

6
REGION



● Assam BJP announces 18-member core committee ahead of Shah's visit

8
NATION



● Man with links to radical outfit JMB held in Assam: CM

● Won't let anyone take away people's voting right till I am alive: Mamata

● BJP alleges use of abusive language against PM during Rahul's yatra



Assam Setting New Milestones

Inauguration of Brahmaputra Wing at Raj Bhavan

and

India's 2nd National Cyber Forensic Laboratory - North East

at Lachit Barphukan Police Academy, Dergaon
(through virtual mode)



29 August 2025



11:30 AM



Raj Bhavan, Kharghuli, Guwahati

Chief Guest

Shri Amit Shah

Hon'ble Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation
Government of India

In august presence of

Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya
Hon'ble Governor, Assam

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam

National Cyber Forensic Laboratory - NE







Brahmaputra Wing



Project cost

₹45
crore

Objectives






-  Provide comprehensive digital investigation facilities for all 8 NE states
-  Strengthen law enforcement capacity through modern forensic technologies
-  Act as a training hub for police officers of NE states
-  Establish itself as a leading digital investigation centre of national repute



Project cost

₹41
crore

Features

-  Governor's office
-  ADC's office
-  PPS's office
-  Conference Hall
-  Waiting Lounge
-  Governor's Suite
-  Presidential Suite
-  Library

DIPRD/HLT/136/29-Aug-25

Govt working on support measures to help exporters deal with 50 pc US tariff

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: The government is working on extending support measures for exporters such as rollout of export promotion mission, and moratorium on loans to help them insulate from the impact of US's 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods, an official said on Thursday.

The government official also said this is a wake-up call and opportunity to diversify the export basket.

Exporters have sought help at the liquidity front and these suggestions are under consideration, the official added.

"The government is seized of issues being faced by exporters, and positive work is going on to help them," the official said adding diversification of exports, implementation of new free trade agreements (FTAs), rolling out of support measures and growing domestic market will help provide cushion to the industry from the impact of US tariffs. The other measures which are under consideration include emergency credit line guarantee scheme for MSME exporters in tariff-hit sectors, moratorium on export loans to allow exporters operational space without asset downgrades, and extension of export realisation period to ease cash flow challenges caused by longer payment cycles.

"The government is trying to speed up the rollout of the export promotion mission and expediting the e-commerce export hub scheme," the official said.

The government is considering support measures worth about ₹ 25,000 crore for exporters under this mission, announced in the Budget, for six financial years (2025-2031). It is proposed to be implemented through two sub-



schemes - Niryat Protsahan (over ₹ 10,000 crore) and Niryat Disha (over ₹ 14,500 crore).

These steps are important as imposition of 50 per cent tariffs (25 per cent additional duty and 25 per cent penalty on India for buying Russian crude oil and military equipment) on Indian goods from August 27 will hit shipments of labour-intensive sectors such as machinery, shrimp, textiles, leather and footwear, gems and jewellery.

Sweeping duties will have a bearing on the order books of exporters as these taxes will make Indian goods less competitive in the US market as compared to its competitors like Vietnam, Bangladesh and Thailand, which are being subjected to lower tariffs by the US.

Cancellation or slowdown in orders may lead to liquidity crunch

and for that, the industry is seeking intervention of the government.

Exporters are seeking measures such as resumption of interest subsidy for five years, export credit support to sustain working capital and liquidity, low cost of credit and easy availability of loans, moratorium on payment of principal and interest for loans up to a period of one year. They have stated that it is difficult to export to the US with these high tariffs.

"We are considering their suggestions. We are trying something tangible with long term benefits," the official said, adding the industry is worried but the losses from these tariffs would be there only in the short run.

Exporters that are dependent completely on the US market will have major issues.

The commerce ministry is also

holding a series of meetings with exporters on issues like diversification of exports and exploring new markets.

India's exports to the US during the first four months of this fiscal year have risen 21.64 per cent to USD 33.53 billion. It was USD 86.5 billion in 2024-25. About half of this is out of the ambit of 50 per cent tariffs.

The US accounted for about 20 per cent of India's USD 437.42 billion worth of goods exports in 2024-25. America has been the largest trading partner of India from 2021-22. In 2024-25, the bilateral trade in goods stood at USD 131.8 billion (USD 86.5 billion exports and USD 45.3 billion imports).

Meanwhile, exporters body FIEO said that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday assured an exporters' delegation that the government stands firmly with them in this challenging time and is committed to addressing their concerns, while exploring every possible avenue to safeguard their interests amidst high US tariffs. The assurance was given to a delegation of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) led by its President S C Ralhan.

They apprised her of the challenges faced by Indian exporters due to the recent escalation of tariffs imposed by the United States.

"The Finance Minister reassured the delegation that the government stands firmly behind Indian exporters in this hour. She emphasized that the government is committed to addressing all concerns of the exporting community and will explore every possible avenue to safeguard their interests," the FIEO said. (PTI)

FM holds inter-ministerial meet on exporters amid US tariffs

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday held an inter-ministerial meeting to discuss possible support measures for exporters to cushion them against the impact of US tariffs, sources said.

Senior officials from different ministries including finance, commerce, textiles, MSMEs, chemi-

cals, and fisheries attended the meet, they said.

The discussions happened in the wake of a steep 50 per cent tariff imposed by the Trump administration on Indian goods entering the American market from August 27, barring few.

According to exporters, labour-intensive sectors includ-

ing shrimp, chemicals, textiles, leather and footwear, and gems and jewellery would be impacted from this tariff as their goods will become less competitive in the US market as compared to their competitor countries including Bangladesh, Vietnam and Thailand, which are being subjected to lower tariffs. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 3...

Discussions with BJP panel

minister had said on Wednesday. On Friday, Shah will inaugurate the newly-constructed Brahmaputra wing of the Raj Bhavan followed by the E-inauguration of the National Cyber Forensic Laboratory and E-Inauguration cum E-foundation laying of various development projects of ITBP, SSB and Assam Rifles.

In the afternoon, Shah will attend a convention of the newly elected NDA panchayat members at the 'Panchayat Sammilan' which will mark the 'sounding of the war bugle' for the 2026 assembly elections in the state by the national leader. After this event, he will review the progress of the Jyoti Bishnu Cultural Complex, an auditorium with a 5,000-seat capacity. In the evening, he will inaugurate the birth centenary celebrations of Assam's first non-Congress chief minister, Golap Borbora, before leaving for New Delhi.

"The visit of the Union Minister is very important for us politically, but all the other events are equally important," the chief minister said. Shah was earlier scheduled to visit the state for a day on August 29. (PTI)

CBI arrests Airtel

to issue unauthorized SIM cards without the knowledge of the persons in whose name SIM cards were officially issued. According to the modus operandi adopted to sell a "ghost SIM card", when a customer seeks a SIM, the point-of-sale person gets an e-KYC done and issues a SIM. Scammers lie to the customers that their e-KYC had failed and they should try again. The SIM generated for the first time was handed over to the customer while the second one - the "Ghost SIM" - was sold to cybercriminals without the genuine customers knowing that a SIM generated in their name was being used by scammers, the officials said.

These "ghost SIM cards" were then used not only to deceive the victims, but also to create mule bank accounts to receive the money, which were later closed to avoid detection or reveal the money trail, they said.

"These sales were done by violating the laid down guidelines and procedures. These SIM cards were sold illegally in bulk to various middlemen at high cost and later these cards were used in commission of various cyber crimes," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement.

Aimed at curbing the sale and misuse of unauthorized SIM cards being sold through distributors/ PoS agents, the CBI crackdown resulted in seizure of incriminating evidences like mobile phones, electronic devices and copies of KYC documents, etc, she said. "This action underscores the government of India's resolute commitment in combating cyber crimes and in bringing its perpetrators to face the law and also special focus in dismantling the infrastructure which facilitates such crimes," the spokesperson said. (PTI)

Benefit from Russian oil

of Russian crude oil or its refined products. At present, India imports 36 per cent of its oil needs from Russia. Of the 5.4 million barrels per day (mbpd) of imports, 36 per cent (1.8 mbpd) of crude oil came from its top supplier, Russia, in 2024-25. Other key suppliers of crude oil to India are Saudi Arabia (14 per cent), Iraq (20 per cent), the UAE (9 per cent) and the USA (4 per cent). While many EU countries have banned imports of Russian oil, a price cap was introduced for other countries purchasing Russian crude oil. Indian imports have adhered to this price cap. Russia exports about 4.3-4.8 mbpd (total output of 9.2 mbpd), which is about 5 per cent of the overall crude oil supply. Besides India, China is the other big importer of Russian crude oil, with an estimated 2 mbpd of oil imported from the country over the past year. Stating that the net benefit from discounted Russian crude is much lower than media reports, CLSA said the headline price discount for Russian crude versus Dubai crude appears large due to its USD 60 price cap, particularly at times when the Brent crude price rises above USD 75 per barrel.

"However, the net gain to Indian importers is far smaller than this visible discount, as there are several shipping, insurance and reinsurance-related restrictions for Russian crude. Therefore, Indian refiners import Russian crude on a cost, insurance and freight (CIF) basis, landed in India. Thus, the landed price of Russian crude is at a far lower discount," it said. Indian oil marketing companies (OMCs) have highlighted that the discount of Russian crude averaged around USD 8.5 per barrel in FY24, but this discount fell to USD 3-5 in FY25 and has declined to about USD 1.5 per barrel in the recent months.

"Using an average discount of USD 4 per barrel would imply a total annual advantage of just USD 2.5 billion captured by Indian importers in FY25, ie, equal to 0.6 bps of India's GDP. However, current discounts would take down the annualised gains from this import to just USD 1 billion," the report said.

Although it is simplistic to look at Russian crude oil imports in isolation, refining is a business where one would need to keep a balanced slate of input crude. So, a higher share of the inferior quality Russian crude would require refineries to also buy a bigger share of better quality, more expensive crude oil. Therefore, to know the real gains of Russian oil imports, one needs to check if there are gains in the average price of crude imported by India.

"To our surprise, the import data of the government reveals no clear gains from Russian oil imports, as the unit price of Indian crude oil imports has moved from a discount versus Dubai pre-FY22 to a premium over the past couple of years. So, any such large gain is not discernible from the Indian oil import data," it said.

It went on to state that the price of crude oil, which is converted into fuels such as petrol and diesel, could rise to USD 90-100 per barrel if India stops importing Russian oil. "With only a few buyers purchasing Russian crude, any stoppage from India may make it difficult for Russia to find buyers for possibly 1 million bpd or 1 per cent of global supply in the near term. Although India should be able to easily secure supply from other sellers, such a supply disruption could drive a spike in crude oil price to USD 90-100 per barrel and would drive up inflation across the world, in our view." CLSA argued that Indian imports of Russian oil provide a much-needed check on crude oil prices, as well as curbing the risk of global inflation. "Economics aside, we believe the issue of Russian crude oil imports has now become a political one with India reiterating its freedom to choose its trade partners within the purview of global trade rules." (PTI)

FIR in Assam: SC

BNS. It said the video uploaded by the petitioner stems from a recent Gauhati High Court proceeding with respect to such allotment. "The petitioner's statements are not fabricated assertions but grounded in verifiable facts which were supported by original video clips of speeches made by the chief minister of Assam. The criticism of government policies, functioning, or political strategies do not amount to an offence under Section 152 BNS," the plea submitted. It said in a democracy, elected representatives remain open to public scrutiny and criticism and at no point does Sharma call for violence, insurrection, or public disorder.

"The present FIR is a classic case of misuse and abuse of Section 152 BNS to stifle dissent and journalistic freedom. Criminal prosecution under a provision carrying life imprisonment, against a journalistic video is grossly inappropriate to be a constitutional affront," the plea said. The plea submitted that Section 152 of the BNS is a "reincarnation" of the sedition provision (Section 124-A of the erstwhile Indian Penal Code), which is under judicial scrutiny by the apex court "due to its vagueness". The plea said the top court had earlier observed that authorities would restrain from registering any FIR under Section 124-A of IPC or continue with pending investigation under this provision. "The instant case is not an isolated instance but forms part of a larger pattern of repeated misuse of criminal provisions akin to sedition against journalists and critics of the government," it submitted. The plea claimed that journalists across the country were subjected to FIRs and prosecutions for merely reporting or commenting on governmental policies and political developments. The plea said the petitioner merely exercised his fundamental right to freedom of speech and press by reporting and critically commenting on political speeches already in the public domain. (PTI)

India, Saudi explore joint

"India and Saudi Arabia share a steadily deepening defence partnership," it added.

It is reflected by the addition of a ministerial committee on defence cooperation under the strategic partnership council during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Saudi Arabia in April, the ministry said.

The meeting was co-chaired by Joint Secretary Amitabh Prasad from the Indian side and Maj Gen Saad Mohammed H Alkathiri from the Saudi side. (PTI)

Assam tea associations

Moreover, another area of concern is that the Tea Board "does not have a proper trace of re-exports and a software application can easily be put in place, which will monitor imports and re-exports", they added. "We appeal that a task force be formed to investigate the whole import matter in a holistic manner. The task force should also recommend measures to protect the Indian tea industry," another member of the delegation said.

The Tea Board's regulation of routing 100 per cent dust-grade tea through public auctions has also created financial distress for the tea industry, they claimed. The Tea Board had thought of having a single point of sale for better price realisation, but there are five auction centres in North India - Kolkata, Siliguri, Jalpaiguri, Guwahati and Jorhat, the tea associations said. "The auction dates are different, buyers are different, selling/buying prices are different, qualities of teas offered are different and so on. Therefore, in any case with five auction centres, it is not a single point of sale," the three tea bodies pointed out. The members of these associations claimed that they know their business and will automatically sell through auction if price realisation is better.

"All of us sell through both auction and private modes depending upon market dynamics from time to time, and therefore forceful regulation by the Tea Board to sell only through auction is not required," another member of the delegation said. These tea associations appealed to the authorities to withdraw the order issued on July 25 on the routing of 100 per cent dust grades through auction. They also claimed that tea growers and the industry are "suffering from a non-compliance situation because of a letter from the Tea Board to FSSAI to put six off-label pesticides under compulsory testing". "We appeal to the Tea Board to withdraw that letter to FSSAI, and we are ready to adhere to compliance as per statute, but there shouldn't be over regulations," they stated. The members of the delegation included ABLTMA chairman Chand Kumar Gohain and vice chairman Chandrjit Baruah, NETA chairman Ajay Dhandhan, its advisor Bidyanand Barkakoty and executive committee member Manab Agrwalla and BCP executive committee member Sumit Agarwalla. (PTI)

Air pollution cuts 3.5 years

to 2017. As of 2023, pollution in districts with non-attainment cities declined by 10.7 per cent relative to 2017, adding six months to the life expectancy of 445.5 million people, the report said. (PTI)

Manufacturing pushes industrial output growth to 4-month high of 3.5 pc in July

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: India's industrial production growth accelerated to a 4-month high of 3.5 per cent in July this year due to good performance of manufacturing sector, according to official data released on Thursday.

The country's industrial output earlier recorded this level of growth at 3.9 per cent in March 2025.

The factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), had expanded by five per cent in July 2024.

The National Statistics Office (NSO) in its revised figure for June kept the pace of industrial production growth unchanged at 1.5 per cent as against the provisional estimates released last month.

The latest NSO data showed that the manufacturing sector's output growth rose to 5.4 per cent in July 2025 from 4.7 per cent in the year-ago month.

Mining production contracted by 7.2 per cent against a growth of 3.8 per cent recorded a year ago.

Power production rose by a meagre 0.6 per cent in July 2025 against 7.9 per cent in the year-ago period. During the April-July period of FY26, the country's total industrial production grew by 2.3 per cent compared to 5.4 per cent a year ago.

Commenting on the data Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, Head - Research & Outreach, ICRA, said, "Encouragingly, growth in manufacturing output accelerated to a six-month high of 5.4 per cent in July 2025 from 3.7 per cent in June 2025, aided by construction inputs and consumer durables."

The previous high in the manufacturing sector was recorded in January 2025 at 5.8 per cent.

She stated that the IIP growth accelerated appreciably to a four-month high of 3.5 per cent in July 2025 from 1.5 per cent in June

2025, led by a broad-based improvement across all the sectors.

Nevertheless, the performance of the mining and electricity sectors remained weak, even as the effect of heavy rains eased somewhat in that month, weighing on the overall IIP growth, she pointed out.

Nayar said looking ahead, the improved transmission of monetary easing and the recent announcement of the forthcoming GST rationalisation may help shore up urban consumption sentiments, although discretionary consumption may see some deferment until lower tax rates are brought in.

"This postponement of discretionary purchases along with the disruptive monsoon rainfall in some regions over the last few weeks could contain the IIP growth sub-3 per cent in August 2025," she said.

Within the manufacturing sector, 14 out of 23 industry groups have recorded a positive year-on-year growth in July 2025.

As per use-based classification, the capital goods segment growth decelerated to 5 per cent in July 2025 from 11.7 per cent in the year-ago period.

Consumer durables (or white goods production) growth slowed to 7.7 per cent during the reporting month against a growth of 8.2 per cent in July 2024.

In July 2025, consumer non-durables output recorded a meagre growth of 0.5 per cent as against a contraction of 4.2 per cent a year ago. Infrastructure/construction reported a growth of 11.9 per cent in July 2025, up from a 5.5 per cent expansion in the year-ago period.

The data also showed that the output of primary goods contracted by 1.7 per cent in July 2025 against 5.9 per cent growth a year earlier. The expansion in the intermediate goods segment was 5.8 per cent in the month under review against 7 per cent a year ago. (PTI)

1.72 lakh people died in 4.80 lakh road accidents in 2023: Road Ministry report

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: The number of road accidents in India went up by 4.2 per cent to over 4.8 lakh in 2023, resulting in death of 20 persons every hour, according to a report by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).

The report showed that 55 road accidents take place every hour in the country.

"A total number of 4,80,583 road accidents have been reported by Police Departments of States and Union Territories (UTs) in the country during the calendar year 2023, claiming 1,72,890 lives and causing injuries to 4,62,825 persons," the report titled 'Road accidents in India 2023' said.

For the fourth consecutive year in 2023, the report said the fatal road accident victims largely constitute young people in the productive age groups.

"Young adults in the age group of 18 - 45 years accounted for 66.4 per cent of victims during 2023.

"People in working age group of 18 - 60 years share 83.4 per cent of total road accident fatalities," it said.

According to the report, during 2023, a total of 4,80,583 accidents were recorded in the country, of which, 1,50,177 (31.2 per cent) took place on the National Highways (NH) including Expressways, 1,05,622 (22.0 per cent) on State Highways (SH) and the remaining 2,24,744 (46.8 per cent) on other roads.

Out of the total of 1,72,890 fatalities reported in 2023, the report said 63,112 (36.5 per cent) were on National Highways, 39,439 (22.8 per cent) were on State Highways and 70,339 (40.7 per cent) were on other roads.

Out of the total 1,60,509 fatal accidents reported in 2023, 57,467 (35.8 per cent) were on National Highways, 36,595 (22.8 per cent) on State Highways and 66,447 (41.4 per cent) were reported on other roads.

Amongst the states, the report said Tamil Nadu recorded the highest number of road accidents on National Highways in 2023, whereas, the number of persons killed in road accident was the highest in Uttar Pradesh. The report noted that road accidents are multi-causal and are often the result of interplay of various factors like human error, road environment and vehicular condition. (PTI)

INTERVIEW NOTICE

A walk-in interview will be held at PMSHriKV Diphu on 04.09.2025 (Thursday) to prepare a panel of contractual teachers for the posts ATL Instructor on purely contract basis for the session 2025-26. An interested candidatemust have ensured his/her eligibility before applying for the said post.

Essential Qualification: B.E./B.Tech. (Electronics & Communication)

- * Proficiency to teach in English and Hindi Medium.
- * Minimum One Year Experience

For other details visit the school website <https://diphu.kvs.ac.in/> The candidates must report at the venue by 9:00 AM on the day of the interview along with original as well as attested copies of their testimonials of qualification and experience. The remuneration of the said posts will be as per KVS norms. No TA/DA will be paid by the Vidyalaya for attending this walk-in interview.

(Dr. Surender Singh)
Principal

AFFIDAVIT

I, MAMIZUL HOQUE, S/O, Late Aijuddin, R/O Vill-Mowamari P.O + P.S - Kharupetia, Dist: Darrang (Assam) do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that I am a permanent resident of the above mentioned address and citizen of India by birth. That my actual and correct name is MAMIZUL HOQUE. That my name has been wrongly recorded in my passport vide no - H9145149 dtd 22/03/2011 as Mohammed Mamijal hoque in place of MAMIZUL HOQUE. That Mohammed Mamijal hoque and MAMIZUL HOQUE are the same and one person. Sd/- MAMIZUL HOQUE

LOST

I, Gupi Ram Borah son of Shri Saruram Borah of Japarajan, Karbi Anglong lost my original Certificate Cum Marks sheet of 1 Year Diploma in Shikshan Praveen of Academic session 2014-15, Roll No. 02 of Govt. Hindi Teachers Training Centre, Diphu, Karbi Anglong. If anybody found the lost document contact: 9864533754

FRIDAY, AUGUST 29, 2025

THE HILLS TIMES 3

Major roads, residential areas of capital under water

Heavy rain inundates Guwahati for 2nd day • IMD predicts more rains

GUWAHATI, Aug 28: Life in Assam's capital was thrown out of gear on Thursday following a spell of heavy rain that submerged almost all peripheral roads and several residential areas, leading to massive traffic jams.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted heavy to very heavy rainfall with thunderstorms and lightning across the city over the next 24 hours.

The city witnessed continuous rainfall for 2-3 hours in the afternoon, which led to knee-deep water on several major and minor roads, while at some locations the water rose to chest level.

Waterlogging was reported from Zoo Road, RG Baruah Road, GS Road, Nabin Nagar, Anil Nagar, Hatigaon, Ganeshguri, Gita Nagar, Maligaon, Hedayetpur, Guwahati Club, Ulubari, Lachit Nagar, Chandmari, Panjabari,

Jorabat, Tarun Nagar, Jatia, Jyotikuchi, Ghoramara, VIP Road, Rajgarh Road, Jorabat, Rukmini Gaon, Survey and Chatribari, among others.

Scores of vehicles broke down, while hundreds of houses in the "smart city" were also inundated.

Severe waterlogging on stretches of National Highway-27 also left dozens of vehicles stranded.

Authorities deployed inflatable rubber boats to ferry people from inundated areas, while several schools delayed their buses amid half-yearly examinations.

"I got a message from my children's school that the buses will leave late and have not started yet. I don't know when they will reach home. Thankfully, my son, who is in Class 9, is with his sister, who studies in Class 6," Gauhati Medical College and Hospital assistant pro-



Professor Vaishali Sarma told PTI.

On Wednesday evening too, a three-hour spell of heavy rainfall brought life to a standstill in Assam's capital, sub-

merging roads and homes, and triggering massive traffic jams across the city. A senior official, who works at the finance department in the Secretariat, left

her car in the office and went home by office staff bus due to massive waterlogging.

"It took the bus around half-an-hour to reach Ganeshguri from Janata Bhawan, which is just 200 metres away. We are moving at a snail's pace. I don't know at what time I will reach home today," she added.

Reports of power cuts in several areas further aggravated the crisis.

Quoting IMD predictions, the Assam State Disaster Management Authority said the weather pattern suggests that rainfall (up to 6 cm in 24 hours) with thunderstorms and lightning is likely to occur at most places in the city.

"Authorities are closely monitoring the situation and emergency response systems are being kept on stand-by," ASDMA said.

In view of the situation, the authori-

ties requested people to take necessary precautions and remain vigilant.

ASDMA also urged the public to stay tuned to official weather updates and follow advisories issued by local authorities.

The crisis has reignited concerns flagged by Gauhati High Court, which in August 2023 had pulled up the state government for failing to address the city's chronic waterlogging.

The HC had asked the state government to submit a plan to mitigate the crisis.

