics in the recent past, according to several prominent physicists, there has been virtually no fundamental advancement in the subject for over 40 years.

In this context, the solution to a foundational problem in physics has the potential to reinvigorate interest in advancing fundamental sciences, especially given its applications in other applied sciences. Climate science serves as one such crucial area. Despite their critical importance, climate models have long struggled with inaccuracies, largely due to their inherent complexity and the vast number of variables and parameters involved. Advances in modelling could significantly improve our ability to track climate change, forecast weather, and predict natural disasters such as hurricanes and floods. That solving a 125-year-old physics problem may contribute to these improvements underscores the vital role of advancing research in the pure sciences. (Courtesy: ORF)

The Banni grassland in Kutch is an effective carbon sink, finds study

By: Simrin Sirur

The Banni grasslands in Gujarat have long captivated scientists for their variety of flora and fauna, including types of grass not commonly seen elsewhere. At 2,300 square kilometers, it is Asia's largest tropical grassland and one of India's most unique saline grassland-wetland ecosystems. Beneath this vast expanse lies a wealth of soil organic carbon, adding yet another dimension to the ecosystem's complexity, a new study finds.

Unlike most other arid, semi-arid, or seasonally flooded savannas, the Banni grasslands have emerged from soils that are inherently saline.

"The Banni grasslands are a relatively new land formation, and the texture of the soil has to do with the deposition of sand from rivers across millennia," said Chetan Misher, co-author of the study and a wildlife ecologist at the Wildlife Conservation Trust. The texture of the soil is fine, resembling the silt and clay in some parts, making it very dense. "The silt is compact, and for a long time was undisturbed," he added. The nature of soil in the Banni grasslands makes it ideal to store carbon – it was found to store 27.69 million tonnes of carbon, according to the study. For perspective, all of Gujarat was reported to have a soil organic carbon stock of 67 million tonnes, as per the India State of Forest Report 2023.

"Such research can shine a lens on the importance of below-ground carbon stocks and restoration, rather than merely tree planting, as an ecologically sensible means to create long-term, sustainable carbon sinks that are tailored to the natural environmental envelopes in which they occur," said Jayashree Ratnam, Director of the Wildlife Biology and Conservation Program at the National Centre for Biological Sciences.

Restored sites have high or-

ganic carbon

Typically, trees and forests have been the focus of domestic policies aimed at increasing carbon storage. Grasslands are rarely thought of as allies in climate mitigation, even though soil is responsible for 55% of the country's carbon stock.

"A huge challenge with the protection of grasslands in India stems from a legacy where these open systems have been viewed as 'less productive', and therefore historically targeted for transformation to other land uses such as agriculture and industry, and more recently renewable energy," said Ratnam, who was not involved in the study.

The researchers attempted to study carbon stocks in the Banni grasslands, because "even global or regional meta-analyses have excluded data from Banni, making it an outlier in the study of SOC [soil organic carbon] stocks in tropical grasslands", says the study. Apart from estimating current stocks, the study also mapped stocks across different land use types. Plots were sampled three times – in 2014, 2017, and 2023 – to draw a picture of how restoration and degradation influenced soil organic carbon storage over time.

Degraded sites were considered as those where Prosopis juliflora was widespread – including dense Prosopis woodlands and sites with Prosopis and mixed vegetation.

Prosopis juliflora is an invasive plant that was introduced into the landscape in the 1960s to combat soil salinisation and improve green cover, but has since spread over approximately 50% of the Banni grasslands. Restored sites, locally called vaadas, where Prosopis was removed by communities or individuals, were included in the study as a point of comparison, as were saline brushlands and wetlands.

Restored sites – the vaadas – had the highest soil organic carbon density, the study found, at around 143 tonnes of carbon per

hectare, "underscoring the potential of restored grasslands to sequester carbon effectively".

The vaadas were followed by wetlands (storing around 138.59 tonnes of carbon per hectare) and saline brushlands (around 125.75 tonnes per hectare). By contrast, areas with Prosopis and mixed vegetation showed the lowest storage density (105.56 tonnes per hectare).

Since the saline brushlands are the biggest land use type, occupying 1,27,521 hectares, they contributed the most to overall soil organic carbon stocks in the Banni grasslands, storing 16.03 million tonnes of carbon.

Undisturbed soil

Changes in land composition could change Banni's carbon storage potential in the future. Though the Banni grasslands have been protected as a reserve forest by law, climatic changes, increasing salinity, and the encroachment by invasive species can accelerate degradation.

Over the nine year study period, saline brushlands shrank by almost 10,000 hectares from 2014 to 2023 – likely due to the combined effects of wetland seasonality and encroachment by Prosopis. Dense wooded Prosopis areas increased by approximately 2,000 hectares over the same time period.

"Prosopis prevents the growth of palatable grasses under their canopy, and so this also affects the soil's capacity to hold carbon," explained Misher, adding, "Ensuring the soil is undisturbed is a key way of ensuring the carbon remains stored in the soil." While trees and other vegetation store carbon in their biomass, grasslands store carbon in the soil, and can do it more effectively in drought prone areas. The fact that the Banni's restored vaadas stored the highest proportion of carbon compared to other land types shows that "planting more trees in tropical grasslands does not lead to more SOC [soil organic carbon] concentration in the soils", says the study. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Israel plans new phase of war in Gaza

JERUSALEM, Aug 20: Israel is preparing to launch an expanded military operation in Gaza City, possibly in the coming days, even as negotiators scramble to bring Israel and Hamas to a ceasefire to end 22 months of fighting.

The Israeli military said Wednesday that the country's defence minister has approved plans to begin a new phase of operations in some of Gaza's most densely populated areas, and that it would call up 60,000 reservists and lengthen the service of an additional 20,000 reservists currently serving. It comes as human rights groups warn that a humanitarian crisis could worsen in Gaza, where most residents have been displaced, vast neighbourhoods lie in ruins, and communities are facing the threat of famine.

A military official, speaking on the condition of anonymity in line with military regulations, said that

the military will be operating in parts of Gaza City where the Israeli military has not yet operated and where it believes Hamas is still active.

The official said that Israeli troops are already operating in the Zeitoun and Jabaliya neighbourhoods of Gaza City to prepare the groundwork for the expanded operation, which is expected to receive approval from the chief of staff in the coming days.

Gaza City is Hamas' main military and governing stronghold and Israeli troops will be targeting Hamas' vast underground tunnel network, the official added. Although Israel has targeted and killed much of Hamas' senior leadership, parts of the militant group are actively regrouping and carrying out attacks, including launching rockets towards Israel, the official said.

Gaza City operation could begin within days

It remains unclear when the operation will begin, but it could be a matter of days. The official said 50,000 reservists will be called up in the coming month, one of the largest mobilizations in months.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has consistently said objective of the war is to secure the release of the remaining hostages and ensure Hamas and other militants can never again threaten Israel. The planned offensive, first announced earlier this month, has heightened international condemnation of Israel and fuelled fears of another mass displacement among Palestinians.

Netanyahu said on August 9 that it would span parts of Gaza City and the central camps. Hundreds of thousands of displaced people are sheltering in the city and it holds some of the last remnants of critical infrastructure.

AP journalists saw small groups

heading south from the city this week, but how many will voluntarily flee remains unclear. Some said they were waiting to see how events unfold before moving yet again, and many insist nowhere is safe from airstrikes.

Some exhausted reservists question war's goals

The call-up comes as a growing campaign of exhausted reservists is accusing the government of perpetuating the war for political reasons and failing to bring home the remaining hostages.

The families of the hostages and former army and intelligence chiefs have also expressed opposition to the expanded operation in Gaza City. Most of the families of the hostages want an immediate ceasefire and worry an expanded assault could imperil bringing the 50 hostages still in Gaza home. Israel believes that 20 are still alive. The former chiefs are sceptical

of the goal of completely destroying Hamas is attainable. Former Shin Bet head Yoram Cohen called it a "fantasy," saying that "if anyone imagines that we can reach every terrorist and every pit and every weapon, and in parallel bring our hostages home — I think it is impossible." Hamas-led militants started the war when they attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251. Most of the hostages have been released in ceasefires or other deals. Hamas says it will only free the rest in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal.

Mediation is underway in Cairo as worries grow about humanitarian crisis

Mediators and Hamas both said this week that Hamas leaders had agreed to cease-fire terms, though similar announcements have been made in the past that did not lead to



ceasefires. An Israeli official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media said that Israel is in constant contact with the mediators in an effort to secure the release of the hostages.

Netanyahu has repeatedly said he will oppose a deal that doesn't include the "complete defeat of Hamas." More than 62,000 people have been killed during Israel's 22-month offensive, Gaza's Health Ministry said on Monday.

The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals. The ministry does not say how many of the dead were civilians or combatants, but says women and children make up around half of them.

In addition to that toll, 154 adults have died of malnutrition-related causes since late June, when the ministry began counting such deaths, and 112 children have died of malnutrition-related causes since the war began. (AP)

India, China reached common understandings on management of border during Wang's visit: Beijing

'The current circumstances further highlight the strategic significance of China-India relations and the strategic value of bilateral cooperation'

BEIJING, Aug 20: India, China have reached new common understandings agreeing to conduct normalised management and control of the boundary during the just concluded visit of Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to New Delhi, Beijing said on Wednesday.

Wang visited New Delhi on August 18-19 during which he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, attended the 24th round of Special Representatives (SRs) talks with NSA Ajit Doval and held talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

Summing up the outcome of Wang's visit, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here that during his visit, the two sides also agreed on resuming dialogue mechanisms in various fields, deepening mutually beneficial cooperation, upholding multilateralism, jointly dealing with global challenges and opposing unilateral bullying acts.

"On the boundary question, the two sides reached new common understandings, agreeing to conduct normalised management and



control, maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas, properly address areas of sensitivity, and initiate boundary negotiations in areas where conditions are met", she said.

Mao said in his meetings, Wang also noted that "the current circumstances further highlight the strategic significance of China-India relations and the strategic value of bilateral cooperation" apparently referring to the US Presi-

dent Donald Trump's tariff threats.

A press release issued by the Foreign Ministry here about Wang's meeting with PM Modi said Wang has conveyed Chinese President Xi Jinping's and Premier Li Qiang's warm greetings to him. Wang welcomed Modi's visit to China to attend the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) summit to be held in the Chinese city of Tianjin on August 31-September 1, it said.

The Chinese foreign minister said that the successful meeting between Modi and Xi in Russia last year has provided guidance for the resumption and a new start for China-India relations.

Both sides have been earnestly implementing the common understandings reached by the leaders of the two countries, promoting bilateral relations to enter a new course of improvement and development, he told Modi. This has not come by easily, and should be cherished, he said. Wang said that his visit to India also served to prepare for high-level exchanges between the two countries.

Through comprehensive and in-depth communication, in terms of bilateral relations, the two sides have agreed on restarting dialogue mechanisms across various fields, deepening mutually beneficial cooperation, upholding multilateralism, jointly addressing global challenges, and opposing unilateralism and bullying acts, the press release quoted him as saying.

Wang emphasized that China-India relations have experienced ups and downs, and the lessons

learned are worth remembering, it said.

Regardless of the circumstances, both sides should adhere to the correct positioning of being partners, not rivals, and prudently manage differences to ensure that boundary disputes do not affect the overall relationship between the two countries, Wang said.

"In the current international situation, the strategic significance of China-India relations is increasingly prominent, and the strategic value of China-India cooperation is even more notable," he said.

Both sides will earnestly implement the important common understandings reached by the leaders of the two countries, strengthen exchanges and cooperation across various fields, and promote the steady and long-term development of China-India relations, the release said.

Both sides will bring greater benefits to the people of both countries, and make due contributions to the cause of human progress as two major civilisations, the press release quoted Wang as saying. (PTI)

Rwanda-backed rebels killed over 140 civilians in eastern Congo, rights group says

DAKAR(SENEGAL), Aug 20: Rwanda-backed rebels killed at least 140 people in farming communities in eastern Congo in July, a human rights group said in a report Wednesday, describing the killings as "summary executions."

Human Rights Watch said 141 people, predominantly Hutus, were feared dead or missing after the attacks near Virunga National Park in North Kivu province, citing local experts and witness accounts.

It said the killings appeared to be part of a military campaign by the M23 group, the most prominent of more than 100 armed groups fighting for control in eastern Congo, against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a mostly Hutu armed group.

Nearly 2 million Hutus from Rwanda fled to Congo after the 1994 Rwandan genocide that killed 800,000 Tutsi, moderate Hutus and others.

Rwandan authorities accused the Hutus who fled of participating in the genocide, alleging that the Congolese army protected them.

"The M23 armed group, which has Rwandan government backing, attacked over a dozen villages and farming areas in July and committed dozens of summary executions of primarily Hutu civilians," said Clementine de Montjoye, senior researcher at Human Rights Watch.

Witnesses said M23 soldiers, accompanied by Rwandan soldiers who were identified by their accents, told them to "immediately bury the bodies in the fields or leave them unburied, preventing families from organizing funerals," the report said.

One woman described being marched in a group to a riverbank near the town of Kafuru. The group of around 70 people was lined up before the soldiers began shooting at them. 47 people, including children, who were killed

were identified, the report added. Willy Ngoma, military spokesperson for M23, called the report "military propaganda."

The report said the Rwandan military and the Rwanda Defense Force (RDF) were involved in the M23 operations, citing U.N. and military sources and witness accounts. There was no immediate comment from the Rwandan government.

The reported killings could escalate tensions in Congo's mineral-rich east where different partners have been racing to achieve a permanent ceasefire since fighting between the M23 and Congolese forces escalated in January.

The UN has called the conflict "one of the most protracted, complex, serious humanitarian crises on Earth."

M23 was previously accused of extrajudicial killings during their seizure of major cities in the eastern part of the country in May. (AP)

India slams Pak on gross sexual violence against women

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 20: India has slammed Pakistan at a UN debate by drawing attention to the "heinous crimes of gross sexual violence" against women in erstwhile East Pakistan in 1971, adding the pattern continues "with impunity to this day."

Briefly addressing what he called as the "baseless allegation" raised by the Pakistan delegate during the debate on Tuesday, Eldos Mathew Punnoose, India's Counsellor and Charge d'Affaires, said that the 1971's instances of sexual violence against women is "a matter of shameful record."

