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VP polls: Notification issued, nomination process begins

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: The Election Commission of India has issued the official notification for the Vice-Presidential Election 2025, setting into motion the nomination process for one of the country's highest constitutional offices.

According to an official statement, the notification was released under sub-sections (4) and (1) of Section 4 of the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952, and published in the Gazette of India on August 7.

It is being republished in the respective State Gazettes in their official languages to ensure wider dissemination of the election schedule and guidelines.

The process has been initiated to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on July 21, who stepped down citing health reasons.

Though his term was due to end in August 2027, the mid-term nature of this election entitles the incoming Vice President to a full five-year term, as per constitutional provisions.

In line with the Commission's directions, the Returning Officer for the election—Secretary General of the Rajya Sabha—has issued a public notice under Rule 3 of the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Rules, 1974, in Form 1.

This notice has also been published in the Gazette of India and republished across State Gazettes.

The last date for filing nominations is August 21, and nominations are to be submitted to the Returning Officer or Assistant Returning Officer at Room No RS-28, First Floor, Parliament House, New Delhi, between 11 AM and 3 PM on any working day, excluding public holidays.

The nomination must include a certified copy of the candidate's entry in the electoral roll of a Parliamentary constituency and the receipt of the ₹15,000 security deposit, which may be paid either in cash to the RO or through the Reserve Bank (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HC directs those facing eviction from Golaghat forests to submit land rights proof

74 people claim possession of land since forefathers' time

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: The Gauhati High Court has directed those facing eviction from Doyang and South Nambur forests in Assam's Golaghat district to submit within 10 days proof of land rights or vacate the land.

Chief Justice Ashutosh Kumar, hearing the petition of 74 people claiming they have been in possession of the land since the time of their forefathers, also directed the state advocate general to submit an affidavit by a forest officer stating that the appellants have been residing in the reserved forest area without any entitlement and are liable to be evicted forthwith.

The petitioners challenged the issuance of notices by the district authority asking them to vacate their land within seven days, alleging that such action of the respondents is in contravention of certain provisions of the Assam Land and



Revenue Regulation, 1886 and the Assam Land Policy, 2019 as also the guidelines of the Supreme Court's order of December 13, 2024.

A group of 59 people and another group of about 15 people had filed two separate petitions and both the appeals were taken up to-

gether for hearing since the issues involved in these appeals are identical and related to the eviction of encroachers from reserved forest areas.

The claim of the petitioners was that they have been in possession of the land in question since the time of their forefathers and such

notices have been served upon them without any specific demarcation as to whether the land in question, said to be in illegal occupation of the appellants/writ petitioners, is a revenue or forest land.

The contention of the appellants in these appeals is that no procedure has been followed for their eviction from their houses, which had been allocated to them under some scheme of the government in the past. The court observed that no documentary evidence had been submitted to support these claims.

The state advocate general, however, contested the petitioners' submission and stated that the appellants are encroachers in the reserve forests, namely, Doyang and South Nambur reserve forests.

He submitted that after the notification converting the forests to reserved forests and its proclamation by the officer concerned, any

non-forest activity in reserved forests would be a criminal offence for which a penalty has been provided under the Assam Forest Regulation, 1891.

He further submitted that approximately 29 lakh bighas (around 9.5 lakh acres) of land in the reserved forests in the entire state have been occupied by encroachers and with the drive undertaken by the government for removing such encroachers, more than one lakh bighas (around 33,000 acres) of land has been cleared of encroachment.

The advocate general contended that none of the appellants are flood-affected or landless, or forest dwellers, but are squatters and encroachers who, by their continuous illegal activities, have been damaging the natural habitat of wildlife. The Doyang and Nambur reserve forests had (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

BJP to emerge as strong force in the BTR polls: Himanta



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said that the BJP is set to emerge as a strong force in the upcoming election in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

Talking to reporters, Sarma said, "I have been touring different constituencies in the Bodoland region for the last few days. I have attended programs in at least 12 constituencies and I have witnessed the massive support for the BJP. Today, in Dotma, I saw a large crowd attending the program and I am immensely happy to see such a huge gathering."

The Chief Minister argued that the atmosphere is in the favour of the BJP for the upcoming polls in the Bodoland region.

"I can sense that the BJP is going to perform very well in the local polls. The fate of elections changes every day. If the elections are held today in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), the BJP will come up with a spectacular performance," he said.

Sarma also asserted that he will complete touring in all 40 constituencies in the Bodoland region by August 20.

He stated, "On August 21, I can clearly say on how many seats the BJP will field candidates here."

The CM also said that the elections will be held for the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) before the Durga Puja and a new regime will take the charge by September 28.

"Durga Puja will commence on September 29 and before that all formalities regarding BTC polls, counting will be completed. I can assure that (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Russia's Shoigu meets Doval, says Moscow committed to further active cooperation with India



MOSCOW, Aug 7: Russia is committed to further active cooperation with India to form a more just and sustainable world order and ensure the supremacy of international law, Russian Security Council Secretary Sergey Shoigu said Thursday as he met NSA Ajit Doval here.

Doval arrived here on Wednesday to hold crucial talks on bilateral

energy and defence ties and to prepare the ground for President Vladimir Putin's visit to India later this year.

His visit commenced on a day when US President Donald Trump issued an executive order slapping an additional 25 per cent tariff on Indian goods as a penalty for buying Russian oil, doubling it to 50 per

cent.

During his meeting with Doval, Shoigu said Russia and India are linked by "strong, time-tested ties of friendship."

"A multi-level trust-based political dialogue is effectively functioning between our countries now. It is based on regular contacts between President Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is important to determine the dates for the next full-scale negotiations between our leaders," he was quoted as saying by the state-run TASS news agency.

On November 19, 2024, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed that Putin would visit India.

Shoigu said that for Moscow, the most important thing is to comprehensively strengthen the special privileged strategic partnership with India, which is based on "mutual respect, trust, equal consideration of each other's interests, and the desire to promote (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

114 families evicted from village grazing reserve land in Lakhimpur: Officials

LAKHIMPUR, Aug 7: The Assam government on Thursday evicted 114 families who had allegedly encroached on village grazing reserve (VGR) and cleared 78.21 acres (237 bighas) in Lakhimpur district, officials said.

The eviction drive in Phukondoli village under Naoboicha revenue circle was conducted under heavy security cover.

The families were served notices on July 31, and most of the people had cleared their belongings, with 25 per cent of them already leaving the village, a district official said.

The village was in a low-lying area, and the settlers had allegedly dug up ponds for carrying out fishery business with each family earning Rs 5 to 10 lakh annually, he said.

Some of the villagers claimed that they had land rights and had lived there for more than two decades, but the district authorities

said the area was declared a VGR many decades ago.

The evicted families belonged to Bengali-speaking Muslim community.

This was the eighth eviction drive carried out in the state since June by the state government. The largest of these took place last week at Uriamghat in Golaghat district, where 1,500 hectares of forest land were cleared, displacing around 1,500 families.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma earlier claimed over 160 sq km of land had been cleared of encroachments since his government took over in May 2021, affecting around 50,000 people.

The CM had also said all unauthorised occupation of forest land, VGR, professional grazing reserve, satras, namghars, and other public areas would be cleared in a phased manner. Most of the people displaced due (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Parliament passes bill to facilitate cargo shipping along Indian coast

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: The Coastal Shipping Bill, 2025, which aims to facilitate cargo shipping along the Indian coastline, was passed by Parliament on Thursday, with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod to the bill.

The bill, which was passed by Lok Sabha on April 3, seeks to unlock the full potential of India's vast and strategic coastline, providing a dedicated legal framework for coastal trade.

The bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha by a voice vote, amid Opposition's protest against Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar.

Moving the bill for passage, Union Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said the bill would reduce the compliance burden for Indian ships, in line with the concept of "ease of doing business", and ensure supply chain security for the

country.

"It will unlock the full potential of India's coastline... To support the goal of growing India's coastal cargo share to 230 million tonne by 2030 we need a framework that minimises regulations while maximising facilitation of growth opportunity in coastal tracks," Sonowal said.

He said presently, regulation and licensing of coastal shipping was governed under the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958.

"This bill provides a holistic, forward looking and progressive framework suited to today's commercial realities in line with globally prevalent practices," the minister said.

A brief debate on the bill also took place amid protests and sloganeering in the House. Golla Baburao (YSRCP), M Thambidurai (AIADMK), Kalpana Saini (BJP), Milind (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India will never compromise on farmers' interest, ready to pay heavy price: PM

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: In a subtle message directed at US President Donald Trump, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that India will never compromise on the interests of its farmers, fishermen and dairy sector, and declared he was prepared to bear a significant personal cost if necessary.

The statement came a day after Trump ratcheted up tariffs on Indian goods to 50 per cent, even as the two nations discuss a bilateral trade deal. The trade deal has been stuck over the US demand for greater access to India's agricultural and dairy market.

The US wants reduced tariffs on products like corn, soybeans, apples, almonds and ethanol, as well as increased access for US dairy products. New Delhi is, however, resisting these demands as these will have a direct bearing on farmers.

"Hamare liye apne kisaanon ka



hit sarvoch prathamika hai. Bharat apne kisaanon, pashu-paalkon aur machhuare bhai-bahanon ke hiton ke saath kabhi bhi samjhuta nahin karega. (For us, the interests of farmers are our top priority. India will never compromise on the interests of its farmers, dairy farmers and fishermen)," Modi said.

He was addressing a global conference to mark the birth centenary of late agri-scientist M S Swaminathan, the architect of India's Green Revolution.

To protect farmers' interests, the prime minister said he was ready to personally pay a huge price.

"Main jaanta hoon ki vyaktigat roop se mujhe bahut badi keemat chukanaa padegi. Lekin main iske liye taiyaar hoon. (I know that I will personally have to pay a heavy price. But I am ready for it)," Modi said.

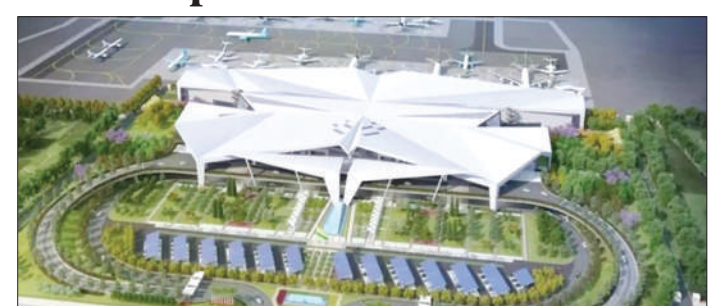
India today is ready (to pay the price) for the fishermen and dairy farmers, he stressed.

The US has further hiked the trade tariffs on Indian goods to put pressure on India to reduce its dependency on Russia for crude oil.