Stating that the Assam government was "not serious" in solving perennial waterlogging problems in the state capital, the Gauhati HC had come down heavily on it for not responding to its repeated notice and slapped a fine of Rs 1,000 each to four departments concerned. (PTI)

Amit Shah arrives on two-day visit to Assam

Discussions with BJP panel on 2026 polls take place

GUWAHATI, Aug 28: Union Home Minister Amit Shah arrived here on Thursday, beginning his two-day visit to the state, which includes attending the Assam BJP's core committee meeting to discuss issues related to the assembly polls scheduled in the state next year.

Shah, who arrived on a BSF aircraft, was received at the Lokpriya Gopinath International Airport by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, members of his cabinet, and senior officials of the state.

Sarma welcomed him with the traditional Assamese 'gamosa'.

The union home minister left for the state BJP headquarters, where he will attend the meeting of the newly constituted 18-member core committee to discuss and strategise the preparations for the Assam assembly polls in 2026.

'Honoured to welcome Hon'ble Union Home Minister Shri @AmitShahji at Guwahati airport',



the CM posted on X.

'Adamiya Amit Shahji will soon chair the Core Committee meeting of @BJP4Assam and take part in various programmes tomorrow. We look forward to his leadership and counsel', he said.

Shah earlier said in a post on X, 'leaving for Assam on a two-day tour. Today, will chair the BJP's

core committee meeting in Guwahati. In the morning tomorrow will initiate the National Cyber Forensic Laboratory to bolster cyber security in the region along with various other projects.'

Later, he will address the 'NDA Panchayat Pratimidhi Sammelan' and the Birth Centenary Celebration of former CM Golap Borbora,

he said.

Replying to the post, Sarma said, 'Your guidance has helped Assam chart new territories in peace and development and we are confident that this visit of yours will further strengthen our resolve to serve the people.'

Earlier, the CM reviewed the arrangements at the Khanapara Veterinary Field where the Panchayat Sammilani will be held on Friday. Sarma also inspected the newly built Raj Bhawan which Shah will inaugurate on Friday morning.

The home minister, after attending the core committee meeting, will have dinner with the BJP members.

'He will discuss the preparation for the forthcoming Assam assembly elections which is very important for the party and the Union home minister takes a keen interest in it', the chief (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

CBI arrests Airtel official, 2 others in Assam

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: The CBI has arrested a territory sales manager (TSM) of Airtel from Silchar, Assam for alleged unauthorized sale of SIM cards used to commit various cyber crimes including digital arrest scams, officials said Thursday.

The CBI raided five locations in Cachar, Assam on Wednesday and arrested three persons including TSM Debashish Doley and middlemen Mahim Uddin Barbhuiya and Ashim Purkayastha, they said.

No immediate response was available from Airtel on queries regarding the arrest of Doley.

In a major crackdown on digital arrest scams in May this year, the CBI had booked 39 point-of-sales (PoS) operators who sold 1,100 "ghost SIM cards" to cyber criminals operating from Southeast Asian countries targeting Indian citizens. During investigation, the CBI found that Doley colluded with the middlemen Barbhuiya and Purkayastha (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

Benefit from Russian oil imports exaggerated

India's actual gain at just USD 2.5 bn

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: India's gains from importing discounted Russian oil are estimated to be just USD 2.5 billion per annum, significantly lower than the previously speculated range of USD 10-25 billion, a research report said on Thursday.

Stopping Russian oil imports would force India, the world's third-largest oil importer and consumer, to rely on limited alternatives, potentially driving global crude prices up to USD 100 per barrel amid rising demand and tight supply.

"Benefit from Russian oil imports is way less than exaggerated media numbers," brokerage CLSA said in a report.

While "some media outlets have estimated the benefit in the range of USD 10 billion to USD 25 billion for India from Russian crude imports, we calculate the net annual benefit to India from Russian crude imports to be much smaller at just USD 2.5 billion or a small 0.6 bpc

of India's GDP," it said.

India's import of Russian oil surged dramatically following the Ukraine war, rising from less than 1 per cent of its total crude oil imports to nearly 40 per cent.

This sharp increase was driven by steep discounts offered by Russia after some Western countries' purchases to punish Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine.

While the shift helped India secure affordable energy supplies, the Trump administration criticised the purchases, accusing New Delhi of profiteering by buying discounted Russian oil and exporting refined fuel to regions including Europe.

India has maintained that its actions do not violate any international laws, as there are no sanctions on purchasing Russian crude. The European Union only recently imposed a ban on importing fuel derived from Russian crude. Additionally, the US has not sanctioned the purchase (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

Drastic decline in crime rates : CM

GUWAHATI, Aug 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said the state has witnessed a decline in crime rates and increase in convictions compared to 2021, leading to overall improvement in law and order.

He also asserted that the Assam Police remains committed to ensuring a safe and crime-free state.

"Compared to 2021, there has been a marked decline in crimes and considerable improvement in convictions," Sarma said in a post on X.

Sarma, who also holds the home portfolio, said there has been a fall of 66.8 per cent in the crime rate per lakh population.

He said Assam has witnessed a 90.09 per cent drop in pending cases since 2021, while the conviction rate under the BNS went up to 56.2 per cent.

"The improvement in the law and order situation is quite remarkable," the chief minister added. (PTI)

PM to attend Bhupen Hazarika birth centenary event on Sept 13

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday chaired the second meeting of the core committee formed for the yearlong celebration of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika's Birth Centenary at Lok Sewa Bhawan here.

According to an official statement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the main centenary event on September 13 to honour the Bard of the Brahmaputra.

The celebrations will commence on September 8, 2025, and will feature a series of cultural events, publications, and outreach programmes across Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Kolkata, New Delhi and Mumbai.

The Chief Minister, along with his Cabinet colleagues, senior officials and committee members, reviewed the preparations and directed all concerned to ensure the grand success of the centenary. He emphasised that the celebrations

should reflect Dr Hazarika's immense contributions to music, culture and society.

The statement informed that the Government of India has approved the issuance of a Rs 100 silver commemorative coin in honour of Sudhakanta.

It added that a museum dedicated to Dr Hazarika will also be established, with the foundation stone to be laid during the centenary year.

Special focus will be given to involving youth, artists and cultural organisations in the programmes to spread Dr Hazarika's message of unity, peace and harmony. The Chief Minister also thanked the Arunachal Pradesh government, represented by Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, for initiating centenary celebrations at Roing.

Tez Hazarika, son of Dr Bhupen Hazarika, attended the meeting virtually and will be present at the main centenary event as a state guest.

FIR in Assam: SC grants four-week interim protection to journalist Abhisar Sharma

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: The Supreme Court on Thursday granted interim protection for four weeks to journalist Abhisar Sharma in an FIR lodged against him in Assam over a video post allegedly criticising the state's policies.

A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and N Kotiswar Singh refused to entertain his prayer challenging the FIR lodged against him in Assam and asked him to approach the Gauhati High Court.

It, however, issued notice to the Centre seeking its response on his prayer challenging the validity of Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which deals with acts endangering the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.

"In so far as the challenge to the FIR is concerned, we are not inclined to entertain. However, we are inclined to give interim protection to the petitioner (Sharma) for a period of four weeks so as to enable him to approach the high court," the bench said.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Sharma, said Section 152 of the BNS seems to have become an "omnibus provision" which can be invoked against anyone.

The bench asked him to challenge the FIR before the high court.

Sibal said the top court has already interfered in a similar matter which was pending.

"We will give you protection, you go there (high court)," the bench said, adding, "Why are you bypassing the high court?"

Sibal said another FIR might be lodged against the petitioner.

The bench observed another FIR might be lodged even if the apex court would entertain the plea.

Sibal said the apex court was already dealing with a separate plea raising similar issue and "some uniformity should be there".

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Sibal said the apex court was already dealing with a separate plea raising similar issue and "some uniformity should be there".

"We will protect you," the bench said, while asking the petitioner to approach the high court.

"This is not fair. What has the journalist done?" Sibal said, adding, "The society looks up to this court. Please don't do this... What message are we sending?"

The bench issued notice on the plea only with respect to the challenge to the vires of the Act.

The plea, filed through advocate Sumeer Sodhi, said the FIR was registered on a complaint by a private person against a video posted by Sharma on his YouTube Channel in which he questioned the wisdom of allotting 3,000 bighas of tribal land to a private entity and "exposed government decisions that affect tribal land rights, environmental concerns, and democratic accountability".

It said the FIR was lodged on August 21 this year for alleged offences, including under Section 152 of the (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

India, Saudi explore joint defence production

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: India and Saudi Arabia on Thursday explored the possibility of joint manufacturing of military equipment, reflecting their growing defence and strategic ties.

The two sides discussed ways to expand defence cooperation at a meeting of India-Saudi Arabia joint committee on defence cooperation in New Delhi.

The talks focused on cooperation in a range of areas such as training, industrial partnerships, maritime cooperation and military exercises, according to the defence ministry.

India offered to provide training to the Saudi armed forces and discussed cooperation in the domains of cyberspace, information technology, disaster management and tactical communication, it said.

"Opportunities were explored for joint manufacturing and partnership in defence equipment with Saudi Arabia," the ministry said in a statement. (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

Assam tea associations express concern over increasing imports

GUWAHATI, Aug 28: Major tea associations in Assam have expressed concern over increasing imports, particularly from African countries, and called for the constitution of a task force to protect the industry, a release said on Thursday.

A delegation of Assam Bought Leaf Tea Manufacturers Association (ABLTMA), Bharatiya Cha Parishad (BCP) and North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) called on Tea Board India's Deputy Chairperson Arunita Phukan Yadav and submitted a memorandum on issues related to imports, routing of 100 per cent dust grade tea through auctions and compliance of norms of the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) on the use of pesticides, it said.

'We are concerned about teas from African countries entering the Indian market without paying duty or through other means, which will

kill the Indian tea industry," the tea associations claimed.

As per the official figures of the Tea Board of Kenya, the exports from the African country to India increased by 45 per cent during the January-June period this year, as compared to the same period last year, they said.

The imports in 2024-25 have doubled compared to 2023-24, the tea associations said. In 2023-24, it was 25.21 m kgs, whereas in 2024-25, it reached 50.14 m kgs.

"Surprisingly, this data does not match that of the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), and this non-matching has created more suspicion in our minds," one of the members of the delegation claimed.

The majority of the tea was imported from Kenya (17 m kgs) and Nepal (15 m kgs) in 2024-25, they claimed. (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

'46 per cent of India's population lives in areas where annual PM2.5 levels exceed the national standard'

Air pollution cuts 3.5 years from life of average Indian: Report

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: All of India's 1.4 billion people live in areas where annual average particulate pollution levels exceed the WHO guideline and even those in the cleanest regions of the country could live 9.4 months longer if the air quality met global standards, according to a new report.

The Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago's (EPIC) 2025 report said PM2.5 concentrations in India in 2023 were higher than in 2022.

These levels are more than eight times higher than the WHO guideline and reducing them to permanently meet the global standard would add 3.5 years to the average life expectancy of Indians.

According to the WHO's 2021 air quality guideline, the annual average limit for PM2.5 is 5 micrograms per cubic metre, while for PM10 it is 15 micrograms per cubic metre.

These limits are far stricter than India's own standards, which currently allow 40 micrograms for PM2.5 and 60 micrograms for PM10.



The report said 46 per cent of India's population lives in areas where annual PM2.5 levels exceed the national standard of 40 micrograms per cubic metre. Meeting this

standard could increase the life expectancy of people in these regions by 1.5 years.

In the most polluted region of the country, the Northern Plains, 544.4 million residents

or 38.9 per cent of India's population could gain five years of life expectancy on average if particulate concentrations met the WHO guideline.

If all of India were to reduce particulate pollution to the WHO guideline, residents of Delhi, the capital and the most populous city, would see the maximum benefits, gaining 8.2 years of life expectancy.

Outside Delhi and the Northern Plains, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra face the highest health burden from particulate pollution. Reducing it to the WHO guideline could add 3.3, 3.1 and 2.8 years respectively to the average life expectancy in these states.

India launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in 2019 with the goal of reducing 2017 particulate pollution levels by 20-30 per cent by 2024. In 2022, the government revised the target to a 40 per cent reduction by 2026 in 131 non-attainment cities.

If this target is achieved, residents of these cities would see their life expectancy rise by two years compared (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The aim of education is the knowledge, not of facts, but of values. - William Inge

Bonhomie between Islamabad and Dhaka

The last week was full of hope and consternation both, for the Indian diplomatic community. On the one hand, the Chinese Foreign Minister met the Prime Minister Modi in Delhi. The Ministry of External Affairs described the talks as fruitful. But what rattled the Indian diplomats more, was the visit of Pakistan's Commerce Minister and Foreign Minister to Dhaka and the Chinese Foreign Minister travelling to Islamabad to meet his Pakistani counterpart, in addition to other military visits. Modi hailed the "steady progress" made in improving the bilateral relationship, after his meeting with the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. On its part, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the two countries have entered a "steady development track" and they "trust and support" each other. Wang also met with Foreign Affairs Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar as well as National Security Adviser Ajit Doval to discuss the countries' disputed border. India's Ministry of External Affairs said Wang's meeting with Doval discussed "de-escalation, delimitation and boundary affairs." However, what was more important for the Indian diplomats was the increasing bonhomie between Islamabad and Dhaka after the fall of former Prime Minister Sheikh Haseena, who was ousted after a deadly civil unrest.

The Indian defence and security establishment, watches the increasing closeness between the two countries with serious concern. Added to this is the widespread apprehensions found in the Indian defence circles, related to the cornering of the country, as China, Pakistan and Bangladesh forge closer ties. New Delhi's concerns are particularly related to the Siliguri corridor, known as India's chicken neck. The growing Chinese and Pakistani influence in Bangladesh has also put an additional burden on the Indian defence forces, which are now stretched across the entire border, LoC and LAC. Reportedly, Pakistan's top spy officials have made frequent visits to Bangladesh in a bid to contain India's growing influence in the region. Bangladesh also sought Pakistan's support to develop the country's leather and sugar industries, he said.

Amidst all this plethora of visits, comes the news that Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will soon travel to China. His visit will mark the launch of the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor - CPEC-II, which has been delayed for years. Pakistan now presents it as a grand plan for jobs, industry, and growth. At its core, it deepens China's grip on Pakistan's economy. Taken together, these parallel diplomatic, military, and economic engagements point to a recalibration of regional ties, with both Beijing and Islamabad seeking closer coordination with Dhaka while also reinforcing their bilateral partnership. These developments will put the Indian diplomats under pressure to pursue a course of action, which counters these three countries and as India has never indulged in such hypocritical or playing one country against another to ensure its interest, it may seem a little tough.

Gopinath Bordoloi: Savior of Assam's identity

Gopinath Bordoloi, revered as the creator of modern Assam, stands as a towering figure in the annals of Indian history, particularly in the northeastern region. Born on June 6, 1890, in the small village of Raha in the Nagaon district of Assam, Bordoloi's life was a testament to unwavering dedication, principled leadership, and an unyielding commitment to the welfare of his people. His father, Budheswar Bordoloi, served as a junior officer in the government's medical service, instilling in young Gopinath a sense of duty and empathy for the common folk. Tragically, his mother, Praneshwari Bordoloi, passed away when he was just twelve years old, leaving him to be raised by his elder sister, Shashikala Devi. This early loss forged a resilient character in Bordoloi, one that would later define his role in shaping Assam's destiny amid colonial oppression and the turbulent tides of partition.

From his humble beginnings, Bordoloi displayed an academic prowess that set the stage for his future endeavors. He completed his matriculation in 1907 at Cotton Collegiate School in Guwahati, earning a scholarship that allowed him to pursue higher education. He then joined Cotton College, affiliated with the University of Calcutta at the time, where he passed his Intermediate Arts examination in 1909 with first division honors. Drawn to the intellectual vibrancy of Calcutta, he enrolled at the prestigious Scottish Church College, graduating with a bachelor's degree in 1911. His thirst for knowledge led him to obtain a Master of Arts degree from Calcutta University in 1914, followed by studies in law. Upon returning to Assam, Bordoloi briefly served as the headmaster of Sonaram High School in Guwahati, a position that exposed him to the educational challenges facing the youth of his state. However, his true calling lay beyond the classroom, in the realm of public service and advocacy for the marginalized.

Bordoloi's foray into politics was marked by a deep-seated admiration for Mahatma Gandhi and the principles of non-violence. Influenced by luminaries such as Rabindranath Tagore, J.C. Bose, and Surendranath Banerjee during his time in Calcutta, he joined the Indian National Congress as a volunteer in 1921. This was a pivotal moment, as Assam at the time had limited organized political activity, primarily through the Assam Association, which was wound up to make way for the Assam Provincial Congress Committee. Bordoloi was elected its first secretary, a role that propelled him into the heart of the independence movement. He actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement, boycotting British institutions and promoting swadeshi. His fervor led to his arrest in 1922, and he spent a year in jail, emerging even more resolute. Though he briefly returned to his law practice in Guwahati after the movement was suspended following the Chauri Chaura incident, Bordoloi could not stay away from the political arena for long.

Between 1930 and 1933, Bordoloi stepped back from overt political activism to focus on social work, serving on the Guwahati Municipal Board and local boards. He championed causes like the establishment of a separate university and high court for Assam, recognizing the need for regional autonomy in education and justice. The Government of India Act of 1935 opened the doors for provincial elections in 1936, and the Congress, under Bordoloi's guidance, contested vigorously. Winning 38 seats, they formed the majority but chose to sit in opposition due to restrictive laws that curtailed ministerial powers. Bordoloi was elected Leader of the Opposition, critiquing the Muhammad Sadulla Ministry for its indifference to Assam's grassroots issues. His eloquence and integrity garnered widespread support, leading to Sadulla's resignation in

September 1938. The Governor invited Bordoloi to form the government, and on September 21, 1938, he took oath as the Premier of undivided Assam, becoming the first Congress-led chief executive in the province.

As Premier, Bordoloi's administration was a beacon of progressive governance. He halted the imposition of land taxes that burdened peasants, protected indigenous land rights by curbing grants to migrant Muslims, and addressed the economic disparities plaguing Assam. His policies aimed at fostering self-reliance and social equity, reflecting Gandhian ideals. However, the outbreak of World War II in 1939 disrupted his tenure. At Gandhi's behest, all Congress ministries resigned in protest against Britain's unilateral involvement of India in the war, and Bordoloi's cabinet followed suit in 1940. Undeterred, he continued his activism, only to be arrested again in December 1940. Released prematurely due to deteriorating health before completing a year in prison, Bordoloi plunged into the Quit India Movement of 1942. The British declared the Congress illegal, and leaders like him were incarcerated once more. He remained in jail until 1944, enduring hardships that tested his resolve but never broke his spirit.

Bordoloi's most defining contributions came during the fraught years leading to India's independence. As the Cabinet Mission arrived in 1946 to negotiate the transfer of power, Assam faced existential threats. The Muslim League, led by figures from Bengal, pushed aggressively to incorporate Assam into East Pakistan, viewing the province's strategic location and resources as vital. The Cabinet Mission's grouping plan proposed placing Assam in Group B with Bengal and other Muslim-majority provinces, effectively ceding it to Pakistan. Bordoloi, re-elected as Premier in the 1946 elections, vehemently opposed this. He mobilized the Assam Congress Committee for mass agitation, organizing rallies and consultations with national leaders. When initial discussions with the Congress high command yielded no results, Bordoloi orchestrated a unanimous resolution in the Assam Legislative Assembly rejecting the grouping. Ten representatives from Assam were tasked with drafting a separate constitution, ensuring integration with the national framework without subordination.

His persistence paid off when Lord Mountbatten, the new Viceroy, assumed office in 1947. Through separate meetings with the Muslim League, Congress, and Gandhi, Mountbatten opted for direct partition over grouping, averting Assam's absorption into East Pakistan. Bordoloi's role was instrumental; he worked tirelessly alongside Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to safeguard Assam's sovereignty. Patel, India's Iron Man, hailed Bordoloi as the "Sher-e-Assam" or Lion of Assam for his courage. This victory not only preserved Assam's territorial integrity but also protected its Hindu-majority population from potential communal violence. Bordoloi also thwarted the insidious Coupland Plan, a subsidiary proposal by Oxford historian Reginald Coupland, which envisioned the northeastern tribal areas, including Garo Hills, Khasi-Jaintia Hills, Lushai Hills, Nagaland, and North Cachar Hills, as a self-governing Crown Colony under British protection. Alerting Gandhi to its implications, Bordoloi intensified non-violent protests, ensuring these regions remained part of India.

Post-independence, Bordoloi became the first Chief Minister of Assam on August 15, 1947, a position he held until his death. His vision extended beyond mere survival; he sought to build a modern, inclusive Assam. The partition brought waves of refugees fleeing communal riots in East Pakistan, and Bordoloi organized their rehabilitation with compassion and efficiency, resettling millions while maintaining communal harmony. He collaborated with Patel to fortify Assam's borders

against threats from East Pakistan and Communist China, laying the groundwork for regional security. Economically, he promoted agriculture, tea production, and resource utilization, recognizing Assam's potential in oil and minerals—the first oil in Asia was discovered there. Educationally, Bordoloi's legacy shines brightest. He spearheaded the establishment of Gauhati University in 1948, fulfilling a long-standing demand for a local institution of higher learning. The Gauhati High Court was inaugurated in the same year, decentralizing justice. He also founded the Assam Medical College, Assam Veterinary College, and the B. Borooah College, alongside the Kamrup Academy, to nurture talent and address healthcare and agricultural needs. The Gauhati Station of All India Radio was another milestone, connecting Assam to the nation.

Bordoloi's approach to governance was holistic, emphasizing unity among Assam's diverse ethnic groups—Bodos, Nagas, Misings, Karbis, and others. As chairman of the North-East Frontier Tribal Areas and Assam Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Sub-Committee in the Constituent Assembly, he advocated for tribal rights, proportional representation, and special financial considerations for Assam's unique challenges, such as migration and population shifts. In debates on August 5, 1949, he highlighted taxation issues, and on September 6, 1949, he detailed the tribal situation, ensuring their voices were heard in the framing of India's Constitution. His interventions on July 18, 1947, addressed demographic changes due to influxes, proposing safeguards for Assamese representation in the Lok Sabha.

Despite his stature, Bordoloi remained a man of simplicity. A devout follower of the Bhagavad Gita, he wore khadi, lived austere, and was known for his Vaishnava devotional singing. The Governor of Assam, Jayram Das Doulatram, bestowed upon him the title "Lokpriya," meaning "loved by all," in recognition of his selfless service. Bordoloi authored books like Annasaktiyog, Shreeramachandra, Hajrat Mohammad, and Budhadhab, reflecting his philosophical depth. However, his health, weakened by years of imprisonment and relentless work, began to fail. On August 5, 1950, at the age of 60, he passed away in Guwahati, leaving behind a grieving state and nation.

Bordoloi's legacy endures as the architect of modern Assam. His efforts ensured communal harmony, democratic stability, and progress, shielding the state from ideological invasions and external aggressions until the 1971 war. Posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1999 by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he became the first and only recipient from the Northeast, a fitting tribute delayed by decades due to the region's peripheral status in national consciousness. In 2002, President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam unveiled a life-size statue of him in Parliament House. The Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati bears his name, and August 5 is observed as Lok Kalyan Divas in Assam to honor his death anniversary.