Punnoose was delivering his statement at the open debate on 'Innovative Strategies to Ensure Access to Life-Saving Services and Protection for Survivors of Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones.' "The utter impunity with which the Pakistan army perpetrated heinous crimes of gross sexual violence against women in erstwhile East Pakistan in 1971 is a matter of shameful record," he said. He was apparently referring to a series of massacres and rapes in 1971 in East Pakistan, in what is today's Bangladesh.

"This deplorable pattern continues unabated and with impunity to this day," the Indian diplomat said.

"Rampant abduction, trafficking, child early and forced marriages and domestic servitude, sexual violence and forced religious conversions of thousands of vulnerable women and girls as weapons of persecution towards religious and ethnic minority communities are reported and chronicled, including in the recent OHCHR reports," Punnoose said.

He also alleged that it is "ironical" that those who perpetrate these crimes are now "masquerading as champions of justice." "The duplicity and hypocrisy is self-evident," he added. Punnoose was responding to Pakistan's allegation that "sexual violence has long been deployed to punish and humiliate communities" in Kashmir. Punnoose in his statement said, "Perpetrators of heinous acts of conflict-related sexual violence must be condemned in the strongest possible terms and brought to justice." (PTI)

NKorean leader's sister says her country will never see South as diplomatic partner

SEOUL, Aug 20: The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said her country will never see South Korea as a partner for diplomacy, state media reported on Wednesday in what was her latest taunt of Seoul's new efforts to mend ties.

Kim Yo Jong, who is one of her brother's top foreign policy officials, denounced the ongoing South Korea-US military drills as a "reckless" invasion rehearsal and claimed Seoul's peace gestures conceal a "sinister intention" against Pyongyang.

Her comments came during a meeting on Tuesday with senior Foreign Ministry officials about her brother's diplomatic strategies in the face of persistent threats from rivals and a rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said.

On Monday, Kim Jong Un condemned the South Korean-US military drills and vowed a rapid expansion of his nuclear forces as he inspected his most advanced warship being fitted with nuclear-capable systems.

The North's news agency said Kim Yo Jong condemned the South as the "top-class faithful dog" of the United States and that the reparation of inter-Korean relations desired by Seoul "will never" happen.

The siblings' back-to-back statements followed the latest outreach by South



Korean President Lee Jae Myung, who said last week that Seoul would seek to restore a 2018 inter-Korean military agreement aimed at reducing border tensions, while urging Pyongyang to reciprocate by rebuilding trust and resuming dialogue.

Since taking office in June, Lee has moved to repair relations that worsened under his conservative predecessor's hard-line policies, including removing front-line speakers that broadcast anti-North Korean propaganda and K-pop.

In a nationally televised speech Friday, Lee said his government respects North Korea's current system and that the wealthier South "will not pursue any form of unification by absorption and

has no intention of engaging in hostile acts".

But he also stressed that the South remains committed to an international push to denuclearise the North and urged Pyongyang to resume dialogue with Washington and Seoul.

Angered by expanding South Korean-US military drills, Kim Jong Un last year declared that North Korea was abandoning long-standing goals of a peaceful unification with South Korea and rewrote the North's constitution to mark the South as a permanent enemy.

Kim Yo Jong has repeatedly dismissed calls to revive negotiations aimed at winding down the North's nuclear and missile programmes, which derailed in 2019 following her brother's collapsed summit with US President Donald Trump during his first term.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Kim Jong Un has made Moscow the priority of his foreign policy, sending troops and weapons to support President Vladimir Putin's war, while also using the conflict as a distraction to accelerate his military nuclear programme.

In her meeting on Tuesday, Kim Yo Jong suggested that Pyongyang seeks to compete with Seoul diplomatically, claiming the South "will not even have a subordinate role in the regional diplomatic arena," which she claimed will be centred on the North. (AP)

NATO defense chiefs hold a virtual meeting on security guarantees for Ukraine

BRUSSELS, Aug 20: NATO defence chiefs were due to hold a virtual meeting Wednesday, a senior alliance official said, as Western countries pushing for an end to Russia's war on Ukraine devise possible future security guarantees for Kyiv that could help forge a peace agreement.

Italian Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone, the chair of NATO's Military Committee, said that 32 defence chiefs from across the alliance would hold a video conference as a US-led diplomatic push seeks to end the fighting.

US Gen Alexus Grynkeiwich, NATO's supreme allied commander Europe, will take part in the talks, Dragone said on social platform X.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov chided efforts to work on security arrangements in Ukraine without Moscow's involvement.

"We cannot agree with the fact that it is now proposed to resolve collective security issues without the Russian Federation. This will not work," Lavrov said Wednesday, according to state news agency RIA Novosti.

Russia will "ensure (its) legitimate interests firmly and harshly," Lavrov added at a news conference in Moscow with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi.

Defence chiefs work on details of a Ukraine security force US President Donald Trump met last Friday with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska and on Monday hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and prominent European leaders at the White House. Neither meeting delivered concrete progress.

Trump is trying to steer Putin and Zelenskyy toward a settlement more than three years after Russia invaded its neighbour, but there are major obstacles. They include Ukraine's demands for Western-backed military assurances to ensure Russia won't mount another invasion in coming years.

"We need strong security guarantees to ensure a truly secure and lasting peace," Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post Wednesday after Russian missile and drone strikes hit six regions of Ukraine overnight.

Kyiv's European allies are looking to set up a force that could backstop any peace agreement, and a coalition of 30 countries, including European nations, Japan and Australia, have signed up to support the initiative.

Military chiefs are figuring out how that security force might work. The role that the US might play in is unclear. Trump on Tuesday ruled out sending US troops to help defend Ukraine against Russia.

Russia has repeatedly said that it would not accept NATO troops in Ukraine.

Attacks on civilian areas in Sumy and Odesa overnight into Wednesday injured 15 people, including a family with three small children, Ukrainian authorities said. Russian strikes also targeted ports and fuel and energy infrastructure, officials said.

Zelenskyy said the strikes "only confirm the need for pressure on Moscow, the need to introduce new sanctions and tariffs until diplomacy works to its full potential."

Switzerland could host a Putin-Zelenskyy summit

Trump said Monday he has begun arrangements for a face-to-face meeting between Putin and Zelenskyy, although the Kremlin hasn't publicly confirmed such a possibility and no venue was suggested.

French President Emmanuel Macron has said the summit could happen in Europe and proposed the Swiss city of Geneva. Switzerland has expressed its willingness to act as host.

Putin's ability to travel abroad is limited, however, because he is wanted by the International Criminal Court in The Hague on a warrant dating back to March 2023 for alleged involvement in the abduction of Ukrainian children.

More than 100 countries are ICC signatories and have a legal obligation to arrest the Russian leader on their soil.

Switzerland intends to ask the ICC to exempt it from sanctions in order to allow Putin in for a summit, according to a senior official in The Hague with direct knowledge of the request. The official was not authorised to speak about the proceedings and spoke on condition of anonymity. (AP)

NO. KDB/BTC/6th AFSC/NTI/2024-25/1392 (A) Dated: 11/08/2025

PRESS NOTICE

Tender No.KDB/BTC/2025

The BDO, Kokrajhar Development Block invites Bids from registered contractors with PWD (Roads/Building) or Registered contractor with BTC in the category of class II and above for the works against Const. of Cremetorium ground at Kundibari Pt-II under 6th finance Commission (Untied) Fund for the year 2024-25 for an estimated amount of Rs. 20,00,000.00(Rupees Twenty Lakh) only

The detail may be seen at the website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also in the Office of the undersigned during Office hours.

N. B. The bill of the contractor will be paid only after receiving the fund from BTC.

Sd/- Block Development Officer,
Kokrajhar Dev. Block, Titaguri

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/2738

No.RDC/MDS/03/2017/Pt-I/2142-45

ADMISSION NOTICE

Re-schedule of Counselling for Admission into MDS Course (Post Graduate) in the Regional Dental College, Guwahati for the Session 2025

It is for general information to the candidates that the counselling for admission for one seat to MDS course in the subject of Periodontics in the Regional Dental College, Guwahati (Assam Quota) for the Session 2025 which was scheduled to be held on 22nd August, 2025 (Friday) at Office of the Directorate of Medical Education, Assam, Sixmile, Khanapara, Guwahati-22 at 11:00 am vide letter no No.RDC/MDS/03/2017/Pt-I/2115-18 dated 18th August 2025 now stands cancelled.

As per Direction of Medical Counselling Committee (MCC), the counselling will now be held on 29th August 2025 (Friday) at 11.00 a.m at Office of the Directorate of Medical Education, Assam, Sixmile, Khanapara, Guwahati-22.

All Candidate whose names have appeared in the State of Assam merit list of NEET-MDS-2025 conducted by the National Board of Examination, New Delhi and who have secured merit position upto 176 in the said merit list as well as, who have fulfilled all the eligibility criteria for admission into MDS courses against Assam State Quota seats as per rules, are hereby requested to physically appear for the counselling with their necessary documents as per schedule mentioned above.

Sd/-
Principal
Regional Dental College, Guwahati-32.

DIPR/D/HLT/128/21-Aug-25

BJP Arunachal Pradesh holds organisational workshop in Itanagar

Party leaders stress discipline, grassroots outreach and cultural awareness to strengthen organisation

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 20: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Arunachal Pradesh unit on Wednesday organised a one-day organisational workshop (Pradesh Sangathanmak Karyashala) at the DK Convention Centre, Itanagar.

The programme aimed at strengthening party organisation, enhancing coordination among karyakartas and elected representatives, and charting strategies for effective grassroots outreach, according to an official statement.

The workshop was attended by state office bearers, ministers, MLAs, chairmen, vice-chairmen, spokespersons of various departments, district presidents and mandal presidents.

In his presidential address, State BJP President Kaling Moyong stressed discipline, unity and commitment to the party's ideology while outlining the vision for Arunachal Pradesh in line with the developmental agenda of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and chief minister Pema Khandu.



He urged district and mandal presidents to resolve issues at the local level without escalating minor matters to the state office.

Deputy chief minister Chowna Mein, in his remarks, underlined the need for such workshops to be held regularly to strengthen party activities.

He highlighted interactive ses-

sions, training modules and discussions on organisational structure, communication and upcoming political programmes.

Mein also emphasised the importance of making people aware of Arunachal Pradesh's history and cultural heritage, including its ties to Lord Buddha and the 6th Dalai Lama.

The workshop covered topics such as organisational structure from state to booth level, distribution of roles among party functionaries, regular touring, narrative building, countering opposition propaganda through media platforms, Panch Parivartan and review of organisational activities.

National-level leaders, including BJP national northeast coordinator V Muralaiah, BJP national vice president and Chhattisgarh MLA Lata Usendi, and Assam minister Ashok Singhal, who is also in charge of BJP Arunachal Pradesh, attended as resource persons.

Chief minister Pema Khandu delivered the concluding address, calling upon party workers to dedicate themselves to strengthening the BJP in the state.

The programme ended with a vote of thanks by State General Secretary Junty Singhphoo.

The one-day workshop concluded with a collective resolve to strengthen the BJP at the grassroots level and continue serving the people of Arunachal Pradesh with integrity and commitment.

DC reviews progress of flagship schemes and infrastructure projects in East Siang



HT Correspondent

PASIGHAT, Aug 20: The monthly District Level Monitoring Committee (DLMC) meeting of East Siang district was held at the DC's Conference Hall on Tuesday under the chairmanship of deputy commissioner Sonalika Jiwani, IAS, to review the status of ongoing schemes, infrastructure projects, and Central and State flagship programmes being implemented by various departments.

During the meeting, DC Jiwani reviewed the District Development Report submitted by the departments, which highlighted

progress in multiple development indicators, including law and order.

She stressed the need for greater inter-departmental coordination in project implementation and directed all executing agencies to keep user departments updated on the progress of works.

According to an official statement, the DC also underscored the importance of proper upkeep and optimum utilization of government assets created under different schemes so that they serve their intended purpose and deliver benefits to the people in line with the vision of the Central and State

governments.

She urged the heads of departments (HoDs) to take up innovative initiatives and implement new ideas in their respective fields.

Calling for sustainability of projects, Jiwani asked nodal agencies to take proactive steps towards revenue generation from public assets.

"Every asset created by the government, from infrastructure facilities to public libraries, must be utilized optimally to benefit the target beneficiaries. For this, we need to reorient our approach and adopt innovative and proactive initiatives to meet the expectations of citizens," she said.

The DC also directed concerned departments to ensure timely redressal of issues flagged during the meeting.

Stressing on the role of each department in the holistic development of the district, she emphasised on time-bound completion of projects with the highest standards of quality.

The meeting was attended by nodal officer and DPO Tatak Mibang, PD DRDA Tating Padung, ADC Mebo Nancy Yirang, Dy SP Ayub Boko, along with heads of departments and officials from various implementing agencies.

Dorjee Khandu Memorial District-Level Badminton Tournament returns in Tawang after three years



HT Correspondent

TAWANG, Aug 20: The 8th Dorjee Khandu Memorial District-Level Badminton Tournament began this afternoon at the auditorium near Higher Secondary School, Tawang, marking the revival of the popular annual sporting event after a three-year gap.

According to an official statement, the four-day tournament, scheduled from August 20 to 23, 2025, is being organised by Monyul Sports Club and sponsored by Tawang legislator Namgye Tsering.

The competition will see participation from three sports clubs representing the three assembly constituencies of the district — Monyul Sports Club (Tawang), Lungla Sports Club, and Jang Sports Club.

A total of 101 players are competing, with 40 from Monyul, 30 from Lungla, and 31 from Jang.

Over 111 matches across 21 events will be played, including a

special Under-19 category aimed at nurturing budding talent for higher-level competitions.

The inaugural function was attended by deputy commissioner Tawang Namgyal Angmo, IAS, as chief guest, Brigadier Bhupal Singh, Sena Medal, as guest of honour, along with Superintendent of Police Tawang Dr DW Thongon, family members of late Dorjee Khandu, senior civil officers, public leaders, and sports enthusiasts.

In her address, DC Angmo underlined the importance of sports in building discipline, fitness, and organisational skills.