On the occasion, Modi also released a commemorative coin and stamp in honour of the legendary scientist.

Outlining his vision for Indian agriculture, the Prime Minister emphasised the need to ensure nutritional security, crop diversification and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Guwahati airport's int'l terminal to be opened in Nov: Himanta



GUWAHATI, Aug 7: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said that the international terminal of Guwahati airport will be opened to travellers in November this year.

Sarma accompanied a delegation from Bhutan to review the progress of the construction of the new terminal on Wednesday night.

"It will be opened in November and we will invite Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inaugurate this state-of-the-art modern infrastructure," he said. The Bhutan delegation from the Gelephu Mindful City also expressed their appreciation for the new terminal building, which will help enhance connectivity with the neighbouring country, Sarma said.

"On the verge of completion, it will boost connectivity in the Northeast and also enhance connectivity for our neighbour Bhutan. Come November, get ready to fly into a whole new experience," the CM posted on X.

Sarma also announced the construction of five additional foot overbridges between Khanapara and Jalukbari in Guwahati to facilitate safe road crossing for pedestrians. (PTI)

Over 8,000 weavers benefit from NABARD's initiatives as Assam marks National Handloom Day

NABARD empowers Assam's handloom weavers

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: Over 8,000 handloom weavers across Assam have benefited from the various livelihood and sectoral development initiatives implemented by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in recent years.

This was highlighted during a state-level programme organised in Guwahati to mark National Handloom Day 2025.

The event, held at Hotel Vivanta, was themed "Handloom for Reinventing the Rural Economy of Assam" and brought together a wide range of stakeholders to deliberate on the role of the handloom sector in the state's rural economic development.

According to an official statement, the celebration was graced by



Dilip Kumar Borah, IAS, Secretary (Finance, and Transformation & Development), Government of Assam, who attended as the chief guest.

In his address, Borah praised NABARD's Assam Regional Office

led by chief general manager Loken Das for their continuous efforts towards empowering weavers and uplifting the handloom sector.

He called the present phase a "golden era" for Assamese handloom, citing national and interna-

tional recognition given to the traditional textile.

He referred to the Prime Minister's use of the Assamese phulam gamosa on global platforms and the chief minister's focus on policies that support the recognition and commercial development of the sector.

Borah drew attention to the Handloom Census of 2019-20, which reported that Assam is home to 12.83 lakh weavers, of whom over 90 per cent are women.

The state also houses around 12.54 lakh active handlooms.

He further commended the government's digital initiative, the Swanirbhar Naari portal, which has seen registration of 5.64 lakh weavers and marketing of over 11 lakh handloom items. Government interventions (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SHILLONG, Aug 7: The North Eastern Council (NEC) on Thursday said it has released over ₹ 11.31 crore during July this year to various central and regional agencies for implementation of development projects across the Northeastern region, including Meghalaya and Sikkim.

A NEC statement said the funds were allocated to support a wide range of initiatives in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, health infrastructure, human resource development, and cultural preservation.

Among the significant allocations, ₹ 2.09 crore was released for the establishment of Kiwi orchards in the region, while ₹ 1.81 crore was sanctioned for the promotion of commercial bamboo plantations, it said.

A sum of ₹ 1.28 crore was earmarked for the establishment of food processing units in Assam, Manipur, and Meghalaya.

The NEC also released ₹ 1.18 crore for setting up a Banana tissue culture facility in the region, ₹ 94 lakh for empowering marginalised women in Sixth Schedule Areas through life skill education, and ₹ 80 lakh for the promotion of Agarwood plantations.

Further, ₹ 83.75 lakh was allocated for research-or-

ented studies and documentation of Kokborok language and literature, while ₹ 74.85 lakh was released for integrated Arecanut and Turmeric plantations.

The promotion of Avocado, Persimmon, and Blueberry orchards received ₹ 49.90 lakh, while ₹ 94.03 lakh was allocated for the establishment of Stabilised interlocking block making enterprises in the Northeast.

An amount of ₹ 17.58 lakh was also disbursed under the NEC Merit Scholarship scheme, it said.

The NEC reiterated its commitment to timely disbursement of funds and the smooth implementation of developmental projects across the region, with special focus on enhancing economic opportunities and strengthening infrastructure in Meghalaya and other Northeastern states.

The North Eastern Council (NEC) has released ₹ 3.21 crore in July for key development projects in Meghalaya, with a focus on health infrastructure, rural development, and sports, an official said.

According to the official, ₹ 1.46 crore was released for the construction of patient lodging and staff quarters at Mawdingdiang (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

No logic behind Trump's 50 pc tariff; talks continue with US: MEA official

MUMBAI, Aug 7: There is no logic or reason behind the Trump administration's "unilateral" move to impose 50 per cent tariffs on Indian exports to the US, a senior Indian diplomat said on Thursday.

Negotiations between the US and India continue even after the move, Secretary, Economic Relations, Ministry of External Affairs, Dammu Ravi told reporters hours after Washington doubled the tariffs on Indian goods.

"This is a unilateral decision. I don't think there is any logic or reason in the way it is done," Ravi told reporters on the sidelines of the LIIDE Brazil India Forum here.

"Perhaps, this is a phase we have to overcome. The negotiations are still going on. So, we are confident that solutions will be found in the course of time in looking at mutually beneficial partnerships," he said while speaking on the sidelines of an event here.

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday slapped additional tariffs, apparently peeved at New Delhi's import of Russian oil. The move is likely to hit various sectors, like textiles, marine and leather exports.

In its first reaction to the move, India called it "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable".

Ravi said the Ministry of Commerce is leading the negotiation from the Indian side, and some solutions were in sight when Trump moved in with the executive order, hiking the tariffs.



"We were very close to finding a solution, and I think that momentum has taken a temporary pause, but it will continue," he said.

It can be noted that, as per plans announced earlier, a team of US officials is slated to visit India later this month for talks on a trade agreement.

Ravi said India and the US have been strategic partners, having a complementary relationship for some time, and underlined that businesses and leaders on both sides are looking at trade opportunities. The high tariff will not have any detrimental impact on the Indian industry, Ravi said, stressing that it will not "pull back" or derail India Inc.

The Indian official said whenever any country faces tariff "walls", it looks for new markets where it can trade with, and the Middle East, Latin America, Africa

and South Asia are among the regions India will target.

"If the US becomes difficult to export to, you will automatically look at other opportunities," he said.

Underlining that all countries are impacted by the tariff decisions being taken by US President Donald Trump, Ravi exuded confidence that solutions will evolve for the challenges.

"This is, in my view, a temporary aberration, a temporary problem that the country will face. In the course of time, we are confident that the world will find solutions to it. Like-minded countries will look for cooperation and economic engagement that will be mutually beneficial for all sides," he said.

With "BRICS currency" also being Trump's subject of ire, Ravi denied any move to avoid the US

dollar, but added that they are seeking alternatives for bilateral trade.

After Covid, there is a shortage of 'hard currency', which is resulting in moves to trade in own currency, he said, adding that work on this aspect is on bilaterally and at the BRICS levels.

The political leadership of Brazil and India is conscious of the need to increase trade, Ravi said, hoping that both countries can work in a "complementary manner".

The recently concluded BRICS Summit in Brazil, attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was extremely successful, he noted.

India and Brazil have a lot in common, including being credible democracies. And there are bilateral opportunities in many sectors like fossil fuels, where the South American country has the reserves and the Asian country has to manage rising demand, Ravi pointed out.

Other areas where collaborations are possible include renewable energy, biofuel advances, solar, hydro and green energy.

Ravi said the idea of direct cash benefit transfer, which has helped save thousands of crore in India by plugging leakages, was borrowed from Brazil.

Similarly, biofuel, where India has announced a compulsory blending of some fuels, is also owed to Brazil. (PTI)

Stock markets weather Trump tariff storm; Sensex, Nifty close higher

MUMBAI, Aug 7: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty staged a comeback on Thursday following the last-hour buying in IT and banking shares, even as US President Donald Trump slapped an additional 25 per cent duty on Indian goods weighed on investor sentiment.

Rebounding around 926 points from the day's low, the 30-share BSE Sensex edged higher by 79.27 points or 0.10 per cent to settle at 80,623.26. The index traded in the red for most of the session and hit a low of 79,811.29.

However, flag-end buying helped recover losses and touch a high of 80,737.55.

The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 21.95 points or 0.09 per cent to 24,596.15.

The latest US tariff action, imposition of an additional 25 per cent duty to take overall tariffs to 50 per cent on Indian goods over New Delhi's continued imports of Russian oil, is likely to hit sectors such as textiles, marine and leather exports hard. India has slammed the action, calling it "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable".

India will attract the highest US

tariff of 50 per cent, along with Brazil.

Among Sensex firms, Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, Eternal, Axis Bank, Maruti, Tata Steel, HDFC Bank and Asian Paints were the gainers.

However, Adani Ports, Trent, Tata Motors, Hindustan Unilever and NTPC were among the laggards.

"Domestic equities recovered sharply from the intra-day lows amid a volatile weekly expiry day. Although the earlier trade was weighed down by broad-based selling following steep US tariff hikes on India, sentiment improved toward the close as reports of potential peace talks involving Trump, Putin, and Zelensky which raised hopes of a softer US stance on trade.

"This renewed optimism triggered a strong rebound in auto, pharma, metals, and energy sectors and aided the market in recalling its trajectory and concluding in the green," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.30 per cent while smallcap index dipped 0.18 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT jumped 0.93 per cent, IT (0.73 per cent), healthcare (0.53 per cent), tech (0.41 per cent) and auto (0.25 per cent).

Telecommunication dropped 0.59 per cent, capital goods (0.41 per cent), commodities (0.37 per cent), power (0.36 per cent) and industrials (0.24 per cent).

As many as 2,193 stocks declined while 1,844 advanced and 154 remained unchanged on the BSE.

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

Markets in Europe were trading in the green. The US markets ended higher on Wednesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 4,999.10 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.72 per cent to USD 67.37 a barrel.

On Wednesday, the Sensex fell 166.26 points or 0.21 per cent to settle at 80,543.99. The Nifty dipped 75.35 points or 0.31 per cent to close at 24,574.20. (PTI)

Gold jumps ₹3,600 to hit record as tariff concerns push investors to safe haven

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: Gold prices rallied ₹ 3,600 to hit a record high of ₹ 1,02,620 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday as investors turned to safe-haven assets after the US administration announced a 25 per cent additional tariff on Indian imports.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at ₹ 99,020 per 10 grams on Wednesday. In the national capital, gold of 99.5 per cent purity rallied by ₹ 3,600 to hit a lifetime high of ₹ 1,02,200 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday. It had settled at ₹ 98,600 per 10 grams in the previous market close. "Gold prices have risen to the upper end of the weekly range on Thursday, driven by renewed trade concerns that have increased demand for traditional safe-haven assets.