In the broader canvas of Indian history, Bordoloi's contributions transcend Assam. He opened the Northeast to the Congress, fostering national integration while preserving regional identity. His non-violent resistance against colonial designs and partition threats exemplified Gandhian ethos, inspiring generations. Today, as Assam grapples with issues like illegal migration, a concern Bordoloi foresaw and addressed, his vision remains relevant. He united diverse communities, promoted education and infrastructure, and laid the foundation for a progressive state. Gopinath Bordoloi was not just a politician; he was a guardian of Assam's soul, a builder of its future, and a symbol of integrity in public life. His life story reminds us that true leadership lies in selfless service, and his indelible mark on modern Assam ensures his place as an eternal icon of resilience and foresight.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Satyabrata Borah

Golap Borbora: A centenary tribute to Assam's first non-congress Chief Minister

By: Dipak Kurmi

As Assam observes the birth centenary of Golap Borbora, its first non-Congress Chief Minister, it is an opportune moment to reflect on the extraordinary journey of a man who embodied resistance, reform, and moral courage. His life was deeply intertwined with the struggles of ordinary people, from peasants and workers to students and cultural voices, and his political legacy continues to resonate across generations. Borbora's tenure at the helm of Assam's government may have lasted less than a year, but his imprint on the state's political imagination remains profound. His story is not simply that of a political leader but of an individual who lived and died with integrity, standing for principles when compromise would have been easier.

Early Life and Education

Golap Borbora was born on August 29, 1925, at Purona Amalapatti in Golaghat, Assam, into a family that placed immense value on education and honesty despite financial limitations. His father, Komol Borbora, was an executive officer at the Digboi Oil Company, and his mother, Puniyapova Borbora, anchored the family through turbulent times. The family's fortunes changed when Komol resigned during a prolonged strike at the oil company, and hardship became a familiar companion. When young Golap was three years old, the family moved to Sipripara, Tinsukia, following his father's employment at Digboi, and it was there that he spent his formative years.

Even amid modest means, Borbora's family emphasized learning. He received his primary education in Sipripara before moving on to Senarain High School, Tinsukia. To support his higher studies, he worked briefly in the Labour Department of the Digboi Oil Company. His intellectual ability shone early: in 1944, he passed the entrance examination with a first division, and in 1947, he graduated with distinction in the ISC from Bangabasi College under the University of Calcutta. This period was not merely an academic journey but also a moral awakening. The final years of the freedom struggle were unfolding around him, and his political outlook was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's ideas and, more significantly, by socialist leaders like Ram Manohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan.

The struggles he witnessed around him in the tea gardens, oil fields, and among daily wage earners shaped his sympathy for the working classes. Equally, his immersion in Assamese literature and culture instilled a lifelong commitment to preserving regional identity even while embracing progressive reform. These twin influences—socialist politics and Assamese culture—became the bedrock of his later political career.

Entry into Politics

By the mid-1940s, Borbora had already stepped into the world of student activism and local political movements. After completing his ISC, he briefly taught at Tinsukia High School but soon resigned, deciding instead to dedicate his life to the Socialist Party and trade union movements. His ability to organize, to speak with clarity, and to place himself among the working masses made him stand out. The years following Independence were challenging for Assam, where issues of regional neglect and economic inequality deepened. For Borbora, politics was not an avenue of personal gain but a moral responsibility to address these inequities.

Throughout the 1950s, he became an active figure in trade unions, representing the struggles of workers, farmers, and marginalized communities. His leadership

was recognized early when he led an agitation demanding an oil refinery in Assam. For this, he was arrested in 1957, an experience that hardened his resolve to confront entrenched power structures. His arrest was emblematic of his larger approach: he did not shy away from confrontation if it meant advancing justice.

By the 1960s, Borbora had grown into a national figure within the Socialist Party. His commitment was rewarded in 1965 when he became the National General Secretary of the United Socialist Party, giving him a platform to voice Assam's concerns at the national stage. In 1968, he entered the Rajya Sabha, becoming the first opposition MP from Assam. His speeches earned him admiration across party lines for their clarity, integrity, and deep sense of justice.

The 1970s and the Road to Chief Ministership

The 1970s were tumultuous years in Indian politics. Golap Borbora played a significant role in the Janata movement that rose in opposition to Indira Gandhi's increasingly authoritarian rule. During the 1974 railway strike, one of the largest industrial actions in India's history, Borbora was imprisoned. His unwavering opposition to authoritarianism reached a peak during the Emergency (1975–1977). Like many prominent opposition leaders, Borbora was jailed for 19 months in Tihar Jail. Yet, rather than weakening him, this incarceration only sharpened his image as a leader of principle.

After the lifting of the Emergency, the Janata Party emerged as a nationwide force, and in 1977, Borbora was appointed the Assam state unit president. Riding the wave of anti-Congress sentiment, he led the Janata Party to a historic victory in Assam, securing 53 seats in the assembly elections. For the first time since Independence, the Congress monopoly in Assam was broken. On March 12, 1978, Golap Borbora was unanimously elected as Chief Minister of Assam, making history as the state's first non-Congress Chief Minister.

Governance and Reforms

Although his tenure lasted only 11 months, from March 1978 to September 1979, Borbora's administration introduced reforms that were bold, people-centric, and reflective of his socialist ideals. His government exempted land revenue for farmers with holdings of up to 10 bighas, providing relief to tens of thousands of small cultivators. Land reform measures, including ceilings on holdings and redistribution to landless families, were introduced to reduce rural inequality.

Education was another priority. His government exempted fees for students up to HSLC level and extended free education to all girls up to high school. Hundreds of new schools were established, adult literacy campaigns were launched, and Assamese was strengthened as a medium of instruction. The focus on mother tongue education was in line with his philosophy that cultural preservation and progress must go hand in hand.

Healthcare reforms were equally transformative. Free medical treatment was introduced in government hospitals, making healthcare accessible to rural and marginalized communities for the first time. His government also allowed free movement of food grains within the state, eliminating barriers that had previously hurt ordinary citizens.

Administrative reforms became a hallmark of his leadership style. Determined to reduce corruption and bureaucratic hurdles, Borbora made the Chief Minister's office more accessible. Citizens could directly approach him with grievances, a practice that symbolized his commitment to participatory democracy. This philosophy of open-door governance set new standards in transparency and responsiveness.

Social welfare programs were expanded to cover workers, widows, and vulnerable groups. Pensions, relief aid, and health support were introduced to improve the conditions of marginalized communities. The government's initiatives produced measurable results: administrative delays were reduced by 75 percent, rural literacy increased by 60 percent, and agricultural productivity rose by 40 percent.

Challenges and the Fall of Government

Despite his achievements, Borbora's government faced formidable challenges. His attempts to curb the influx of illegal immigrants from neighboring countries stirred controversy, as the issue was deeply intertwined with Assam's socio-political fabric. At the same time, his move to dismantle the liquor monopoly in the tea garden belts threatened entrenched economic interests. These reformist measures, while progressive, cost him the support of powerful lobbies, contributing to the fall of his government in September 1979.

Yet, even after his government ended, Borbora was remembered as a leader who dared to confront systemic issues that others avoided. His 11 months in office remain etched in Assam's history as a period of principled governance rooted in social justice.

Later Years and Legacy

After leaving the Chief Minister's office, Borbora continued to serve the people, though he gradually withdrew from active politics. He devoted himself to social causes and educational initiatives, mentoring younger leaders and speaking on issues of democracy and justice. In his later years, he suffered from age-related ailments and passed away on March 19, 2006, at the age of 83.

His family has carried forward his legacy in different ways. His son, Pankaj Borbora, has been associated with the Bharatiya Janata Party, while his grandson, Abhinav P. Borbora, presides over the College Students Welfare Committee (CSWC), an NGO that commemorates his contributions. The CSWC Golap Borbora Scholarship Programme provides financial assistance to meritorious students, and the annual Golap Borbora Memorial Lecture continues to foster dialogue on democracy, governance, and social justice.

The Lasting Significance of His Leadership

Golap Borbora's life exemplifies the transformative power of principled politics. His reforms in land, education, healthcare, and welfare programs directly touched the lives of thousands. His insistence on transparency and open governance remains a benchmark in Assam's administrative history. More importantly, he demonstrated that leadership rooted in honesty, social justice, and empathy could challenge entrenched power and inspire people. His emphasis on cultural preservation alongside modern reform continues to guide Assamese identity politics, proving that progress does not have to come at the cost of tradition. In his words and actions, Borbora embodied a philosophy of participatory democracy, where citizens were not passive recipients of governance but active shapers of policy.

As Assam marks his centenary, Golap Borbora's legacy stands as a reminder that true political leadership is not measured by the length of tenure but by the depth of integrity and impact. His journey from the tea gardens and classrooms of Tinsukia to the Chief Minister's office in Dispur symbolizes the story of a man who never compromised with power but instead used it to serve. His centenary is therefore not just an occasion for remembrance but a call to renew faith in politics as a force for justice, dignity, and hope. (the writer can be reached at dipakkurmi@gmail.com)

An appraisal of the Indian ports bill 2025

By: Diganta Barooah
(CONTD FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE)

- Environmental & Safety Compliance :
 - ✓ In Compliance with international obligations like MARPOL (International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships) and Ballast Water Management Convention. • Retains 1908 Act provisions penalizing unsafe actions (e.g., injuring buoys, discharging firearms).
 - Ports to prepare :
 - ✓ Waste reception and handling plans. ✓ Pollution control and emergency preparedness plans. ✓ Disaster management plans. ✓ Central government to conduct periodic audits. ✓ Promotes renewable energy and shore power systems to reduce emissions.
 - Safety Standards :
 - Uniform safety protocols across all ports.
 - ✓ Offences and Penalties :
 - Decriminalization :
 - Some offences are now punishable by monetary penalties instead of imprisonment.
 - New Offences :
 - ✓ Starting port operations without notification. ✓ Failure to report pollution or provide pollution-related facilities. ✓ Non-compliance with DRC orders.
 - Penalties :
 - ✓ Imprisonment (up to 6 months), fine (up to ₹1 lakh), or both for endangering vessel safety or disturbing waterbed/geophysical structures.
 - ✓ Compounding allowed for first-time contraventions
 - Economic and Operational Enhancements :
 - Digitalization :
 - ✓ Simplifies procedures and enhances Ease of Doing Business (EODB).
 - Logistics Cost Reduction :
 - ✓ Speeds up cargo movement and improves hinterland connectivity.
 - Employment Generation :
 - ✓ Opportunities in port operations, logistics, warehousing, and allied industries.
 - Support for Exporters and MSMEs :
 - ✓ Streamlined procedures and improved infrastructure.
 - Funding Flexibility :
 - ✓ Clear provisions for Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and foreign investment.
 - Coastal Shipping Boost :
 - Integration with inland waterways and multimodal transport systems.
 - Criticisms of the Indian Ports Bill, 2025 :
 - Lack of Appeal Mechanism Against Penalties :
 - The Bill does not provide a mechanism to appeal penalties imposed by the conservator for offences listed in the second schedule. • This contrasts with other laws like the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023, and Bharatiya Vayunyan Adhiniyam, 2024, which allow appeals to higher-ranking officials, ensuring checks and balances.
 - Lack of Safeguards for Entry and Inspection Powers :
 - The Bill grants the conservator and health officer powers to enter and inspect vessels within port limits without specifying safeguards.
 - Other laws, such as the Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code, 2020, and Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, include safeguards under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, like recording

reasons, electronic documentation, and ensuring witnesses.

- Ambiguity on 'Mega Ports' Classification :
 - The Bill allows the central government to notify ports as 'mega ports' but does not clarify their purpose or provide specific provisions for their governance. • Mega ports retain their existing classification as major or non-major ports, creating confusion about the need for this additional designation.

Achievements :

- ✓ Port capacity increased by 87% in the last decade to 2,500 MMTPA (target: 3,300+ MMTPA by 2030).
- ✓ Cargo handling : 819.22 million tonnes in FY24, up 4.45% year-on-year. ✓ Coastal shipping grew by 118%, inland waterways by 700% over a decade. ✓ Turnaround time reduced from 93 hours to 48 hours (global average: ~23 hours).
- ✓ 9 Indian ports in the top 100 of Container Port Performance Index (CPII) 2023, with Visakhapatnam at 19th rank.

About Ports in India

- Major Ports :
 - 12 Major Ports governed by the Major Port Authorities Act, 2021 under the administrative control of Ministry of Shipping.

- Non-Major Ports :
 - 213 non-major ports managed by the State Maritime Board / State Government.

Coastal Economy of India

• The coastal economy, a key component of India's Blue Economy, includes economic activities in marine, maritime, and onshore coastal zones, such as ports, shipping, fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, renewable energy, and marine biotechnology.

- Geographical Scope :
 - India's coastline spans 11,099 km (revised in 2024 via geospatial mapping) covering Nine coastal states (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal) and Four Union Territories (Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar Islands).

- Significance :
 - ✓ Handles 95% of India's trade by volume and 70% by value. ✓ Sustains over 4 million fisherfolk and coastal communities. ✓ Contributes significantly to GDP through trade, logistics, and allied industries.

- Policy Framework :
 - ✓ Sagarmala Programme (2015) : Focuses on port-led development, connectivity, and coastal community upliftment.
 - ✓ Maritime India Vision 2030 : Aims to position India as a global maritime hub by 2030.

- Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision (MAKV) 2047 :
 - Targets India among the world's leading maritime powers through shipbuilding, port infrastructure, and financial resilience.
 - ✓ National Policy for India's Blue Economy (2021) : Promotes sustainable marine-based economic growth.

- Key Features of India's Coastal Economy
 - ✓ Maritime Trade and Ports :
 - Ports: India operates 12 major ports (e.g., JNPT, Paradip, Deendayal) and 217 non-major ports (66 cargo-handling, 151 for fishing).
 - In 2023-24: ✓ Major ports: 819 million tonnes (53% of total cargo).

(CONTD TO NEXT ISSUE)

Violence against journalists

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Violence against journalists has emerged as one of the gravest threats to democracy and freedom of expression in the present world. The act of targeting those who dedicate their lives to uncovering truth and disseminating information is not merely an assault on individuals but a direct attack on the public's right to know. Journalism, by its very nature, seeks to question authority, investigate wrongdoing, and hold power accountable, but this function often puts journalists in direct confrontation with political establishments, corporate entities, criminal syndicates, and extremist groups. The result is a growing climate of intimidation, censorship, and violence, one that is undermining the very foundation of democratic societies and pushing journalism into a state of crisis.

The seriousness of the problem is evident from the rising numbers of attacks, killings, and unlawful detentions reported annually. International organizations such as Reporters Without Borders, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and UNESCO repeatedly highlight the worsening situation. Hundreds of journalists are killed every decade, often for exposing corruption, organized crime, environmental exploitation, or political abuse. The alarming aspect is not only the scale of the violence but also the impunity that follows. In most cases, attackers are never punished, creating a precedent where silencing journalists becomes a low-risk enterprise. The culture of impunity emboldens perpetrators, and the lack of accountability corrodes trust in justice systems, leaving the profession more vulnerable.

The violence manifests in multiple forms, ranging from physical assaults, assassinations, and arbitrary arrests to online harassment, threats, and surveillance. In countries where democracy is fragile or authoritarianism is entrenched, journalists are often the first to be targeted. Governments justify repression in the name of national security, sovereignty, or public order, but in reality, such measures are designed to stifle criticism and control narratives. The weaponization of laws has become a subtle but powerful form of violence, where journalists are burdened with sedition charges, anti-terror laws, or defamation cases. This not only criminalizes reporting but also ensures prolonged harassment through the legal system, discouraging investigative journalism and forcing many to withdraw from sensitive reporting altogether.

India, often celebrated as the world's largest democracy, reflects the complexity of this issue. Journalists in metropolitan centers may still enjoy relative safety, but those working in rural and semi-urban areas face extreme vulnerabil-

ity. Reporters covering local corruption, illegal resource extraction, insurgency, or caste and communal conflicts are frequently attacked or even killed. Many of these cases receive little national attention, leaving families of slain journalists without justice. The misuse of colonial-era laws, arrests under vague charges, and police harassment have further shrunk the space for critical reporting. The dangers are not limited to physical violence alone but extend to psychological intimidation through trolling, hate campaigns, and targeted disinformation, particularly against women journalists.

The situation is equally concerning in other parts of the world. In Mexico and the Philippines, journalists investigating drug cartels, organized crime, or state collusion are regularly assassinated, making these nations among the most dangerous for the press. Russia and China showcase state-led suppression, where critical reporting is treated as an existential threat to authority. In conflict zones such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen, journalists are deliberately targeted by both state and non-state actors who view independent coverage as a

pendent reporting, it has also become a breeding ground for harassment and intimidation. Coordinated trolling campaigns, doxing, and threats of sexual violence against female journalists are widespread, creating an atmosphere of psychological terror. Online violence has the same silencing effect as physical attacks, pushing many to self-censor or retreat from public platforms. Moreover, digital surveillance by governments through spyware, hacking, and constant monitoring has made investigative journalism perilous. The absence of strict accountability mechanisms for technology companies exacerbates the issue, as online spaces become unregulated grounds for abuse.

The consequences of unchecked violence against journalists extend beyond individual tragedies. The silencing of journalists leads to the silencing of entire communities, particularly marginalized ones whose stories rarely find space in mainstream narratives. When journalists are intimidated or eliminated, corruption flourishes, human rights abuses remain hidden, and citizens are deprived of factual information necessary to make informed decisions. The



liability. The killing of Jamal Khashoggi inside a Saudi consulate illustrated the extent to which even international borders and diplomatic norms are disregarded when silencing a critical voice becomes a political priority.

The rise of digital media has introduced a new dimension to violence against journalists. While the internet has democratized access to information and expanded the reach of inde-

chilling effect created by violence ensures that even those who survive alter their reporting, avoiding subjects that could provoke retaliation. Over time, societies slide into a dangerous pattern where propaganda dominates, dissent diminishes, and the truth becomes obscured. The erosion of journalistic freedom is thus not just a professional hazard but a systemic threat to democracy itself.



Addressing this crisis requires strong political will and institutional reforms. States must recognize that protecting journalists is inseparable from upholding constitutional freedoms and democratic accountability. Legal systems must be strengthened to ensure that every act of violence against journalists is investigated impartially and prosecuted effectively. International conventions that safeguard press freedom, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, must not remain symbolic but be enforced rigorously. Diplomatic pressure and sanctions on regimes that perpetrate or condone violence against journalists can act as deterrents.

Media organizations too must shoulder responsibility by investing in the safety and welfare of their staff. Journalists, particularly those working in high-risk areas, require safety training, legal support, and institutional backing. Unfortunately, many media houses prioritize profit and sensationalism over safety, leaving their frontline reporters exposed. Solidarity within the profession is equally critical. Independent journalists, unions, and press councils must build alliances to keep cases of violence alive in public consciousness until justice is delivered. International cooperation among media networks can help amplify local cases of violence, ensuring they are not buried under political or corporate influence.

Civil society has a vital role in resisting violence against journalists. Public support for independent media strengthens the position of journalists, signaling that truth-telling is valued by society. When citizens actively consume credible journalism, resist disinformation, and demand accountability for attacks on the press, they create an environment where violence loses legitimacy. Media literacy campaigns can further enhance societal resilience against prop-

aganda and manipulation, ensuring that journalism continues to thrive as a pillar of democracy.

The long-term challenge lies in reconciling the demands of national security with the necessity of a free press. Governments often argue that journalism disrupts security or public order, but history repeatedly proves that suppressing the press ultimately weakens societies. True stability emerges from transparency, accountability, and the empowerment of citizens with accurate information. Protecting journalists is therefore not an optional democratic ideal but a practical necessity for building resilient societies.

The persistence of violence against journalists reflects the growing intolerance of power towards scrutiny. The murders of investigative reporters in Mexico, the imprisonment of journalists in Turkey and Belarus, the suppression of independent voices in Hong Kong, or the brutal killing of Khashoggi are not isolated incidents but symptoms of a global pattern of shrinking democratic space. If left unchallenged, this trend threatens to normalize violence as a tool to manage dissent, pushing societies into silence.

The defense of journalists must therefore be understood as the defense of democracy itself. Every attack on a journalist is an attack on the collective right of society to know the truth. The responsibility to reverse this trend lies not only with states and institutions but with citizens who must refuse to accept violence as the cost of truth. Unless decisive action is taken, the profession of journalism will increasingly be equated with danger, and the very principles of accountability, transparency, and justice will erode. Protecting journalists is not simply about safeguarding a profession but about preserving the voice of truth in society, without which democracy risks becoming an empty shell.

'Election campaign is on social media, then why not in the assembly?' Dignity of the House or the rights of the public-protection of dignity or distance from the public?

By: Dr. Priyanka Saurabh

The greatest strength of democracy lies in its transparency and public participation. Parliament and Vidhan Sabhas represent the voice of the people and are the places where policies, laws and important issues related to public interest are decided. In such a situation, public access to the proceedings of the House can be called a basic need of any healthy democracy. The recent decision taken by the Haryana State Assembly Speaker that the proceedings of the Assembly will no longer be broadcast on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and web channels raises many important questions. Is this decision going to limit transparency or save the dignity of the House - this is the basic question of this editorial.

In the last decade, social media has brought a new revolution in Indian democracy. Earlier, where people used to depend on TV news channels or newspapers, now they get instant information from Facebook Live, YouTube streaming and Twitter updates. The proceedings of institutions like Vidhan Sabha or Parliament are no longer limited within the walls, but have started reaching directly on the mobile screens of the public.

This change was also positive. Common citizens, especially the youth, started getting involved in democratic discourse. They got an opportunity to understand how their elected representatives were debating their issues in the House. But at the same time, its negative aspects also came to the fore. Many times, small excerpts of serious debates in the House were taken out and made viral on social media, which were used for political propaganda, satire or to spread misunderstandings. As a result, the real purpose of the proceedings was left behind and controversies grabbed more headlines.

Haryana State Assembly Speaker Harivindra Kalyan says that the video-messages going viral on the internet media have hurt the dignity of the House. Many times, small parts of unparliamentary words, uproar and sarcasm are broadcast again and again, which only conveys a negative image to the public. He has issued an order clarifying that from now on only recognized TV channels will be able to broadcast the proceedings live, while there will be a strict ban on putting live or recording on any social media platform. He also argues that broadcasting the words and parts removed from the proceedings of the House on social media is a direct violation of the rules. Therefore, it is necessary to ban it. The order also states that action will be taken against the violators.

Although this argument seems correct on the surface, it also raises many questions from a democratic point of view. The assembly runs on public taxes, and every

If broadcasting the proceedings of the Vidhan Sabha on social media is prohibited, then leaders and parties should also not use social media for election campaigning. Today, to seek votes, large-scale campaigning is done on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter along with rallies and TV. In such a situation, stopping only the proceedings of the House seems unfair. In a democracy, the rules should be the same for everyone, only then the public's trust in the system can be maintained.

activity there is directly related to the citizens. In such a situation, limiting access to information can be considered contrary to democratic values. Today's young generation does not watch TV. They are active on YouTube, Twitter and Instagram. If the proceedings are limited to TV channels only, a large population will be deprived of democratic debate. When only select mediums are allowed, it will send the message that information is being controlled. Transparency and accountability will be weakened in democracy.

More than 82 crore people use the internet in India. About 45 crore people are active on social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter etc.). The number of people watching TV is decreasing, while the number of people watching news on mobile is constantly increasing. Sansad TV and state assembly channels reach very few viewers, while a live stream on YouTube can gather millions of viewers. According to experts, digital transparency is the biggest means of maintaining public trust in democracy.

TV channels still reach only a limited section of society, whereas social media reaches every village and youth. In a country like India where there is talk of Digital India, limiting information only to TV channels does not match the demand of the time. Today's major discussions of politics and society take shape only in Twitter trends and YouTube debates.

It is true that it is not right to spread the proceedings of the House in an uncontextualized manner on social media. Many

times, parts are cut and made viral for fun or political attack. This gives an incomplete and wrong picture to the public. But the solution is not to impose a complete ban.

A better solution could be that the Vidhan Sabha itself creates an official YouTube channel, Twitter handle and Instagram account. The proceedings should be broadcast from there in full and without editing. Also, clear rules should be made that other people cannot use this official content by changing its context. In this way, decorum will be maintained and transparency will also be ensured.

In many democratic countries of the world, the proceedings of the Parliament and Assembly are made available to the public through live streaming. Countries like Britain, America, Canada and Australia have made the proceedings of their Parliament accessible online. There too, unparliamentary words or uproar take place, but still the public is given complete information so that faith in democracy remains intact. In a huge democracy like India, where the youth is moving towards political consciousness, banning social media is like taking a step backwards.