She encouraged the youth to adopt active lifestyles and register for the upcoming Tawang International Marathon scheduled for October 24, 2025.

She noted that excellence in life is not confined to academics and emphasised that with dedication, young people can achieve international recognition in sports.

Guest of honour Brigadier Singh

extended his best wishes to the players and praised the organisers for promoting sports and health awareness among youth.

He emphasised the importance of early identification of sporting talent so that young athletes can be groomed for national and international levels.

Tournament Organising Secretary Pema Chowang welcomed dignitaries and participants, explaining that the event is both a sporting tradition and a tribute to late Dorjee Khandu, the former chief minister remembered for his service to the people of Arunachal Pradesh.

He noted that the tournament is hosted on a rotational basis across the three constituencies but was suspended in recent years due to unavoidable circumstances, including the demise of late Jambye Tashi, former MLA of Lungla.

The inaugural ceremony concluded with a vote of thanks by Kesang Norbu, former secretary of Monyul Sports Club, following which the opening Men's Open match was played between Sangey Wangchu and Pema of Monyul Sports Club against Tenzin Phuntsok and Thutan Tsering of Jang Sports Club.

Sangey Wangchu and Pema secured victory with straight sets of 21-12 and 21-16.

The tournament, organisers said, not only promotes sportsmanship and youth engagement but also honours the memory of late Dorjee Khandu by continuing his vision of encouraging healthy and progressive activities for the district.

Capacity building programme for TGTs begins in Tawang

HT Correspondent

TAWANG, Aug 20: A three-day Capacity Building Outreach Programme for Trained Graduate Teachers (TGTs) from Tawang, West Kameng, and Bichom districts began on Wednesday at Timilo Boutique, Tawang, with a focus on competency-based assessment and subject-specific pedagogies in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National/State Curriculum Framework (NCF/SCF).

Organised by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar, the programme is designed to enhance exam readiness and strengthen classroom teaching in Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science.

A total of 91 TGTs are taking part in the training, which is supported by Reach to Teach, a New Delhi-based NGO serving as SCERT's Knowledge Partner.

According to an official statement, the inaugural session was attended by deputy commissioner of Tawang, Namgyal Angmo, IAS, as chief guest, and principal of Government Higher Secondary School, Tawang, Aseng Modi, as guest of honour.

Also present were DDSE Tawang Hridar Phuntsok, SCERT assistant director Mudong Omo, and resource persons from Reach to Teach.

In her address, DC Angmo thanked SCERT for hosting the event in Tawang and encouraged teachers to use the opportunity to strengthen their teaching practices.

Public hearing held for 1,200 MW Kalai-II hydroelectric project in Anjaw



HT Correspondent

HAWAL, Aug 20: The Arunachal Pradesh State Pollution Control Board (APSPCB) on Wednesday conducted a public hearing for environmental clearance to the proposed 1,200 MW Kalai-II hydroelectric project in Anjaw district, being developed by THDC India Limited. The information was provided in an official statement.

The hearing was chaired by Anjaw deputy commissioner Millo Kojin and witnessed the participation of Women and Child Development minister Dasanglu Pul, senior THDC officials, and over 350 project-affected persons (PAFs) representing 33 villages.

Minister Pul, recalling that her late husband and former chief minister Kalikho Pul had initiated survey work for Kalai-I and Kalai-II in 2009, expressed happiness at seeing his vision move closer to reality. Urging local residents to extend their support, she cited the example of Uttarakhand's Tehri dam, underlining the long-term benefits of large-scale hydropower infrastructure. She assured villagers that 50 per cent of the project's employment opportunities would be reserved for land-affected families and stressed that the project would also boost self-employment and entrepreneurship in the region.

According to officials, the Kalai-II project entails an investment of nearly ₹14,000 crore and is expected to generate free power worth ₹318 crore annually for the state after commissioning. In addition, it will contribute ₹2.2 crore every year to the Local Area Development Fund. The project, one

of 13 stalled hydroelectric schemes revived last year through Memorandums of Agreement (MoAs) with four central public sector undertakings, is expected to create around 1,700 direct jobs. It is also projected to spur development in the district through improvements in roads, healthcare, education, and allied services.

During the hearing, APSPCB officials explained the process for obtaining environmental clearance, while representatives of THDC India Limited and its consultant WAPCOS Ltd gave a detailed presentation on the project's environmental impact assessment and proposed mitigation measures.

The majority of participants spoke in favour of the project, acknowledging its potential to drive economic growth in the border district. However, some villagers raised concerns regarding land rates, compensation, employment assurances, and the scope of local area development.

Summing up the proceedings, deputy commissioner Kojin assured the villagers that their suggestions and concerns would be duly recorded in the minutes of the meeting. He also proposed that two representatives from each affected village be taken on an exposure visit to Uttarakhand's Tehri dam, so that they could gain first-hand knowledge of the benefits and challenges of such projects.

THDC executive director A K Ghildiyal, along with other senior officials of the corporation, assured the gathering that genuine concerns of the people would be addressed in accordance with rules and guidelines.

Justice Prasanta Kumar Deka sworn in as Lokayukta chairperson

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 20: Justice Prasanta Kumar Deka (Retd) was sworn in as the Chairperson of Lokayukta, Arunachal Pradesh, while Er Sang Phuntsok, IAS (Retd), took oath as its member in a ceremony held at the Vivekananda Hall of Raj Bhavan, Itanagar, on Wednesday, according to an official statement.

The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Pamaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), administered the oath of office.

Chief minister Pema Khandu, deputy chief minister Chowna Mein, cabinet ministers, senior officers and other officials attended the function.

The proceedings were conducted by Chief Secretary Manish Gupta.

Following the ceremony, Justice Deka called on the Governor.

During the interaction, the Governor underlined the significance of the Lokayukta in strengthening democratic governance, describing it as a moral guardian entrusted with upholding integrity in public life.

He advised the Chairperson to play a proactive role in promoting transparency, ensuring public accountability and combating corruption. The Governor further said a corruption-free system is the foundation of people's trust in governance and emphasised that institutions like the Lokayukta are key to achieving this.

SCCZ observes World Entrepreneurs Day with interactive session

HT Correspondent

ZIRO, Aug 20: Saint Claret College (Autonomous), Ziro, through its Department of Management under the Institution's Innovation Council, organised an interactive session on Wednesday to mark World Entrepreneurs Day, according to an official statement.

The programme featured entrepreneur Dulley Pai, Chairman of Ujwal Ziro Charity Mission, as the resource person.

Sharing his journey across multiple industries, Pai spoke about the challenges he faced and the lessons learned from each venture.

He urged students to embrace failures as stepping stones to success, stressing resilience, focus, and eth-

ical business practices.

He also advised them to avoid corruption and to set positive examples for future generations.

Pai further shared practical strategies for aspiring entrepreneurs, particularly on financial management and sustainable business approaches.

College Principal Dr Fr Allwyn Mendoz, in his address, underlined unemployment as a pressing issue and highlighted entrepreneurship as a viable solution to economic challenges faced by the youth.

Students actively participated in the session, raising questions on financial management, common startup pitfalls, and practical solutions, making the event engaging and interactive.

Arunachal Rising Campaign boosts public awareness in Changlang: Report

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 20: The Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Changlang, has released a comprehensive report highlighting the successful implementation of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) initiatives and the Arunachal Rising Campaign from January 2022 to July 2025.

According to the official statement, the campaigns were aimed at spreading awareness about government schemes, mobilising communities, and fostering collective progress across the district.

More than 25 IEC campaigns were organized, covering themes such as health, education, sanitation,



tion, women empowerment, and voter awareness.

The Arunachal Rising Campaign, a flagship outreach pro-

gramme, was also conducted extensively in towns and remote border villages.

Using mobile vans, folk

media, posters, and digital outreach, the campaign sought to promote transparency, good governance, and citizen participation.

Special focus was given to youth development, women's empowerment, health awareness, sanitation, and digital literacy.

The DIPR reported a "marked improvement" in awareness levels among villagers, who reported better knowledge of welfare schemes like PMAY, Ujjwala, and Ayushman Bharat. Youth participation also saw significant growth, with schools and colleges actively joining rallies, while Self-Help Groups (SHGs) played a stronger role in sanitation and health campaigns.

Despite these successes, the report acknowledged challenges such as difficult terrain, limited manpower, and language barriers in diverse tribal communities.

To address these, it recommended increasing IEC van campaigns in border villages, promoting use of local dialects, engaging NGOs and youth clubs, and expanding digital outreach through WhatsApp groups and local radio.

"The IEC and Arunachal Rising Campaigns in Changlang have successfully strengthened bonds between the government and the community. With improved planning and support, their impact can be further expanded in the years ahead," the official statement concluded.

Assault on democracy, death knell for federalism: Left parties on bills to remove PM, CMs

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Left parties on Wednesday said the new bills that provide for the removal of the prime minister or chief ministers arrested on serious criminal charges, are a direct "assault" on democracy and the federal framework, and vowed to oppose it "tooth and nail".

The government introduced three bills in Parliament on Wednesday for the removal of the prime minister, a Union minister, a chief minister or a minister of a state or Union Territory when arrested or detained on serious criminal charges for 30 days in a row.

Playing the move, CPI(M) general secretary M A Baby said, "Modi Govt's 3 bills to oust PM, CMs, Ministers after 30 days in custody expose its neo-fascist characteristics. This direct assault on our democracy will be opposed by CPIM tooth and nail. We urge all democratic forces to unite against this draconian move."

"These bills, cloaked as tackling crime in high office, reveal their true intent given the RSS-controlled Modi gov't's history of undermining elected state govts. With SIR, they mark a blatant move to subvert our democracy. All democratic forces must resist," he said on X.

CPI(M) Rajya Sabha MP John Brittas also called the bills "draconian".

"The new bill by Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah, purportedly in the name of 'public interest, welfare, and good governance', is, in reality,



draconian and designed to destabilize opposition-led state governments while undermining India's federal structure," Brittas said in a post on X. "In an era marked by vindictive politics, where central agencies are deployed against opposition leaders, the provisions will be misused for ulterior motives," he said.

The CPI(M) leader said the bill's reference to "constitutional morality" contradicts its spirit, as it deviates from the established principle that disqualification and punishment should be tied to convictions by courts, not merely charges or arrests.

"This principle is clearly enshrined in Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act (RPA). In today's pernicious political climate, where individuals can be easily charged, arrested,

and detained for extended periods, this legislation will be weaponised to target political opponents and erode democratic norms," he said.

Communist Party of India (CPI) Rajya Sabha MP P Sandosh Kumar said the three bills will open "floodgates of vendetta politics".

"These Bills are a weapon to open the floodgates of vendetta politics. The BJP, which misuses agencies like the ED and CBI against political opponents, will now have a free hand to destabilise elected governments. Any Chief Minister or Minister can be arrested and summarily removed, allowing the ruling party to decide who governs in the States. This destroys federalism and the level playing field in politics," Kumar said.

CPI(ML) Liberation general secre-

tary Dipankar Bhattacharya said the bills will sound the "death knell" for federalism.

"Viewed together with the ongoing systematic subversion of the electoral system starting with the appointment of Election Commissioners to the relentless push for 'One Nation, One Election' system, this amendment will sound the death knell for federalism and parliamentary democracy in India," Bhattacharya said.

"Every state government opposed to the BJP's politics and policies will henceforth be rendered permanently destabilised and dysfunctional. Every NDA ally will be on tenterhooks to fall in line with the BJP," he said in a statement.

"The weaponisation of central agencies like ED, CBI, I-T, NIA and the abuse of the Constitutional office of Governors in narrow partisan interest, a trend which has been seriously condemned on several occasions even by the Supreme Court, will now gain legal validity with the enactment of this bill," he added.

The three bills - Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Bill 2025; the Constitution (One Hundred And Thirtieth Amendment) Bill 2025; and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill 2025, were introduced in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday amid opposition protests.

Later, the bills were referred to a Joint Committee of Parliament. (PTI)

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta attacked during 'Jan Sunwai' Accused arrested under attempt to murder charges

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta was attacked during a 'Jan Sunwai' programme at her camp office in Civil Lines on Wednesday morning, her office said, terming the assault part of a "well-planned conspiracy to kill her".

The accused, Sakriya Rajeshbhai Khimjibhai, a 41-year-old resident of Rajkot (Gujarat), was detained, and is being jointly interrogated by IB and Delhi Police's Special Cell, according to a senior police officer. The attack took place around 8.15 am, he said.

PWD Minister Parvesh Verma said that the chief minister has sustained injuries to her hand, shoulder and head.

A senior police official, who is privy to the probe, said that it was a serious attack, adding that it could have been life threatening.

"We are doing a joint interrogation with the IB, Special Cell and intelligence agencies. He had five criminal cases, including two assault cases involving knife attack and three under Ex-



cise Act," the official told PTI.

He said that police have not charged him conspiracy yet. The accused was not carrying any weapon because he knew that there would be strict checking. He was carrying a bag containing clothes and some papers.

Police have registered an FIR under attempt to murder charges in connection with the attack.

A case under section 109(1) [attempt to murder] of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) has been lodged at the Civil Lines police station, Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Raja Banthia

said in a statement.

He has also been booked for allegedly assaulting and obstructing public servant from discharging his duty.

Sources said that Khimjibhai came to Delhi two days ago and stayed in north Delhi's Civil Lines.

Delhi Minister Kapil Mishra said this is not an ordinary attack, adding that the attacker tried to "push the chief minister down on the ground and beat her".

"Such an attack on anyone, that too on a woman chief minister, who is dedicated to public work round the clock, was unheard of in Delhi," Mishra told reporters.

The chief minister has been attended by doctors and is currently under observation. She underwent MLC (medico legal case) examination. CMO officials said.

Official sources said that the attack on CM Gupta was part of a "well-planned conspiracy", citing CCTV footage from her residence in Shalimar Bagh. (PTI)

Russia has mechanism to deal with it: Russian diplomat on US action against India for buying crude oil

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Russia has a "special mechanism" to confront any challenge arising out of the US slapping punitive measures against India for its procurement of Russian crude oil, Russian charge d'affaires Roman Babushkin said on Wednesday. The relations between New Delhi and Washington are on a downturn after US President Donald Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to a whopping 50 per cent including a 25 per cent additional duties for India's purchase of Russian crude oil.