"Additionally, the US administration imposed an additional 25 per cent tariff on Indian imports, intensifying the trade tensions between the two economies," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Also, silver prices jumped ₹ 1,500 to ₹ 1,14,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday. The white metal had ended at ₹ 1,12,500 per kg on Wednesday, according to the association.

On the MCX, the most traded precious metal futures for October contracts climbed ₹ 893 or 0.88 per cent to hit a fresh peak of ₹ 1,02,155 per 10 grams, during the day. Subsequently, the December contracts appreciated by ₹ 880 or 0.86 per cent to hit a lifetime high of ₹ 1,03,047 per 10 grams on the bourse. In addition, silver contracts for September delivery increased ₹ 1,503 or 1.32 per cent to ₹ 1,15,158 per kilogram on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

74 people claim

been notified about 100 years ago and never in the past, the appellants had made any claim for settlement, or for their right for 'jhum' or shifting cultivation, or else it would have been decided by the forest authorities, he said. He also submitted that the forest area in question has been demarcated and only such persons, who are found to be residing in such demarcated areas, have been issued notices. The chief justice observed that, barring a statement by the petitioners that they have been residing in the houses constructed over the years, which do not fall in the reserved forest area, no documentary proof for such a statement has been given.

"However, in order to satisfy ourselves that the appellants are not forcefully and illegally evicted from their place of residence, we permit them to bring on record any document to establish the claim of their having been allocated land in the reserved forest area for the construction of houses," the chief justice observed.

The court extended the time given to them to clear the forest area or submit documentary evidence of their land rights by another 10 days, to be counted from August 5, the day the order was passed, and till then no coercive steps shall be taken against the appellants.

The court fixed the next date of hearing on August 14. The state government has carried out seven eviction drives since June this year, affecting more than 50,000 people and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had earlier said that all unauthorised occupation of forest land, VGR (Village Grazing Reserve), PGR (Professional Grazing Reserve), Satras, Namghars, and other public areas would be cleared in a phased manner.

Most of the people displaced due to the eviction drive are Bengali-speaking Muslim communities who claim that their ancestors had moved and settled in the areas where drives were carried out after their land in the 'Char' or riverine areas got washed away due to erosion by the Brahmaputra. (PTI)

VP polls: Notification

of India or a Government Treasury. Nomination forms may be collected from the same office during working hours. Scrutiny of the nomination papers will take place on August 22 at 11 AM in Room No F-100, Sangoshthi-2, First Floor, Parliament House. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is August 25.

If the election is contested, polling will be conducted on September 9 from 10 AM to 5 PM at Room No F-101, Vasudha, First Floor, Parliament House, New Delhi. The Vice President is elected through a system of Proportional Representation by means of a single transferable vote, and voting is done by secret ballot. Members of both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, including nominated members of the Upper House, are eligible to vote.

The effective strength of the electoral college is currently 781, with 543 members in the Lok Sabha (one seat vacant in Basirhat, West Bengal) and 240 members in the Rajya Sabha (six seats currently vacant). Of these six, four are from Jammu and Kashmir, while the remaining two are from Punjab and Jharkhand—vacated following the resignation of AAP leader Sanjeev Arora and the demise of JMM veteran Shibui Soren, respectively.

The winning candidate will require a minimum of 391 votes, assuming full participation.

The BJP-led NDA is comfortably placed in this election, with support from 293 of the 542 Lok Sabha members and 129 out of 240 members in the Rajya Sabha. (With inputs from PTI)

Russia's Shoigu meets Doval

a unifying agenda." "We are committed to further active cooperation to form a new, more just and sustainable world order, ensure the rule of international law and jointly combat modern challenges and threats," Shoigu said.

Doval expressed hope that the summit meeting would provide new directions for the development of bilateral relations and produce a "tangible and substantial" result of the talks, TASS reported.

According to local reports, Doval is likely to meet top Russian officials to discuss defence and economic cooperation. Separately, Kremlin foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov said that Russia will brief NSA Doval on US special envoy Steve Witkoff's talks with President Putin, following which an agreement has been reached to hold a US-Russian summit as soon as next week. (PTI)

114 families evicted

to the eviction drives are Bengali-speaking Muslims, who claim that their ancestors had moved and settled in the areas where drives were carried out after their land in the 'Char' or riverine areas was washed away due to erosion by the Brahmaputra. (PTI)

BJP to emerge as strong

the new team will take charge in the BTC by September 27 or 28—one or two days prior to Durga Puja festival," he mentioned.

Sarma further said that he will not comment anything adverse against any opponents in the run-up of BTC polls. He stated, "I will not say anything against Hagrama Mahillary and nor I will comment against Pramod Bodo and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) as it is a constituent of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)."

Reacting to the distribution of BJP tickets, Sarma said, "The state party president Dilip Saikia will decide on candidatures of aspirants for the BTC polls."

India will never compromise

development of climate-resilient crop varieties and technology integration.

He called for developing drought-tolerant, heat-resistant, and flood-adaptive crops while pushing for AI and machine learning integration in agricultural systems.

The Prime Minister suggested that real-time decision support systems could be made accessible in every district to forecast crop yields, monitor pests, and guide farming practices.

Modi called for increased research on crop rotation and soil-specific suitability and further stressed the need to develop affordable soil testing tools and effective nutrient management techniques.

He also talked about the need to intensify efforts towards solar-powered micro-irrigation and stated that drip systems and precision irrigation must be made more widespread and effective.

Stating that the government has always considered the strength of farmers as the foundation of national progress, Modi highlighted that several schemes like PM-KISAN, PM Fasal Bima Yojana, PM Krishi Sinchai Yojana, PM Kisan Sampada Yojana, creation of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and recent PM Dhan Dhanaya Yojana for the all-around development of the farm and allied sector.

"The policies formulated in recent years were not merely about assistance, but about instilling confidence among farmers," he said, reiterating the government's continuous efforts to increase farmers' income, reduce production cost, and create new sources of revenue.

Modi said financial support to cooperatives and self-help groups has given fresh momentum to the rural economy. The e-NAM platform has made it easier for farmers to sell their produce.

The event honoured Swaminathan, whom Modi described as a visionary whose contributions transcended any single era. The prime minister recalled Swaminathan's prescient focus on forgotten crops like millets and his early warnings about chemical overuse in farming.

"Dr Swaminathan believed the solutions to climate change and nutritional challenges lie in the very crops that have been forgotten," Modi said, underlining how the scientist's work anticipated today's climate adaptation priorities. (PTI)

Parliament passes bill

Deora (Shiv Sena), Rambhai H Mokaria (BJP), Masthan Rao Yadav Beedha (TDP), Birendra Prasad Baishya (AGP), and Darshana Singh (BJP) participated in the debate.

While participating in the debate, Thambidurai raised the issue of Tamil fisherfolk, and the Katchatheevu island. DMK MP Tiruchi Siva however raised a point of order and said the AIADMK MP's speech was not related to the bill, and should be expunged. Siva's point of order came as the Chair had instructed that anything unrelated to the bill would not go on record. (PTI)

NEC releases ₹ 11.31 crore

near NEIGRIHMS here. Another ₹ 1.30 crore was allocated for the construction of an indoor stadium in Jongksha, while ₹ 44.32 lakh was sanctioned for providing key identified services in Mawshynrut block of West Khasi Hills district.

The NEC also highlighted that Meghalaya's tourism sector witnessed notable developments during the first quarter of 2025-26 financial year.

Among the major projects is the construction of tourism infrastructure at Laitlyngkot (Lamlyer) in East Khasi Hills, which aims to develop a comprehensive tourist resort with a spa, adventure activities, a children's playground, approach roads, beautification and landscaping facilities, the official said.

Another significant project, the Tea Boutique and Eco-tourist lodge at Umsning in Ri-Bhoi district, was completed on June 13, 2025.

Designed to promote tea growers and create employment for local youth, the facility also serves as an educational hub and supports tea marketing initiatives while accommodating visiting tourists.

The NEC reiterated its commitment to timely fund disbursement to ensure the successful implementation of development projects aimed at strengthening the state's infrastructure and boosting economic growth. (PTI)

NABARD empowers Assam's

including raw material support, minimum support prices (MSP), plans for an Integrated Handloom Park at Kaziranga, and Silk Tourism initiatives in Sualkuchi and other areas were also highlighted as crucial steps for sustaining the sector. Delivering the keynote address, NABARD CGM Loken Das outlined the organisation's ongoing contributions to Assam's handloom development.

He stated that NABARD has extended grant support of over ₹528 lakh in recent years, enabling over 8,000 weavers to benefit from a range of programmes including skill development, rural enterprise promotion, marketing infrastructure creation, and formation of Off-Farm Producer Organisations (OFPOs). He also informed that NABARD had supported the Geographical Indication (GI) registration of handloom products and the facilitation of authorised users under GI.

Looking ahead, Das shared that a Handloom Roadmap for Assam is being prepared by NABARD in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee. The roadmap will serve as a strategic plan for the long-term and sustainable development of the handloom ecosystem in the state. The event also featured remarks from Sushmita Phukan, regional director of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), who appreciated NABARD's role in credit facilitation and urged further promotion of eco-friendly and sustainable local weaving practices.

Prabhas Bose, chief general manager of State Bank of India (SBI), highlighted the critical role of Self Help Group (SHG) financing and the need for convergence between banking services and government schemes to reinforce the growth of the handloom sector. To facilitate constructive dialogue, the programme included two thematic panel discussions—one focusing on the challenges confronting Assam's handloom sector, and the other on the sector's potential in rejuvenating the rural economy.

Experts, policymakers, weavers, and financial institutions participated in the discussions, sharing perspectives on overcoming structural gaps and leveraging opportunities for growth. As part of the event, NABARD-supported weavers displayed their handloom products at a special exhibition, offering visitors a glimpse into the richness of Assam's textile tradition. A dedicated stall by TRIFED also showcased tribal weaving, reinforcing the role of tribal artisans in the state's broader handloom landscape.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

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

No. C/S-10,143/2025/1074

Dated: 5/8/2025

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Superintending Engineer PWD(R&B), Diphu Circle-1, Diphu, on behalf of Governor of Assam invites tender for the following works under PWD, Diphu Roads Division, Diphu at the estimated amount shown against the name of each estimate, from class-1 (A,B,C) contractors of PWD(R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu. Details may be seen at the office of the undersigned during office hours from 7/08/2025 to 27/08/2025. The last Date/Time for receipt of tender will be upto 3.00 PM on 27/08/2025.