Technology in itself is neither good nor bad, it is its use that gives it meaning. Completely stopping the broadcast of assembly proceedings on social media is in a way denying the power of technology. It would be better if clear guidelines are made for this - live broadcast should be done only from official channels. Extracted parts from the proceedings should not be broadcast. Punitive action should be taken on videos made out of context. There should be a dialogue between the media and the public.

If a centralized digital platform is created by the Vidhan Sabha, the public will get direct and unedited access to the content. This will neither spread misunderstandings nor will it harm the dignity of the House. Apart from this, this step will also prove to be the simplest and most powerful medium to connect the youth with democratic discussions.

The success of democracy depends on public participation and transparency. The Vidhan Sabha is not just an institution of the MLAs, but also of the public. In such a situation, easy access of the public to its proceedings is essential for the health of democracy. This decision of the Vidhan Sabha Speaker is an attempt to save the dignity of the House, but it may cost transparency.

The right way is to strike a balance between dignity and transparency. Instead of banning social media, it should be streamlined so that not only the dignity of democracy is maintained, but citizens can also remain fully aware of the activities of their representatives. This will be the biggest identity of a healthy democracy.

Building a Vishwaguru: Bhagwat's blueprint at RSS centenary

By: Lalit Garg

The centenary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was marked in New Delhi at Vigyan Bhawan with its annual lecture New Kshiti series. This was not merely a celebratory event but a profound proclamation of India's soul and its future. In his keynote address, RSS Sarsangchalak Mohan Bhagwat spoke with such clarity and seriousness that he not only dispelled long-standing misconceptions about the Sangh's ideology but also opened up a new horizon in India's journey to becoming a Vishwaguru—a teacher and guide to the world. The event was both a reflection on the Sangh's hundred years of dedicated service and a declaration of its vision for the next century. Bhagwat emphatically stated that the essence of the Sangh's work lies in the creation of a new human being. At first glance, this may sound simple, but its implications are deep and far-reaching. The roots of every societal and national problem lie within the individual. Therefore, the Sangh has resolved to unite all sections of society into one thread. Unless an individual's character, perspective, and conduct undergo transformation, no system or structure can permanently change. Through the patient and long-term pursuit of character-building, the Sangh seeks to transform society and the nation. The fruits of this work cannot be measured by the number of shakhs (branches) or programs but by the invisible yet tangible moral force that is gradually reshaping the course of society.

One of the most significant parts of Bhagwat's lecture was his explanation of Hindutva. He categorically clarified that Hindutva is not a narrow definition, nor is it a specific religion's ritual or sect. Rather, it is the Indian way of life—a vast cultural stream that integrates compassion, harmony, service, non-violence, truth, and self-realization. Hindutva unites; it excludes none. It is the very soul of India, and it is on this foundation that India earns the eligibility to become a Vishwaguru. This perspective firmly dispels the misconception that the Sangh's idea of Hindutva is merely a political tool or a ladder to power. Instead, it is a worldview meant to bind humanity into one, leaving no room for discrimination.

On the second day, Bhagwat delved deeper, introducing the concept of Panchakarma for society. Just as Ayurveda prescribes Panchakarma for the purification of the

human body, a similar fivefold process is necessary for the purification and reconstruction of society. He outlined five dimensions—character-building, organizational strengthening, social harmony, upliftment of the poor, and spiritual awakening. He argued that a nation does not become great through political reforms or economic growth alone. True greatness emerges only when individuals are morally upright, society is organized, harmony prevails, the weaker sections are uplifted, and life is enriched with higher spiritual values. Bhagwat's emphasis on the upliftment of the poor was particularly noteworthy. He asserted that India will be truly strong only when dignity and opportunity reach its last citizen. His words echoed Mahatma Gandhi's Antyodaya, Vinoba Bhave's Sarvodaya, and Deendayal Upadhyaya's Integral Humanism. The greatest challenge before modern India is the unequal distribution of development. The gap between the rich and poor continues to widen. Unless this divide is bridged, the nation's progress will remain incomplete. For Bhagwat, the greatness of a nation is measured by whether its weakest citizen can live with dignity and respect.

Equally significant was his perspective on religious unity. India's history itself bears testimony to the coexistence of diverse faiths—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, and Jains—all of which flourished on this soil. At their core, all religions preach compassion, service, and humanity. Conflict arises only when religion is linked to the politics of power. Bhagwat stressed that if we focus on the essence of religions, there is no conflict. Love, truth, and service are the shared foundation. This shared foundation can enable India to build a society that becomes exemplary for the world.

While Bhagwat's ideas provide clarity and direction, one must also question how easily they can be translated into action. India's social complexities—caste tensions, religious divides, political interests, and economic inequalities—make the task of creating a "new human being" a long and arduous journey. Critics argue that although the Sangh has strong ideas, they have yet to deeply penetrate all sections of society. Suspicion among minority communities still exists. Therefore, trust cannot be earned by words alone but through transparent and concrete actions that demonstrate that the Sangh's Hindutva is genuinely inclusive. Similarly, while

the call for uplifting the poor and uniting religions is commendable, the question remains whether the Sangh and its affiliated organizations can deliver measurable results. Critics further note that government initiatives have so far played a larger role in mainstream development than social organizations. Thus, if the Sangh is to prioritize these goals, it must move beyond moral appeals and design practical, actionable programs. Only then will its vision gain real effectiveness.

In the present global scenario, Bhagwat's message becomes even more relevant. The world is reeling under violence, terrorism, wars, and the blind race of consumerism. Environmental crises are worsening day by day. Mental stress and self-centered lifestyles are hollowing out human life from within. In such circumstances, India is perhaps the only nation capable of offering an alternative philosophy of life. Alongside material growth, India possesses the heritage of spiritual abundance—a heritage that qualifies it to be a Vishwaguru. The RSS centenary lectures were therefore not just an internal exercise for swayamsevak, but a message to the entire nation and the world: build a new man, uplift the poor, unite religions, establish harmony, and guide the world on the foundation of Hindutva's broad and inclusive vision.

For decades, the Sangh has faced criticism that its ideology is narrow, representing only the majority while excluding minorities. Bhagwat's address has clarified that the Sangh's vision is neither narrow nor exclusionary. Its Hindutva is inclusive, giving space to all faiths and beliefs. Its aim is not political power but moral and cultural reconstruction of society. The Sangh's centenary is therefore a historic opportunity. India today stands at a decisive crossroads: on one side lies economic growth, technological achievements, and growing global stature; on the other, internal challenges of inequality, caste tensions, religious discord, and valueless politics persist. The solution lies not in external reforms alone but in inner transformation. This, precisely, is the Sangh's approach and Bhagwat's central message. The centenary lecture series thus leaves us not merely with a conclusion but with a question: Do we wish to make India powerful only in material terms, or do we truly aspire to make it a Vishwaguru? If the answer is the latter, then Bhagwat's vision must be translated into action. We must cultivate a spirit of belonging to the world, not merely a transactional outlook.

Major setback for ruling party, wave of resignations in Srirampur BTC Constituency

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Aug 28: In a major setback ahead of BTC polls, several leaders in Srirampur constituency resigned from the ruling UPPL-BJP alliance and joined the Bodoland People's Front (BPF).

Among them were UPPL Central Committee Executive Member Anowar Hussain, Mozammil Haque President, Howriyapet VCDC, Sheikhawat Hussain Miah Vice-President, Palashguri VCDC, and others. They accused the ruling party of unfulfilled promises and lack of development. Senior BPF leaders welcomed them with party symbols and phulam gamochas.

97th Death Anniversary of Kuki Leader Pu Chengjapao Doungel observed at Manja

HT Correspondent

DIPHU, Aug 28: The 97th death anniversary of Pu Chengjapao Doungel, a towering Kuki freedom fighter and central figure of the Anglo-Kuki War (1917-1919), was solemnly observed at the Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA) peace camp in Manja.

Organised by RGOK/KRA Assam, the programme included floral tributes, a ceremonial salute by KRA cadres, songs, and prayers. Doungel, revered as the "Kuki Raja," was exiled to Sadiya and imprisoned for four years for his leadership in resisting the British. Leaders, including Paolal Hangsing of the Kuki Human Rights Forum, highlighted Doungel's legacy as a visionary who inspired resistance and unity.

Napur Sarma passes away in Morigaon



HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Aug 28: Napur Sarma (Mun), a philanthropist and respected youth of Morigaon town, died today due to cardiac arrest. He was 51.

Sarma, also a noted cricketer, represented Morigaon district in inter-district competitions. He is survived by his wife, Rupa Sarma and a son.

The Morigaon Zila Brahman Samaj and Morigaon Sewa Ashram Committee expressed condolences.

Diphu youth missing

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 28: One Delon Nunisa, aged 24, son of Boijen Nunisa and Parbati Daulaguppu Nunisa of Amolapatti, Diphu, Karbi Anglong, has been missing since September last year (2024).

"Our son Delon Nunisa left home on September 25, 2024, without informing anyone. We have tried all possible means to find him, but in vain," the aggrieved parents said.

The parents of the missing youth have urged anyone who knows about him or spots him anywhere to inform them at the contact mobile numbers 7086246064 and 8453317585.

Freshers' Welcome Ceremony held at Kokrajhar University

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Aug 28: Kokrajhar University on Thursday celebrated its first-ever Freshers' Welcome Ceremony with a day-long series of colourful programmes. It may be noted that the erstwhile Kokrajhar Government College, one of the oldest and most prestigious institutions of Lower Assam, was recently upgraded and granted the status of Kokrajhar University. Following this recognition, the university organized its inaugural freshers' programme today.

The event commenced in the morning with the hoisting of the university flag by Vice-Chancellor Ganesh Chandra Ouary, followed by floral tributes to the statue of Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma, offered by Registrar Dr. Dimcha Daimary Mushahary. Later, a formal session was held at the Kokrajhar Sports Association auditorium, organized by the Kokrajhar College Students' Union.

Former Principal Secretary to the Government of Assam, He-

Assam BJP announces 18-member core committee ahead of Shah's visit

'The new core committee was announced with the approval of the party's national president JP Nadda'



GUWAHATI, Aug 28: The BJP announced an 18-member new core committee of its Assam unit ahead of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's two-day visit to the state.

Shah is scheduled to hold a meeting with the new core committee on Thursday night to review preparations and strategise for the 2026 assembly polls.

State BJP chief Dilip Saikia said the new core committee was announced with the approval of the party's national president JP Nadda.

Apart from Saikia, the other members of the committee are Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union ministers Sarbananda Sonowal and Pabitra Margherita, the party's national secretary Ka-

makhya Prasad Tasa, state ministers Ashok Singhal, Ranajo Pegu and Ranjeet Kumar Dass, and former state president Bhabesh Kalita.

Three state vice presidents of the party, Ashok Bhattacharai, Rekharani Das Boro and Moon Swarnakar, and five general secretaries, GR Ravindra Raju, Dipu Ranjan Sarmah, Pallab Lochan Das, Ritu-parna Baruah and Anup Barman, are also in the core committee along with former MP Rajdeep Roy.

The special invitees to the committee are state BJP in-charge Harish Dwivedi, the party's Northeast coordinator Sambit Patra, and co-coordinator V Muralidharan.

The committee's primary role is to formulate strategy, ensure coordination at all levels, and mobilise the grassroots workers to consolidate the base.

The BJP will be seeking a third consecutive term in office in the assembly polls next year. (PTI)

Former KAMSFC captain Waisong Bey honoured with Karmapan sward for sports promotion

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 28: Waisong Bey, a former captain turned manager and coach of Karbi Anglong Morning Star Football Club (KAMSFC) was awarded with the Karmapan Award in the field of Best Sports Organiser on Sunday, held at the Durga Mandir Conference Hall in Lal-mati, Guwahati. The award was constituted by News Darpan.

Notably, Bey, the founding member of KAMSFC, has always been working for the promotion of sports spirit through football. He is a former captain of the club and also holds UEFA and All India Football Federation (AIFF) coaching licenses and is an international athlete. Bey has successfully guided KAMSFC into major tournaments like the Durand Cup 2025 and achieved the club's promotion to I-League 2 for the 2025-26 season. Before

reaching to the AIFF official I-League tournament the club under the guidance of Bey has won many prestigious tournaments locally and in the state, including the Greater Diphu Sports Association (GDSA) League, CEM Gold Cup, KASA Club League, and Assam State Premier League (ASPL) in 2015 and 2023, respectively.

Now, the club will play in the I-League 2nd Division for the 2025-2026 season. It is worth mentioning that KAMSFC is the only professional football club from Assam to represent the state in the I-League, the official tournament of the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

Furthermore, under his guidance, local talent, such as KAMSFC academy-developed defender Komolson Rongphar and goalkeeper Gojen Hanse, has flourished.

Dillai Police seize 10.7 Kg morphine during naka checking on NH-29, two arrested

HT Correspondent

DILLAI, Aug 28: In the wee hours of today during a routine naka checking on NH29 at Six Mile, one truck bearing registration number AS02DC6129 was detained. UBC Surajit Mech noticed that the driver and handyman had suspicious facial expressions, indicating that they might be carrying some suspicious items. Consequently, he informed the OC Dillai Akash Gogoi which was also intimated to SP, Karbi Anglong, Sanjiv Kumar Saikia and SDPO Bokajan, Rustom Raj Brahma. On the arrival of SDPO Bokajan along with one section of the B/19 CRPF personnel from Bokajan the checking was carried out. Police sources said during a thorough check of the vehicle in the presence of independent witnesses, recovered a total of 10.712 kg of NDPS substances from the cabin box of the truck, on the back side of the driver's seat.

The recovered substances were tested by DDT kit and found positive for Morphine and accordingly seized the same in presence of independent witnesses. Both the driver and handyman were apprehended. The apprehended persons were Ali Ahme S/o Nizam Ali, resident of Naukhuti under Lanka Police Station, district Hojai and Md Azad S/o- Tamijur Ali, resident of R.K. Nagar, Galachand, district Karimganj. A case has been registered against them by Dillai police. During the checking were also present SDPO Bokajan, Rustom Raj Brahma; OC Dillai, Akash Gogoi; i/c Lahorijan Mintu Saikia and Chota Lengri i/c Jayanta Doley.

AIOCD appeals for GST reduction on medicines

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 28: The All India Organisation of Chemists and Drug-gists (AIOCD), representing 12.40 lakh chemists nationwide, has appealed to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and the GST Council to reduce GST on medicines. They sought to bring all medicines under the 5% slab and exempt life-saving drugs. The memorandum also requested relief for ayurvedic medicines and nutritional supplements.

The Nagaon District Drug Dealers Association welcomed and supported the move.

KSA holds mass rally in Diphu, ultimatum to KAAC over illegal land pattas to non-tribals

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 28: The Karbi Students Association (KSA-Inglongpho) of Diphu Regional Committee (DRC) organised a mass rally to submit an ultimatum to Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, regarding land pattas issued to non-scheduled tribes living under KAAC jurisdiction here on Wednesday. The KSA has given an ultimatum of five days time to act out in cancelling land pattas issued illegally to non-scheduled tribes.

The streets of Diphu town reared the air with the slogans like 'stop issuing land pattas to non-scheduled tribes,' 'no land rights to non-scheduled tribes,' 'sixth scheduled long live' and 'KSA long live' as the KSA members and leaders marched from KSA Central Executive Committee (CEC) office Rongthang to Diphu Revenue Circle office here on Wednesday, while they submit their ultimatum to the CEM, KAAC. The rally was led by KSA-DRC president Litonsing Timung, secretary Nelson Timung and KSA-CEC vice president, George Timung and several other

leaders.

Their demands include to stop playing politics with the land rights of scheduled tribes people by any political parties, no pattas to non-scheduled tribes, to evict all the illegal settlers immediately, no land rights to non-tribals and to punish the officials involved in issuing land pattas to non-tribes.

KSA-CEC vice president Timung said all the land pattas issued illegally to non-tribals should be cancelled immediately. Timung also questioned the KAAC authority for keeping silent and not replying to All Assam Bengali Samaj Youth Students Federation (AAB-SYSF), president, Dipak Dey, who has insulted the CEM, KAAC Tuliram Ronghang.

The All Assam Bengali Samaj Youth Students Federation (AAB-SYSF) president, Dipak Dey in a 'Prakashya Sabha held at Samaguri, Howraghat recently has reportedly said that the population of Bengalis in Karbi Anglong is not a small community now. It has grown its numbers and grown stronger. If needed the Bengali community alone can put down CEM, KAAC Tuliram and also put him up.

Nagaon DC inspects encroachment along Kolong river and Morikolong beel

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 28: District Commissioner Devashish Sarma inspected encroached stretches along the Kolong river and Morikolong beel today.

He directed house owners to stop releasing untreated wastewater into the river and warned of strict action. The administration appealed for voluntary vacation of encroached land.

The inspection was attended by senior district officials.

Ganesh Chaturthi celebrated with devotion in Howraghat

HT Correspondent

HOWRAGHAT, Aug 28: The Ganesh Chaturthi festival was celebrated at Dakhin Dighalipar village in Karbi Anglong with traditional fervour.

The celebrations included Raj Bhog, Homa Yagna, prasad distribution, dances by the community, cultural programmes, and a DJ performance. People from all communities participated with enthusiasm.

Man with links to radical outfit JMB held in Assam: CM

GUWAHATI, Aug 28: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said a person was arrested for allegedly sending phone numbers of several residents of Dhubri district to the fundamentalist outfit Jamat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), which is trying to create disturbances in the state.

The arrested man, an Indian, was the main conduit who supplied phone numbers to the JMB, and its members would then dial those people with the intention to radicalise them, he said at a press conference on Wednesday.

The arrested person, Ali Hussain Bepari, had also been apprehended earlier but was out on bail, he said.

The police are in the last stage of the investigation, and more details are likely to emerge soon, Sarma said.

A strict vigil is being kept in the districts of Dhubri and South Salmara that border Bangladesh, he said.

"South Salmara has been peaceful for the last five years, but there have been several activities in recent times in Dhubri. So, we have decided to continue with the shoot-at-sight orders at night during the Durga Puja as we are apprehensive about the law and order situation," he said.

Sarma said no FIR will be filed against former Planning Commission member Sayeeda Hamid "for saying that Bangladeshis can also live here".

"If I file an FIR, then she will collect contributions from different parts of the country to fight the case. She will be only enriched," he said.

If she, however, comes back to Assam, the state government will do what is required to be done according to the law, the CM said.



The chief minister said that since the Assam agitation around four decades ago, no Bangladeshi had been deported, but now "every week we are pushing back 70-100 people who are trying to enter the country". He said that it is a fact that Assam and the rest of the Northeast are used as a corridor by infiltrators.

Regarding the National Register of Citizens (NRC), Sarma alleged that the "people of Assam have been cheated as there are many anomalies in the list with many doubtful entries made".

The final NRC released on August 31, 2019, excluded 19,06,657 applicants. A total of 3,11,21,004 names were included out of 3,30,27,661 applicants. It has, however, not yet been notified.

"Our final aim is to ensure that the Centre, Supreme Court or the Assam government, within its powers, examine the legal angle and find a solution as the existing NRC cannot be accepted by us," he said. (PTI)

31st Foundation Day of religious minority council celebrated at Anthaibari, Gossaigaon

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Aug 28: The BTR Religious Minority Council (RMC) Central Committee, in collaboration with the Gossaigaon District Committee, celebrated its 31st Foundation Day on Wednesday at the council headquarters in Anthaibari, Gossaigaon.

The celebration began with flag hoisting by Abdus Sattar Ahmed, President, RMC. Leaders from the central committee, along with presidents, secretaries, and office-bearers of district units from Gossaigaon, Parbatjhora, Kokrajhar, and Chirang, attended.

Speakers recalled the RMC's role in safeguarding minority rights in BTC and urged vigilance against political misuse. District President Shahidul Islam criticized the government's alleged inhuman treatment towards minorities and urged unity beyond labels such as Miya, Deshi, Goria, and Moria.

President Ahmed appealed for prioritizing national interest, curbing child marriage, liquor, and drug abuse. He warned against attempts by ultra-nationalist forces to repeat the communal violence of 1983.

The meeting condemned derogatory remarks against Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind President Maulana Arshad Madani. Leaders, including Sanowar Ali, Jamir Uddin Sheikh, Gazibur Rahman, and Sahajamal, emphasized unity to resist injustice.

Rashtriya Ekta Parv celebrates Rajasthan's heritage at Kendriya Vidyalaya Dalgaoon

HT Correspondent

DALGAON, Aug 28: PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya 210 CoBRA CRPF Dalgaoon hosted the Cluster Level Rashtriya Ekta Parv with vibrant patriotic spirit on August 26, 2025. Organised by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, the event promoted national unity and the spirit of "Unity in Diversity," with a special focus on Rajasthan's rich culture and heritage.

The event was inaugurated by Chief Guest Rajendra Chopra, 2 I/C of 210 CoBRA CRPF. A total of 180 students from seven Kendriya Vidyalayas under the Nagaon Cluster—Udalguri, Rangapara, Misa Cantt., Digaru, Nagaon, and Mangaldai—participated in the celebrations.

Highlights of the programme included a captivating Ghoomar dance, a stage play depicting the bravery of Maharana Pratap, and remarkable artworks such as miniature models of Mehrangarh Fort and Hawa Mahal. The cultural showcase was further enriched by soulful Rajasthani folk songs and instrumental performances.

Addressing the gathering, Chopra praised the students' creativity and efforts, stressing the significance of cultural unity in nation-building. The programme concluded with resounding applause and a collective chant of "Unity in Diversity," followed by a heartfelt vote of thanks delivered by Principal Rinju Mani Kalita.

ABVP submits memorandum to Margherita College principal on student welfare issues

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Aug 28: The Margherita College Branch of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) on Aug 26 submitted a memorandum to the Principal of Margherita College, highlighting a series of pressing issues faced by students of the institution. Margherita College, located in Tinsukia district, is the largest educational institution under the 83rd Margherita Legislative Assembly Constituency. It caters not only to local students but also to learners from neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh and other districts of Assam, offering undergraduate degree courses in Arts, Commerce, and Science.

According to information provided by ABVP leaders, a delegation led by Rubul Rajkhowa, Organising Secretary of ABVP Tinsukia District Committee, along with members of the ABVP Margherita College Branch, met Principal Dr. Atanu Kakoty and submitted the memorandum. The student leaders also held a discussion with the Principal, placing emphasis on the importance of addressing the concerns in the interest of the college community.

The memorandum outlined several key demands. These include the reopening of the Boys' Common Room, which has remained non-functional for some time, and the installation of sanitary pad vending machine facilities to ensure the health and hygiene of female students. Another major demand was to name the Girls' Common Room in memory of late Tukhin Tikha, a meritorious former student of Margherita College who was brutally raped and murdered in 2015, allegedly by suspected Bangladeshi nationals.

Speaking on the occasion, Rubul Rajkhowa said that the demands represent not only practical measures for student welfare but also symbols of dignity and historical remembrance for the institution. "The ABVP strongly believes that these steps will improve student facilities while also honouring the memory of a bright former student. We hope that the Margherita College administration will take prompt steps to fulfil the demands," he stated.

Newborn girl abandoned in Ledo, rescued by locals and police

HT Correspondent

TINSUKIA, Aug 28: A newborn girl was found abandoned in a house at 2 No. Kolpara village, Ledo, under Margherita constituency. Local resident Samir Das discovered the infant after hearing her cries. Ledo police rescued the baby and shifted her to Margherita Civil Hospital, where doctors confirmed she was stable.

The shocking incident raised concerns about stigma and lack of support for vulnerable mothers. Authorities have launched an investigation while the baby remains under medical supervision.

Arunachal to celebrate Bhupen Hazarika centenary at Roing: DyCM Mein

Hazarika's compositions in Arunachali dialects helped bring the culture of the state to national prominence



ITANAGAR, Aug 28: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Thursday said the state will commemorate the birth centenary of Bharat Ratna awardee Dr Bhupen Hazarika with a state-level programme at Roing in Lower Dibang Valley district on September 26, as part of the nationwide celebrations of the legendary musician's legacy.