At a media briefing, Babushkin projected the rapid upswing in his country's ties with New Delhi in several critical areas and said Russia has been a "partner of choice" for India's requirement of various military platforms and hardware.

The Russian charge d'affaires described as "unjustified" the unrelenting American pressure on India to stop buying Russian oil and said such an approach as well as sanctions are

detrimental to the global economic stability and energy security.

"It is a challenging situation for India. We are enjoying trust in our partnership with India and we are committed to address challenges that may come in the energy ties between the two countries," Babushkin asserted, exuding confidence that India-Russia energy cooperation will continue to grow.

Last week, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent warned that the Trump administration may increase secondary tariffs on India if it continues to procure Russian crude oil.

Though the US imposed an additional 25 per cent tariff on India for its energy ties with Russia, it has not initiated similar actions against China, the largest buyer of Russian crude oil.

Defending its purchase of Russian crude oil, India has been maintaining that its energy procurement is driven by national interest and market dynamics. (PTI)

PM degree row: Delhi HC defers verdict on DU's plea against CIC order to disclose info

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday deferred pronouncement of its verdict on Delhi University's plea challenging a CIC order directing disclosure of information on the bachelor's degree of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Justice Sachin Datta, who was scheduled to pass the judgment at around 2.30 pm, did not preside as planned.

The verdict is likely to be pronounced on August 25.

At the time of arguments, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who appeared for DU, argued the CIC order deserved to be set aside for the "right to privacy" superseded the "right to know".

Mehta, however, had said the university was willing to show to the court its record pertaining to Modi's degree but cannot disclose the same for "scrutiny by strangers" under the RTI law.

The court has reserved its judgment on other similar petitions which would also be pronounced.

Following an RTI application by one Neeraj, the Central Information Commission (CIC) on December 21, 2016, allowed inspection of records of all students who cleared the BA exam in 1978 -- the year Prime Minister Modi also passed it.

The high court stayed the CIC order on January 23, 2017.

DU challenged the CIC order on the ground that it held the information of students in a fiduciary capacity and "mere curiosity" in the absence of public interest did not entitle anyone to seek private information under the RTI law. (PTI)

Harbour line trains back on track in Maharashtra

MUMBAI, Aug 20: Intermittent showers lashed Mumbai overnight and the rain intensity reduced on Wednesday morning, putting life back on track, a day after heavy rains battered the city.

Local train services on the Central Railway's harbour line resumed from 3 am Wednesday after 15 hours of disruption, bringing relief for commuters, while schools and colleges also opened a day after rain-enforced holiday.

All public transport services in Mumbai, including local trains, resumed normal operations on Wednesday morning, a day after the torrential rains crippled normal life, officials said.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange alert of heavy rains for Mumbai for Wednesday, and predicted the intensity of rainfall in the metropolis will go down from Thursday.

Mumbai's Santacruz observatory, representative of the western suburbs, recorded 200 mm rainfall in the 24-hour period ending at 8.30 am on Wednesday, as per the IMD data.

"The Colaba observatory in south Mumbai received 107.4 mm rain, whereas the Santacruz observatory in the western suburbs reported 209 mm during the 24-hour period," an official from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Other areas in the metropolis also witnessed intense showers. Vikhroli received 229.5 mm rain, Mumbai airport 208 mm, Byculla 193.5 mm, Juhu 150



mm and Bandra 137.5 mm of rainfall between Tuesday and Wednesday morning. The metropolis received an average rainfall of more than 100 mm in the 22-hour period ending at 6 am on Wednesday, civic officials said.

The island city recorded an average downpour of 131.51 mm, eastern suburbs 159.66 mm and the western suburbs 150.60 mm, they said.

On Tuesday evening, 782 passengers were rescued after two overcrowded Monorail trains on elevated tracks got stuck between stations in Mumbai on a day of torrential rains.

Some of the panic-stricken commuters were even ready to put their life at risk by jumping off the Monorail trains, which got stuck on elevated tracks after heavy rains in Mumbai, but were safely rescued later.

As a precautionary step, the fire brigade spread sheets on the ground in case any passenger jumped to escape the ordeal, but that situation did not arise, an official involved in the rescue operation said.

Rescue teams broke open windows

and forced the train doors open to evacuate passengers, he said.

Local train services on the Central Railway's (CR) harbour line resumed early on Wednesday as water receded on tracks, more than 15 hours from Mumbai's lifeline was halted as rains pounded the metropolis.

Suburban services on the CR's main line, between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in south Mumbai and Thane stations, were restored on Tuesday evening after remaining suspended for eight hours.

Trains were currently operational on all the CR lines, a spokesperson said.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), in a statement on Wednesday morning, said local train services on the central, western and harbour lines, and the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) undertaking's bus services were operating smoothly. The BMC stated its entire machinery was on the ground and working round-the-clock to monitor the situation and respond swiftly in case of any emergencies.

"All departments are on alert and prepared to take necessary measures if required," the statement said.

The BMC also appealed to the people not to believe in rumours and urged them to contact the municipal emergency control room for verified information or assistance during emergencies on its helpline number 1916. (PTI)

Stalin slams Assam police summoning senior journo

CHENNAI, Aug 20: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Wednesday slammed the Assam police for summoning senior journalists Siddharth Varadarajan and Karan Thapar in a sedition case, saying "democracy can't survive if asking questions is treated as sedition."

The summonses have been issued despite the Supreme Court granting protection in a related matter only days earlier, he said.

"No copy of the FIR and no particulars of the case have been furnished, leaving only the threat of arrest. Section 152 of the BNS is being misused as a substitute for the repealed sedition law to suppress independent journalism. I strongly condemn the action of the Assam Police in issuing summonses to senior journalists @SVaradarajan and #KaranThapar of @thewire_in," he said on X.

"A democracy cannot survive if asking questions is treated as sedition," he added.

The Guwahati Police had summoned the two senior journalists in connection with a case registered on sedition charges. They have been asked to appear before the Crime Branch of Guwahati Police on August 22. (PTI)

No. SMED/DMCH/VRDL/Staff/151/2023/786

RECRUITMENT FOR THE FOLLOWING POSTS IN MEDICAL COLLEGE LEVEL VIRAL RESEARCH DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY (VRDL) UNDER DHR AT DIPHU MEDICAL COLLEGE & HOSPITAL, DIPHU

Applications are invited from Citizens of India for purely temporary and contractual engagement at medical college level Viral Research Diagnostic Laboratory (VRDL), Government of India scheme "Setting up of Nation-wide Network of Laboratories for Managing Epidemics and National Calamities", funded by the Department of Health Research - Indian Council of Medical Research (DHR-ICMR at Diphu Medical College & Hospital, Diphu, Assam for the following positions.

| Last date of receipt of application | Interview |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 30-08-2025 | For the posts of: Scientist-B(Medical)-01 post Scientist-B(Non-Medical)-01 post |

| Sl. No. | Name of Post | No. of Post | Monthly Remuneration | Qualification | Upper Age limit |
|---------|--------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1. | Research Scientist - B (Medical) | 1 | 56000+ 10 % HRA per month | <p>Essential Qualifications: MBBS/B.V.Sc/ BDS from MCI/NCI recognized Medical college/institute with 2 years research experience.</p> <p>Desirable Qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MD in Microbiology/M.V.Sc/MDS from a recognized university or a candidate with PhD degree will be preferred. Additional research/ training experience in Microbiology or molecular techniques from recognized institute(s). R&D experience in Microbiology laboratory (Molecular including sequencing and immunological) at least for three years after obtaining essential qualification. Knowledge of Computer Applications and data analysis Research publications in indexed journal <p>NOTES: MD/MDS and M.V.Sc degree in relevant subjects shall be treated equivalent to three years or two-year experience, respectively.</p> | *35 years as on 30-08-2025 |
| 2. | Research Scientist - B (Non Medical) | 1 | 56000+ 10 % HRA per month | <p>Essential Qualifications:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> First Class M.Sc (Medical Microbiology / Virology / Microbiology / Biotechnology / Molecular Biology / Life Sciences) from recognized university including the integrated PG degree. Second class post graduate degree in Microbiology/ Biotechnology/ Life Sciences/ equivalent subject from a recognized university, including the integrated PG degrees with PhD. <p>Desirable Qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> R & D experience in Microbiology / Biotechnology Laboratory (Molecular and immunological) at least for two years in recognized institute after obtaining essential qualification. Experience in ICMR/DHR/IDSP/CSIR/DBT/any other project/Medical college. Research Publication in indexed journal Knowledge of computer application and Data management. <p>NOTES: PhD degree in relevant subjects shall be treated equivalent to Three- year experience.</p> | *35 years as on 30-08-2025 |

*Upper Age limit relaxation is as per Government rule. Up to 05 years (five years) age relaxation for candidates with at least 02 years previous experience of working as a project staff in a VRDL or extramural research project on Virology or Microbiology in a Medical college.

- Candidates will have to submit NOC (No Objection Certificate) from their respective competent authority/PI/ organization, if already working/ engaged in another project/DHR scheme.
- The pay band for the above mentioned post is subject to increment, as per latest DHR guidelines and receipt of funds.

Terms & Conditions:

- Application and selection procedure: Candidates have to submit the application form through speed post/registered post or self submit to the office of the "Principal cum Chief Superintendent, Diphu Medical College & Hospital, Diphu, Assam 782460" with superscription as "Application for VRDL post of Research Scientist- B (Medical)/ Research Scientist-B (Non- Medical)" on or before 30-08-2025. If the last date is a holiday, the next working day will be counted as the last date. It is the sole responsibility of the candidate and the undersigned is not responsible for delay in receipt of application. The applications received will be scrutinized by the selection committee. The eligible candidates will be called for interview or written test, depending upon number of eligible candidates. The candidates are advised to check college website <https://dmccassam.in/> for the date, time and venue of the interview. No separate communication will be sent to the candidates.
- The shortlisted candidates will have to bring all the original documents including the experience certificate, research publications, training certificate, computer training certificate and all other relevant documents on the day of interview and also the Photo copies to be enclosed along with the application.
- The shortlisted candidates will be notified in the website of DMCH, Diphu and will have to appear for interview on the specified date, time and venue.
- Documents to be submitted:
 - The candidate needs to submit the application as per format. The number of rows may be added if desired by the candidate. No change in serial no. order or head of column to be made. The application in the said format needs to be properly filled up and signed.
 - Two recent self signed passport sized colored photographs are to be attached on first page of the Performa format.
 - Qualification: Qualifications and degree should be from Government recognized institution/University.
 - One set of Photostat copies of ID proof and Address proof and certificates self attested must be attached with the application form.
 - All the relevant educational qualifications and experience certificates (as per advertisement for specific post only) need to be attached with the application form.
- This is purely contractual post and as such it will not have any claim whatsoever for regulation neither in DMCH, Diphu nor at DHR/ICMR. The mere fulfillment of requisite essential qualification/ experience does not guarantee selection.
- During the period of the project as well as on its termination, the DMCH, Diphu as well as DHR will have no legal liabilities relating to staff.
- No TA/DA will be paid, neither for appearing in the interview nor for joining the assignment.

Sd/-
Principal-Cum-Chief Superintendent
Diphu Medical College & Hospital
Diphu, Assam

DIPR /D/HLT/127/21-Aug-25

Socio-economic development discussion on cards

Tripura BJP tribal leaders meet Shah in Delhi

AGARTALA, Aug 20: A delegation of Tripura BJP tribal leaders called on Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi and discussed various issues on how to boost socio-economic development in the state, a senior party leader said on Wednesday.

The party wants to provide maximum benefit to the tribal people, said the delegation chief Rajib Bhattacharjee who is also the president of the Tripura BJP.

The meeting assumes significance as the party seeks to strengthen the Janajati Morcha, the BJP's tribal wing, ahead of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) due early next year.

The TTAADC areas constitute two-thirds of the state's geographic



area and are home to the tribals, who form one-third of the state's population. The Tipra Motha Party, which became a BJP ally last year, has been in power in the TTAADC

since 2021. "A delegation of the party's Janajati Morcha, headed by me and the party's northeast coordinator (Sambit Patra), made a courtesy

call with the Union Minister for Home Affairs in New Delhi on Tuesday," Bhattacharjee said.

A threadbare discussion over various issues on bringing a new pace to socio-economic development took place during the meeting in which Union Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goyal was also present, he said.

Bhattacharjee said, "A Rs 1,400 crore World Bank-aided project for socio-economic development of the indigenous people is underway in the state's tribal dominated areas. Our aim is to provide maximum benefit to the tribal people."

A few days ago, the Janajati Morcha leader met BJP's national general secretary BL Santosh and held discussion on organizational matters. (PTI)

Centre authorises Tripura to certify paddy for Manipur, Mizoram: Agriculture Minister

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 20: Tripura Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath on Wednesday said that the central government has authorized the state to certify paddy seeds for neighboring states Mizoram and Manipur.

The Minister said that if the Tripura Agriculture Department gives certification to the paddy of Manipur and Mizoram, then their paddy will be truly certified. He was speaking after unveiling the statue of M S Swaminathan at the State Agriculture Research Station premises at AD Nagar.

"Though late, I want to convey my thanks to the Research Centre for installing the statue of Dr. Swaminathan. It is due to him that agriculture got a good shape in the country. He worked to make our country self-sufficient in food grains. Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that by 2030, 72% of edible

oil must be produced within the country. So, the government is giving stress on edible oil production. Because we don't need to import fish or milk, but we do need to import edible oil. That is why we are stressing on producing edible oil," said the Minister.

The Agriculture Minister said that Dr. Swaminathan always emphasized that if agriculture fails, nothing else can be developed. "If we can't make a good budget for agriculture, then all other budgets will fail," he added. He also said that the department is working to strengthen agriculture through Integrated Cultivation. "Our country exports fish, eggs, rice, milk, sugar, and spices to foreign countries. At AD Nagar, research is conducted on paddy, while at Nagicherra, research is carried out on all horticulture items. We have two research centres. I want to tell all the farmers to get in touch with the agriculture centres in the state so that we can work on modern agriculture."

445 new recruits get appointment letters to join Civil Defence and Home Guards Dept

SHILLONG, Aug 20: The Meghalaya government on Wednesday handed appointment letters to 445 people who have been recruited by the Civil Defence and Home Guards Department.