1. Construction of road from Taralangso 4-lane to Sodar Engti village under Annual Action Plan, KAAC for the year 2025-26. Estimated amount: Rs 1,45,00,000.00

2. Construction of road from NH-329 to Sedeng Terang village under Annual Action Plan, KAAC for the year 2025-26. Estimated amount: Rs 1,35,00,000.00

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

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

Memo No. C/S-10,143/2025/1074(A)

Dated: 5/8/2025

CM Sarma addresses Vijay Sankalp rallies in Kokrajhar

Peace and development in BTR top agenda as CM Sarma rallies support ahead of BTC polls



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 7: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday addressed two Vijay Sankalp rallies held at Ramfalbil and Fakiragram in Kokrajhar district, drawing large gatherings of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers and supporters.

The rallies, organised by the BJP, were aimed at strengthening the party's base in the Bodoland

Territorial Region (BTR) ahead of the upcoming Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections.

Speaking at Ramfalbil under Dotma BTC constituency, the chief minister outlined the party's roadmap for peace, development, and inclusive growth in the region.

He described the restoration of peace in BTR as the "single biggest achievement" of the BJP-

led governments at the Centre and in Assam.

"Since the BJP assumed power in Delhi and Dispur, not a single person has died due to gun violence in BTR. This marks a historic departure from the past, when nearly 4,000 lives were lost and numerous families displaced due to conflict," Sarma said.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to lasting peace, stability, and holistic development in BTR, ensuring that welfare schemes from both the state and central governments reach all communities equitably.

The rally was attended by cabinet minister Ashok Singhal, BJP MLAs, Executive Members of BTC, MCLAs, and other senior party functionaries.

Later in the day, the chief minister addressed a similar gathering at the Fakiragram playground, continuing his outreach efforts in the run-up to the BTC elections.

BJP welcomes new members in Bokajan amid push for political consolidation



HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Aug 7: In a continued effort to strengthen its presence in the hill districts of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, the ruling BJP, which holds power both in the state and the Karbi An-

glong Autonomous Council (KAAC), welcomed a fresh batch of political workers from opposition parties.

At a joining ceremony held at Hanjlangso Pathu Aklam under Bokajan Legislative Assembly

constituency, several workers from the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) and the Congress formally joined the BJP.

Chief Executive Member of KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang, who attended the programme as chief guest, welcomed the new members into the party.

He also assured that the development of Sarupathar Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) constituency would be prioritised.

"All roads in the area will be repaired soon," he said, adding that grievances in villages such as Sinasing Lekthe, Habe Timung, and Koi Terang would be addressed.

Also present at the event were Sarupathar BJP Mandal president Silarson Rongpi; MLAs Darsing Ronghang and Bidyasing Englang; KAAC Executive Members Suriya Rongphar, Madhurya Dhekial Phukon, and Madhuram Lekthe; along with MAC members Kadam Terangpi and Shorbon Kumar Telenga.

Statues of Lachit Borphukan proposed in Rajasthan

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: In a move aimed at fostering national unity and honouring India's unsung heroes, the Rajasthan Foundation (Assam and Northeast Chapter) has proposed the installation of statues of Ahom general Lachit Borphukan in Jaipur and Kota.

The proposal is part of a broader initiative to commemorate the 17th-century military commander, widely revered in Assam for his role in resisting Mughal expansion during the Battle of Saraighat in 1671.

According to an official communication, the initiative is being planned through the collective efforts of the Assamese community living outside the state.

Public contributions and participation are expected to play a key role in bringing the project to fruition.

Jaipur, the cultural and administrative capital of Rajasthan, and Kota, a major hub for higher secondary education drawing students from across India, have been identified as the proposed sites for the statues.

The Rajasthan Government has extended its support to the proposal.

Rajasthan's Education Minister Madan Dilawar has reportedly endorsed the initiative and assured the necessary cooperation.

Discussions have also included a proposal to introduce Lachit Borphukan's legacy into Rajasthan's school curriculum. The Education Minister is expected to forward a formal recommendation to the Centre for further action in this regard.

Organisers of the initiative have expressed the hope that the Government of Assam will also lend support to the project, describing it as a step towards strengthening cultural integration and historical awareness across states.

The installation of the statues and curricular inclusion are intended not only to highlight Borphukan's historical significance but also to promote a broader sense of shared heritage and national unity.

Karbi Anglong celebrates 11th National Handloom Day with focus on rural weavers

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 7: The Handloom & Textiles Department of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) celebrated the 11th National Handloom Day at the conference hall of Jirsong Asong on Thursday, with the theme "Know Your Weaves."

The event brought together departmental officials, handloom entrepreneurs, cooperative society members, and local weavers to discuss ways to promote indigenous weaving traditions and strengthen rural handloom economies.

Speaking on the occasion, Nirupama Timungpi, Joint Secretary of the Handloom & Textiles Department, said the theme encouraged people to appreciate and understand the traditional textiles produced by local weavers.

She informed that the department plans to conduct a rural survey to create a database of weavers — both those who own looms and those who do not — in order to provide targeted support.

Joint Director Tapash Kumar Das noted that this was the seventh time KAAC had celebrated National Handloom Day.

He highlighted the potential for traditional weavers to expand into production of items like pillow covers, curtains, cloth bags, and designer apparel, and stressed the importance of connecting them with market channels to sell their products.

The event was also attended by Under Secretary Karon Hansepi, handloom entrepreneur Rongbin Aklam, proprietor of Umrahi Textiles Rijak Dera, and other officials and staff of the department.

NFR general manager inspects proposed wagon workshop site at Basbari in Kokrajhar

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: Chetan Kumar Srivastava, General Manager of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), conducted a detailed inspection of the proposed site for a Wagon Periodic Overhauling (POH) Workshop at Basbari in the Alipurduar Division of Assam's Kokrajhar district.

The inspection marks a significant step toward the execution of a strategically important infrastructure project for the region.

According to an official statement, the General Manager was accompanied by Uttam Hajowary, Chairman of the TLLCC, Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), along with senior officials from the railway administration.

KVK Karbi Anglong holds training on organic farming and certification

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 7: The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Karbi Anglong, organised a farmer-oriented training programme on organic farming and certification to raise awareness on sustainable practices and enhance market access. The programme was inaugurated by Dr Monuj Kr. Doley, Head of KVK Karbi Anglong, who underscored the growing relevance of organic farming in ensuring food safety, environmental sustainability, and improved incomes.

He also highlighted the importance of certification in building consumer trust and unlocking premium markets.

Chandan Kalita, Organic Inspector-cum-Seed Certification Inspector from the Assam Seed and Organic Certification Agency (ASSOCA), served as the resource person.

He delivered a detailed presentation on the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), a community-based certification process tailored for smallholder organic farmers.

Kalita also conducted a hands-on training session on documentation and registration protocols under PGS, guiding farmers through record maintenance, group formation, and application procedures.

Local farmers participated enthusiastically in the session, which ended with an interactive Q&A and a vote of thanks. The programme concluded with renewed commitment from the farming community to embrace organic cultivation and explore certification pathways.

Encroached structures demolished in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Aug 7: The district administration on Thursday demolished two houses constructed on land reportedly encroached upon from the Asom Satriya Sangeet Mahavidyalaya at Rajbari.

According to officials, the land was originally under the Industrial Training Institute (ITI) but had been formally allotted to the Sangeet Mahavidyalaya a few years ago through a mutual agreement.

However, two employees of the ITI allegedly constructed houses on the plot without authorisation.

The matter came to light after the authorities of the Satriya Mahavidyalaya, which was provincialised in 2021, approached the district administration seeking intervention.

Following an inquiry conducted through the Jorhat Revenue Circle (East), eviction notices were served to the encroachers, asking them to vacate the premises.

An official from the Revenue Circle, who was present during the operation, confirmed that the structures were demolished after the occupants vacated the premises recently.

3 held under POCSO Act

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Aug 7: Three youths, including a woman, have been arrested in Jorhat under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act for allegedly luring a minor girl and confining her in a homestay and a hotel for two days, where she was reportedly sexually assaulted. A case has been registered against the accused under Jorhat Police Station Case No 404/2025. They have been booked under Sections 127(2), 123, 64(1), and 351(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), read with Section 4 of the POCSO Act, 2012. The arrested individuals have been identified as Rinku Hazarika and Pallab Jyoti Hazarika, both residents of Bhogamukh in Teok, and Santana Gogoi alias Pahi of Paakhimora, Meleng.



his residence on August 6, where she was allowed to rest.

The distressing visuals of the elephant's condition triggered immediate intervention from the authorities on Thursday morning.

A coordinated team comprising district officials, forest department personnel, veterinarians, and local environmental activists visited Majhi's premises in Makum to assess the animal's condition. The medical team administered medication and began preliminary treatment at the site.

Following a thorough medical evaluation, the forest department, in coordination with the district administration, ordered a mandatory three-day rest period for the elephant.

Officials also directed the owner to arrange for suitable vehicular transport for the remainder of the journey, ensuring proper medical supervision en route.

In a change of plan, authorities confirmed that the elephant would now be taken to either Kaziranga or Guwahati,

where advanced treatment facilities are available for large animals.

The incident has sparked serious concern regarding the implementation and enforcement of wildlife welfare regulations in the state. Officials have indicated that legal action against the elephant's owner is under active consideration for endangering the animal's life and violating prescribed transport protocols. The episode has highlighted persistent gaps in animal welfare enforcement, especially in cases involving captive elephants used for logging, tourism, or ceremonial purposes.

Conservation groups and citizens alike have called for stricter monitoring of elephant ownership and transport practices, along with stronger penalties for violations.

As Maniki rests under veterinary supervision in Makum, her plight has become a powerful symbol of the urgent need to uphold animal rights and ensure compassionate, science-based treatment of injured wildlife.

Owner defies transport order; visuals of limping elephant draw sharp public, official response

Injured elephant's 95-km forced trek sparks outrage across state

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Aug 7: Widespread public outrage has erupted in Assam following the circulation of a viral video showing a visibly injured 48-year-old elephant, named Maniki, being forced to walk along a highway in a severely compromised condition.

The footage, which quickly drew condemnation from wildlife enthusiasts and conservationists across the state, shows the elephant limping painfully on a bent foreleg as a mahout rides on her back.

The elephant was being taken from Kakopathar in Tinsukia district to Dibrugarh—a distance of nearly 95 kilometres—for medical treatment.

However, the journey was undertaken on foot in violation of clear directives issued by the forest department, which had mandated transportation of the injured animal by truck to avoid further stress and suffering. The injured elephant belongs to Ruchi Chetia of Jorhat. Officials confirmed that Chetia disregarded forest department guidelines in choosing to force the elephant to walk the arduous route.

Maniki had sustained a serious leg injury two years ago in Arunachal Pradesh, when a heavy wooden log fell on her left foreleg. The injury resulted in a permanent deformity and chronic limping, severely limiting her mobility. Speaking to reporters, mahout Pradip Moran revealed that the journey began nearly a week ago.