Mein, who attended the core committee meeting on the centenary celebrations in Guwahati chaired by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, informed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will join the commemorative event in Assam on September 13.

"The Hon'ble Chief Minister reviewed the programme in detail and emphasised the need for collective efforts to make the event truly memo-

orable," Mein said in a post on X.

"In this spirit, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh has also taken steps to honour the legacy of Dr Bhupen Hazarika. We will be commemorating his birth centenary at Roing on 26th September 2025," the deputy chief minister shared in his social media post.

Widely known as the 'Sudhakantha', Hazarika was born on September 8, 1926, in Sadiya, Assam, and died on November 5, 2011, in Mumbai.

A singer, poet, composer, filmmaker and political thinker, Hazarika's works carried strong messages of humanity, communal harmony and social justice, earning him national and international acclaim.

He was conferred the Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honour, posthumously in 2019.

Hazarika shared a deep connection with Arunachal Pradesh, where he spent part of his early career and composed soulful songs inspired by the Idu Mishmi community and the natural beauty of the Dibang Valley.

His compositions in Arunachali dialects helped bring the culture of the state to national prominence.

The state government said Roing, in Lower Dibang Valley, was chosen as the centenary venue in recognition of this enduring bond.

As part of the centenary celebrations, the Union finance ministry issued a notification announcing the release of a special ₹ 100 commemorative coin in Hazarika's honour.

The coin, made of 99.9 per cent pure silver, will be circular with a diameter of 44 millimetres and 200 serrations.

The obverse side of the coin will

feature the Lion Capital of Ashoka Pillar with the legend 'Satyameva Jayate' inscribed below, flanked by the word 'Bharat' in Devanagari script on the left and 'India' in English on the right, along with the rupee symbol and the denomination 100.

The reverse side will bear the image of Hazarika, with the inscription 'Dr. Bhupen Hazarika ki Janma Shatabdi' in Devanagari on the upper periphery and 'Birth Centenary of Dr. Bhupen Hazarika' in English on the lower periphery. The year '2025' will also be inscribed below the image.

Calling the government's decision 'a historic recognition by Prime Minister Narendra Modi', Mein said, "This is a fitting tribute to Sudhakantha, whose timeless contributions to music, literature, and social harmony continue to inspire us all." (PTI)

AAPOPPFA alleges ₹ 100 crore irregularities in Namsai palm oil project

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, Aug 28: The All Arunachal Pradesh Oil Palm Farmer Association (AAPOPPFA) has alleged major financial irregularities amounting to nearly ₹ 100 crore in the palm oil project implemented between 2014 and 2016 in Namsai district.

According to an official statement, AAPOPPFA president Hormin Camdir Teli raised the allegations at a day-long awareness camp on palm oil cultivation held at Chongkham Wood Town Resort on Thursday.

He claimed that despite central government provisions for 100 per cent financial assistance—covering land clearance, bio-fencing, free seedlings, intercropping and other benefits—farmers did not receive the intended support.

Teli accused the Agriculture Department of Namsai and Shivasai Oil Palm Pvt Ltd of Andhra Pradesh of misusing project funds.

He cited ₹ 90 lakh allegedly shown as expenditure on seedling procurement from Tinsukia, information that was obtained through RTI.

He warned that the association would take legal action or launch



a farmers' agitation if the matter was not resolved.

District Agriculture Officer (DAO) Rupa Mannau, who assumed office last year, assured farmers that under the new National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP), disbursements and benefits would be delivered transparently.

"We have 800 hectares to be covered and will disburse as per the guidelines," she said.

Local MLA and RWD Adviser Chau Zingnu Namchoom, who attended the event, also acknowledged the concerns.

"Even I had planted palm oil during 2014–16 but didn't receive

a single paisa," he said, pledging to raise the issue with the chief minister, deputy CM and agriculture minister.

He stressed that Namsai, being an Aspirational District, should receive priority in agricultural initiatives. Kalyani Namchoom, ADC and in-charge Deputy Commissioner of Namsai, assured follow-up with concerned departments to address farmers' grievances.

L Dai, ADO, explained the NMEO-OP scheme, while Patanjali Foods Ltd DGM Tapas Kumar Tripathi announced plans to cover 40,000 hectares under palm cultivation in the district and set up a

processing unit with a buy-back guarantee.

Senior BJP leader Tapan Siga, sharing his personal experience, said his family's 20-hectare palm oil plantation from 2014 had been left to wither due to lack of financial support and market access.

"Not a single rupee of subsidy or assistance has reached us," he lamented.

The statement noted that palm oil farming has already seen success in Lower Dibang Valley and East Siang districts.

With the state's Agriculture Policy 2025–35 in motion, Arunachal Pradesh is aiming to expand oil palm production under national schemes to reduce dependence on imports and save significant foreign exchange.

The oil palm initiative in the state was formally introduced in April 2016, following an MoU between the state government and Ruchi Soya Industries Ltd.

The programme was attended by ADC Chongkham K Tithak, ZPM Chow J Namchoom, AAPOPPFA General Secretary Tana Jasap, CVC GS, progressive farmers, SHG members, Patanjali officials and Agriculture Department officials of Namsai.

Finger Millet Field Days, farmer-scientist interactions held in Lungla

HT Correspondent

LUNGLA, Aug 28: Finger Millet Field Days and Farmer-Scientist Interaction programmes were organised in Phomeng and Kheteng villages under Lungla circle of Tawang district by the Almora-based ICAR–Vivekananda Parvati Krishi Anusandhan Sansthan (VPKAS) in collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Tawang, under the NEH Programme of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

According to an official statement, the programme aimed to promote improved finger millet technologies and strengthen farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange in the region.

During the interaction, Dr DC Joshi, Senior Scientist, ICAR–VPKAS, highlighted initiatives undertaken for millet promotion in Tawang, including the introduction of the improved finger millet variety VL Mandua 376 and the VL Millet Thresher.

He appreciated farmers for conducting frontline demonstrations and sharing seeds with adjoining villages, enabling rapid spread of the variety across the district in 2025.

Dr Joshi underscored the benefits of early-maturing, high-yielding varieties in boosting production and encouraged horizontal dissemination of quality seed among farmers.

Dr RP Meena, Scientist (Agronomy), discussed improved agronomic practices and eco-friendly



weed management to enhance profitability, while also stressing the importance of mechanisation in finger millet cultivation.

Er Utkarsh Kumar demonstrated the Vivek Millet Thresher-cum-Pearler, explaining its role in reducing drudgery, saving time and costs, minimising post-harvest losses and improving produce quality.

Farmers expressed keen interest in adopting the thresher and sought support from ICAR–VPKAS and KVK Tawang for its availability.

Dr CK Singh, SMS (Agronomy), KVK Tawang, credited with popularising VL Mandua 376 locally as "teen mahine ka mandua", informed that the variety was cultivated in over 40 villages during Kharif 2025, including border

areas near Tibet and Bhutan.

With higher yield, shorter duration, and better grain-to-husk ratio, the variety has gained wide acceptance.

He projected that VL Mandua 376 would reach most finger millet-growing villages within the next 2–3 years through institutional seed supply and farmer-led seed exchange.

A total of 99 farmers participated in the event and reiterated the urgent need for millet threshers to cope with increased production from VL Mandua 376 and ease post-harvest operations.

The event reaffirmed the commitment of ICAR–VPKAS and KVK Tawang to enhance millet production, promote improved technologies and support mechanisation in Tawang district.

Assam Rifles hold security meeting at Dadam

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Aug 28: The 44 Assam Rifles organised a security meeting at COB Dadam in Arunachal Pradesh chaired by Colonel Ankit Harjai, Commandant 44 Assam Rifles, on Thursday. The meeting was attended by 48 Gaon Buras, Panchayat leaders, and representatives from Dadam, Muktuwa Lahu, Hukkaan, Longkai and nearby villages. The forum reviewed the local security situation with focus on insurgent activities, extortion, and safe movement in vulnerable areas.

Villagers were urged to remain vigilant, resist unlawful demands, and share timely information with security forces.

Special emphasis was laid on guiding youth away from drugs and insurgent influence towards education and employment.

Public leaders expressed appreciation for the efforts of Assam Rifles in maintaining peace and extending welfare initiatives. Assam Rifles assured the gathering of continued support and reaffirmed the commitment to safeguard the people and foster lasting stability in the region.

Monitoring team inspects DDSY projects in Upper Subansiri

HT Correspondent

DAPORJO, Aug 28: A monitoring team led by Mokir Eshi Ori, Director (Monitoring & Evaluation), Finance, Planning and Investment, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, inspected completed and ongoing projects under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Swavalamban Yojana (DDUSY) in Upper Subansiri district from inception to the 2024–25 financial year.

According to an official statement, the team also included District Planning Officer (DPO) Tapak Rakmi, District Agriculture and Cooperative Officer (DACO) Taw Ekke, and other development officials.

The officials visited more than 13 project sites across different locations in the district.

The Director verified the status of projects, reviewed detailed reports on income generation and employment benefits, and interacted with beneficiaries.

Guv Parnaik calls on youth to embrace fitness, sportsmanship



ITANAGAR, Aug 28: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) KT Parnaik on Thursday urged the people of the state to imbibe the spirit of sportsmanship and fitness while extending greetings on the occasion of National Sports Day, commemorating the birth anniversary of hockey legend and Bharat Ratna awardee Major Dhyan Chand.

"Sports are much more than the pursuit of medals. They shape character, strengthen resolve, and nurture the courage to dream and achieve," Parnaik said in his message.

Paying tribute to Dhyan Chand's extraordinary contribution to Indian hockey, he noted that the day celebrates deeper values inspired by sports, discipline, resilience, teamwork, and the will to strive against all odds.

"This spirit of sportsmanship is closely tied to the

Fit India Mission, which reminds us that true progress begins with good health," the governor observed.

Parnaik said fitness is the foundation of a strong, confident, and forward-looking nation.

"A healthy body sharpens the mind, and together they create a generation ready to lead India towards the vision of Viksit Bharat," he added.

He termed the youth as "the pride of today, the hope of tomorrow, and the torchbearers of the future".

"With their energy, determination, and passion, they have the power to build a stronger Arunachal Pradesh and contribute meaningfully to the rise of a truly developed India," the governor stressed.

Wishing the people on the occasion, he said, "On this National Sports Day, may we all imbibe the spirit of sportsmanship and work together towards building a fitter, stronger, and united Bharat." (PTI)

BRO to complete strategically important road in Arunachal by March 2026: Chief Engineer

ITANAGAR, Aug 28: Border Roads Organisation (BRO) Project Brahman Chief Engineer S C Looniya has said that the double-laning of the 32-km Pene-Tato stretch of the strategically important Aalo-Mechuka road in Arunachal Pradesh's Shi-Yomi district will be completed by March 2026. Admitting that the project has been delayed, Looniya attributed the delay to land acquisition on a stretch of the road.

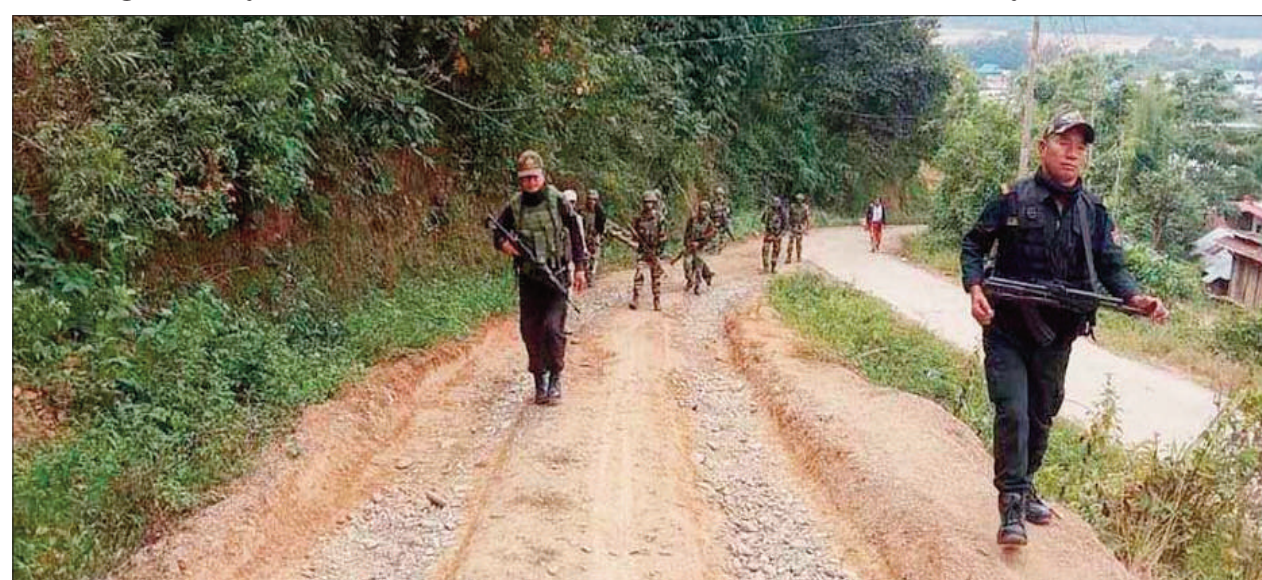
He said, "We want to complete the formation-cutting immediately, to ensure that commuters don't face problems like road closure due to formation cutting and equipment movement. The stretch with all parameters will be completed, so that people get a safe, secure, satisfactory-level road connectivity."

Looniya said our aim is to at least provide all-weather connectivity from Kaying in Siang district to Tato soon.

"We are committed and are working vigorously to extend NH-13 to far-flung areas of Tato," he said.

The chief engineer, however, maintained that black-topping of the road will take some time.

On the Tato-Mechuka stretch, Looniya said the 14 bridges along the Tato-



Mechuka stretch have been awarded to a contractor and work on these bridges are in various stages.

He said the work on the 12-km Yarlung-Trijunction road, including the 140 ft steel modular bridge has started and will be

completed within two years, while the 16-km Yarlung-Lamang road has already been completed.

The DPR for the 14-km Lamang-Lola Road is under preparation, he said.

He said the roads under the National

Highway Single Lane (NHSL) will provide road connectivity to forces stationed in forward areas.

The chief engineer also said that the Migging-Tuting road will be completed soon. Only 15 km of formation cutting is

left, and the surfacing work is being planned this year, he said, adding that if weather permits, the work will be completed by March 2026.

The chief engineer also said that if the government allows, they are willing to take up the maintenance of the NH-13, Akajani-Likabali-Bam road.

It will be beneficial for movement of BRO personnel stationed in Daporjo (Upper Subansiri), Aalo (West Siang), Yingkiong (Upper Siang), Mechuka (Shi-Yomi), he said.

The Akajani-Likabali-Bam-Aalo road was constructed by BRO in the 1960s before it was awarded to the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd in June 2015 for double-laning.

Several portions of the road are in pathetic condition and in many places, the road is not fit for traffic movement and has invited the ire of the locals.

The NH-13 connects Likabali in Lower Siang district to Aalo in West Siang. It further connects Mechuka in Shi-Yomi district. The Project Brahman under BRO is headquartered in Pasighat in East Siang district. (PTI)

Lawyers' body suspends strike in dist courts

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: The New Delhi Bar Association on Thursday suspended the strike by lawyers in district courts over a notification issued by Lieutenant Governor on police virtually presenting evidence in courts after meeting a representative of Home Minister Amit Shah.

A communication from the New Delhi Bar Association (NDBA) said, "This is to inform that (during) the continuous, tireless and strong agitation against the notification dated August 13 issued by the LG, a meeting was held today with the representative of the Union Home Minister."

It added, "It has been communicated that Home Minister Amit Shah would meet the representatives of the bar to discuss, address and resolve the concerns with an open mind."

NDBA Secretary Tarun Rana said a statement was issued by Delhi Police commissioner clarifying the notification would become operational after all stakeholders were heard.

"In view of the written positive response, the ongoing agitation, scheduled demonstration before the LG House (on Friday) and call for abstinence of work in all district courts of Delhi is being suspended till the final outcome of the discussions and deliberations with Union Home Minister, Amit Shah," Rana said. Following the notification, the lawyers in district courts began their strike on August 22. (PTI)

Won't let anyone take away people's voting right till I am alive: Mamata

CM apologises for delay in government recruitment drives, admission process in colleges

KOLKATA, Aug 28: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said she would not let anyone take away people's voting rights, alleging that the BJP was unleashing "linguistic terror" on Bengalis across the country.

Addressing a rally in Kolkata to mark the foundation day of the Trinamool Chhatra Parishad, the party's students' wing, Banerjee claimed that the BJP has deployed over 500 teams from across the country in West Bengal to conduct surveys, aimed at deleting names of voters from the electoral rolls.

"Do not give your details if anyone comes to your house for surveys. They will use that data to delete your name from the voters' list. Instead, check directly with the polling centres and ensure your Aadhaar cards are ready, because the Centre has made it compulsory," she told her supporters at the rally.

Alleging that the Election Commission was intimidating state government officers at the behest of the BJP, she said, "I respect the office of the EC, but you know, lollipops suit children. If adults start taking lollipops on behalf of one party, it does not look good."

Banerjee, the TMC chairperson, alleged that the BJP is insulting Bengalis by branding poor migrant workers from the state as "Bangladeshis".

"You torture poor people by calling them Bangladeshis. But to



me, poor people are my biggest strength. I don't believe in caste or creed, I believe in humanity," she said.

"Recently, a migrant worker from Habra was killed in Maharashtra, but these people (BJP) never raise their voice over such atrocities," she said.

Banerjee alleged that the BJP was trying to make people forget the role played by Bengalis during the freedom movement.

"If there is no Bengali language, then in which language were the national anthem and national song written? They want people to forget the historical role played by Bengalis. Now they are even funding movies to defame Bengal and insult our history," she alleged.

"Their predecessors were agents of the British who gave undertakings to get out of jails," she claimed.

With months left for the assembly elections in the state, due in the

first half of 2026, Banerjee has been consistently hitting the road, alleging that Bengali-speaking migrant workers were being harassed in BJP-ruled states.

Taking on the Centre, the CM alleged that funds for key welfare schemes had been withheld out of "political jealousy".

"For four to five consecutive years, Bengal was number one in providing 100 days' work, building houses for the poor and constructing rural roads. Out of jealousy, they have stopped our funds, and now they want to impose the NRC to take away people's voting rights. But as long as I am alive, nobody will be allowed to snatch away people's voting rights," she said.

Banerjee also alleged that central agencies have been weaponised by the BJP to target opposition parties.

"Earlier, no government used central agencies like this before

elections. But the BJP has made it a routine," she claimed.

Banerjee accused the CPI(M) of "joining hands" with the BJP to fight her.

"The CPI(M) government in Kerala is claiming that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose fled the country in fear of the British. We condemn this," she said.

Listing the social welfare initiatives undertaken by her government, the CM said these schemes have empowered women and the youth of the state.

She said 1.38 crore students have got bicycles under the 'Sabbu Sathi', 53 lakh students have got tablets and smartphones under the 'Taruner Swapna' scheme, and the 'Students' Credit Card' scheme has benefited 92,000 youths.

"Our revenue has increased nearly 5.5 times since 2011, and between 2013 and 2023, we were able to bring 1.72 crore people out of poverty. While we empower women and students, the BJP runs a 'corruption bhandar' and promotes nepotism," Banerjee said.

She apologised for the delay in government recruitment drives and starting the admission process in colleges, but blamed it on litigation.

"Those who file case after case are the ones delaying recruitment and admissions. Then they blame us. They cannot fight us politically, so now they are fighting us in court," she said. (PTI)

BJP alleges use of abusive language against PM during Rahul's yatra in Bihar



NEW DELHI/PATNA, Aug 28: The BJP on Thursday alleged that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi-led 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar had crossed all "limits of insult, hate and tastelessness", claiming that abuses were directed at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother during the campaign.

The party, on its official X handle, refrained from posting the video of the incident, but clips shared online by a few accounts showed some unidentified people using a Hindi abuse for Modi from a dais during the Yatra.

The video, which has gone viral, is purportedly of Darbhanga district from where the Yatra had taken off on Wednesday morning, when Gandhi, his sister and Congress general secretary Priyanka Vadra and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav left for Muzaffarpur on motorcycles.

PTI could not independently verify the authenticity of the video. Several podiums had been erected along the route for local party workers who tried to mobilise public sentiments in favour of the INDIA bloc ahead of assembly elections due later this year.

The BJP said, "Tejashwi (Yadav) and Rahul are behind the use of such filthy language that it cannot be repeated from a public platform... Such lowliness was never seen before in politics. This Yatra has crossed all limits of insult, hate and tastelessness."

J'hkhand Assembly passes resolution to send proposal to Centre for giving Bharat Ratna to Shibu Soren

RANCHI, Aug 28: The Jharkhand Assembly on Thursday passed a resolution to send a proposal to the Centre recommending Bharat Ratna for veteran tribal leader and former chief minister Shibu Soren.

The resolution, moved by Transport Minister Dipak Birua, was passed by voice vote.

Moving the resolution, Birua said Soren dedicated his whole life to protect the rights, honour and self-respect of tribals, farmers, labourers and the oppressed and waged a war for the creation of a separate state.

"His contribution holds historical significance in achieving social justice and democratic values. He was not just a political leader but a visionary. Through his tireless struggle and effort, we got a new state and a new identity. Conferring the highest national civilian honour to such a leader would be a true tribute to him," Birua said.

He added, "In accordance with the spirit of the ruling and the opposition, I move a resolution that this House request the government of India to confer Bharat Ratna on Dishom Guru Shibu Soren."

Leader of the opposition Babul Marandi said his party (BJP) supported the decision.

"Since we are taking a historic decision, I would like to add two more names — Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda and Binod Bihari Mahto, who were pioneers of the Jharkhand movement, in the resolution," Marandi added.

JMM founder Shibu Soren died on August 4 while undergoing treatment at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi. He was 81.

The former Rajya Sabha MP, who played a key role in Jharkhand's creation, has left behind a legacy that reshaped the country's politics.

His death marked the end of a political era that saw the tribal movement rise to national prominence.

Born on January 11, 1944, in Ramgarh district's Nemra village (then in Bihar, now in Jharkhand), Soren was popularly known as "Dishom Guru" (leader of the land) and patriarch of JMM, who was considered one of the most enduring political figures in the country's tribal and regional political landscape.

His political life was defined by continuous advocacy for the rights of tribals. (PTI)

Rajasthan HC cancels 2021 police recruitment exam

JAIPUR, Aug 28: The Rajasthan High Court on Thursday cancelled the contentious 2021 police sub-inspector recruitment exam owing to allegations over paper leak and involvement of members of Rajasthan Public Service Commission (RPSC).

Justice Sameer Jain cancelled the exam, which was the bone of contention for both BJP and Congress governments in the state and gave a detailed verdict.

"The Hindi idiom: 'ghar ka bhedhi lanka dhaye' (insider does maximum damage), aptly encapsulates the egregious circumstances surrounding the Sub-Inspector Recruitment Examination 2021, wherein the very guardians entrusted with safeguarding the sanctity of the process, namely the members of the RPSC, were instrumental in its vitiation," the order said.

The verdict further called it a "travesty of monumental proportions" in which "six members of the RPSC, tasked with the sacrosanct duty of protecting the interests of the public and masses, chose to betray that trust".

Senior advocate Major R P Singh, who represented the petitioners, said the illegality and fraud on the system was so conspicuous and the verdict would hopefully act as a deterrent for the "gangs" playing with the future of youths.

Advocate Harendra Neel, who also represented petitioners, said, "Involvement of five members of RPSC has been found. Court has taken suo motu cognisance on matters related to RPSC. The court has said that the entire recruitment is polluted and if the recruitment is not cancelled then law and order of the state might get affected. It is a courageous and strict decision of the court."