Civil Defence and Home Guards Minister Comingone Ymbon handed the appointment letters to the recruits at the first 'Rozgar Mela' of the department in Mawdingiang. These recruits will join as sub-inspectors, guardsmen, drivers and non-combatant employees.

Addressing the programme, Ymbon urged the new appointees to serve with discipline and integrity.

"Every action you take reflects not only upon yourself, but upon the institution you represent and upon the state you serve," he said.

He said the Civil Defence and Home Guards Department stands as "pillars of courage and resilience" during natural calamities such as floods, earthquakes and cyclones, as well as during emergen-

cies like fires, accidents and law-and-order situations.

Ymbon said the recruitment process was conducted smoothly and completed on time, despite a setback during the physical efficiency test due to rain.

Secretary of Civil Defence and Home Guards Vijay Kumar Mantri said that over 22,000 candidates were shortlisted and then filtered through physical and written tests, as well as interviews, to reach the final 445 appointments. (PTI)

Exploring Himalayan region's intersections, expressions, care practices

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 20: Nagaland University (NU) and University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) jointly organised an international workshop named 'Ecologies of Care' for a collaborative dialogue to explore the Himalayan region's various intersections, expressions, and care practices. Over 150 participants attended the workshop held in Kohima, a varsity release said on Wednesday.

In his opening remark, chief guest of the event Prof Jagadish K Patnaik, VC, Nagaland University, lauded the university's history and archaeology department for continuously making significant strides in research and collaboration by foregrounding Naga cultural heritage and Indigenous epistemologies. Prof Dolly Kikon, director, Centre for South Asian Studies, UCSC, asked the participants not only to love one another but also "love our lands like our ancestors did" by centering indigenous philosophies, and care. While pointing to the dearth of Indigenous archaeologists around the world, Prof Tiatoshi Jamir, department of history and archaeology, NU, invited students to return to the metaphor of the "hearth" where indigenous knowledge and wisdom were shared and transmitted in the past.

Drawing on his research, Jamir explained how returning to folklore on the origins of rice has helped inform archaeology on the early beginnings of rice cultivation in Northeast India. He called for a need for reparative research by indigenous scholars that emphasise on "with", "by" and "for" indigenous communities to decolonise knowledge production in academia.

cial justice continues to inspire us," Saha said.

He emphasized that the Congress will always walk on the path shown by Rajiv Gandhi, striving to strengthen the spirit of brotherhood and solidarity in society.

"At a time when politics of hatred and division are spreading, Rajiv Gandhi's message of harmony and inclusiveness is more relevant than ever. People fondly remember him for his noble works, and Congress is determined to uphold his legacy by bringing back peace and communal amity," the state Congress chief asserted.

Across India, the Congress marked the day as Sadbhavna Diwas, with programmes dedicated to promoting peace and communal harmony. In Tripura too, the party observed the occasion with district and block-level programmes to spread Rajiv Gandhi's message of unity and inclusive development.

2 injured in gas cylinder blast

SHILLONG, Aug 20: Two persons, including a BSF personnel, were injured as an LPG cylinder exploded at their house in Shillong, police said on Wednesday. The incident happened in Umpling Lumdingmet around 10 pm on Tuesday, they said.

The injured were identified as Sandeep Kumar, the BSF personnel, and Subham Cheran Momin, a civilian. They lived on rent on the ground floor of a building, and the explosion happened in their kitchen. They were initially taken to the BSF hospital at Umpling and later shifted to NEIGRIHMS, police said. While Kumar's condition is reported to be stable, Momin was shifted to Guwahati for better treatment by his family, they said.

The owner of the house said the explosion was so powerful that it shattered window panes and damaged a retaining wall and a nearby structure. "There is no foul play involved in the incident," East Khasi Hills SP Vivek Syiem said. (PTI)

Orange alert issued in Tripura, all DMs on alert

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 20: The Tripura government on Wednesday has sounded an Orange Alert in view of an intense spell of monsoon showers forecast by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) over the next few days.

According to the Agartala Meteorological Centre, South Tripura district is expected to witness very heavy rainfall between August 21 and 25. Gomati and Sepahijala are also likely to experience heavy downpours on August 24 and 25. Meanwhile, a Yellow Alert has been issued for the remaining districts from August 21 onwards.

In a circular to all District Magistrates and Collectors, the Revenue Department instructed administrations to remain on high alert. Additional Secretary J.V. Duati directed officials to mobilize security, rescue and relief personnel, including NDRF, SDRF, Fire Services, Tripura State Rifles, trained volunteers and other emergency teams.

Authorities have been told to keep flood-response equipment—boats, ropes, life jackets and safety gear—ready, while ensuring constant monitoring of rivers, embankments and other vulnerable points.

Tripura Congress observes Rajiv Gandhi's birth anniversary, pledges to uphold peace and harmony

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 20: On the occasion of the 81st birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) on Wednesday paid rich tributes to the late leader and reaffirmed its commitment to restore peace, harmony, and unity in the country.

TPCC President Ashish Kumar Saha, after offering floral tributes at Gandhi Ghat in Agartala, said that Rajiv Gandhi's vision and ideals remain deeply relevant at a time when the nation is witnessing unrest and divisive politics.

"Rajiv Gandhi was a people's leader who dreamt of building a modern and progressive India. He worked tirelessly for youth empowerment, women's reservation, technological advancement, and educational reforms such as the establishment of Navodaya Vidyalayas. His commitment to peace, unity, and so-

lakh alert SMS, he said.

The integrated alert system enables real-time dissemination of disaster warnings through multiple platforms, including SMS, mobile applications, browser notifications and satellite-based channels.

The alerts cover a wide range of hazards such as floods, cyclones, thunderstorms, lightning, avalanches and tsunamis, thereby strengthening last-mile connectivity during emergencies.

Timely alerts generated by the India Meteorological Department's Shillong centre have empowered the SDMA to issue faster and more accurate warnings, improving preparedness and response on the ground. The CAP platform, also known as 'SACHET', integrates national agencies like the IMD and Central Water Commission with state-level disaster authorities for uniform and geo-targeted dissemination of alerts. (PTI)

Manipur RS member seeks speedy completion of Jiribam-Imphal railway line

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: BJP Rajya Sabha member from Manipur, Maharaja Sanajaoba Leishemba on Wednesday asked the government to take a two-pronged approach for a speedy completion of the vital Jiribam-Imphal railway line, otherwise it will take another two or three years to complete the project.

In a special mention at the Upper House, Leishemba said the 55.36 km long Jiribam-Khongsang section has already been completed and commissioned in September 2022.

However, the remaining portions of Khongsang-Noney (18.25 km) and Noney-Imphal (37.02 km) are yet to be completed, he noted.

"Apart from frequent bandhs, blockades and extortion etc, our national highways are prone to mud and landslides during the rainy season which hampers the movement of goods trucks carrying essential commodities in the state," Leishemba pointed out.

So, he said a speedy completion of this railway project will be the only solution for all these inconveniences, while drawing attention of the government to start the construction work also from Imphal side so as to speed up the project.

"As of now the construction work is being progressed only from Jiribam side. Therefore, a two-pronged approach for construction from both sides will give



the required impetus to move the construction work towards a speedy completion. Otherwise it will take another two or three more years to complete the project," Leishemba said.

In another special mention, K Laxman (BJP) expressed concern over menace of online gaming and betting apps among youths saying these platforms camouflaged as skill-based games are driving countless individuals into addiction, debt and even suicide. He lamented that these apps are glamorised by celebrities and influencers, "whose endorsements mislead lakhs of impressionable users. This cannot be allowed to continue unchecked". Asking the government to take multi-pronged action, Laxman called for a nationwide digital de-

addiction awareness campaign to educate youth and families about the psychological and financial harms of such platforms.

He also suggested that banning all betting and gambling platform that endanger social and financial stability may be considered.

AAP member Raghav Chadha, in his special mention, demanded free subscription of advanced generative AI to all Indians saying the world is changing fast and AI is an opportunity to move forward and help them realise their dreams.

Citing a research report which stated that by 2030 AI will create value of USD 15 trillion, he said if India is not prepared from now for this race, forget about the country being a winner, it will be left far behind. (PTI)

Three Manipur militants arrested for extortion

IMPHAL, Aug 20: Security forces arrested three militants belonging to various factions of a proscribed outfit from Imphal East district on the charge of involvement in extortion, police said on Wednesday.

While two of them were picked up on Tuesday, one was arrested on August 18.

A self-styled corporal of the Kangleipak Communist Party (MFL faction) was arrested from his residence at Wangkhei on Tuesday. The 26-year-old man was allegedly involved in extortion of the public in the valley area.

Security forces arrested a 33-year-old cadre of the Kangleipak Communist Party (Peoples' War Group) from his house at Khurai Heikru Makhong on Tuesday.

Another cadre of KCP (MFL) was picked up from the vicinity of Minuthong bridge on Monday. The militant, 27, was allegedly in-

involved in extortion of shops, business establishments and people in the valley area. Police said combing operations are being carried out extensively to nab those involved in extortion and other crimes in the state. (PTI)

NOACEH/CS/SOPD/07/2025-26/03

PRESS NOTICE INVITING BID

The Additional Chief Engineer, P.W.D.(R&B), Hills, Assam Diphu, on behalf of Governor of Assam invites bids from registered contractors of Class-I (A&B) category for the work "Construction of black topping road with side drain Ch.800.00m at Chekso Anglong near St Anthony School, Biria, Diphu under SOPD (KAAC) for the year 2025-26. Details may be seen in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 25/08/2025 to 01/09/2025.

Sd/-
Addl. Chief Engineer,P.W.D.(R&B),
Hills, Assam, Diphu

DIPR /C/HLT/130/21-Aug-25

BODOLAND TERRITORIAL COUNCIL

Bodofa Nwgrw, Kokrajhar

BEWARE OF FAKE WORK ORDERS

It has been reported that some miscreants and vested interest groups are circulating fake work orders in the name of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) with the sole intention of misleading people and tarnishing the image of the Council.

All concerned are strictly advised not to trust or act upon any such documents.

STAY VIGILANT - VERIFY BEFORE YOU TRUST

When in doubt, please verify directly with the concerned Secretary, Bodoland Territorial Council or the concerned Head of the Department.

For verification, please email at btcprrchd@gmail.com

REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

Help us combat fraud by reporting any suspicious work orders immediately.

LEGAL WARNING

Any person or group found involved in creating or circulating such fake work orders will be prosecuted and will be liable for legal action.

BTC committed to transparency & public safety

IPR(BTC)/D/2025-26/87 - Published in public interest by IPRD, BTC

M'laya most active among NE states in disaster warning system: Official

SHILLONG, Aug 20: The State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) in Meghalaya has emerged as the most proactive among North Eastern states in deploying the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP)-based integrated alert system of disaster warning, an official claimed on Wednesday.

The SDMA in Meghalaya has sent 62 alert messages to over 7.28 lakh mobile phone subscribers with a total of 13.84

lakh alert SMS, he said.

The integrated alert system enables real-time dissemination of disaster warnings through multiple platforms, including SMS, mobile applications, browser notifications and satellite-based channels.

The alerts cover a wide range of hazards such as floods, cyclones, thunderstorms, lightning, avalanches and tsunamis, thereby strengthening last-mile connectivity during emergencies.

Timely alerts generated by the India Meteorological Department's Shillong centre have empowered the SDMA to issue faster and more accurate warnings, improving preparedness and response on the ground. The CAP platform, also known as 'SACHET', integrates national agencies like the IMD and Central Water Commission with state-level disaster authorities for uniform and geo-targeted dissemination of alerts. (PTI)

No.DPRD/BTC/Market-1/2025/

PRESS NOTICE

Dated Kokrajhar the 19th August 2025

The Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for the mentioned below 2 (two) Nos. of work under Materials and Supplies-99 Others-SOPD-G-BE Voted under Market & Fairs Department for the financial year 2025-26 under Grant No.56 of Normal Budget of BTC from the registered suppliers and contractors of Class-II (A, B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads) / (Building), BTC.

| Sl. No. | Name of work | FY | A/A amount |
|---------|--|---------|-----------------|
| 1 | Supply of PVC Dustbin for distribution to Market/Parghat/Go-Hat under different Dev. Blocks in BTC area for the year 2025-26 | 2025-26 | Rs. 30,00,000/- |
| 2 | Supply of Bleaching Powder for distribution to Market/Parghat/Go-Hat etc. under different Dev. Blocks in BTC area for the year 2025-26 | 2025-26 | Rs. 30,00,000/- |

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

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

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/2747

LOVE PUNJABI CINEMA, HAVEN'T GONE OUT OF MY WAY TO LOOK FOR HINDI MOVIES: NEERU BAJWA

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Punjabi cinema star Neeru Bajwa says she is not averse to working in Bollywood, but she hasn't gone out of her way to seek Hindi movie roles.

Known for her standout performances in Punjabi blockbusters such as "Madhaniyan", "Wahh Ni Punjabne", "Sardaar Ji 3", and "Jatt & Juliet 3", Bajwa recently featured in a cameo opposite John Abraham in "Tehran". She is currently promoting her new Punjabi film "Phaphey Kutniyan", which revolves around two women who con their way through parties. Bajwa has paired up with actor Tania for the movie.

"I've always loved Punjabi cinema, it's my first love. I'll keep doing Punjabi films as long as the audience wants to see me. I haven't gone out of my way to look for Hindi roles," Bajwa told PTI in an interview here. Talking about how "Tehran" came her way, Bajwa revealed it was through a casting director she had worked with earlier on her Punjabi film "Kali Jotta".

"She told me about the role, I loved it, and things just fell into place. I don't know many people in Bombay, so I believe that if a role is meant for me, it will find its way to me," she recalled. She said the film's lead star John Abraham was down-to-earth and humble.

"We had a lot of women on set, and he made sure everyone was comfortable. It was a great experience."

Written by Jagdeep Sidhu, "Phaphey Kutniyan" is set for release on August 22 in theatres. Sidhu said the film blends comedy and suspense in a unique narrative that breaks

away from conventional Punjabi storytelling.

"While we were working on the story, the characters started to form naturally... As they developed, we began imagining which actor would fit best. We were lucky to get our first choices—Neeru ma'am and Tania."