By the sixth day, Maniki had only managed to reach Makum, covering just 36 km of the intended route.

Her condition continued to deteriorate during the march, prompting a local resident, Krishna Majhi, to intervene.

Majhi offered shelter to the elephant at

Organisations demand apology from Numal Momin over remarks on Article 244(A)

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 7: Criticism continues to mount against Assam Legislative Assembly Deputy Speaker Numal Momin over his recent remarks on Article 244(A), with several regional organisations demanding an apology and accusing him of adopting contradictory political positions.

At a joint press conference held at the Karbi Students Association (KSA) Central Executive Committee office in Rongthe-ang on Thursday, the Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao Autonomous State Demand Committee (KADHASDCOM), along with its allied bodies — KSA, Karbi Riso Adorbar (KRA), Karbi Soralo Anei (KARSA), and Dimasa Students Union (DSU) — strongly condemned Momin's recent comments.

The controversy stems from Momin's statement during a visit to Kekang Adong polling station under Bokajan LAC, where he said that Karbi Anglong has received "more than what Article 244(A) offers."

Referring to the region's current infrastructure, including a medical college, law college, engineering, agriculture, and veterinary colleges, he argued that Article 244(A) does not explicitly guarantee such institutions.

"If we go behind Article 244(A), the loss will be ours," he said while speaking to the media. KADHASDCOM president Ajit Timung called the remarks "unfortunate and condemnable," alleging that Momin is engaging in dual politics.

"He had earlier signed a memorandum submitted to the Union Home Minister supporting the Autonomous State demand. Now he is contradicting that position," Timung said.

He urged elected representatives, including MPs, MLAs, and members of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), to remain consistent and committed to the demand for an Autonomous State under Article 244(A).

"There is a clear difference between the powers of an Autonomous Council and the provisions under Article 244(A). These should not be confused," he added.

KSA vice president George Timung questioned Momin's stance, alleging inconsistency. "Sometimes he supports the Autonomous State, and at other times he appears to reject it. The people deserve clarity," he said.

Timung further accused Momin of promoting divisive politics by advocating a separate satellite regional council for other communities under Article 244(2).

"In 2018, he submitted a memorandum to the Governor seeking such a council. That move reflects a divide-and-rule strategy, which is unacceptable," he said. DSU president Shivraj Hasnu also expressed concern over the remarks, echoing calls for accountability.

KSA general secretary Barnabas Killing demanded a public apology from Momin, stating that a leader holding constitutional office should refrain from making comments that may hurt public sentiment.

No.TECH-213/NIT/KOK/BLDG/2023-24/2110 Dated Kokrajhar, the 07/08/2025

PRESS NOTICE

Tender No.KOK/BLDG-218/136 of 2025-26

The Executive Engineer, P.W.D. Kokrajhar District & Chirang District Territorial Building Division, Kokrajhar invites bids from registered contractors with Class-I(A), (B), (C) and Class- II for

1) **Repair and Renovation of Bodoland Guest House at Gossaigaon for an estimated amount of 21,99,759.00 (Rupees Twenty One Lakhs Ninety Nine Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty Nine Only)**

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

Sd/- Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Kokrajhar Dist. & Chirang Dist. Territorial Building Division, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/2446

No.BDB/Tender/46/2023-24/6285 Dated 01/08/2025

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tender affixing a non-refundable Court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight & twenty five paise) only with a validity period of 180 days which will be converted and drawn up in the printed of F-2 form are invited from the registered contractors of Class-I (A, B & C), Class-II & Class-III category of Assam PWD (Roads & Building) and BTC according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the works under the Award of 6th ASFC For the year 2023-24 during 2025-26 BTR Kokrajhar as stated below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00PM on 26/8/25 and will be opened on the next date (as on 27/8/25) & place at 2.30 PM.

Sl. No.	Name of activity	Estd. Value (In laths)	Tender Value	EMD/Bid Security (in Rs.)	Cost of Tender paper (in Rs.)	Time of Completion of Work
1	"Imp. of Home Pipe Culvert at Pakiban near Amarendra Deka house"	4.00L	4,00,000/-	(for 1% ST/SC) 2% (for OBC/ General)	120	3 month
2	"Imp. of road with sand gravelling from Prabhat Barman house to Babul Debnath house at Garumpam"	4.00L	4,00,000/-	(for 1% ST/SC) 2% (for OBC/ General)	120	3 month

Pre-bid Date & Time : 05/08/2025
Last Date & Time of Bid submission : 26/08/2025
Date & Time of Bid Opening : 27/08/2025 02:30 P.M.
Detail N.I.T. may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender papers will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agents from 5/8/25 to 27/8/25 up to 130 PM. in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of demand draft/bankers cheque from any Nationalized Bank, duly pledged in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC Kokrajhar payable at Kokrajhar.

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/2439

Sd/- Block Development Officer, Bhergaon Dev. Block, Bhergaon

The purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls. -Pablo Picasso

Kamal Haasan making waves

It did not take long for actor-politician Kamal Haasan to reveal his true colours. It isn't 'safran', though. 'Kamal Saar' is a time-tested disruptor. He is grateful to Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin for the Rajya Sabha seat and whose thoughts on 'Sanatan Dharma' is legend: Malaria, dengue, leprosy, AIDS, HIV... Covid-19? Udhayanidhi wants Sanatan Dharma/Hinduism "eradicated". Haasan wants the "shackles" of Sanatan Dharma broken. The Rajya Sabha seat has emboldened Kamal and he couldn't wait to thank Udhayanidhi Stalin and Chief Minister MK Stalin enough. Without DMK, Kamal Haasan would not have rated the "elder" tag. Haasan is a thespian and an accomplished actor though nowhere near Rajnikant in popularity. Haasan is also nowhere in the league of Vijay Joseph as a budding politician. Kamal Haasan has his own political party but he remains a budding politician! Vijay also has a political party but with a difference. His budding days are already over. Kamal's eyes, however, strike a shining intelligence. And the booming husky voice only silenced by a silent role in a silent movie! Haasan can snatch words right out of the mouths of babies and who hasn't heard of 'bachche man ke sachehe'? To millions and millions of Indians, Kamal Haasan is an honest politician with both name and face recognition. The media finds Kamal Haasan's opinions palatable. A Michelin-chef would even make a recipe out of them! Kamal Haasan's last film 'Tugh Life' was spurned by the box-office. Most successful Kamal Haasan movies are about making hay till 'Sanatan Dharma' lasts!

Kamal Haasan is important because he makes Hindus think. US President Donald Trump doesn't think much of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the least said about Trump's view on 'India's dead economy'. Trump resurrected the 'Hindu growth rate' in his own lowlife lingo. And PM Modi didn't react, except with innuendos at an open air political rally. Why can't Kamal Haasan give President Trump a verbal hiding instead of trying to run down Sanatan Dharma? Kamal's political party Makkal Needhi Maaim has found "new energy" after his latest assault on 'Sanatan Dharma'. Kamal Haasan is not daft. Nor is he a mischief-monger. The fact that Haasan ran away from school not once but twice is forgotten lore and rumour at their best. But the best thing that happened to Kamal Haasan is that silver-screen discovered him before Eastman Kodak found 'colour film processing'.

Nobody batted an eye. Kamal Haasan is a progressive left-liberal. Kamal praised actor Suriya's education society 'Agaram Foundation' for helping students study medicine. "Now can you understand why we oppose NEET? The law has made medical education inaccessible to poor students," Kamal said. Chameleon, anybody? Actor and newly-installed BJP state vice-president Khushbu Sundar called Haasan's remarks unwarranted. Haasan has a closet full of actor friends. His outburst "education is the only weapon against Sanatan and dictatorship" has become lore now.

The rising risk of memory loss due to Air Pollution

By: Lalit Garg

A recent meta-study has revealed an alarming link between air pollution and deteriorating memory. Toxic particles in the air—especially fine dust and harmful gases such as nitrogen dioxide, primarily emitted from vehicles and industrial processes—are directly affecting our brains. This comprehensive research is based on 51 studies involving nearly 30 million individuals. The findings are particularly concerning for countries like India, where air pollution levels are among the highest in the world. If even wealthy and developed nations are struggling with the mental health impacts of pollution, India cannot afford complacency. Tackling air pollution must become our top priority.

The study warns that regular exposure to polluted air significantly increases the risk of dementia—a progressive condition that impairs memory and cognitive abilities. Globally, nearly 57.4 million people are already affected by dementia. Without urgent action to curb air pollution, this number could triple to 152.8 million by 2050. Notably, people exposed to polluted environments over long periods may experience a decline in brain function equivalent to aging by a decade. For example, a 50-year-old constantly breathing toxic air could show cognitive ability akin to that of a 60-year-old. Published in The Lancet Planetary Health journal, the study found that each 10-microgram per cubic meter increase in PM2.5 (fine particulate matter) raises the risk of memory-related diseases by 17%. Even a single microgram increase in black carbon—sourced from vehicle exhaust and burning wood—raises the risk by 13%. These microscopic particles can bypass our respiratory and circulatory systems, reaching the brain and triggering inflammation and oxidative stress, ultimately damaging neurons. The implications of this are far-reaching. Not only does polluted air affect lung and heart health, but it also impairs memory, concentration, learning, and emotional stability. Studies have shown that children living in high-pollution areas perform worse in school tests compared to those in cleaner environments. Adults exposed to polluted air often experience irritability, fatigue, and even depression. Their productivity and decision-making abilities may also suffer.

The impact of pollution-induced memory decline is not confined to individuals—it affects educational outcomes, workplace efficiency, and societal decision-making. Data indicates that people in high-PM areas score lower in verbal fluency, reasoning, learning, and memory tests—similar to losing an entire year of education. A recent study revealed how cognitive distraction in routine tasks, like grocery shopping, increases with pollution exposure. Older adults and less-educated individuals are particularly vulnerable, often losing the ability to perform everyday functions and becoming increasingly dependent on others.

Despite the rising threat, medical science currently offers no definitive cure for dementia. Existing treatments are limited and often ineffective, leaving patients to gradually lose their memory and independence. Dr. Kristian Bredal of Cambridge University, co-lead author of the study, emphasizes that dementia prevention is not solely a healthcare responsibility. Urban planning, transportation policies, and environmental regulations all play crucial roles in addressing this crisis. Air pollution not only harms individual health but also distorts collective thinking, lifestyle choices, and environmental decisions. On a larger scale, it contributes to reduced educational achievement, lower productivity, higher healthcare burdens, and deepening economic inequalities. A separate study from Washington involving 1.2 million individuals showed that exposure to wildfire smoke, which increases PM2.5 levels, raised dementia risk by 18–21%. Another extensive review by Cambridge University (29 million people across 51 studies) confirmed that PM2.5 exposure increases dementia risk by 13–17%. The science is clear: these fine particles penetrate deep into the respiratory system and brain, disrupting brain function and accelerating mental decline.