Additional Advocate General Vignyan Shah, who represented the state, said, "The SIT report, FIRs registered,

has found that the then RPSC members Babulal Katara, Ramu Raika were involved and there were irregularities in the recruitment process. The court has made sharp comments on the functioning of RPSC and cancelled the recruitment exam. The court after taking suo motu cognisance has ordered to file a PIL before the double bench against the conduct of the RPSC."

He said the report of the state government's investigation team and its cabinet sub-committee opined if further irregularities in the recruitment exam were found, then the exam could be cancelled.

Cabinet minister in the BJP-led state government, Dr Kirodi Lal Meena, who has been advocating for long to cancel the examination said, "It is a victory of truth. There was fraud in the entire recruitment. According to my information, there were more than 500 such candidates who had passed this examination through fraudulent means. If such people were inducted in the service, imagine the plight of the law and order situation of the state."

BJP state president Madan Rathore called the high court decision "supreme".

The state government is believed to seek legal opinion and decide the future course of action.

Leader of Opposition in the Rajasthan Assembly Tikaram Jolly said, "The high court's decision to cancel the Sub-Inspector Recruitment Examination is commendable. The Congress Party has always worked in the interest of the youth. In the country, the stringent law providing for life imprisonment up to, a fine of 10 crore rupees, and confiscation of the property of the guilty in cases of paper leaks was first enacted in Rajasthan by the previous Congress government." (PTI)

Two more bodies found, death toll in Palghar building collapse rises to 17

PALGHAR, Aug 28: The death toll in the collapse of an allegedly unauthorised building at Virar in Maharashtra's Palghar district has risen to 17 with the discovery of two more bodies, officials said on Thursday.

Police have arrested the builder of the four-storey structure, Ramabai Apartment, after the Vasai Virar Municipal Corporation (VVMC) lodged a complaint, they said.

"Two more bodies have been located under the debris. The teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and other rescue units are extracting them," said Vivekanand Kadam, Chief of the Disaster Management Cell of Palghar District. Their identities will be ascertained subsequently, he said.

The building, housing nearly 50 flats, collapsed on an adjacent vacant tenement at Vijay Nagar in Virar area of Palghar, adjoining Mumbai, at 12.05 am on Wednesday, they said.

A one-year-old girl's birthday party was underway on the fourth floor when 12 flats in a wing of the building collapsed, trapping residents and guests under the debris, as per eyewitnesses.

Palghar District Collector Dr Indu Rani Jakhar on Thursday morning said that the death toll in the incident had gone up to 15 overnight.

The girl, whose birthday was being celebrated when the incident occurred, was among the deceased.

Six other persons, who were injured and rescued, were undergoing treatment in various hospitals, according to an official from the Vasai-Virar Municipal Corporation (VVMC).

Emergency teams, including the NDRF, local police and fire department, continue to sift through the rubble to check if more victims are trapped.

The work of clearing the debris will continue to ensure no other person is trapped under the rubble, the collector told PTI.

"The work is almost complete, but we want to be absolutely sure before concluding the operation," she added.

Kadam said the teams are working around the clock. "The goal is not only to recover those trapped but also to ensure no lives are put at further risk," he said.

The authorities on Wednesday identified seven of the deceased.

They have identified eight more victims as Govind Singh Ravat (28), Shubhangi Pawan Saheni (40), Kashish Pawan Saheni (35), Deepak Singh Behra (25), Sonali Rupesh Tejam (41), Harish Singh Bisht (34), Sachin Nevalkar (40) and Deepesh Soni (41).

Eyewitnesses described the horrifying scene, where a moment of happiness turned to chaos in an instant.

"People were dancing and celebrating (during the birthday party) when suddenly the entire structure collapsed like a pack of cards," said a survivor.

The aftermath was marked by chaos and panic, with people screaming and accusing the builder of negligence.

Residents claimed that unlike previous incidents of building collapses where cracks or structural weaknesses were visible beforehand, there were no such warning signs here.

The sudden collapse has raised serious concerns over building safety and unauthorised constructions in the area.

Locals have alleged "lethargy and negligence" on part of the builder and authorities, with many demanding a thorough investigation into how the unauthorised structure was allowed to house so many residents without proper safety measures.

Police on Wednesday arrested the builder after the VVMC lodged a complaint.

Luckily, the chawl or tenement on which the building collapsed was vacant, District Disaster Management Officer Vivekanand Kadam earlier said.

As a precautionary measure, all the chawls around the ill-fated building have been vacated and occupants shifted to safer places, he said.

Constructed in 2012, Ramabai Apartment has 50 flats, and the collapsed part had 12 apartments, said Kadam.

A spokesperson of the VVMC had called the building "illegal".

The debris removal was delayed because officials initially struggled to bring heavy machinery to the crashed building located in a congested locality.

"All affected families have been temporarily housed at Chandansar Samajmandir. We are providing food, water, medical assistance, and other essential services," VVMC assistant commissioner Gilson Gonsalves said. (PTI)

Nuakhai festival reminds people of their deep gratitude to farmers for their hard work, says PM

Prez, PM, Odisha Guv, CM greet people on 'Nuakhai' festival

BHUBANESWAR/ SAMBALPUR, Aug 28: President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, and Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik on Thursday greeted the people on the occasion of 'Nuakhai', an agrarian festival mostly celebrated in the western parts of the state.

The 'Nuakhai', which means 'new feed', is basically an agrarian festival where the first crop of the year is offered to the goddess in the western districts of Odisha, and younger people seek the blessings of elders. This festival is mostly celebrated in the western parts of the state.

Murmu, who hails from Odisha, extended her heartfelt greetings of Nuakhai to all Indians, especially the people of Odisha.

The President in a post on X said: "On the occasion of the agriculture-based Nuakhai festival, heartfelt congratulations to all countrymen from my side, especially to the people of Odisha. This festival is a sacred opportunity to express respect for agriculture and gratitude towards farmers. It is a symbol of goodwill and inti-



macy. My best wishes are that Nuakhai fills everyone's life with happiness, peace, and prosperity."

Modi said Odisha's Nuakhai festival reminds people of their deep gratitude to farmers for their hard work.

In a post on X, Modi said, "Wishing everyone a joyous Nuakhai. This cherished festival is a reminder of our deep gratitude to the farmers whose hard work sustains us all. May there be good health, prosperity and happiness in every home."

Nuakhai Juhar!"

The governor said, "My heartfelt greetings and best wishes to the people of the state on the occasion of the mass festival #Nuakhai of Western Odisha. May everyone's life be filled with happiness and prosperity by the blessings of Mother Samlei."

Majhi also expressed his greetings to the people of the state and said: "Our culture, prosperity and symbol of unity, Nuakhai, I congratulate and salute you...

.May this Nuakhai, which has come carrying new hopes, fill your life with happiness, peace and prosperity, this is what I am praying for in the cave of my heart. #Nuakhai."

Replying to PM's Nuakhai message, Majhi in a social media post said: "Honourable and illustrious Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji, on behalf of the people of Odisha, heartfelt Nuakhai greetings. This message of your good wishes is a reflection of your deep respect and honour towards the farmer brothers of Odisha. Our hardworking farmers are indeed our Annadatas and the backbone of the nation. I express my gratitude for your continuous efforts towards the welfare and development of all Annadatas of Odisha as well as the country."

Patnaik expressed his heartfelt greetings to the people. In a video message, he said: "On the eve of the auspicious Nuakhai festival, I extend greetings to the people of Odisha with 'Nuakhai Juhar'."

Majhi, in a video message, said: "The practice of offering 'Nuakhai Juhar' (respect) to elders, receiving blessings, and celebrating with dance, music, pitha (cake), and pana (betel) carries forward a

unique legacy of togetherness. On this day, I urge students, youth, workers, farmers, and soldiers to dedicate themselves to their responsibilities and contribute to building a developed Odisha by 2036 and a developed India by 2047."

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who is an MP from Sambalpur, came down to his constituency and celebrated Nuakhai with people. Along with his wife, Pradhan ate 'nabanna' (new food) with the family members of Shamsunder Pati at Sindurpanka village. "Nuakhai is not just a festival but an emotion. Coming together and eating navanna together is the speciality of Nuakhai festival," he said.

The festival was dedicated to Goddess Samaleswari in Sambalpur, Pataneswari in Balangir and Patnagarh, Sureswari in Subarnapur, Manekeswari in Kalahandi and Sekharabasin in Sundargarh. Being an agrarian festival, the eldest in the family each household in the area worshipped their paddy fields and offered milk and flowers. There are about 400 Maa Samaleswari temples in the state.

Earlier, the Nuakhai festival was observed on different time and day as per separate temple timings. However, since

1991, the people of the state have been celebrating the festival on the same day.

'Nuakhai', a mass festival of the state, is celebrated with people wearing new clothes, worshipping the presiding deity and having a sumptuous lunch with the entire family. Local folk music and songs are an integral part of Nuakhai, which is a mass festival across the state, particularly in 10 western Odisha districts.

Exchanging 'Nuakhai Juhar', a traditional greeting form, among friends, relatives and well-wishers, is a major part of the festival apart from rituals associated with temples. On the occasion, the farmers of western Odisha offer their first crop of the year to their presiding deities, and the heads of the family offer rice and other food items to their presiding deities.

The entire western region of the state, comprising about 10 districts, joins the festival and people living outside their villages return to their houses on this day to seek the blessings of elders.

The Nuakhai festival is observed to express gratitude to the Goddesses for providing food grain for survival of humanity, said Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari. (PTI)

Women are now actively involved in piggery, pottery, poultry, fisheries, entrepreneurship, micro-enterprises, group-based ventures

Tripura achieves 95% target of Lakhpati Didis: CM

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 28: Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday said that already 1,08,281 women, which is around 95%, have become Lakhpati Didis in Tripura.

Saha said this while addressing the National Workshop on Integrated Farming Cluster for the North Eastern States at Hotel Polo Tower, Agartala. He said that agriculture remains the backbone of country and its economy, as well as the lifeline of rural households.

He said in order to strengthen livelihoods, particularly for members of women's self-help groups, the Integrated Farming Cluster (IFC) approach has been conceptualized under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihood Mission by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

"In Tripura, we have already launched activities for 80 Integrated Farming Clusters (IFCs) with an investment of Rs 32 crore. These were inaugurated at the



Sampurnata Abhijan Samman Samaroh on August 2, 2025. The objective of these integrated farming clusters is to diversify and intensify livelihood interventions so that rural households can increase their incomes through integration and synergy," said Saha.

He said that today there are about 4.85 lakh women members in 54,113 self-help groups, 2,470 village organizations and 173 clus-

ter-level federations.

"For strengthening their livelihood, 2,628 producer groups and 118 non-farm collectives have been developed, and we have facilitated Rs 1,677 crore in bank loans along with Rs 787 crore as revolving fund and community investment fund support. I am proud to share that in Tripura we are moving forward with this mission at full speed. Out of the 1.14 Lakh

targeted Didis, already 1,08,281 have become Lakhpati Didi, which is around 95% in Tripura," said Saha.

He further said that this transformation has been made possible because of the determination of women, government support and community solidarity.

"Our women are now actively involved in piggery, pottery, poultry, fisheries, entrepreneurship, micro-enterprises, group-based ventures, catering services and agro-ecological practices, making rural Tripura vibrant and self-reliant. In the North-East Rising Summit 2025 at New Delhi, our Prime Minister rightly said that the North-East is Ashtalakshmi. To realize this vision, our government is giving maximum attention to infrastructure, connectivity and livelihood generation. Over the last seven years, Tripura has undertaken several groundbreaking initiatives that are changing the socio-economic landscape of the state," he added.

Mizoram firm on opposing centre's plan to fence Myanmar border: Home Minister



AIZAWL, Aug 28: Mizoram Home Minister K Sapdanga on Thursday said that the state government is firm in opposing the Centre's plan to fence the state's portion of the India-Myanmar border.

He, however, said that fencing the international border is the prerogative of the central government, and it is assessing the matter in coordination with the border guarding force (Assam Rifles).

The Centre in February last year decided to scrap the India-Myanmar Free Movement Regime (FMR) to ensure the country's internal security and maintain the demographic structure of the Northeastern states. The FMR allows people residing close to the India-Myanmar border to venture 16 km into each other's territory without any documents.

The announcement came two

days after Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the government has decided to fence the entire

1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border. Of this, Mizoram shares a 510-km-long boundary with the Chin state of the neighbouring country, and the Chin community people there share ethnic ties with the Mizo people.

The state cabinet had also last year objected to the Centre's plan to erect fencing along the Indo-Myanmar border.

"As regards the Indo-Myanmar border fencing, the Mizoram government is still firm on the resolution adopted by the assembly and the decision taken at the meeting of council of ministers, both on February 28, 2024," Sapdanga informed the assembly in a written reply on Thursday.

The resolution opposed fencing

the Indo-Myanmar border and scrapping the FMR with Myanmar.

It had also passed a resolution urging the Modi government to take steps to ensure the Zo ethnic people, who have been scattered in different countries due to the divide and rule policy of the British, are unified under one administrative unit.

The state cabinet had also last year objected to the Centre's plan to erect fencing along the Indo-Myanmar border.

Sapdanga said on Thursday that the state government sent letters to the Lok Sabha secretary general and to the Home Ministry deputy secretary last year informing them about the assembly resolution and the Cabinet decision.

More than 29,000 refugees from Chin state, who were displaced by conflict following a military coup in the neighbouring country in February 2021, have taken refuge in Mizoram.

The Mizoram government is currently undertaking biometric enrollment for the Myanmar nationals, along with asylum seekers from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

Mizoram civil society organisations and student groups also opposed the Centre's decision to fence the Indo-Myanmar border and lift the FMR, asserting that it would affect ethnic ties. (PTI)

Nagaland signs MoU with SBI to integrate SBlePAY gateway payment with e-GRAS

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 28: The Nagaland government, through its finance department, signed an MoU with the State Bank of India for integrating the SBlePAY Payment Gateway facility with the state's Electronic Government Receipt Accounting System (e-GRAS) at the finance department's conference hall in civil secretariat in Kohima on Thursday.

The government said integration of SBlePAY Payment Gateway with e-GRAS will enable citizens, businesses, and institutions to make seamless online payments towards government receipts such as taxes, fees, duties, and other revenues.

The e-GRAS, a unified digital platform for secure and convenient online payments to the government, will now offer multiple digital payment options, net banking, debit/credit cards, and UPI, ensuring ease of use and wider accessibility, along with real-time settlement and reconciliation of receipts with the state treasury.

The signing of the MoU marked a significant milestone in Nagaland's digital transformation journey. By integrating e-GRAS with SBlePAY secure payment gateway, the state government said it is reinforcing its commitment towards transparency, efficiency, and citizen-centric service delivery.

This initiative also aligns with the government's broader vision of digital India and e-Governance, paving the way for full-scale operationalization of e-GRAS across Nagaland.

Minister Jamir bats for balance of culture and global education at Naga students' conference

KOHIMA, Aug 28: Stressing that global education and cultural preservation are not opposing forces but complementary, Nagaland's Minister for Rural Development and SIRD Metsubo Jamir on Thursday called upon the state's youth to stay rooted in their identity while embracing a rapidly changing world.

Addressing the inaugural session of the 31st General Conference of the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) at RSA Ground, Tsemnyu, Jamir said preserving cultural identity was not a matter of nostalgia but a vital foundation for "well-being, belonging, and intergenerational continuity."

He urged students to revive indigenous languages and practices while also preparing themselves to meet global challenges through education that fosters empathy, intercultural understanding, and resilience.

Nearly 1,500 Naga students from Nagaland, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur, along with delegates from neighbouring Myanmar, are participating in the four-day conference hosted by the Rengma Students' Union under the theme 'Resilience in Transition.'

Reflecting on the conference theme, Jamir underscored the importance of cultural preservation in an era of rapid global transformation.

"Preserving cultural identity is not merely a nostalgic act. It is a vital foundation for well-being, belonging, and intergenerational continuity," he said, urging students to revive indigenous languages, practices, and traditional knowledge systems while also embracing new opportunities and global education.

Jamir also praised the NSF as a "pillar and beacon of unity" that has inspired generations of Nagas despite political divisions and challenges.

He also appreciated the apex students' body for pressing the government to introduce the State Service Selection Board to uphold meritocracy in employment, and for extending support to the government's initiatives in protecting the land from illegal immigrants.

Tsemnyu MLA and host of the conference, Jweng Seb, described NSF as the "conscience-keeper of Naga aspirations" since its inception in 1947.

He urged the gathering to pursue unity, interdependence, and collective growth.

"Unity for us is not uniformity — our Naga identity



is plural, but we are one people," he said, encouraging delegates to frame resolutions with practical steps and accountability.

North East Students' Organisation (NESO) president Samuel B. Jyrwa in his address acknowledged NSF's 78 years of service and warned of urgent issues facing the region, particularly illegal migration and drug abuse.

"If our mind, physique, and spirit are corrupt, what future can we talk about? The menace of drug abuse must be tackled with urgency," he cautioned.

Delivering the presidential address, NSF president Medovi Rhi reaffirmed the federation's legacy as the "heartbeat of the Nagas."

He reminded delegates of NSF's struggles in defending youth rights, opposing corruption, and protecting indigenous entitlements, but warned that internal disunity now posed the greatest threat.

"When our own house is burning, how can we afford to quarrel over the walls?" he asked, urging Naga organisations to rise above divisions to build a stronger future.

Central organising committee convenor K. Elu Ndang welcomed delegates to the historic district of Tsemnyu, saying the conference offered a platform "to reflect on our shared journey, address the challenges of our times, and chart a collective path forward." (PTI)

Tripura gears up for three-day National Sports Day celebration

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 28: The Youth Affairs and Sports Department has lined up a series of events across Tripura to mark the National Sports Day with a three-day state-wide celebration from August 29 to 31.

The announcement was made by Tripura Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Tinku Roy at a press conference held at the Secretariat Press Conference Hall today.

He said that the main celebration will be held at Agartala Town Hall on the morning of August 29, where talented players of the state will be felicitated. Similar programs will also take place in all districts and subdivisions. A special yoga exhibition will be held at 7 a.m. on the same day at three iconic locations — Unakoti, Neermahal, and Ujjayanta Palace.

The minister further informed that on August 30, the Dashaarath Dev State Sports Complex at Badarghat, Agartala will host athletics, swimming, judo, badminton, hockey, football, volleyball, gymnastics, tennis, and kabaddi competitions.

"Chief Minister Prof. (Dr.) Manik Saha will attend the event as chief guest. Additionally, competitions will be organized across the districts and subdivisions in multiple sports categories. The celebrations will conclude on August 31 with the "Sunday on Cycle" program, to be held simultaneously at the subdivision, district, and state levels. The state-level rally will begin from the Ujjayanta Palace premises, covering the Circuit House route, and return to the palace," he told reporters.

Minister Roy also urged educational institutions and social organizations to dedicate at least one hour to sports during the program.

He informed that outstanding athletes will be felicitated in both individual and team categories under the Chief Minister Sports Development Project and Chief Minister Sports Talent Discovery Project. A total of 39 players from the Tripura School Sports Board and Tripura Sports Board will also receive awards.

608 villages to be covered under Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan in Nagaland



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 28: Angelina Tajen, secretary, Nagaland tribal affairs department, on Thursday said 608 villages across Nagaland will be covered under the Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan (AKA) to provide saturation coverage to tribal families and villages for their inclusive development, social change, and sustainable growth.

Presenting an overview of the AKA at a state-level orientation programme at the chief secretary's conference hall in Kohima, Tajen said there will be convergence of 15 departments, including tribal affairs, rural development, health, education, and others, for implementation of the programme.

She stated that the programme was initiated by the Government of India to empower tribal communities through leadership development and responsive governance, adding it is a grassroots governance revolution designed to promote inclusive development and sustainable change.

Chairing the programme, chief secretary Sentiyaner Imchen said the programme focuses on building leadership at the rural level while also providing tribal villages with essential assets and services.

He stated that by combining leadership development with asset creation and service delivery, the programme can have a transformative impact on tribal communities, promoting sustainable development and social change.

Imchen added that this holistic approach aims to empower local communities and promote inclusive development.

Terming it a game-changer initiative, Imchen said the programme is not just a scheme, but a grassroots governance revolution designed to empower tribal communities through leadership development and responsive governance.

He went on to say that by bringing together different departments and providing essential services and facilities, this programme aims to benefit the common man and village people.

He stressed that the AKA has the potential to transform the lives of millions of people in tribal communities, and its impact will likely be felt for years to come.

Imchen further said the collaborative approach through convergence can help bridge the gap in service delivery and promote inclusive development in the region.

He asked the DCs across the state to pay adequate attention to the programme and ensure successful implementation in their respective districts.

Congress demands fresh Assembly elections in Manipur

IMPHAL, Aug 28: Congress MP Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka on Thursday demanded fresh elections in Manipur and said that the party seeks the return of peace and brotherhood in the state. He was speaking at the state-level rally of 'Vote Chhor, Gaddi Chor' in Imphal.

Ulaka, who is AICC in charge of Manipur said, "We are holding this rally here so that you know what is happening in the country. Congress party, our leader Rahul Gandhi, will ensure that democracy enshrined in the constitution is protected."

He said Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge visited Manipur multiple times. Congress wants a statement from Prime Minister Narendra Modi on when he will visit Manipur and why



he is silent on Manipur. Ulaka said President's Rule has been imposed in the state despite the BJP and its allies having 55 MLAs in the 60-member Manipur Assembly.

He said, "Our demand is simple. We want fresh elections in Manipur where people will elect their government and solve the issues. There is no solution, no peace now. We will

stand with Manipur and ensure peace and brotherhood return to the state. Manipur is under President's Rule since February this year.

He also said, "We will be doing a signature campaign from September 15 to October 15. We will be collecting ten crore signatures, which we will give to the President of India or the Election Commission."

Earlier, speaking at the occasion, AICC secretary Christopher Tilak said two months back, "We had a programme highlighting how BJP is violating the constitution. As far as Manipur is concerned, the constitutional violation has been maximum in the country in Manipur."

He also alleged that the BJP is trying to dilute the Constitution. (PTI)

Mizoram to ban begging, bill passed in Assembly

AIZAWL, Aug 28: The Mizoram assembly passed a bill to prohibit begging in the state amid objections by opposition members.

Introducing the Mizoram Prohibition of Beggary Bill, 2025, on Wednesday, Social Welfare Minister Lalrinpuui said its objective is not only to prohibit begging, but also to assist and rehabilitate beggars by offering sustainable livelihood options.

She said there are concerns that begging is increasing in Mizoram, although the state is very fortunate to have very few beggars due to its social structure, involvement of churches and NGOs and the welfare measures and schemes being implemented in the state.

There is also an apprehension of an influx of beggars from outside the state with the arrival of the railhead at Sairang-Sihhmui, she said.

The railway line is scheduled to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 13.

The government is of the opinion that with proper regulatory frameworks in place, it can keep the state free from beggars, Lalrinpuui said.

The minister said that the government will form a state-level 'relief board', which will set up receiving centres for temporary retention of beggars. Beggars will be first kept at the receiving centre, and they will be sent to their native homes or states within 24 hours, she added.

The minister said there are more than 30 beggars, including non-locals, in state capital Aizawl, as per a survey conducted by the Social Welfare Department. Opposition members, including MNF leader Lachhandama Ralte, stated that the Bill is detrimental to the Christian faith and will tarnish the state's reputation. They instead suggested a robust community involvement to stop begging. Chief Minister Lalduhoma said the main motive of the Bill is to help and rehabilitate beggars with the collective help of the government, NGOs and churches. (PTI)

Mizoram govt procured ginger worth over ₹ 95 cr from farmers under flagship scheme: Minister

AIZAWL, Aug 28: The Mizoram government has procured over 3 lakh quintals of ginger worth over ₹ 95 crore from farmers under the state's flagship programme 'Bana Kaih' or handholding scheme, state Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare minister PC Vanlalruata informed the Assembly on Thursday.

He said the government received only ₹ 12.78 crore by selling the produce to companies.

Replying to questions from members during the monsoon session, Vanlalruata said the government has been making efforts to uplift farmers under the Bana Kaih programme.