Sidhu, known for writing Punjabi romantic films like "Qismat", "Qismat 2", "Sufna", and "Lekh", admitted that writing comedy and suspense was far more challenging than romance.

"In romance, emotions flow more naturally. But with comedy or suspense, every scene and every punchline needs precise timing and often multiple rewrites," he explained. Tania, who made her debut with Sidhu's directorial venture "Sufna", credited Sidhu for his versatility as a writer. "He can dive into any genre and still bring depth to the story. Most writers stick to one style, but not him. Since his first directorial was my debut, we have a strong bond, we're honest with each other, and that helps build richer characters." (PTI)



Anurag Kashyap slams producer Vijay Subramaniam over AI generated film 'Chiranjeevi Hanuman'



NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap has called out producer Vijay Subramaniam for his AI-generated movie "Chiranjeevi Hanuman- The Eternal", saying it represents a dangerous future for Hindi cinema.

The 52-year-old shared the film's poster on Instagram with a note to Subramaniam, who is the founder and group CEO of talent management agency Collective Artists Network.

Subramaniam has produced the project in collaboration with Vikram Malhotra of Abundantia Entertainment.

"Any actor or anyone who calls themselves artists and has a spine will be and should be either questioning him or leaving the agency since he has proved that he thinks you're no match for his AI performance."

"This right here is the future for the spineless and cowardly so called artists in the Hindi Film industry. Well done Vijay Subramaniam. Shame is not enough on you. You should be in the gutter," Kashyap posted.

The director further said that companies are always looking out for themselves rather than the talent.

"So much for looking after and representing the interests of creators. End of the day, all these agencies are only interested in making money off you and since they choose turkeys after turkeys for you and you're not making enough for them, they are going all AI," Kashyap added.

In a follow-up comment on his post, Kashyap said he has no issues with artificial intelligence as nobody "can stop AI from taking over every field and the world".

"My genuine grouse is with my friend Vijay Subramaniam, because he is the CEO of KWAN Collective. He represents the artists, the voice of artists and he is producing an AI FILM, when the industry needs corrections, especially from the agencies, who are very responsible for costs going up, actors career paths and writers, musician, filmmakers."

Earlier, Kashyap's close friend, filmmaker Vikramaditya Motwane, had reacted over the film announcement in a post on his Instagram Stories.

"And so it begins... Who TF needs writers and directors when it's 'Made in AI?' (sic)" the "Black Warrant" director wrote.

Subramaniam had earlier told PTI in an interview that his aims to create films that merge modern technology with ancient stories that will cater to a younger audience with shorter attention spans. (PTI)

Assamese filmmakers debut feature film selected for Busan film festival

GUWAHATI, Aug 20: Assamese director Maharshi Tuhin Kashyap's debut feature film 'Kok Kok Kookkook' has been selected for the 30th edition of the Busan International Film Festival in South Korea for its Vision Asia section.

Produced by the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI) of Kolkata, the movie is a magic realist horror drama, a press release said on Wednesday.

The film explores the intense lives of migrants struggling for identity against the backdrop of a gritty yet scenic city.

Known for his distinctive use of magic realism and poetic imagination, Kashyap who used to be known as a short film maker, brings forward a deeply personal yet universal story set in his hometown Guwahati in Assam.

"This film is dedicated to the people of Assam, who once celebrated diversity without hesitation. I fear times and minds are changing," the director said.

He hoped that this film stands as a "testament of my existence, and of those who fight for identity every day".

Kashyap, an alumnus of SRFTI, developed the film as his final dissertation project under the mentorship of filmmaker Dominic Sangma.

His short films have received wide inter-

national acclaim, including screenings at global festivals and multiple awards.

The world premiere of the film at Busan marks a milestone for both the filmmaker and contemporary Assamese cinema, continuing its growing recognition on the global stage, the release added.

The Vision Asia section at BIFF introduces groundbreaking works from Korea and Asia, spotlighting bold and boundary-pushing films from emerging voices that represent the future of Asian cinema. The 30th Busan International Film Festival will be held from September 17 to 26. (PTI)



'THE DANISH GIRL' FEELS EXTREMELY DATED: ALICIA VIKANDER

LONDON, Aug 20: Oscar-winning actor Alicia Vikander believes the 2015 film "The Danish Girl", which featured her in the role of Gerda Wegener, is "extremely dated". The film was directed by Tom Hooper and will mark 10 years in November. Also starring Eddie Redmayne in the lead role, it was inspired by the lives of Danish painters Lili Elbe and Gerda Wegener.

"The Danish Girl" revolved around Elbe's character, who becomes one of the first known recipients of gender reassignment surgery. "I'm the first one to say it already feels extremely dated, which I think is a good thing," Vikander told British Vogue in an interview. She added, "At that time, it was a pivot in something that it made (the subject of transgender lives) at least discussed. I hope that, in a way, it was a bit of an eye-opener and opened the way for art to cover those themes."

The film got a standing ovation of nearly 10 minutes after its premiere at the 72nd Venice Film Festival, Italy. But went on to receive mixed reviews after its release. In an earlier interview with The Sunday Times, Redmayne said he wouldn't agree to take up the role at present. Adding the film was made with best intentions.

"No, I wouldn't take it on now. I made that film with the best intentions, but I think it was a mistake... The bigger discussion about the frustrations around casting is because many people don't have a chair at the table. There must be a leveling, otherwise we are going to carry on having these debates. The film was based on the 2020 novel of the same name by David Ebershoff and also featured Matthias Schoenaerts, Ben Whishaw, and Amber Heard in pivotal roles. (PTI)

IF WE SPEAK TRUTH, IT'S CALLED PROPAGANDA: MITHUN CHAKRABORTY ON 'THE BENGAL FILES'

MUMBAI, Aug 20: "The Bengal Files" is a film that speaks about what happened in Bengal in 1946, says veteran actor Mithun Chakraborty who is upset that when filmmakers depict the truth, they are dismissed as "propaganda".

Third in Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri's "Files" trilogy, the movie revolves around the Calcutta riots of August 16, 1946, which were triggered after the All-India Muslim League called for 'Direct Action Day' to demand a separate homeland.

Chakraborty, who has been a regular in most of Agnihotri's films including "The Tashkent Files", "The Kashmir Files" and the new one, said there is a segment that's always trying to target such movies.

"If we speak the truth, it is called propaganda. Shouldn't our generation know what happened to Noakhali, and

what was the Calcutta killing? They should not know about it? It's very surprising. It's a film about the truth, the history, what happened to Bengal and Noakhali, and the Calcutta killing. We made 'The Kashmir Files' as well, we have shown the truth in it," he told PTI in an interview.

"These people are always there to target things, no matter what you do. With 'The Tashkent Files' do you not want to know what happened to our great Lal Bahadur Shastri ji, or what happened to the Kashmiri Pandits? You had only heard that they have been thrown out but how did this happen? Now, you know it."

The former Rajya Sabha MP and the BJP politician said he plays the role of a madman, who is a riot victim, in the movie who acts as the conscience of the story.

Chakraborty, 75, criticised people



for targeting the movie without even seeing the trailer of the film. Agnihotri has alleged the trailer launch event of "The Bengal Files" in Kolkata faced sabotage and they had to change the venue at the last moment.

The Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress has described the film as politically motivated, leading to calls for a boycott and ban.

"People had not seen the trailer and said, 'It should be banned'. What is it there in the trailer to be banned? Like, nudity is passed in the name of cinematic liberty, but in this film, there's no such thing. Violence is part of life and if you've done it you must accept it," the actor said. Chakraborty praised Agnihotri, saying the director somehow always creates a character for him in his films. "He puts a lot of work into it. He fanatically looks for the actual story, and that is something amazing.

He goes in depth into the story so much that his documentation is always correct." Asked about the controversy surrounding the National Award win for "The Kerala Story", Chakraborty called those criticising the movie's win as "pseudo intellectuals".

"People on the jury were not from Kerala, they were from all over the country. They thought this film should get a national award, but then there was so much fuss about it. So, whenever you speak the truth, there will be people (who will oppose it)."

Chakraborty, who won the National Film Award for his debut role in Mrinal Sen's 1976 film "Mrigayaa" before finding commercial success in Bollywood with movies such as "Disco Dancer", "Commando", "Pyaar Jhukta Nahi" said at this point in his career, he is receptive to any role that piques his interest. (PTI)

Mbappe converts penalty kick as Real Madrid beat Osasuna 1-0 in Spanish league opener



MADRID, Aug 20: Kylian Mbappé got off to a scoring start in his second season with Real Madrid, leading the team to a 1-0 victory over Osasuna in their Spanish league opener Tuesday.

Mbappé, the leading scorer in his debut with Madrid last season, converted a 51st-minute penalty kick to give the hosts the victory. A nice run by Mbappé through the right side of the area, followed by a neat cutback move, prompted the foul.

The goal gave new coach Xabi

Alonso a winning debut in his first full season with the club. The former Madrid player arrived before the Club World Cup to replace Carlo Ancelotti, who left to take the Brazil job.

"It was special to be back here as a coach, unforgettable," Alonso said. "Hopefully it was the first of many victories celebrated here."

Alonso started the match with three of the club's new signings for the season — left back Álvaro Carreras, right back Trent Alexander-Arnold and central defender Dean

Huijsen. Teenage forward Franco Mastantuono came off the bench to replace Brahim Díaz in the 68th, being loudly cheered by the crowd at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Some fans had not been happy after the former River Plate player praised Lionel Messi — the fellow Argentine who was a star at rival Barcelona — during his introductory news conference.

The 18-year-old Mastantuono had a chance to score in the 89th, but his shot from inside the area was saved by the Osasuna goal-

keeper.

"They all did well," Alonso said of the newcomers. "They are players who will be helping us for years. None of them felt the pressure of the Madrid jersey or of the Bernabeu."

Osasuna defender Abel Bretones was sent off in stoppage time with a straight red card for a high arm to block Madrid forward Gonzalo Garcia.

"They dominated, we knew it was going to be like that," Osasuna midfielder Rubén García said. "We

played a good game but couldn't get too close to their goal. In the end, they deserved the victory."

Madrid forward Rodrygo stayed on the bench the whole match, intensifying speculation of a possible transfer. Alonso downplayed Rodrygo's lack of minutes, saying he still counts on the Brazil international for now.

"It was only a match," he said. "If in three months he still isn't getting these minutes, then it's different."

The game was played Tuesday instead of last weekend along with the rest of opening matches because Madrid's players needed more rest following the team's participation at the Club World Cup. Madrid's attempt to delay its debut even further was denied by the league.

Madrid controlled possession — more than 70% — but struggled to break through the tight Osasuna defense early, threatening with a few long-range shots.

"There were positives, beginning with the result," Alonso said. "We still need a few things that will give us stability to keep progressing."

Mbappé, with the No. 10 jersey this season, had one of Madrid's best first-half chances with a curling shot from inside the area that just missed the top corner, but finally broke through with the winner early in the second half as Madrid continued to press forward. He sent a low shot from the spot into the right side of the net as the goalkeeper dived the other way. (AP)

Slimmed-down Bayern Munich still the team to beat as new Bundesliga season begins

BERLIN, Aug 20: Bayern Munich reclaimed its Bundesliga throne last season. Vincent Kompany and Harry Kane are looking for another title to consolidate their rule and build their own dynasty.

Ahead of the opening game of the league season Friday between Bayern and Leipzig, the defending champion remains the team to beat and the role of closest challenger is wide open.

Most of the likeliest candidates — Bayer Leverkusen, Borussia Dortmund, Stuttgart, Leipzig and Eintracht Frankfurt — have lost key players. Few have made standout signings since last season.

Leverkusen, the only team to break Bayern's dominance over the last 13 years, has had a huge overhaul of the side that won the Bundesliga in 2024. Gone are key players like Florian Wirtz, Granit Xhaka, Jeremie Frimpong and captain Jonathan Tah, as is star coach Xabi Alonso. Former Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag has been tasked with leading the rebuilt team's fresh start.

Luis Díaz's arrival from Liverpool gives Bayern a new attacking threat, as he showed last weekend with a goal on his debut as Bayern lifted the German Supercup.

In Kane's third season as Bayern's star striker, the structure around him is no longer a holdover from the club's Robert Lewandowski era.

Leroy Sané, Thomas Müller, Kingsley Coman and Mathys Tel have all left. This slimmed-down squad will require Díaz and the experienced Serge Gnabry — the only remaining forward from Bayern's 2020 Champions League win — to be consistently effective. The biggest pressure might be on Michael Olise. A long-term injury at the Club World Cup means Jamal Musiala may not return before 2026, leaving Olise, usually a winger, to occupy a less familiar role in the center. Racking up 20 goals and 23 assists last season was a strong start, but Olise was mostly on the right flank.

Tah adds strength and experience to the defense after signing from Leverkusen. Kompany can

call on some exciting young midfielders after Tom Bischof and Lennart Karl both shone in pre-season.

From Jude to Jobe, there's a Bellingham running Dortmund's midfield again.

Still only 19, the younger of the Bellingham brothers signed from Sunderland and straight away looked at home on a bigger stage when he made his Dortmund debut at the Club World Cup.

Jobe Bellingham is the standout new arrival among the group of would-be Bayern challengers, who are each trying to adapt after stars departed. Leverkusen said goodbye to a host of title-winners, while Frankfurt bid farewell to Hugo Ekitiké and goalkeeper Kevin Trapp, and Jamie Gittens left Dortmund for Chelsea.

Ahead of Jürgen Klopp's first full season as Red Bull's head of global soccer, Leipzig has reportedly spent over 110 million euros (\$128 million) on seven young players — Brazilian striker Rômulo is the oldest at 23 — but lost Benjamin Šeško to Manchester United.

There could be more signings before the transfer window closes Sept. 1. Leverkusen and Frankfurt in particular have earned much more than they've spent so far. Promoted teams Hamburger SV and Cologne's biggest challenge will be to stay in the top division.

Cologne brought back veteran coach Friedhelm Funkel for its last two games to make sure of its return as second division champion, but former Paderborn coach Lukas Kwassniok has been appointed to ensure it stays.