Recent Chinese research has also linked PM and NOx exposure to reduced cognitive ability in middle-aged and older populations, especially impairing working memory. If immediate and decisive actions are not taken, the situation will only worsen. Air pollution sets off harmful chemical reactions in the body that damage cells, proteins, and DNA—paving the way for neurological diseases like dementia. Encouragingly, the research suggests that reducing air pollution could offer long-term benefits across health, economic, social, and climate sectors. It would also ease the burden on patients, families, and caregivers. The question we must now ask ourselves is: how far are we willing to go to protect not just our lungs, but our minds?

Trump's 50% tariff gives a big jolt to the India-US trade target of \$530 billion by 2030

India hits back but major exports to US market facing bleak future due to high prices

Indo-US trade tensions escalated to a flashpoint, on Wednesday as US President Donald Trump doubled down on a defiant India with 50% tariffs on Indian imports, raising it from 25%, citing its continued purchases of Russian oil as a blatant violation of Washington's sanctions. The increased rate will be effective after three weeks. Terming it a betrayal of strategic expectations, Trump's move is seen as the most serious rupture in bilateral trade relations since his return to the White House and casts fresh uncertainty over the long-stalled \$530 billion trade pact between the two countries by 2030.

The executive order signed late Tuesday accused the Indian government of "directly or indirectly importing Russian Federation oil," prompting an "additional rate of duty of 25%" on top of the 25% already set to take effect as part of Trump's sweeping global tariff regime. With this, India now joins a short list of countries—including Brazil, Myanmar, and Syria—that face U.S. tariffs of 40% or more. The effective 50% tariff on Indian goods is among the highest levied by the United States on any major trading partner.

Speaking to CNBC on Tuesday, Trump was blunt in his rationale: "India has not been a good trading partner... They're buying Russian oil. They're fuelling the war machine." The timing of the announcement was telling—just hours before a broader tariff hike across multiple U.S. trading partners was due to take effect. US and NATO countries have been complaining that China and India have been fuelling the Russian war machine against Ukraine by continued purchase of Russian crude, proceeds of which went to fund the war in Crimea.

Trump's fury stems from India's decision to continue purchasing discounted Russian crude despite repeated U.S. warnings. For New Delhi, the rationale has always been economic and strategic—low-cost oil from Russia during a time of inflationary pressure and geopolitical uncertainty. Indian officials maintain that the oil purchases were carried out transparently and with an understanding that it was not in violation of any formal sanctions. The Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi responded forcefully to the latest development, stating, "These actions are unfair, unjustified and unreasonable. India will take all necessary actions to protect its national interests."

Until recently, India was poised to be



among the early beneficiaries of a Trump-era trade normalization strategy following the US withdrawal from the China-centric global supply chain. However, those hopes have been all but dashed by Trump's aggressive push to bring manufacturing—especially tech production—back to the US. In a May post on Truth Social, Trump declared: "I have long ago informed Tim Cook of Apple that I expect their iPhones that will be sold in the United States of America will be manufactured and built in the United States, not India, or anywhere else." India had in fact benefited substantially from the US pivot away from China. According to Bloomberg and Canalis, India accounted for 44% of US smartphone imports in the last quarter, surpassing China. Many of those phones—especially Apple iPhones—are now made in India, largely due to Apple's strategic shift in production. Tim Cook, Apple's CEO, is expected to appear with Trump at the White House later today for a new investment announcement, even as Apple braces for a \$1.5 billion hit next quarter due to existing tariff headwinds.

US Commerce Department data shows that India was the 10th largest source of goods imports to the US in 2024, with \$87 billion worth of shipment. Sectors likely to be most affected by the new tariffs include pharmaceuticals, textiles, auto components, and electronics—particularly smartphones.

At the heart of the dispute is India's refusal to fully align with US sanctions on Russia, particularly in the energy sector. New Delhi has consistently argued that its oil purchases from Moscow are in national interest and not in violation of international law. Furthermore, Indian refiners buy from Russia on a commercial basis, and not as part of any government-to-government deal. Nevertheless, Trump's order frames the purchases as an affront to US policy. It has also sparked concern in European capitals and in OPEC countries, with whom India

has deepened energy relationships in recent years. In fact, state-run oil companies in India have already begun diversifying their crude basket, increasing purchases from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iraq, and even the United States itself.

There are signs that New Delhi anticipated such punitive measures and has been gradually reducing its dependency on Russian crude. In June 2025, for instance, National Oil companies such as Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Bharat Petroleum signed multi-year contracts with suppliers in the Middle East to ensure uninterrupted supply amid the threat of sanctions.

According to the Petroleum Ministry, Russian oil now comprises less than 22% of India's total crude imports, down from 35% at its peak in 2023. Yet, despite these adjustments, Washington's patience appears to have run out. What remains to be seen is whether India will double down on diversification or scale back Russian imports even further to placate U.S. concerns.

India's trade strategists are now faced with a pivotal decision—resist or recalibrate. If India chooses to resist, it could look to deepen ties with alternative export markets like the EU, ASEAN, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), all of which have shown appetite for Indian products and services. New Delhi may also seek to expedite free trade talks with the UK and Australia to cushion the loss of U.S. market share. The EU is India's second-largest trading partner, accounting for trade in goods worth €120 billion in 2024, or 11.5% of India's total trade. India is the EU's 9th largest trading partner, accounting for 2.4% of the EU's total trade in goods in 2024, well behind the USA (17.3%), China (14.6%) or the UK (10.1%). Trade in goods between the EU and India has increased by almost 90% in the last decade.

The EU's imports from India comprise mainly of machinery and appliances, chemicals, base metals, mineral products, and

textiles. India's main exports to the EU consisted of machinery and appliances, transport equipment, and chemicals. Trade in services amounted to €59.7 billion in 2023 (with a deficit for the EU of €7.9 billion).

The EU's share of foreign direct investment (FDI) stock in India reached €140.1 billion in 2023, up from €82.3 billion in 2019, making the EU a leading foreign investor in India. The stock of India's FDI in the EU was €10.2 billion. Some 6,000 European companies are present in India.

But falling in line with Washington's dictates could risk alienating Russia—a long-time defense and energy partner—and undermine India's carefully calibrated strategic autonomy. "There is no binary choice here," said former Indian foreign secretary Shyam Saran. "India must protect its strategic interests while also preserving access to global markets. It's a balancing act." Indian exporters, already battling currency fluctuations and global demand softness, now face an uphill climb. For sectors like generic pharmaceuticals—which depend heavily on the US for revenue—tariffs could be crippling. The Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEP) has warned of job losses in textile hubs such as Tiruppur and Surat if orders shrink due to cost escalations.

India's IT services, ironically, remain untouched by the current tariff regime, but fears persist that restrictions could soon expand to services, especially if immigration and H-1B visa tensions resurface.

The Trump-Modi equation, once hailed as a cornerstone of the new Indo-Pacific architecture, is now on shaky ground. Modi was one of the first foreign leaders to visit Trump after his second inauguration, but the mood has clearly soured. A former US trade official commented anonymously: "Trump sees trade as leverage, not as partnership. He's willing to weaponize it—even against allies—if it suits his domestic narrative."

India, meanwhile, is unlikely to buckle easily. Its statement suggests retaliation may be on the cards, possibly through tariff hikes on American whiskey, Harley-Davidson bikes, or even the withdrawal of market access in sectors like fintech and digital payments where US firms have a growing footprint.

The doubling of tariffs by the United States marks a major inflection point in the Indo-US relationship, placing economic cooperation at odds with strategic alignment. As Washington prioritizes compliance over compromise, and New Delhi reaffirms its sovereignty over its energy choices, both countries risk drifting into a prolonged trade confrontation.

Whether this is a short-term disruption or the start of a longer-term decoupling depends on how both sides manage their immediate interests. For now, the world's two largest democracies find themselves staring at a hard choice between principle and pragmatism. (IPA Service)

CHILD ABUSE: A hidden social menace

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Child abuse is not only a tragic individual crime but a national and global failure to safeguard the most vulnerable members of society. Beneath the surface of seemingly normal families, institutions, schools, and even online platforms, an insidious crisis unfolds—one that often goes unreported, unheard, and unresolved. Despite the illusion of social progress and the rhetoric surrounding children's rights, child abuse remains one of the most persistent and damaging social issues across the world, cutting across economic classes, cultures, and communities. The veil of silence surrounding abuse makes it a deeply entrenched menace, one that thrives on powerlessness, fear, and systemic neglect.

Child abuse is multifaceted, encompassing physical violence, emotional cruelty, sexual exploitation, neglect, and now increasingly, digital abuse. Its victims, being minors, rarely have the means, voice, or social power to speak out or seek redress. Often, the perpetrators are not strangers but people the child knows—family members, teachers, neighbours, caregivers—those entrusted with the responsibility of protection and nurturing. This betrayal of trust creates wounds far deeper than visible scars, and the damage reverberates through a child's mental, emotional, and psychological development for years to come. In many cases, the trauma of childhood abuse manifests later in life through depression, addiction, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and social withdrawal. In the worst cases, it perpetuates cycles of violence, both personal and institutional.

The disturbing reality is that child abuse is far more prevalent than society acknowledges. Reports may suggest a few thousand cases per year, but experts widely agree that this is merely the tip of the iceberg. Under-reporting remains a chronic issue, fueled by fear, stigma, lack of awareness, and institutional apathy. In India, according to the National Crime Records Bureau, a child is sexually abused every 15 minutes. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was enacted to address this crisis, yet convictions remain low and delays are rampant. A significant percentage of victims are under 12, and in many cases, victims are too afraid or unaware of how to report abuse. When they do, the process of justice is often so drawn-out, re-traumatizing, and opaque that many families abandon it altogether. Victims face victim-blaming, social ostracization, and even threats—especially in cases where the perpetrator is influential.

This problem is not limited to India. Globally, child abuse continues to expose systemic loopholes and cultural denials.

Countries with advanced child protection laws still grapple with institutional abuse and cover-ups. In the United States, the Catholic Church abuse scandal and the failures of child protection services highlight how institutions have often prioritized reputation over justice. In the United Kingdom, grooming gangs operated for years under the radar, with local authorities reluctant to act due to racial or political sensitivities. In Australia, revelations from Royal Commissions on Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse showed how widespread the abuse was in religious and educational institutions. Even in Scandinavian nations known for progressive policies, cyber exploitation and grooming have emerged as new-age threats.