"The government bought 3.45 lakh quintals of ginger from the farmers between January 20 and June 30 this year under the handholding scheme," he said.

The minister added that the government has so far spent or re-



leased ₹ 95.28 crore as support price for the purchase of raw ginger, while about ₹ 45 crore is still pending for release to farmers.

According to the minister, the government purchased ginger at ₹ 50 per kg at designated secondary collection centres and the pro-

cured stock was sold to companies through an auction system, with preference given to the highest bidders.

However, the government received only ₹ 12.78 crore in return from these sales.

Vanlalruata said the government

faced challenges in procuring farmers, noting that some non-ginger farmers had allegedly bought ginger from Myanmar and sold it to the government to make some profits.

He said assistance has been sought from the Centre under the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS), and assured that the pending payments would be released to farmers soon.

Purchasing five key crops — ginger, turmeric, chilli, broomsticks, and unhusked rice — was a major plank of the ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM).

These crops were brought under the Bana Kaih scheme, which was launched in September 2024.

For the 2025-26 fiscal year, the government has allocated ₹ 350 crore for the scheme — a 75 per cent increase from ₹ 200 crore in 2024-25. (PTI)

Guv directs officials to implement health schemes effectively

IMPHAL, Aug 28: Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Thursday held a meeting with officials on strengthening healthcare delivery across the state and directed them to ensure that no community is left behind in accessing quality facilities, a Raj Bhavan statement said.

Key discussions during the meeting at Raj Bhavan included addressing the gap of financial resources and expanding access to affordable and quality healthcare for all sections of society, it said.

The governor directed the officials to take concrete steps for an "effective implementation of schemes and to ensure that no community is left behind in accessing quality healthcare", it said.

During the meeting, the State Health Mission Society team also made detailed presentations on Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY). (PTI)

'KPOP DEMON HUNTERS' LIKELY TO RETURN WITH SEQUEL

LOS ANGELES, Aug 28: The 2025 animated musical urban fantasy film "KPop Demon Hunters" is likely to return for a sequel.

The film, featuring the voices of Arden Cho, Ahn Hyo-seop, May Hong, Jiyoung Yoo, Yunjin Kim, Daniel Dae Kim, Ken Jeong, and Lee Byung-hun, follows a K-pop girl group, Hunt7x, who lead double lives as demon hunters. The group face rival boy band, the Saja Boys, whose members are secretly demons.

According to entertainment news outlet Variety, the film has overtaken Netflix's "Red Notice" to become the most-watched film in the service's history at more than 236 million total views. The film's original soundtrack also featured on the Billboard Top 10.

Directed by Maggie Kang and Chris Appelhans, the animated musical also topped the American box office outgrossing films like "Weapons" and "Freakier Friday". In an interview with Variety, "KPop Demon Hunters" Kang spoke about the possibility of a sequel which would explore stories of group members Zoey and Mira instead of just focusing on lead vocalist Rumi.

"We've set up so much for potential backstory. Obviously, there's a lot of questions that are left unanswered and areas that are not explored, and we had to do that because there's only so much movie you could tell in 85 minutes," Kang said. "This was Rumi's story, and we have backstories for Zoey and Mira — ones that we actually put in the

movie, but it just kind of rejected it. It just wasn't the movie for those stories," she added.

Sony had reportedly entered into negotiations with Kang and Appelhans for a sequel. (PTI)



WORLDWIDE RIGHTS FOR VENICE-BOUND TITLE 'SONGS OF FORGOTTEN TREES' ACQUIRED BY CELLULOID DREAMS

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: French company Celluloid Dreams has acquired worldwide sales rights for "Songs of Forgotten Trees", the debut feature by filmmaker Anupama Roy and the one of the Indian titles to have its world premiere at the 82nd Venice International Film Festival.

Presented by filmmaker Anurag Kashyap, the film will premiere in the festival's prestigious Orizzonti Competition section, an international competition for films that highlight new trends, with a focus on debut works, young talents, indie features, and lesser-known cinema, on September 1.

"Songs of Forgotten Trees", which follows the evolving relationship between two migrant women in Mumbai, starring Naaz Shaikh and Sumi Baghel in lead roles.

Celluloid Dreams, headed by CEO Salih Guemraoui, is known for championing bold auteur-driven cinema and has represented works by acclaimed filmmakers such as Jafar Panahi and Hirokazu Kore-eda.

"Celluloid Dreams is thrilled to support such an ambitious and captivating project as Songs of Forgotten Trees, which aligns perfectly with our editorial slant, as well as start a new and ambitious partnership," Guemraoui said in a statement.

Roy said, "I am pleased that Celluloid has partnered with our film, and I have full faith



in them that they will take it to the world, in the best possible way."

According to the film's official synopsis, "Songs of Forgotten Trees" follows the story of Thooya, a migrant and aspiring actress, who survives the city by leveraging beauty and wit, occasionally trading intimacy for opportunity.

"When she sublets her sugar daddy's upscale apartment to Swetha, a fellow migrant working a corporate job, the two women—seemingly from different worlds—begin to share more than just a space. Amid the relentless pulse of Mumbai, they discover a silent empathy.

"But as personal histories, desires, and wounds resurface, their delicate connection is tested. What follows is not a rupture, but a strange and tender unfolding—of selfhood, of survival, of unexpected kinship," it read.

The movie is produced by Bibhanshu Rai, Romil Modi and Ranjan Singh. The cast also includes Bhushan Shimpi, Ravi Maan, Pritham Paliania and Lovely Singh.

It features cinematography by Debjit Samanta, editing by Ashish Patel and music by Nishant Ramteke. (PTI)

Challenging to make something relevant and fresh for Salman Khan: Sooraj Barjatya



MUMBAI, Aug 28: Director Sooraj Barjatya says it's always a challenge to create work that feels "relevant" and fresh for superstar and his long-time collaborator Salman Khan.

Barjatya was set to make an action film with the 59-year-old star but that idea was dropped as the filmmaker was unable to crack the right character for Khan.

The duo have collaborated on hits such as "Maine Pyar Kiya" (1989), "Hum Aapke Hain Koun..." (1994), "Hum Saath Saath Hain" (1999), and "Prem Ratan Dhan Payo" (2015).

"There are some subjects that you are not able to take it forward, you are unable to crack the climax or get the character, so till all of this does not come together, it doesn't make sense to make a film.

"I've barely made seven films, but this is what I've decided to do, and till the time I don't feel convinced I won't make it. So, I'm so happy that Salman Bhai is with me, and today to make something relevant and fresh for him at his age is a bigger challenge," the filmmaker told PTI.

With a career spanning more than 30 years, Khan has built a reputation for blockbuster successes but his recent outings like "Sikandar", "Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan", "Radhe", "Dabangg 3", and "Race 3" have not lived up to the expectations of his loyal fan base. Barjatya, however, is optimistic about Khan's career and making a huge comeback.

"I think it happens in everyone's life... it is just that he is a celebrity, that's why he gets so much attention. But everyone should be allowed to make a mistake, to learn because that is what his life is.

"We have to allow each other to (grow), we should not be so harsh. He is such a good person, he is so strong that he is going to come back in a very big way," the director said.

Both Barjatya and Khan are busy working on their respective new films. The filmmaker is looking forward to beginning work on a new family drama set to feature Ayushmann Khurrana and Sharvari, while Khan has begun work on a much-anticipated war drama titled "Battle of Galwan". Based on the 2020 Galwan Valley conflict, this film, helmed by Apoorva Lakshia. (PTI)

Nila Madhab Panda-produced 'Spying Stars' to compete at Busan Film Festival

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: "Spying Stars", a film produced by acclaimed director Nila Madhab Panda, is set to be screened at the 30th edition of the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) under a new competition section.

The festival, which has traditionally followed a non-competitive format, has launched a sweeping new section to mark its anniversary year.

Fourteen films will vie for the Busan Awards across five categories — best film, best director, special jury prize, best actor and artistic contribution. The trophy has been designed by acclaimed Thai filmmaker and artist Apichatpong Weerasethakul. "Spying Stars" is directed by Vimukthi Jayasundara, best known for winning the Caméra d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival for his debut feature "The Forsaken Land" (2005).

"Producing a film is not just about creation. For me, producing this film is like a spiritual journey. Vimukthi's deep reflection on the virus, nature, AI -- and his poetic connection with the metaphysical world -- makes 'Spying Stars' a powerful and timely film. "His use of psychological layers turns this story into more than a film—it becomes an experience. Spying Stars is a journey through fear, silence, and stillness. And above all, it's a film about finding inner

freedom," Panda said in a statement.

The film follows Anandi (Indira Tiwari), a biotechnician who arrives at Hanuman Island to perform her father's last rites but is quarantined in a remote hotel amid a pandemic in a machine-dominant world. When a mysterious star begins following her, she escapes and takes shelter with a mother and her transgender daughter.

"My film is a representation of how the tidy and so-called device-controlled world we were familiar with broke down and became an unknown and uncomfortable reality," Jayasundara said.

"It is a liberation film that is spiritual in nature. It asks one question: in a time of pervasive voyeurism and technological control, how do we retain our humanity?" The film's cast also includes Kaushakya Fernando and Samanalee Fonseka. The film is produced by Vincent Wang and co-produced by Arfi Laamba, Katharina Suckale and Michel Klein.

"Spying Stars" is the first project from Panda's new studio, Eleanora Images. The banner's upcoming slate includes three narrative features and two documentaries, with Panda set to begin work on his next directorial, scheduled to go on floors in early 2026. (PTI)



'The Monk and the Gun' is a celebration of innocence: Bhutanese filmmaker Pawo Choyning Dorji

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: Bhutanese filmmaker Pawo Choyning Dorji, who spent his formative years in India as the child of a diplomat, believes that looking at his country from a distance gave him a better perspective about its culture which he now wants to share with the world through his films.

In his new film, "The Monk and the Gun", which was Bhutan's official entry to the Oscars in 2023, Dorji captures an important chapter in Bhutan's recent history. The movie, currently streaming on MUBI India, is set in 2006 when King Jigme Singye Wangchuck introduced democratic elections and held a mock exercise to train people.

"In Bhutan, we have a saying that you will never see your eyelashes because they are so close. But as a Bhutanese growing up outside, I could see the transformation of society as we were striving to become a modern country. I could see my eyelashes... And those scenes, observed as a little young boy, I've tried to capture in the film," Dorji told PTI in an interview.

"The Monk and the Gun" is set in the town of Ura where an old Lama instructs a young monk to procure a gun ahead of the mock elections between with parties

named after a colour. The young monk eventually crosses paths with an American gun collector, who is in the country in search of an antique rifle. Now why would a Lama need a gun? The film answers this question while introducing viewers to Bhutan's uniqueness.

"I tell people that this film is really about innocence. As I noticed my country and culture go through this phase of modernisation, that innocence was lost. If you have been to Bhutan, you will notice that we are a culture that celebrates this quality of innocence. "As we were becoming a modern country, we were told that sometimes innocence is ignorance. But with this film, I wanted to remind the audience that, 'Hey, sometimes it's okay to be innocent and that's not ignorance.'"

The idea of the film started taking shape when Dorji found himself stuck in his country during the global pandemic. "At that time, I went to the forest of central Bhutan and built a stupa. There were all these toy guns in the foundation of the stupa. So I asked the Lama, 'Why are we burying guns?' And he told me the story of why. I was like, 'I need to make this into a film.'"

Slowly, a script started to emerge about Bhutan's transformative phase.

The director said Bhutan is the only country in the world where democracy was introduced without a war or a revolution, which was different from the narrative he encountered as a young political science student in the US.

"I was kind of being fed this jargon that, 'Oh, you know, democracy is the gift given by the modern world to all these civilizations that don't have it'.

"And as a political science student, I found it to be a beautiful comedy that after all that, the people in Bhutan still voted for the Yellow party," he said, describing the result of the mock elections where people voted for the preservation of tradition and culture instead industrial development, represented by the Red Party.

The period in Dorji's film captures not just what people were thinking when the mock election was introduced but also how they were getting to know about the outside world through television. "I always tell the Americans, 'All of you remember where you were when the moon landing happened. For Bhutan, it was not the moon landing, it was our television being switched on for the first time... I noticed that when the TV started coming, everyone started gathering around. And in villages, usually the people with the

biggest TVs became the most popular households. And every time, outside the house would be all these shoes lined up because everyone is glued to the TV."

Dorji spent many years in India -- in Delhi, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh. He is happy that the film can now reach the audiences in India.

"A lot of my formative years where I discovered who I wanted to be and what I wanted to do with my life were in India. I'm grateful that finally this film has a home in India. It has the most passionate audience," he said.

"The Monk and the Gun" won the Audience Choice Award at MAMI in Mumbai and his other film "Lunana: The Yak in the Classroom" is the only Oscar-nominated Bhutanese film.

Dorji said he is lucky that his films resonate beyond Bhutan.

"When my film 'Yak in the Classroom' was nominated at the Oscars, I met all these Hollywood people and I told them that you are watching a film that is unlike any other you've seen. It's about people in skirts and it's in a language you have never heard. But therein lies the beauty of art that even though it is so culturally diverse in humanity, there is so much that makes us all similar." (PTI)

HOCKEY: INDIA SEEK WORLD CUP BERTH THROUGH ASIA CUP TRIUMPH; UP AGAINST CHINA IN OPENER

RAJGIR (BIHAR), Aug 28: Three-time champions India will look to put behind their dismal recent form and secure a World Cup berth by winning the men's Asia Cup hockey tournament starting with a tricky opening game against lower-ranked China here on Friday.

India and China are placed in Pool A with Japan and Kazakhstan. Pool B consists of titleholders and five-time champions South Korea, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Chinese Taipei.

Kazakhstan, set to play their first Asia Cup in over three decades, and Bangladesh replaced Pakistan and Oman, both of whom withdrew from the event.

Pakistan opted out citing security reasons in the backdrop of India's Operation Sindoor following the Pahalgam terror attack in April. Top two teams from each pool will qualify for the semifinals, with the final scheduled on September 7.



The tournament is India's best and last chance to qualify for next year's World Cup to be jointly hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands from August 14 to 30. India stumbled in their first attempt to secure a spot, dropping to seventh in the world after a dismal European leg of the FIH Pro League.

India secured just one win from eight matches and recorded a record seven-game losing streak - the longest in the team's history, forcing chief coach Craig Fulton to go back to the drawing board and field a full strength side for the Asia Cup.

Fulton admitted that the Asia Cup is the "most important tournament of the year."

India are the highest-ranked side in the tournament, and the continent's flag-bearer in world hockey. The tag brings with it pressure and opportunity and the need to silence critics with a dominating show.

Fulton needs to reassess his "defend-to-attack" approach which fell apart in Pro League. India conceded 26 goals across eight games, especially due to avoidable mistakes by the defenders. And in this tournament, the Harmanpreet Singh-led outfit cannot afford to slip up on the defensive front.

Penalty corner conversion will also be a big concern for India as the team heavily relies on Harmanpreet. In his absence, the likes of Amit Rohidas, Jugraj Singh and Sanjay have struggled to deliver.

India's outing in the European leg of Pro League also exposed another major concern -- goal-keeping.

After the retirement of PR Sreejesh, Krishan Bahadur Pathak and Suraj Karkera are the team's two custodians. But while the former struggled to deal with aerial balls, the latter looked dicey when put under pressure. (PTI)

Benfica edges past Mourinho's Fenerbahce to complete 36-team Champions League lineup

MONACO, Aug 28: José Mourinho and Fenerbahce fell short of returning to the Champions League, losing 1-0 at Benfica in the qualifying playoffs.

Benfica — the first club Mourinho coached — had two goals disallowed on video review in the first half before its Turkish forward Kerem Aktürkoğlu scored with a rising shot in the 35th minute for the only goal over the two legs.

Club Brugge, Copenhagen and Qarabag of Azerbaijan also advanced to complete the 36-team lineup for the league phase, with the draw being made Thursday.

Mourinho is a two-time Champions League winner but has not coached in the main stage of the marquee competition for six seasons. Fenerbahce's absence now stretches to 17 seasons.

Brugge routed Rangers 6-0 for an aggregate score of 9-1. The Belgian side already had an early lead before Rangers defender Max Aarons was sent off in the eighth minute.

Qarabag is back in the Champions League eight years after its debut campaign, winning 5-4 on aggregate over Ferencváros despite a 3-2 loss in Baku on Wednesday.

Copenhagen won 2-0 at home to Basel to advance 3-1 on aggregate. The draw ceremony starts 6 p.m. local time (1600 GMT) Thursday at a beachside concert hall and conference venue in Monaco.

Who is in the Champions League draw?

A record six teams from England are in the competition this year. More than half — 19 in total — are from the four highest-ranked countries: England, Italy, Spain and Germany.

Newcomers in the main phase are Bodo/Glimt of Norway, Kairat Almaty of Kazakhstan, Pafos of Cyprus and Union Saint-Gilloise of Belgium.

The Champions League will go further north than ever before, with Bodo located inside the Arctic Circle, and further east, to Almaty, near Kazakhstan's border with China. Pafos, the Russian-owned champion of Cyprus, was created just 11 years ago in a merger of two clubs.

Athletic Bilbao heads the teams returning after a long absence. The emblematic team from Spain's Basque region last played in the 2014-15 group stage. Olympiakos missed four editions and Villarreal returns after losing in the semifinals to Liverpool in 2022.

There is no team from Ukraine for first time in 20 years. In that period, Shakhtar Donetsk featured 17 times and Dynamo Kyiv 10. Russian teams are banned from all European competitions for the fourth straight season since the full military invasion of Ukraine.

The 71st edition of the European Cup or Champions League will include 14 different former champions with a combined 50 titles, including holder Paris Saint-Germain.

Now that five-time winning coach Carlo Ancelotti left Real Madrid to coach Brazil, Pep Guardiola is the leading coach in this edition. (AP)

Barcelona and Madrid may yet lose Fermín and Rodrygo in transfer window



BARCELONA (SPAIN), Aug 28: Real Madrid and Barcelona are used to luring players from other clubs.

The Spanish powerhouses face key support players possibly moving to the wealthier Premier League at the pending closure of the transfer market.

Brazil forward Rodrygo, who has scored clutch goals for Madrid to add to its Champions League title haul, is at the center of media speculation that he could be heading to Manchester City or another English club. Chelsea is also reportedly after Barcelona midfielder sparkplug Fermín López, while Marc Casadó could also be sold with Barcelona needing income.

Coach Hansi Flick has said he wants to keep both players, especially after Barcelona let starting central defender Inigo Martínez go to Saudi Arabia. Catalan media say the club would consider an offer of only more than 60 million euros (\$70 million) for Fermín if he asked to leave. The transfer window closes on Monday, just after the third round of the Spanish league this weekend.

Barcelona and Madrid both seek a third win in as many games — along with Villarreal, Athletic Bilbao and surprising Getafe.

Key matchups
Barcelona visits Rayo Vallecano on Sunday after two away wins at Mallorca and Levante. Will Fermín and Casadó, who made significant

contributions to their domestic double last season, get minutes in the capital?

Real Madrid hosts Mallorca on Saturday with Kylian Mbappé seeking to add to his three goals from their opening two wins over Osasuna and at Real Oviedo. Xabi Alonso gave Rodrygo only his second start in eight games since he took over as Madrid's coach this summer before the Club World Cup.

Atletico Madrid is at Alaves also on Saturday. Atletico has taken only one point of six so far, making its worst start to the league in 14 seasons under coach Diego Simeone.

Ferran Torres has two goals in as many games while playing as Barcelona's central striker. Robert Lewandowski returned last round as a substitute after recovering from a thigh injury. Flick will have to pick between Torres and Lewandowski at Rayo. Marcus Rashford is another option up front for Flick.

Villarreal's Tajon Buchanan is coming off his hat trick in a 5-0 rout of Girona last round. The Canada winger, who joined from Inter Milan this summer, will likely figure again for leader Villarreal when it plays Celta Vigo on Sunday with Gerard Moreno injured and Ayoze Pérez doubtful.

New playmaker Alex Baena is doubtful for Atletico, while Valencia's José Luis Gayà is suspended for Valencia's game on Friday against unbeaten Getafe. (AP)

AIFF, FSDL submit 'consensual resolution' to SC; ISL likely to start in December

GRIMSBY (ENGLAND), Aug 28: Manchester United sank to a new low under Ruben Amorim by getting eliminated by fourth-tier Grimsby Town after a marathon penalty shootout in the second round of the English League Cup.

Grimsby won 12-11 on spot-kicks at 9,000-capacity Blundell Park on England's east coast, with Bryan Mbeumo missing the decisive penalty. United needed late goals by Mbeumo and Harry Maguire just to salvage a 2-2 draw in regulation, having trailed 2-0 at halftime on Wednesday.

It will go down as one of the most embarrassing results in United's history and leaves the team winless in three games so far this campaign, after a woeful 15th-place finish in the Premier League last season.

Grimsby's jubilant fans stormed onto the field to celebrate

with the players after Mbeumo's spot kick rebounded off the crossbar to seal United's fate.

"It's an amazing feeling, one that will live on forever," said Grimsby's Charles Vernam, who scored one of the team's goals.

Grimsby is currently fourth in League Two, and finished the match with a lineup containing several academy graduates and a Faeroe Islands international.

United, meanwhile, had 200 million pounds (\$270 million) worth of new signings just in its attack in Mbeumo, Matheus Cunha and Benjamin Sesko. Cunha also failed in the shootout by having his weak attempt saved and Sesko took United's 10th penalty — only ahead of goalkeeper Andre Onana.

After Onana and Grimsby goalkeeper Christy Pym converted their penalties, the shootout re-

verted to the outfield players once again. Bruno Fernandes scored his for United, but Mbeumo couldn't.

"Going into the penalty shootout, the gaffer (manager) said to us, Lads, all the pressure is on them," and it was really," Grimsby midfielder Kieran Green said.

It was a bittersweet moment for Pym, who said: "I'm a Man United fan so I'm half-fuming a little bit."

The result piles more pressure on Amorim, who came into the game with 16 wins from his 44 matches in charge of United after being hired in November. He sat in the dugout during the shootout, not even watching the kicks.

A 1-0 loss to Arsenal in the opening round of the Premier League featured an encouraging performance by a new-look

United team, but some worrying old habits returned when fading to a 1-1 draw at Fulham on Sunday.

The exit at Grimsby quickly brought back the gloom of last season.

"The way we started the game without any intensity, we were completely lost," said Amorim, who apologized to United's fans.

United was only playing in the second round — for the first time since 2014 — after failing to qualify for European competition last season. That year, the team lost 4-0 at third-tier MK Dons in the second round.

Big win for Brighton

In other results Wednesday, Brighton won 6-0 at second-tier Oxford, Everton beat third-tier Mansfield 2-0 and Fulham won 2-0 against second-tier Bristol City. (AP)

Bundesliga: Cup trouble puts a question mark over Bayern's strong start

DORTMUND, Aug 28: When Harry Kane scored Bayern Munich's sixth goal against Leipzig in the first game of the Bundesliga season, it seemed almost as if the title race could be over before anyone else had played a game.

Not so fast.
Bayern needed a late Kane header to claim a shaky 3-2 win at third-division Wehen Wiesbaden in the German Cup on Wednesday which showed Bayern can still be rattled by a determined opponent with well-timed counterattacks.

It wasn't a weakened Bayern team, either. Kane, Michael Olise and Luis Díaz all played the full 90 minutes. Key matchups — Bayern visits Bavarian rival Augsburg on Saturday for a reunion with former player-turned-coach Sandro Wagner. He had a good start in his first head coach job with a 3-1 win at Freiburg last weekend.

Most of Bayern's potential title rivals struggled last week, all except for Eintracht Frankfurt, which swept aside Werder Bremen 4-1 in its first league game since Hugo Ekitiké left



for Liverpool. Next up is Hoffenheim away on Saturday.

Promoted Hamburger SV hosts St. Pauli on Friday for what's sure to be a heated city derby. Hamburg's promotion means it's the first time the two cross-city rivals have played in the top flight since 2011.