Hamburg, which was the longest surviving founding member of the Bundesliga, endured seven seasons away. Elation at finally securing its return has given way to sober reality after a summer of discouraging results. Hamburg needed extra time to get past fifth-tier Pirmasens in the first round of the German Cup last weekend.

Merlin Polzin's team starts its Bundesliga campaign at Borussia Mönchengladbach on Sunday before hosting St. Pauli for what is sure to be an emotional city derby the following weekend. (AP)

India thrash Nepal 7-0 in SAFF U17 Women's C'ship campaign opener

THIMPHU, Aug 20: A clinical India thrashed Nepal 7-0 in their opening match of the SAFF U17 Women's Championship, with three players scoring a brace each, here on Wednesday.

Nira Chanu Longjam (25th, 56th), Abhista Basnett (16th, 41st), and Anushka Kumari (37th, 62nd) scored twice, while captain Julian Nongmaithem (45+1) struck once to ensure a flawless start to India's campaign.

The Young Tigresses raced to a commanding 5-0 lead by half-time, leaving Nepal no room for recovery in what was a one-sided affair from the outset.

With the tournament adopting a double round-robin format this year, it was imperative for India to begin on the front foot, and they did so in sensational style.

From the first whistle, India asserted their dominance. Their cohesive structure, the result of months of joint training since January, was evident in every phase of play. The midfielders dictated tempo, finding incisive passes and carving through Nepal's defence with sharp distribution,

while the forwards constantly found pockets of space to create havoc. The backline, though tested early, remained compact and resilient. Goalkeeper Muni produced a solid display, securing a clean sheet and marshalling her defence with confidence.

Set-pieces proved to be a significant weapon for India. The breakthrough came in the 16th minute after a poor backpass resulted in a corner.

Shveta Rani swung in a dangerous delivery from the left, and Nepal custodian Jharna Dumrakoti fumbled under pressure. Basnett was quickest to react, slotting home from close range.

India doubled their advantage in the 25th minute. Kumari slipped a beautifully weighted pass behind the defence for Nira Chanu, who still had work to do. The striker powered home a low drive, beating the stretching Dumrakoti.

Kumari then turned scorer in the 37th minute, racing onto a through ball and showing great composure to beat the keeper and make it 3-0. (PTI)

EX-ENGLAND PACER BROAD KEEN TO TAKE UP COACHING ROLE

LONDON, Aug 20: His illustrious career now a part of England's cricketing folklore, legendary pace bowler Stuart Broad is planning a move towards coaching role where he can some day produce the likes of Jofra Archer and Jimmy Andersons.

Broad, the second-highest wicket-taking pace bowler in Test cricket after country-mate Anderson, says he has spoken to Rob Key, managing director of the England cricket team, and expressed his desire to groom the U-17 and U-19 players.

"It's certainly something I want to stay connected to, the coaching," Broad, who has taken 604 Test wickets, told The Telegraph.

"I've chatted to Rob Key a little bit about doing some stuff with

the younger bowlers in the England setups when the schedule suits," added the tall former pacer, who has donned the role of a broadcaster after hanging up his spikes. Broad, who figures in seventh place in the list of all-time highest wicket-takers across formats, added that though he had not set a timeline on taking the plunge into coaching, he was optimistic it could happen as early as next year.

"I haven't set any sort of targets or dates of coaching or what's to come, but probably next year I'd start looking at dipping my toe into it a little bit more." Broad was a consultant to the South African cricket team ahead of their World Test Championship final against Australia at Lord's, which the Pro-



teas won to clinch their maiden ICC world title. He believes he can play a role in accelerating the development of younger bowlers in the England set-up. "The U19s or even U17s - you really know what you're developing, and

you've got your base of technique, but the growth you can make between 15 and 20 is huge." "What excites me the most is, where's the next Jofra Archer? Where's the next Jimmy Anderson? I watched on Instagram, Harry Moore, who's

been out with a stress fracture. I look at him and go, 'huge talent, 6ft 6in, swings it both ways, hits good areas'.

"Where could he be in four years' time? Maybe even less than that? Where can you spot these players whose ceiling is very high?" Broad says he agrees with Rob Key's plan of engaging stalwarts like Andrew Flintoff and Graeme Swann, among others, to strengthen England cricket. "I'm completely on Rob Key's side. You want your best cricket brains still sharing information to the best players, and you don't want them to be put off by having to jump through loads and loads of hoops that might be a bit unnecessary with the knowledge they've got." (PTI)

Isak breaks silence on Newcastle saga: 'The relationship can't continue'

NEWCASTLE, Aug 20: Alexander Isak has gone public for the first time about his discontent at Newcastle, saying the club has broken promises and that "the relationship can't continue."

The Sweden striker was the subject of a bid from Liverpool during the offseason and has been training away from the Newcastle squad, having indicated he wanted to explore his options.

Isak was not involved in Newcastle's Premier League opener on Saturday, a goalless draw at Aston Villa.

On Tuesday, the 25-year-old Isak, who scored 27 goals in 42 games for the Magpies last season, was named in the PFA team of the season for the Premier League and used a social media post expressing his gratitude to address his situation at Newcastle for the first

time.

"I've kept quiet for a long time while others have spoken," Isak wrote. "That silence has allowed people to push their own version of events, even though they know it doesn't reflect what was really said and agreed behind closed doors."

"The reality is that promises were made and the club has known my position for a long time. To act now as if these issues are only emerging is misleading. When promises are broken and trust is lost, the relationship can't continue."

Isak finished his post by saying: "That's where things are for me right now — and why change is in the best interests of everyone, not just myself."

Newcastle responded with a statement saying: "We are clear in response that Alex remains under contract and that no commitment has ever been made by a club official that Alex can leave Newcastle United this summer."

The Newcastle statement said the club wanted to keep its best players "but we also understand players have their own wishes and we listen to their views."

"As explained to Alex and his representatives, we must always take into consideration the best interests of Newcastle United, the team and our supporters in all decisions and we have been clear that the conditions of a sale this summer have not transpired."

Isak joined Newcastle in 2022 from Spanish team Real Sociedad and has blossomed into one of the most sought-after strikers in the world.

Newcastle manager Eddie Howe

said last week there was still a chance Isak could be reintegrated into the Newcastle squad, despite the difficult current situation.

Howe said the offseason has been challenging given the absence of his star striker but that the squad has "really come together in the latter stages of preseason."

Newcastle's statement said the club strived to "retain our family feel."

"Alex remains part of our family and will be welcomed back when he is ready to rejoin his teammates."

With 23 goals in the Premier League last season, Isak was second in the scoring chart behind Liverpool's Mohamed Salah.

Newcastle has been linked with a move for Brentford striker Yoane Wissa, who also sat out the opening round of games. (AP)

Schauffele not at East Lake and debating whether another event would help before Ryder Cup

ATLANTA, Aug 20: Xander Schauffele isn't at East Lake for the first time in his career, the result of a rib injury that cost him two months at the start of the season. He never quite found any momentum in his game with his swing out of sync.

"It would be nice to have three months off. That would be ideal if we were being honest," Schauffele said at the BMW Championship. "I feel like I need to get as far away from golf as possible very soon. That's how I feel."

That's not the reality, however. Schauffele had such a big year in the majors last year — winning the PGA Championship and the British Open, top-10 finishes in the other two — that he was among the first to clinch a spot on

the Ryder Cup team.

Three months? The Ryder Cup starts in 38 days.

Schauffele was among the players who confirmed to The Associated Press in July that the U.S. team planned to play at the Procore Championship in Napa, California, the week of Sept. 8-14, two weeks before the Ryder Cup. The exception would be Bryson DeChambeau, suspended when he bolted to Saudi-funded LIV Golf in 2022 and then was among those who sued the PGA Tour. It might also be missing Schauffele.

"I'm not sure," Schauffele said when asked if he would be there. "I haven't signed up yet. It would be nice to play, but if I don't think playing is going to help me, then

I won't play."

Despite his recovery from a rib injury that led to his swing getting out of sorts, Schauffele extended his cut streak to 71 — exactly halfway to the record held by Tiger Woods. He also managed six finishes in the top 12 and two top 10s in the majors.

"I think I understand more than I did before," he said. "The frustration before was more not understanding why I was doing certain things. Now I know why I'm hitting it bad and don't know how to fix it. So, frustration for different reasons. I don't know what's worse."

He kept his attitude in good shape — the California native is renowned for his positive attitude regardless of his results — and he

looks forward to sorting it out.

"I love golf. I love trying to figure it out," he said. "But it's been a trying year. I definitely need to hit the reset button. The next step will be to come back with a solid plan and stick to it."

Harris English has more than \$10 million in reasons why he would love to win the Tour Championship for the FedEx Cup. He grew up three hours away in Moultrie, Georgia. He played college golf at Georgia, an hour away. The same could be said for Russell Henley, Sepp Straka or Brian Harman.

But it was the PGA Tour's first trip to East Lake that inspired a 9-year-old Harris English.

"I came out here in 1998," English said. "I still have a brochure

of whatever it was that I used to get a bunch of guys' autographs. I met Payne Stewart. This to me is the first event I went to and was like: 'This looks really good. I want to do this when I'm older.'"

English played a lot of sports as a kid and golf took hold of him. Tiger Woods was on the scene and the PGA Tour was starting to take off.

"I was in awe of the guys out here," he said. "I was taking pictures of everybody, didn't care who they were."

This was 1998 — he was using a disposable camera.

"That was one of my first golf moments, coming to this tournament," he said. "It means more to me being at East Lake, but also being our Tour Championship."

Niall Shiels Donegan, the Scottish lad raised in the San Francisco Bay area, had a big week at the U.S. Amateur by going from a 20-for-17 playoff all the way to the semifinals. He was rewarded with a spot on the Great Britain & Ireland team for the Walker Cup.

Miles Russell, the high school senior from Georgia, also had a big week by finishing third in the 36-hole qualifying and reaching the quarterfinals. His reward was a spot on the U.S. team as the first alternate, along with Max Herten-de. Both sides announced their 10-member teams for Sept. 6-7 at Cypress Point, the first time the fabled course in California is hosting the amateur matches since 1981. (AP)

Asia Cup: No major surprises as Lakra, Dilpreet retained in 18-member India squad

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: There were no major surprises in the 18-member Indian men's hockey team picked for the upcoming Asia Cup in Rajgir, Bihar with mid-fielder Rajinder Singh, and forwards Shilanand Lakra and Dilpreet Singh retaining their places in the squad, announced on Wednesday.

The tournament is scheduled to be held from August 29 to September 7 and the winner will earn direct qualification to next year's FIH men's World Cup to be co-hosted by Belgium and Netherlands from August 14 to 30.

Ace drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh will continue to serve as captain of the team.

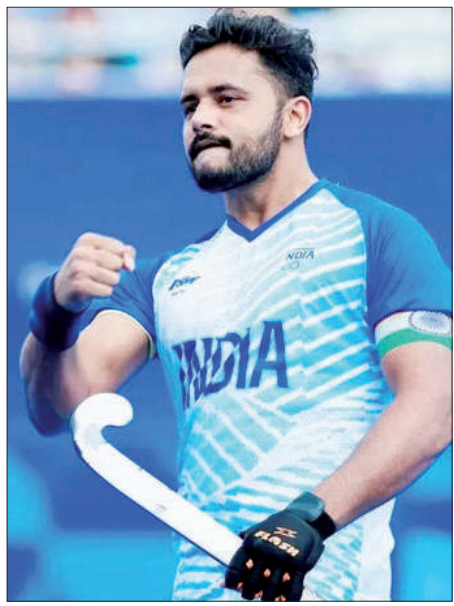
The trio of Rajinder, Lakra and Dilpreet was also part of the jumbo squad for the preceding tour of Australia. Rajinder came in for Shamsheer Singh, Lakra is filling in for the recently-retired Lalit Upadhyay, and Dilpreet was preferred over Gurjant Singh who was ignored for the matches against Australia.

Striker Lalit Upadhyay had retired from international hockey after the European leg of the FIH Pro League in June.

The selection largely reflected the established core of players, with focus on the forthcoming World Cup.

The squad overall features a strong group of experienced campaigners, with depth and balance across all departments.

The World Cup qualifying tournament places India in Pool A with Japan, China, and Kazakhstan. Hosts India will begin their campaign against China on August 29, before facing Japan on August 31 and Kazakhstan on September 1.



The goalkeeping duties will be shared by Krishan B Pathak and Suraj Karkera.

In defence, Harmanpreet and Amit Rohidas will be joined by Jarmanpreet Singh, Sumit, Sanjay, and Jugraj Singh.

The midfield engine room comprises Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Rajinder, Raj Kumar Pal, and Hardik Singh.

The forward line will be spearheaded by Mandeep Singh, Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Lakra, and Dilpreet, offering plenty of firepower to trouble opposition defences.

Indian squad:
GOALKEEPERS: Krishan B Pathak, Suraj Karkera
DEFENDERS: Sumit, Jarmanpreet Singh, Sanjay, Harmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas, Jugraj Singh
MIDFIELDERS: Rajinder Singh, Raj Kumar Pal, Hardik Singh, Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad
FORWARDS: Mandeep Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Dilpreet Singh
ALTERNATE ATHLETES: Nilam Sanjeev Xess, Selvam Karthi. (PTI)

Meanwhile, Nilam Sanjeev Xess and Selvam Karthi have been named as alternate athletes.

Speaking on the team selection, head coach Craig Fulton said, "We've gone with an experienced squad that understands what it takes to perform in high-pressure situations."

"The Asia Cup is crucial for us because qualification for the World Cup is at stake, so we needed players who have the composure, resilience, and know-how to deliver."

"The selection reflects our intent — to put forward a team that can compete strongly and achieve our main objective."

"I'm very pleased with the balance and quality across the squad. We have leaders in every line — defence, midfield, and attack — and that collective strength is what excites me the most. I think the way this team can play together will be our strongest asset," he added. (PTI)

SINQUEFIELD CUP Gukesh bounces back with crushing win over Abdusattorov

ST. LOUIS (USA), Aug 20: World champion D Gukesh put his opening-round blues behind him and scored an excellent victory over former world rapid champion Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan in the second round of the Sinquefeld Cup here.

On a day when R Praggnanandhaa played a quiet game to draw with Fabiano Caruana of the United States, Alireza Firouzja of France gave a perfect endgame lesson as he crashed through the defense of Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland in the other decisive game of the day.