Technology has further complicated the fight against child abuse. While the internet has empowered many children with information and platforms for expression, it has also exposed them to unprecedented risks. The dark web, encrypted messaging apps, and anonymous social media platforms have become hubs for trafficking, grooming, and the sharing of child sexual abuse material. Online predators masquerade as peers or authority figures, manipulating children into harmful interactions. Despite efforts by law enforcement agencies, the sheer scale of digital abuse and the sophistication of technology used by perpetrators have made regulation and surveillance increasingly difficult. Cases of children being lured into trafficking rings, coerced into producing explicit content, or cyberbullied into self-harm are becoming alarmingly common.

The psychological toll of abuse, especially when unaddressed, is profound. Studies reveal that abused children are more likely to suffer from mental illnesses such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, borderline personality disorder, and anxiety disorders. They are also at greater risk of poor academic performance, substance abuse, homelessness, and involvement in criminal activities. Neuroscientific research confirms that abuse alters the brain's structure and stress response mechanisms, impairing emotional regulation and social development. The lack of early intervention and psychological support means that many survivors grow into adults still battling the demons of their childhood.

Addressing child abuse requires a multi-pronged approach rooted in prevention, protection, and rehabilitation. Legal frameworks must be strengthened, but more importantly, they must be effectively implemented. Laws without accountability and enforcement are meaningless. The judicial system must ensure that child abuse cases are handled swiftly, sensitively, and with absolute confidentiality. Specialized child-friendly courts and trained personnel are

essential. Equally crucial is the training of police officers, school staff, social workers, and medical professionals to recognize signs of abuse and respond appropriately. Too often, frontline workers either ignore warning signs or mishandle disclosures, further traumatizing the victim.

Schools and educational institutions must play a central role in the protection of children. Schools are one of the few spaces where children can be observed regularly, making them critical for early detection of abuse. Comprehensive sex education and awareness programs can empower children to understand boundaries, recognize inappropriate behaviour, and report abuse. Yet in many societies, such programs are absent or resisted due to cultural taboos and moral policing. This resistance leaves children ignorant and vulnerable. Educating children about good touch and bad touch, providing safe reporting mechanisms, and ensuring psychological counselling services in schools are not optional—they are essential safeguards.

Parents and caregivers, too, must be part of the solution. Often, abuse happens because adults lack awareness or choose to ignore red flags due to fear of social embarrassment or loyalty to family members. Parenting programs that promote positive, non-violent discipline, emotional attunement, and open communication can go a long way in creating safe home environments. Religious and community leaders must also challenge cultural norms that enable silence or normalize abusive behaviour under the guise of tradition, obedience, or family honour.

The role of the media in combating child abuse cannot be understated. Responsible journalism can bring attention to hidden cases, expose systemic failures, and demand accountability. However, sensationalism or insensitive reporting can harm victims and deter others from coming forward. Media houses must adhere to ethical guidelines when reporting child abuse and focus on creating public awareness rather than exploiting trauma for ratings. Documentaries, films, and public service announcements can also serve as powerful tools in shifting public perception and breaking the stigma surrounding child abuse.

Non-governmental organizations have long filled the gaps left by the state. From rescue operations and legal aid to counselling and rehabilitation, NGOs have demonstrated both commitment and innovation in child protection. Initiatives like CHILDLINE (1098), Aarambh India, and the Bachpan Bachao Andolan have saved thousands of lives. But these organizations often operate with limited resources, facing bureaucratic hurdles and inconsistent fund-

ing. It is imperative that governments support such initiatives, integrate their expertise into public policy, and scale up their best practices. One of the greatest barriers to eradicating child abuse remains the culture of silence. Fear, shame, and societal apathy combine to hush victims and their families into submission. Children are often told to remain quiet to protect family reputation, or worse, they are not believed when they report abuse. Breaking this silence requires creating safe, supportive, and non-judgmental environments where children feel heard and validated. It also requires adults to believe, support, and act decisively when abuse is suspected. Community-based child protection committees, helplines, and anonymous reporting tools can aid in encouraging disclosures without fear.

Furthermore, rehabilitation must extend beyond legal justice. Survivors need long-term psychological support, educational opportunities, and community reintegration programs. Simply rescuing a child from an abusive environment without follow-up care leaves them vulnerable to re-victimization or a lifetime of unresolved trauma. Trauma-informed care models must be adopted across institutions that deal with children. Policymakers should view child protection not just as a law and order issue but as a public health priority.

Finally, the battle against child abuse must be waged with the urgency it deserves. Too often, outrage erupts after a high-profile case only to subside in days. What is needed is a sustained, institutionalized commitment to child protection embedded in governance, education, health, and justice systems. Political leaders must speak openly about child abuse, allocate sufficient budgets for child welfare, and implement robust monitoring mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs. Technology must be used not just by predators but also by protectors—through surveillance of online platforms, use of AI for tracking CSAM, and development of child safety apps.

The measure of a society is how it treats its children. A nation that allows its children to suffer in silence, to be abused in homes, schools, or cyberspace, fails its moral and constitutional duty. Child abuse is not a family issue, a private matter, or a marginal concern—it is a national emergency. It damages lives, undermines development, and breeds generations of wounded individuals. But it is not inevitable. With the right policies, awareness, compassion, and action, it can be prevented, addressed, and eventually eradicated. The question is whether society has the will to see the invisible, hear the unheard, and protect the powerless.

To ignore child abuse is to be complicit in it. The time to act is now.

Operation Sindoor has the key to why India and US ties are in doldrums

By: Pravin Sawhney

The special session of the parliament on Operation Sindoor exposed the limitation of India's foreign policy, driven as it is by the objective of projecting Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a strong leader, instead of furthering India's national interests. This objective suffered a setback after Operation Sindoor.

Before I go into the three key operational failings of Operation Sindoor, it should be understood that between nuclear armed India and Pakistan, the air war will determine the outcome of the campaign. While the firing of long-range missiles and drones by both sides will cause destruction of military and civilian infrastructure, apart from collateral damage, it will not determine the outcome of the war. Instead, it could raise the possibility of nuclear signalling by Pakistan since it has an elongated geography with numerous high value targets close to the border. The side which achieves limited, or total air superiority, will quickly help its army move fast to occupy enemy territory. For this reason, the air battle of May 6-7 night was important.

The first and biggest failing of Operation Sindoor was the timidity of military leaders, allowing the political leadership to determine operational matters. For example, India's naval attaché in Indonesia, Captain Shiv Kumar disclosed that IAF was told to fire its missiles into Pakistan without first silencing Pakistan's air defences. At a time when the Pakistan Air Force had adequate warning of the impending attack, this was a shocking lapse. Then, India formally asking for an end to hostilities within half an hour of its operations not only showed a lack of political will to fight, but also that the political leadership was in operational control with the IAF leaders watching helplessly. These, and other issues which insiders know but are afraid to talk about, led to IAF fighter losses, whose numbers no one is willing to disclose.

The second operational shortcoming was that the Indian military was unaware that it would not be fighting the Pakistan military but a one-front-reinforced war. This meant the Pakistan military was fully supported by the PLA's non-kinetic capabilities and the combat support needed for a war surge. This was a big support for the Pakistan military considering neither the US nor Russia helped the Indian military with round-the-clock surveillance capabilities by their constellation of satellites namely, GPS (Global Positioning System) and GLONASS (Global Navigation Satellite System). After Sindoor, news came that to boost its real-time surveillance for military actions, the Indian military was in talks for commercial satellite imagery from a US-based company called Maxar Technologies, amongst others.

The third failing was of the IAF being unmindful of PAF's new war concept called Multi-Domain Operations (MDO). MDO are done by a digital ecosystem where space, air and ground as-



sets and fighters are integrated by data link allowing free information flow amongst them. This ecosystem is ideal for firing Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missiles. So, instead of PAF's J-10C doing a one-on-one engagement with IAF's Rafale, it used the MDO in what is called a 'system of systems' approach. The J-10C got the information feed from airborne assets and on getting the target coordinates through it, the fighter fired its PL-15 BVR missile while keeping its own radar off so as not to disclose its location. The PL-15 with a range of over 200km initially flew on a pre-programmed trajectory using its inertial navigation system with the mid-correction provided by an airborne asset. In the terminal phase, the PL-15's own AESA radar got activated and guided the missile to the target. Once the missile's AESA radar locked on the target, its seeker, highly resistant to the target's electronic countermeasures, ensured that it hit it with precision. The PL-15 is an advanced BVR.

Four issues regarding 'system of systems' warfighting are noteworthy. One, it requires great effort to put the hardware and software of the digital ecosystem in place. Two, it takes years of realistic combat training, patience and hard work for pilots to become proficient in using a digital ecosystem. Three, the PAF needed to have an advanced level of electronic warfare capabilities to ensure that the software data links connecting the ecosystem were not disrupted or damaged by the adversary. And four, unlike one-on-one engagement

which is a tactical approach, the MDO operates at the higher operational level involving multiple domains of land, air, space and electromagnetic spectrum with linked assets and capabilities from them. The MDO is necessary for BVRs engagement in modern aerial warfare.

The outcome of the air war was sensed by the US when shortly after asking Pakistan to end hostilities through the DGM channel, Indian NSA Ajit Doval spoke with his US counterpart Marco Rubio. The latter on social media said the US was monitoring the India-Pakistan situation and President Trump was keen for an early ceasefire. Besides Doval other policy makers were also in touch with the Trump administration which in turn was interacting with Pakistanis for an early ceasefire. This was the basis of Trump's repeated claims made later that he brought about the ceasefire between India and Pakistan, thereby preventing a nuclear war.

Pakistan was quick to publicly thank Trump for the ceasefire through its foreign minister Ishaq Dar, something that India did not do. India stuck to the narrative that it was Pakistan which sought ceasefire with India on May 10 after its military's kinetic beating by the Indian military. Both Trump and Modi stuck to their positions for different reasons. Trump had entered his presidency as a peace time president who promised to end the Ukraine war in 24 hours. However, having failed to end wars in Ukraine and West Asia, Trump needed a

breakthrough by claiming to end a possible nuclear war between India and Pakistan to show to his voter base that he was serious about ending 'forever wars'. India denied him that opportunity since India's foreign policy is premised on Modi being a strong leader. To be sure, this incident did not go down well with an egoistic Trump.

Add to this was Trump's open call to India to withdraw from BRICS which he said was an anti-US group out to weaken the US dollar. Moreover, with Russia ignoring Trump's ultimatums to end the Ukraine war, he instructed India to stop buying Russian oil. This of course was not possible for India since (a) it would show Modi as a weak leader, (b) adversely impact India's economy, and (c) it would end the already strained ties with Russia, which besides so many other things, is India's guarantor of peace with China.