Players to watch — Former Real Madrid right back Lucas Vázquez could make his debut for Bayer Leverkusen, which needs a win at Werder Bremen to bounce back from a loss in coach Erik ten Hag's

first league game last week. Vázquez hasn't played for a team other than Madrid in 10 years.

Carney Chukwuemeka is back at Borussia Dortmund after completing a permanent transfer following his loan from Chelsea last season.

Dortmund faces Union Berlin on Sunday. Who's out — Dortmund defenders Nico Schlotterbeck, Niklas Süle and Emre Can are all injured and stand-in defender Filippo Mané is suspended following his sending off last week, leaving coach Niko

Kovac short of options at the back for Union's visit.

Stuttgart needed penalties to get past Eintracht Braunschweig as it began its German Cup title defense on Tuesday, without defender Luca Jaquez after he broke his nose in a loss at Union Berlin last week. Jeff Chabot and Ameen Al-Dakhil are also out. Stuttgart hosts Borussia Mönchengladbach on Saturday.

Off the field — Dortmund's Jobe Bellingham will want to make amends for his disappointing Bundesliga debut, especially after his father caused a furor by speaking with sports director Sebastian Kehl outside the locker room afterward.

Dortmund coach Kovac got a one-year contract extension this week. It's recognition of the turnaround since he took over in February with the team in 11th.

A disputed Bundesliga goal brought a change to soccer regulations this week. Leipzig had a goal initially given against Bayern even though Castello Lukeba dribbled with the ball while taking an earlier free kick. (AP)

Novak Djokovic is trying to solve riddles at the US Open but is back in the 3rd round

NEW YORK, Aug 28: For the second contest in a row at this U.S. Open, Novak Djokovic appeared a bit sluggish, a bit off, for a stretch. This time, he even dropped the opening set. And then, as always at Flushing Meadows, the 24-time Grand Slam champion progressed to the third round.

Djokovic improved to 36-0 across the first and second rounds in New York, a place he's won four championships, by coming back to beat 145th-ranked American qualifier Zachary Svajda 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-3, 6-1 at Arthur Ashe Stadium on Wednesday.

"I really tried to soak it in and enjoy the moment, especially when I won the first set," said Svajda, a 22-year-old from San Diego. "It kind of shocked me. I was like, 'Wow!'" Asked on court afterward how he felt in his first competition since losing to eventual champion Janik Sinner in the Wimbledon semifinals on July 11 while hindered by a groin injury, Djokovic replied:

"Not that great, to be honest." Svajda noticed.

"He was missing a little bit," said Svajda, who got cramps in his legs and arms as the match wore on. "He was getting a little frustrated." At his news conference later, the 38-year-old Djokovic spoke a little more about his mood.

"It's not a motivation thing. It's just like me a bit frustrated with my game, and then I kind of go through stuff internally that — you don't want to know the details what I'm going through and telling myself," he explained after getting to the third round at a major for the 75th time, breaking a tie with Roger Federer for the most such appearances by a man. "I'm just trying to be locked in. Just trying to solve the riddle once I'm on the court." Djokovic continued. "It's not like I'm not finding joy on the court competing. I enjoy competing, but I don't enjoy not playing well. That's why I put extra pressure on myself and my team to be better the next day, the next



match." That will come against Cam Norrie, a British left-hander who reached the semifinals at Wimbledon in 2022 and is 0-6 against Djokovic.

Norrie got past Francisco Comanana of Argentina 7-6 (5), 6-3, 6-7 (0), 7-6 (4) in four hours and now it's his turn to face the task that Svajda

did Wednesday against Djokovic. "He does everything so well, which is incredible," Svajda said. "I was talking to my team and coaches before, trying to figure it out. It's Novak Djokovic, so there's not a big weakness."

Townsend and Ostapenko have a heated exchange after their match

Taylor Townsend and Jelena Ostapenko got into a face-to-face argument on the Court 11 sideline right after Townsend won their second-round match 7-5, 6-1. Townsend, an American who is ranked No. 1 in doubles, said Ostapenko, a Latvian who won the 2017 French Open, told her she has "no class" and "no education."

What else happened at the U.S. Open on Wednesday?

No. 5 seed Jack Draper, a semifinalist in 2024, withdrew because of a lingering injury to his left arm. Winners included defending champion Aryna Sabalenka, both of last year's runners-up — Jessica Pegula and Taylor Fritz — along with Carlos Alcaraz, Ben Shelton, Frances Tiafoe, 2021 champion Emma Raducanu and Emma Navarro. No. 12 Casper Ruud, whose 0-3 record in Grand Slam finals includes a loss to Alcaraz at Flushing Meadows in 2022, was eliminated 6-4, 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 7-5 by Raphael Collignon of Belgium. (AP)

Pragg qualifies for Grand Chess Tour finale; Wesley So wins Sinquefeld

ST. LOUIS (USA) Aug 28: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa sealed his spot in the Grand Chess Tour finale after finishing runner-up at the Sinquefeld Cup, where American Wesley So clinched the title with a dramatic three-way playoff victory.

So defeated Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan in the ninth and final round to tie with Praggnanandhaa and compatriot Fabiano Caruana on 5.5 points at the top. He then went on to the playoff scoring 1.5 points out of a possible two.

Praggnanandhaa played out a draw with Levon Aronian of United States and defeated Caruana in the tiebreak to finish second on one point while the latter had to be content with the third place finish after the tiebreaker wherein he scored a lone draw against So.

With Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France already the highest point scorer in the Grand Chess Tour, Levon Aronian also qualified for the GCT grand finale along with Caruana and Praggnanandhaa.

In the Classical section, So Caruana and Praggnanandhaa ended on 5.5 points apiece tying for the top spot while Aronian finished solo fourth on 5 points from his nine games.

Vachier-Lagrave, Samuel Sevian of United States and Duda Jan-Krysztof of Poland tied for the fifth spot on 4.5 points apiece a half point clear of world champion D Gukesh who did not have a great event.

Alireza Firouzja of France finished ninth on 3.5 points while Abdusattorov ended last with 2.5 points in all.

Praggnanandhaa raised visions of winning the cup with a swift victory over Caruana in the first tiebreak game.

However, the Indian lost to So in the second round and the American was smart enough to hold Caruana in the final game to win the tournament.

Earlier in the day, Praggnanandhaa played out an easy draw with Aronian to seal his place amongst the top three. (PTI)

T20 tri-series: Rashid Khan's Afghanistan squad is the favorite in this Asia Cup tune-up

SHARJAH, Aug 28 : It's time for Rashid Khan and his Afghanistan lineup to be favorites in a Twenty20 international cricket tournament.

Afghanistan has a formidable, spin-heavy squad for the tri-series that starts Friday and also features Pakistan and the host United Arab Emirates. It's a tune-up for next month's Asian Cup, which is also being staged in the UAE.

Last year Afghanistan reached the T20 World Cup semifinals before losing to South Africa, a run to the last four that underlined its strength in the shortest format of international cricket.

Seven T20 games over the next 10 days at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium will involve the teams competing against each other twice before the top two qualify for the Sept. 7 final.

The slow pitches of Sharjah Cricket Stadium are unlikely to produce any big scores — the 200-run mark has been crossed only four times in 41 T20 internationals at the 16,000-capacity stadium.

The slow nature of the pitches has encouraged Afghanistan to pack its squad with five spinners, including the uncapped AM Ghaz-anfar. Rashid Khan and mystery spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman have conceded fewer than six runs per over in a combined 23 T20s at Sharjah, while picking up 43 wickets.



Experienced allrounder Mohammad Nabi, who also bowls offspin, is rich with experience from playing in 25 T20s for Afghanistan at Sharjah, where he's taken 16 wickets at an impressive economy rate of 6.49.

Left-arm spinner Noor Ahmad had some impressive performances in IPL this season while representing Chennai Super Kings. The spin bowling attack is expected to pose some serious challenges to the rival batters.

Pakistan has its spin bases covered. Specialist spinners Abrar

Ahmed and Sufiyan Mugeem are backed up by off-spinners Saim Ayub and captain Salman Ali Agha and left-arm Mohammad Nawaz. They're all capable of bowling a full quota of four overs in a T20 game, if the conditions favors slow bowling.

Pakistan's new limited-overs coach Mike Hesson has yet again ignored experienced veterans Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan as he searches for batters with better strike-rates upfront.

Babar and Rizwan haven't played an T20 international since

December. Pakistan has instead given consistent chances to Sahibzada Farhan, Mohammad Haris and Saim Ayub to look out for quick runs in the batting powerplay as it builds a team for next year's T20 World Cup.

Hesson wanted to see Babar not only improve his batting against spinners but also wanted him to score at a faster rate to regain his place in the T20 squad.

Pakistan has had mixed results over the last few months since Hesson was appointed coach. It started with Pakistan routing Bangladesh 3-0 at home before Bangladesh rallied to beat Pakistan 2-1 in the return series in Dhaka. Pakistan then won 2-1 against West Indies in Florida as Hesson experimented with batting and bowling combinations.

Uncapped left-handed batter Harshit Kaushik is among the four changes UAE has made after it lost to the hosts at the Pearl of Africa Cup in Uganda. Leg-spin all-rounder Mohammad Farooq, who has nine wickets in 8 T20s, and fast bowlers Junaid Siddique and Mohammad Jawadullah are the others who've returned to the UAE squad.

Coach Lalchand Rajput believes that after winning a T20 series against Bangladesh at home in May, the UAE team has the ability to beat any other test playing nation in the shortest format. (AP)

Sindhu stuns world No 2; Dhruv-Tanisha pair ousts fifth seeds to reach World Championships quarters

PARIS, Aug 28 : Two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu shocked world number 2 Wang Zhi Yi of China to storm into the quarterfinals of the World Championships, here on Thursday.

The 15th ranked Sindhu, who won the world title in Basel in 2019, took 48 minutes to prevail 21-19 21-15 in the pre-quarterfinals to lead head-to-head record against the Chinese 3-2.

The 30-year-old Indian will now face world number nine Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia in the quarterfinals as the Indian is now just one victory away from securing a record-equalling sixth World Championships medal. The Indonesian had beaten Sindhu in straight games at the Sudirman Cup earlier this year, though the Indian had prevailed in their Asian Games round-two clash in 2022.

A five-time World Championships medallist, Sindhu made a bright start in the opening game, racing to an 11-6 lead at the mid-game interval with a flurry of sharp smashes and net winners.

Wang fought back strongly to level at 19-19, but the Indian held her nerves to pocket the game.

In the second game, Sindhu kept up the pressure, once again opening up a 11-6 cushion at the break.

A stunning 57-shot rally briefly tested her, but she regained control with decisive attacking play, closing out the match.

Sindhu thus extended her remarkable record against Chinese shuttlers at the Worlds, having previously beaten Wang Yihan (2013), Wang Shixian (2014), Li Xuerui (2015), Sun Yu (2017) and Chen Yufei (2017 and 2019) in earlier editions.

India's Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto also pulled off a big upset by stunning Hong Kong world number 5 pairing of Tang Chun Man and Tse Ying Suet 19-21 21-12 21-15 in a 63-minute battle to storm into the quarterfinals.

The Indians, who had earlier cruised past Ireland's Joshua Magee and Moya Ryan 21-11 21-16 in 35 minutes, came from a game down to topple the reigning Asian champions with a determined fightback.

"We had a rough run a couple of months back. I think we are building together, step by step, slowly, slowly

we are getting there. Really happy with the way we played today," Tanisha said.

"We came prepared, prepared better this time. We didn't give up at any point in the match. Even after we lost the first set, we didn't let it get to us. We fought back even harder in the second and third. We kept pushing each other till the end, till the last shot. I think that was the real game changer today."

The Indian duo had endured a patchy start to the year, losing in the round of 16 at the Malaysia Open and India Open, before reaching the semifinals at the German Open in February.

However, early exits at the Orleans Masters and All England Championships followed.

Dhruv spoke about the turnaround.

"We started really good in the beginning of the year, two tournaments didn't go well. There was no technical problem, but the main thing was we kept on supporting each other and came prepared well. Previously when we were losing the first game we were mentally down, but today we stayed strong," he said.

Gurpreet, Amanpreet secure 1-2 finish for India in 25m pistol

Shymkent, Aug 28 (PTI) Gurpreet Singh led India to a 1-2 finish in the 25m Standard Pistol with Amanpreet Singh securing the silver at the 16th Asian Shooting Championship here Thursday.

The gold and silver from Gurpreet and Amanpreet swelled India's medals tally to 82, including 44 golds, 20 silver and 18 bronze.

The duo also won the team gold along with Harsh Gupta with a combined score of 1709. The other gold medals of the day were won by the 50m Rifle Prone Junior team and 25m Standard Pistol Junior team.

The 37 year old Gurpreet won his first ever gold medal in an international competition and bettered the bronze he had sealed in the Asian Championships in the same event 12 years ago in Tehran.

Both Gurpreet and Amanpreet shot identical scores of 572 but Gurpreet's 18 inner circle shots against Amanpreet's 11 ensured the Army shooter finished on top. 25m Rapid Fire Pistol gold medalist Su Lianbofan of China won the bronze. (PTI)

Shami toils hard on red-ball return; East keep North in check at 308/6

Badoni, who had a very good outing in the Delhi Premier League recently, adapted to the demands of the red ball with consummate ease

BENGALURU, Aug 28 : Senior pacer Mohammed Shami was impressive without being incisive but young left-arm spinner Manishi's strikes helped East Zone curb North Zone to 308 for six on the opening day of the Duleep Trophy quarterfinals here on Thursday.

Middle-order batter Ayush Badoni made a stylish 63 off 60 balls on a rather smooth pitch, but other North batters' would rue their failure to kick on after getting solid starts after East bowled by choice.

But the focus was firmly on Shami, who was playing in his first First-Class game since November 2024.

He appeared a bit out of touch in his first two spells, as the archetypal sharpness was conspicuous by its absence, possibly because he was trying to tune his body to the rigours of long-form cricket.

He beat the bat's outside edge a couple of times but the North openers — skipper Ankit Kumar and Shubham Khajuria — negotiated the spell without much difficulty.

Shami's first spell of the day read 5-2-10-0 and the second was 3-0-10-0, both were bowled in the morning session, but he was largely operating in lower gears, trying to assess the conditions and his own body.

But there was a marked difference in his third spell right after lunch (4-2-9-0) as a familiar Shami surfaced — quick and testing the batters' judgement outside the off-stump.

The occasional in-dippers too appeared as Badoni and Nishant Sindhu copped a couple of blows on their pads.

The 34-year-old could have had his first wicket of the day a bit earlier in the fourth spell (5-0-26-1), but Kumar Kushagra dropped Kanhaiya Wadhawan (37) at long-on on 27.



But Shami soon found success as he had Sahil Lotra caught behind off a loose waft outside the off-stump, and that seemed to settle down the veteran.

Shami might not have been threatening every ball as he does when on top of his game and fitness, but the sum total of 17 overs he bowled (1/55) on the day would be very pleasing for him.

He shifted through spells of varying intensity without much discomfort, something that might prompt him to go even harder in the days to come.

It may be recalled that Shami could not board the flight to England for the recent Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy because of his perceived inability to handle long spells in five-day cricket.

But this day might have offered him some bright signs, and for the selectors whenever they sit down to select the squad for the home Test series against the West Indies.

But a shard of credit too should be given to Badoni for sticking to his aggressive game, and his drives on the up were a sight for sore

eyes.

Badoni, who had a very good outing in the Delhi Premier League recently, adapted to the demands of the red ball with consummate ease.

But he fell much against the run of play, getting caught down the leg side while attempting a pull off pacer Mukhtar Hussain.

However, it was a rather just reflection of the day when North batters like Khajuria (26), Ankit (30), Yash Dhull (39) and Nishant (47) could not convert their starts despite scoring at a fair clip.

India pacer Mukesh Kumar had a moment of worry as he had to spend nine overs out of the field to tend to his hamstring between first and second sessions.

But Mukesh returned to the field in the middle session to ease East's concern, whose bowlers leaked plenty of runs in the first phase as North made 139 in 34 overs despite losing three wickets.

All those three wickets were taken by 21-year-old Manishi from Jamshedpur, who was accurate enough to take advantage of batters' false shots. (PTI)

Prannoy bows out of Worlds after draining loss to world No. 2 Antonsen

PARIS, Aug 28 : Indian shuttler HS Prannoy came agonisingly close to pulling off a major upset before bowing out of the BWF World Championships with a gruelling second-round loss to world No. 2 Anders Antonsen of Denmark.

The 2023 bronze-medallist fought for nearly an hour and 30 minutes before going down 8-21, 21-17, 21-23 despite holding two match points on Wednesday night.

"Played a few bad shots towards the end. I should have kept a little more energy and tried to be on the attacking side. In the last 3-4 points, I felt he was on the attack and I gave him a few easy smashes that probably changed the game. "I should have taken a few more chances at the net and played patiently," Prannoy said after the loss.

Ranked 34th in the world, Prannoy bounced back after a sub-par opening game to force a decider. Armed with momentum after winning the second, he continued to push Antonsen to the brink but crucial errors cost him dearly.

"Losing match points always hurts, especially in big events. One match can change the course of a tournament. Beating somebody in form gives you a lot of confidence, but if you are on the other side it takes your entire effort away and you start doubting yourself again."

"I really didn't want to be in that situation," he added.

The 2022 Thomas Cup winner, who is also a world and Asian Games bronze-medallist, has been plagued by a series of health setbacks in recent years.

He battled a chronic stomach disorder, a nagging back injury and even contracted chikungunya right before the Paris Olympics. The 33-year-old had taken a break after the Games.



Opening up on his fitness struggles, Prannoy said: "I've been trying to constantly improve on that front. Game-wise I'm there, I can still play a couple of years more, but fitness-wise I'm not able to keep up with these youngsters."

"The pace is too high and sometimes the body doesn't react as I want it to. It's a tad slower. That's part and parcel of the game — the sport is fast and explosive."

Looking ahead, Prannoy hinted at one final World Championship appearance before his body forces him to take a harder call on his career. (PTI)

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Indian players to assemble in Dubai on September 4 ahead of Asia Cup

NEW DELHI, Aug 28 : The 15-member Indian squad led by Suryakumar Yadav will assemble in Dubai on September 4 for the Asia Cup, which begins on September 9.

In a departure from the usually laid out convention, players will reach Dubai in a staggered manner from their respective locations unlike on other occasions when the team would first assemble in Mumbai before departure.

The decision was taken keeping logistics in mind and also the travelling convenience of the players.

"All the players will arrive in Dubai by September 4 evening and the first nets session will be held on September 5 at the ICC Academy. Factoring in the logistical convenience, the players will be allowed to fly in to Dubai from their respective cities," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"Obviously, a few will travel from Mumbai but to ask some of the others to first come to Mumbai and then fly to Dubai doesn't make sense. In any case, Dubai is a short duration flight compared to other international flights," he added. (PTI)

South Delhi Superstarz edge Purani Dilli 6 to book playoffs spot

NEW DELHI, Aug 28 : South Delhi Superstarz pulled off a thrilling 8-wicket win over Purani Dilli 6, chasing down a mammoth target of 134 in a rain-curtailed 7-over-a-side clash. The contest went right down to the penultimate ball before the Superstarz held their nerves to collect two crucial points and registered a place in the playoffs. Chasing 134, openers Tejasi Dahiya and Anmol Sharma came out all guns blazing, smashing boundaries at will and registering the fastest team fifty of the tournament. Their explosive stand of 122 runs in just 5.5 overs left Purani Dilli 6 shell-shocked.

Tejasi was finally dismissed for a whirlwind 69 off 21 balls, but the damage had already been done. Even after a brief hiccup in the final over, when Vision Panchal was sent back for 6 by Gaurav Saroha, Anmol Sharma stood tall. Showing remarkable composure, Sharma (56 not out off 17) launched a massive six off the second-last delivery to seal victory with a ball to spare. Earlier, after rain delayed the start, Purani Dilli 6 made the most of their seven overs. Despite losing both Vansh Bedi and Samarth Seth, early in the first over to Aman Bharti (2/17 in 2 overs), the middle order came alive. Dev Lakra and Yug Gupta produced a stunning counter-attack, stitching together a blazing 117-run stand for the third wicket. (PTI)

PKL season 12 to kick off with Titans vs Thalaivas game on National Sports Day

VIZAG, Aug 28 : Home favourites Telugu Titans will lock horns with Tamil Thalaivas in the opening game of the season 12 of the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) that kicks off here on Friday.

The league is returning to the city after a gap of seven years.

Bengaluru Bulls and Purneri Paltan play the second match of the day at the Vishwanadh Sports Club. Telugu Titans skipper Vijay Malik said the season is going to be very competitive.

"Every team has strengthened its squad, and the level of preparation across the league is very high. As players, we know that every match

will test us, and that is what is going to make this season of the Pro Kabaddi League the most exciting one yet — no game will be easy, and every win will have to be earned," said Malik.

Star raider Pawan Sehrawat, who will captain the Thalaivas, said starting the season against the home team adds an extra layer of excitement.

"We know the crowd will be strongly behind them, but that only motivates us to work harder. Matches like these set the tone for the season, and we are looking forward to giving the fans a great contest," he said. (PTI)

Admirer of Tendulkar, inspired by Pandya, UAE's Alishan Sharafu ready for India challenge in Asia Cup



MUMBAI, Aug 28 : An admirer of Sachin Tendulkar's genius and inspired by Hardik Pandya's fighting spirit, UAE batter Alishan Sharafu is looking forward to the challenge of facing India in the Asia Cup starting September 9.

UAE is placed in Group A alongside India and Pakistan, with Oman being the fourth team. Sharafu said the hosts being clubbed with heavyweights like India and Pakistan is a great learning opportunity. India and the UAE will clash on September 10.

"I wouldn't say it's any pressure or nervousness because you want to do well against these teams. We are looking at it as an opportunity. India, obviously (are) one of the best sides in world cricket right now, (so) who wouldn't want to do well?" he said in an interaction organised by Sony Sports, the official broadcasters of the tournament.

"We do not necessarily want to focus too much on the opponent and we want to stick to what we want to do, and focus on just playing good cricket. If we back ourselves, then anything could be possible."

"Similarly with Pakistan as well. Yes, they are missing a few names (Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan), but, they are still very good players so (we would) just take it one game at a time," he added.

The 22-year-old Sharafu said he grew up admiring players like Tendulkar, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers, but draws a lot of inspiration from Hardik Pandya and Ben Stokes.

"Hardik is one player that I really admire. I like the way he plays and the calmness and composure that he offers to his team. He's a fighter; he has had his ups and downs. As an athlete, that's one quality that you have to possess just looking at the way he goes about his cricket, it's just ad-

mirable," he said.

"I've looked up to Ben Stokes and Hardik Pandya for just the fighters that they've been and (all that) they offer," he added. With the T20 series win over Bangladesh in May, UAE have gained in confidence. Sharafu said nonetheless it would be a challenge to ace the hot and humid conditions in Dubai and Abu Dhabi — the two venues of the tournament.

Sharafu, whose unbeaten 68 helped UAE record only their second series win over an ICC Full Member this year, said the triumph over Bangladesh will hold his team in good stead in the eight-team competition.

"It's great for our confidence as a team, knowing that we can go out there and beat some of these big teams that play Test cricket. Even in that series, we could have beaten them 3-0 but we missed out in the first game."

"The players are in a really good space knowing that on their day they can beat these big teams," he said.

"I feel that it's going to be relatively difficult for spinners with how humid it has been. We've seen in the last few practice games that we've played, spinners have been finding it difficult to grip the ball a little more because of how humid it's been; just sweat and moisture in the air," he added.

Sharafu, who averages over 30 in 50 T20Is with a strike rate of nearly 134, finished as the fourth-highest run-scorer in T20Is in 2024 with 770 runs. He is hoping to find his rhythm in one-day cricket as well.

"I've had a little more success and better stats in T20s. I started off relatively young into international cricket, so initially in 50 overs, I batted in a lot of different numbers," he said. (PTI)