Levon Aronian of the United States played out a draw with compatriot Samuel Sevian to remain in joint lead while another American Wesley So drew with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France in the 10-player USD 3.75,000 prize-money tournament.

With seven rounds still to come, Praggnanandhaa, Aronian and Firouzja share the lead on 1.5 points.

Gukesh moved to joint fourth place alongside Caruana, Wesley So, Sevian and Vachier-Lagrave. Duda stands on ninth spot on half a point while Abdusattorov is yet to open his account after losing his second game on the trot.

Gukesh faced the open Sicilian, popularised by the legendary Viktor Korchnoi in the last century. There have been many takers of the variation at the top level, including Caruana, but these days the opening is not a favourite among elite players.

Gukesh played one of the testing variations and did not shy away from mainstream theory. Abdusattorov got a passed pawn in the middle of the board supported by another pawn but his king was always under the hammer as Gukesh's imaginative manoeuvres proved.

The Indian ace won a rook for a knight endgame, and even though the counter-play remained for the Uzbek, it was hard to find the exact moves with the clock ticking. Gukesh wrapped the issue with some timely exchanges leading to a won endgame.

Praggnanandhaa decided to give Caruana a taste of his own medicine by going for the Rossolimo Variation that the American had used extensively in his World Championship match against Magnus Carlsen.

However, the American proved his understanding of the resulting pawn structure in the middle game and some exchanges steered the game to a draw in the rook-and-minor-piece endgame that ensued.



Firouzja had to showcase his skills in the endgame with a bishop and knight against the lone king and the Frenchman achieved it flawlessly.

Results round 2: R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 1.5) drew with Fabiano Caruana (USA, 1); Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 1.5) beat Duda Jan Krzysztof (Pol, 0.5); Levon Aronian (USA, 1.5) drew with Samuel Sevian (USA, 1); Wesley So (USA, 1) drew with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 1); D Gukesh (Ind) beat Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb). PTI Cor AM

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa outplayed World Champion D Gukesh in the opening round of the Sinquefeld Cup Chess tournament to rise to the third position in live world rankings.

He now shares the lead with the unstoppable Levon Aronian of United States, who outsmarted Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan after the opening round on Monday.

In other games of the first round Fabiano Caruana of USA played out a draw with Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland while wild counter play once Nodirbek ran out of steam after a long time trying to attack the black King. The Uzbek Grandmaster had the white pieces and a slightly favourable position but the American stayed put with some good resources. The game should have been a draw but Abdusattorov bungled and lost badly.

Results round 1: R Praggnanandhaa (Ind) beat D Gukesh (Ind); Fabiano Caruana (USA) drew with Duda Jan Krzysztof (Pol); Samuel Sevian (USA) drew with Wesley So (USA); Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb) lost to Levon Aronian (USA); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) drew with Alireza Firouzja (Fra). (PTI)

The solid approach was under

the scrutiny early as Gukesh spent a lot of time in a known position and went for a dubious set-up that involved early exchange of queens.

Praggnanandhaa had the Bishop pair as playing with white pieces gave him a distinct advantage.

Making things worse for himself, Gukesh also fell short of time and had to find some really difficult moves to stay in the game.

Relentless, as he is, Praggnanandhaa did not let the position slip out of hand as he won a pawn by force and the rest was easy. The game lasted just 36 moves.

"I don't really know what happened today. I think he was a bit off," said Praggnanandhaa after the game.

Incidentally with this victory, Praggnanandhaa also restored parity with Gukesh in classical format in which both have three wins each.

"Last year, I messed up some good positions against him. I think I did not beat him (in classical) for almost two years now, so finally it's good to get a win," noted Praggnanandhaa.

Aronian was quick to find counter play once Nodirbek ran out of steam after a long time trying to attack the black King. The Uzbek Grandmaster had the white pieces and a slightly favourable position but the American stayed put with some good resources. The game should have been a draw but Abdusattorov bungled and lost badly.

Results round 1: R Praggnanandhaa (Ind) beat D Gukesh (Ind); Fabiano Caruana (USA) drew with Duda Jan Krzysztof (Pol); Samuel Sevian (USA) drew with Wesley So (USA); Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb) lost to Levon Aronian (USA); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) drew with Alireza Firouzja (Fra). (PTI)

DPL Season 2: East Delhi Riders beat Purani Dilli 6 by 21 runs

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: East Delhi Riders delivered a commanding all-round performance to defeat Purani Dilli 6 by 21 runs in a Delhi Premier League Season 2 game to become the first team to qualify for the play-offs.

Defending a competitive 173, the Riders struck early as Manjeet fell for a duck on the second ball of the innings.

Navdeep Saini piled on the pressure in the third over, dismissing Kush Nagpal (1) to leave Dilli 6 in trouble.

Despite a spirited resistance from Samarth Seth (41 off 30), Pranav Pant (29 off 25) and skipper Vansh Bedi (48 off 26), the chase never fully took off. Purani Dilli 6 eventually stumbled to 151/8 in their 20 overs.

Navdeep Saini was the standout bowler, producing a fiery spell of 3/21 in his four overs. He was well supported by the rest of the Riders' attack, who never allowed Dilli 6's middle-order revival to blossom into a match-winning partnership.

Earlier, opting to bat first, East Delhi Riders built their innings around two crucial knocks. Skipper and wicketkeeper Anuj Rawat played a captain's hand with an unbeaten 59 off 36 balls, while Arpit Rana anchored the top order with a composed 64 off 47.

Their innings propelled the Riders to a challenging 172/6. Smart rotation of strike, sharp running between the wickets, and timely acceleration in the death overs also highlighted the team's batting effort.

For Purani Dilli 6, Dev Lakra and Aayush Singh picked two wickets apiece, while Rajneesh Dadar and Udhav Mohan chipped in with one each, but the Riders' disciplined approach and late flourish proved decisive. (PTI)

National Sub Junior Girls Football gets underway in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Aug 20: The National Sub Junior Girl's Football Championship got underway at the Jorhat stadium and Morioni Bapuji Stadium from Wednesday.

The tournament is being organised by Jorhat District Sports Association in collaboration with Assam Football Association. A total of 16 state teams will participate in the tournament. Maharashtra, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Manipur, Gujarat, Assam, Mizoram, Odisha, Haryana, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab are the teams participating in the tournament, which will conclude on August 30. The teams are divided into four groups and are marked as Tier-A group match.

Kuldeep slips to third in ODI rankings, Maharaj regains top spot

DUBAI, Aug 20: India wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav has slipped to third place in the latest ICC ODI rankings for bowlers released on Wednesday with South African tweaker Keshav Maharaj reclaiming the top position. Maharaj regained the top position after helping his team beat Australia by 98 runs in the first ODI of their three-match series in Cairns.

The 35-year-old left-arm spinner, who was named Player of the Match after grabbing five for 33, overtook Kuldeep and Sri Lanka's Maheesh Theekshana to the top spot, which he had earlier held briefly in November and December 2023. Apart from Kuldeep, Ravindra Jadeja is the only Indian bowler who is in the top 10 in the updated list.

The Indian team has not played an ODI match since their title triumph in the Champions Trophy.

West Indies fast bowler Jayden Seales was another one to make huge inroads in the bowling rankings after his superb haul of six for 18 in the final game of their three-



match series against Pakistan, moving up 15 spots to 18th position. Pakistan leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed (up 15 places to joint-39th) and West Indies off-spinner Roston Chase (up five places to 58th) are others to move up the list.

In the men's T20I rankings, India's Abhishek Sharma and Tilak Varma remained on the top two yards with skipper Suryakumar Yadav in the sixth spot and Yashasvi Jaiswal in 10th position.

South Africa's Dewald Brevis continues his upward movement, gaining nine spots to reach 12th position while Australians Marsh and Glenn Maxwell have progressed four and 10 spots, respectively, to reach 25th and 30th positions.

The T20I bowling rankings see Australia seamers Nathan Ellis (up three places to ninth position) and Josh Hazlewood (up two places to 18th) make significant gains, with South Africa fast bowler Kagiso Rabada moving up from 44th to 37th position. (PTI)

up two places to ninth position after scoring 120 not out in the final ODI against Pakistan while Aiden Markram (up four places to 21st), Temba Bavuma (up five places to 23rd) and Mitchell Marsh (up six places to 48th) are the others to progress.

In the men's T20I rankings, India's Abhishek Sharma and Tilak Varma remained on the top two yards with skipper Suryakumar Yadav in the sixth spot and Yashasvi Jaiswal in 10th position.

South Africa's Dewald Brevis continues his upward movement, gaining nine spots to reach 12th position while Australians Marsh and Glenn Maxwell have progressed four and 10 spots, respectively, to reach 25th and 30th positions.

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Warring factions in litigation-marred AITA spar over Team Manager for Davis Cup

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: As the results of last year's AITA elections stay unannounced, the rival factions in the national tennis federation have picked separate team managers for the upcoming Davis Cup tie against Switzerland, leading to an ego tussle between the members.

AITA had conducted its elections on September 28, 2024 but the results were submitted before the Delhi High Court in a sealed envelope due to a petition filed by former players Somdev Devvarman and Purav Raja.

The players alleged that the Sports Code (2011) was not followed.

Since then, the old Executive Committee has been managing the affairs of the sports body but a fresh controversy erupted when Anil Dhupar was removed as Secretary General by the EC on June 27 this year and Sunder Iyer was appointed interim secretary. Dhupar has challenged his removal in the court which will next hear the matter on September 10. The ministry has refused to interfere in the internal matter of the AITA.

Now that the National Sports Governance Act 2025 has come into force, the matter should reach a conclusion soon.

Iyer informed the EC members on August 9 that Tripura association secretary Sujit Roy will travel to Switzerland as manager with the Indian Davis Cup team for the tie to be played in Biel on September 12 and 13.

What followed the announcement was an email exchange among the EC members who debated the appointment.

Dhupar, who has challenged the legality of the EC meeting that removed him as secretary on June 27 in Ahmedabad, asserted that it has been a longstanding tradition for the secretary general to travel with the team as manager and AITA President Anil Jain has approved and sanctioned his name.

Bengal Tennis Association (BTA) President Hironmoy Chatterjee mentioned that it's the Executive Committee which has the power to nominate the manager and Dhupar, in the past, had travelled as manager only after the EC approved the same. Chatterjee advised all the members to ignore the email sent by Dhupar and All Assam Tennis Association (AATA) President Raktim Saikia endorsed his view.

AITA Vice President Navneet Sehgal though advised the members to respect the tradition and not get into "my man his man" concept.

Another AITA Vice President Chintan Parikh said Dhupar has not received any favourable decision from the court so he should not be appointed as manager by the President without consulting the EC.

He further stressed that a secretary general becoming the manager of Davis Cup team was "demoting" the position.

"The President, Hon. Secretary and their internal kitchen cabinet consisting of 3-4 members, have decided to undermine the EC members totally and run AITA with total autocracy like a family shop. They should know their days are numbered, and their actions will go in the history of AITA as shameful," Parikh wrote.

Parikh argued that all travel expenses need to be approved by the EC and if Dhupar decides to travel as manager without an explicit consent of EC, AITA will not pay his expenses, unless approved by EC.

AITA President Anil Jain, against whom a no confidence motion was proposed before being withdrawn last year, argued that Parikh's mail disregards the authority of the President as envisaged by the AITA constitution. (PTI)

Online Gaming Bill: Cricket industry's revenue could be hit due to proposed ban on real money gaming

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: The 'Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill 2025', which was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, could spell the end of "real money gaming platforms", that have stakes in the sponsorship market of Indian sports, most significantly cricket.

The contents of the bill, which aims to regulate one of the fastest growing industries, is music to the ears for the Esports fraternity in the country.

But the multi-billion dollar fantasy gaming industry comprising companies that have spent big money in sponsorship of cricket might see a marked dip in their revenues.

And as a chain reaction, it could also affect the sports sponsorship market, including individual players' sponsorship and franchise-based domestic leagues of disciplines like kabaddi and football. The Online gaming regulation bill looks to create a regulatory body that will look after four diverse segments -- Esports, educational gaming, social and casual gaming and real money gaming.

Of these, there will be restrictions on online money games, states the document which is in possession of PTI. As per "PROHIBITIONS" clause: "No person shall offer, aid, abet, induce or otherwise indulge or engage in the offering of online money game and online money gaming service."

"No bank, financial institution, or any other person facilitating financial transactions or authorisation of funds shall engage in, permit, aid, abet, induce or otherwise facilitate any transaction or authorisation of funds towards



payment for any online money gaming service." The "OFFENCES AND PENALTIES" clause clearly terms real money gaming as a criminal offence which could lead to jail and humongous fine for the service provider.

Clause 9. (1) reads "Any person who offers online money gaming service in contravention of section 5 shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with fine which may extend to one crore rupees or with both."

Clause 9. (2) reads: "Any person who makes or causes to make advertisement in any media, in contravention of section 6, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years or with fine which may extend to fifty lakh rupees or with both."

My11Circle is the official fantasy sports partner of the money-spinning Indian Premier League.

Dream11 brought the Indian team's title rights for about USD 44 million (Rs 358 crore approx). My11Circle brought IPL fantasy gaming rights for a fee of Rs 625 crore for five years (Rs 125 crore approx annually).

Add to this the country's top cricketers -- former as well as current -- have hefty personal endorsement deals with various real money gaming platforms.

Noted sports lawyer Vidushpat Singhania, who has a deep understanding of the subject, explained the consequences in a nutshell.

"Cricket is huge in India and there won't be any dearth of sponsors for Indian cricket and its properties. However, personal sponsorship market can shrink because of this bill."

"Also fan engagement will be affected," Singhania told PTI.

He, however, explained that fantasy games can still run a subscription based model.

"There will be a subscription fee and say you pay Rs 100 for a gaming app and test your skills in fantasy gaming. But real money gaming which is paying and earning money, that is prohibited as per this bill." The gigantic revenue stream of all these fantasy gaming apps will certainly diminish due to the ban and hence money flowing back into the sport will decrease markedly.

Esports made its debut at the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023 and the International Olympic Committee will be conducting its first Esport Olympics in Riyadh in 2027. (PTI)