In short, India's projected foreign policy of multi-alignment (being in the QUAD and the BRICS at the same time) or being sought by all nations in the world, lies shattered. The reality of the present multipolar world with three great powers (the US, China and Russia) is that the Modi government's foreign policy is aligned with the US' Indo Pacific policy meant to contain China's rise. All US presidents since Obama's pivot to Asia had sought to contain China's rise with India becoming its military bulwark in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The US' role for India as a net security provider (including for combat) in the IOR suited the Modi government since it saw in this an opportunity of projecting its own strategic reach befitting a major power. So, the Modi government did two things. One, on the military front, it signed US military's four foundational agreements to become a part of the US Indo-Pacific command defence network. Two, on the policy front, external affairs minister, S. Jaishankar abandoned SAARC and focused on BIMSTEC which he said aligned well with Modi government's Act East policy which in turn was compatible with US' Indo Pacific policy with QUAD as its key component.

Moreover, as the founding member of Russia-India-China which was formed on the suggestion of Russian foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov in the Nineties and later became the basis of BRICS, India realised that with the rise of China, it had become a powerful grouping doing better than the G-7. Thus, until the arrival of the Trump administration, India could have its cake and eat it too since it was both in QUAD and BRICS. Given this, India's G-20 presidency in 2023 gave it the opportunity to showcase the four pillars of its foreign policy. These were:

- India's pivot to the US' foreign policy while being the foundational member of BRICS;
- Close ties with G-7 given India's strategic proximity to the US;
- Projecting itself as the bridge between Global South and Global North; and
- Piggybacking on the US foreign policy, it projected regional competition with China.

President Trump crushed India's foreign policy assumptions.

Trump was not interested in security competition with China in the IOR, hence the strategic role of India diminished, if not ended. Trump's foreign policy focus was on MAGA (Make America Great Again) through trade wars, to end forever wars, to maintain security competition with China in the eastern Pacific by hoping to keep it tied in the first island chain. While this was bad news for India, it quickly decided to hoist its strategic ties with the US on MAGA. This resulted in the February 13 joint statement between India and the US which promised Mission 500: to enhance the present US \$ 200 billion bilateral annual trade to US \$ 500 billion by 2030. India committed to buy Green Tech, Big Tech, energy, and defence equipment amongst other things from the US. Both sides were happy until Operation Sindoor happened.

While Trump was unhappy with Modi for denying him the credit for ending the war, he was astonished by his own intelligence briefing that five jets (belonging to the IAF) were lost in the opening round of the four days war. Trump publicly mentioned this number hoping that India would give its version of IAF fighter losses, which did not happen. This convinced Trump and much of the world that the Pakistan military was a peer competitor of the Indian military since India did not want an escalation after firing its opening kinetic salvo and was unwilling to talk on fighter losses in the air battle. This was the reason for Trump's strategic tilt from India to Pakistan. Since the US own foreign policy is predicated on military power, Pakistan's show of its military power was quickly noticed by Trump resulting in two areas of strategic convergence between the two nations: The US wants Pakistan to stabilise Afghanistan, and it wants Pakistan's help to get a foothold in the region to keep a watch on the Eurasian landmass.

As a consequence of Operation Sindoor, India and Pakistan were hyphenated as peer military competitors. And by denying Trump the credit of successfully ending a potential nuclear war, India's strategic ties with the US are in doldrums. Meanwhile, India cannot normalise ties with Beijing as its China policy of regional competition with it would unravel. Since normalisation of ties would imply mutual cooperation, China's deep pockets, superior infrastructure building capability, advancement in standards setting in Green and Big Tech, its exceptional ecosystem for global manufacturing and so on would end India's hope of projecting itself as China's regional competitor. Given its colonial mindset, dent to India's image of being the big brother in South Asia is unacceptable to New Delhi. Between a partnership with China and being a US vassal, India would prefer the latter, as it would come with the illusion of major power, even if by association. Thus, unless India changes its mindset, its rise will not happen. (Courtesy: The wire)

How the ICJ's advisory opinion transforms Global Legal Responsibility India speaks in many tongues, marches with one heart

By: Dipak Kurmi

In a defining moment for international climate justice, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered a powerful advisory opinion on July 23, 2025, marking a pivotal legal and moral development in the global response to climate change. The Court unanimously affirmed that states have binding legal obligations to combat climate change and protect the Earth's climate systems, not merely as a political or ethical ideal, but as a duty rooted in international law. While advisory opinions are not enforceable verdicts, the legal gravitas and moral weight of the ICJ's pronouncement have the potential to reshape how nations, courts, and communities perceive climate responsibility.

The ruling explicitly stated that countries and territories are obligated to take actions — to the fullest extent of their capacities — to mitigate climate change. Human-induced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the Court warned, are not just abstract pollutants but direct threats to biodiversity, public health, and human life. The advisory opinion reflects growing judicial recognition that climate change is not only an environmental issue but a legal and human rights concern, implicating states in potentially actionable breaches if they fail to act with due diligence.

The Legal Scope of an Advisory Opinion
An ICJ advisory opinion is a formal interpretation of international law, typically requested by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) or its specialized agencies. Though non-binding in nature, these opinions carry considerable persuasive authority and serve as guiding principles for national and international courts. They do not impose direct legal consequences, but their role in setting legal norms and influencing policy decisions is profound. The United Nations itself affirms that such opinions carry both "legal weight and moral authority." The July 2025 opinion was delivered in response to a formal request by the UNGA on March 29, 2023. The General Assembly had asked the ICJ to clarify the obligations of states under international law in protecting the environment, particularly against GHG emissions, and to outline the legal consequences if those obligations were breached. What began as an initiative by a group of Pacific Island law students in 2019 had, over six years, evolved into a global campaign — led by Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change and joined by over 1,500 civil society organizations — and eventually culminated in a worldwide legal milestone. The campaign was formally embraced and championed by the island nation of Vanuatu, which has long stood at the frontlines of climate vulnerability.

Key Findings of the Opinion
At the heart of the ICJ's opinion lies the assertion that the obligation to prevent environmental harm exists under customary international law. It is no longer sufficient for states to claim action; they must demonstrate meaningful and proportional efforts aligned with the scale of the crisis. The Court leaned heavily on scientific evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and emphasized that states must adopt — and enforce — rigorous measures to cut emissions

and protect the climate system. Importantly, this due diligence requirement is not passive; it includes active oversight, administrative enforcement, and the prevention of harmful activities even by private actors.

In an important clarification, the Court noted that Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) — voluntary national climate goals submitted under the Paris Agreement — are not enough unless they represent each state's "highest possible ambition." The ICJ held that countries must not merely commit on paper but also act with seriousness and vigilance in implementing climate goals. This elevates NDCs from aspirational documents to potential benchmarks of legal compliance, subject to scrutiny under international law.

The Court made it clear that obligations relating to climate change are not derived from a single treaty but form an interconnected web of international legal instruments. It cited the UN Charter, the Kyoto Protocol, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Paris Agreement, among others. These treaties, which are legally binding, collectively form the framework within which states must operate. Additionally, the Court referenced other relevant conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), thereby highlighting the broad legal ecosystem surrounding climate obligations. The ICJ also recognized the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment — a significant affirmation that links environmental degradation with the erosion of human rights. This recognition aligns with recent trends in international jurisprudence that increasingly position environmental health as an intrinsic component of human dignity and intergenerational equity.

While the Court refrained from assigning individual responsibility to specific states, it clarified that a failure to meet climate obligations could constitute a breach of international law. Such breaches, it said, may require reparations — including guarantees that the wrongful acts will not recur and compensation for affected states. This is a bold legal opening for climate-vulnerable nations seeking justice through litigation or diplomatic pressure.

Implications for Global Climate Politics
The ICJ's advisory opinion comes at a time of widespread disillusionment with international climate negotiations. For over three decades, the world's attempts to forge meaningful collective action on climate change have largely fallen short. Countries continue to miss emissions targets. Finance commitments from developed nations remain unfulfilled. Some major economies have even backtracked on their climate responsibilities — notably, the United States temporarily withdrew from the Paris Agreement without facing legal consequences. The ICJ opinion offers a counterpoint to this inertia. It reinforces the legal sanctity of environmental obligations and creates a new platform for courts and activists to pursue climate accountability. By asserting that legal consequences can follow inaction, the ICJ has raised the stakes for nations that have previously treated climate policy as negotiable or optional.

As environmental lawyer Ritwick Dutta observes, the opinion may also help develop more

robust international environmental law, particularly in holding violators accountable. Most current conventions, while rich in principles, are weak on enforcement. The ICJ opinion might pave the way for more meaningful compliance mechanisms and could even pressure nations like the United States to ratify treaties such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and UNCLOS, which they have long resisted.

The Indian Context: Navigating Opportunities and Pressures

For India, the ICJ's opinion presents both challenges and opportunities. India has historically contributed little to global GHG emissions, but as the third-largest current emitter, it is under growing pressure to accelerate its transition toward renewable energy. India remains heavily reliant on coal but has announced a commitment to reach net-zero emissions by 2070 — a timeline more conservative than that of many developed nations.

The ICJ's opinion emphasizes the broader protection of climate systems — forests, rivers, grasslands, oceans — beyond the narrow metric of carbon emissions. This perspective could shift how climate action is interpreted in India's courts and policies. For example, the Indian Supreme Court's decision in the Great Indian Bustard case prioritized solar energy over biodiversity conservation — a dilemma that could be reassessed under the ICJ's holistic approach.

The opinion also reinforces the legal burden on both state and private entities to avoid environmental harm. This could result in increased litigation and judicial scrutiny of corporate polluters and regulatory failures. Already, the Indian government has acknowledged in an affidavit before the Supreme Court that continued coal dependence poses risks to both public health and the economy. This alignment with the ICJ's findings strengthens the legal basis for phasing out fossil fuels while investing in sustainable alternatives. Environmental activists like Harjeet Singh warn that the ICJ's nuanced view on differentiated responsibilities — which may re-evaluate static labels of "developed" and "developing" countries — could challenge India's long-held position in climate negotiations. However, Singh also emphasizes that the primary responsibility for the climate crisis remains with developed nations due to their disproportionate historical emissions. Any recalibration of responsibilities must be just and equitable, taking into account both capabilities and vulnerabilities.

A Legal Compass for the Climate Struggle Ahead
Ultimately, the ICJ's advisory opinion does not offer immediate solutions to the climate crisis. It does not impose penalties or force nations to act. But it does provide a comprehensive and authoritative legal interpretation that climate change is not just a political failure but a potential legal breach. It empowers national courts, civil society groups, and vulnerable states to demand accountability and justice. It breathes new life into international environmental law and gives future generations a powerful legal framework to stand upon.

In an era marked by rising temperatures, biodiversity loss, and deepening inequality, the ICJ has delivered not merely an opinion, but a call to conscience — backed by law. The climate crisis is no longer just a planetary emergency; it is a legal reckoning in motion. (The writer can be reached at dipakurmigpltd@gmail.com)

The Modi Govt's landmark NEP-2020 is a transformative initiative that underscores this linguistic commitment. For the first time in independent India's history, students are now encouraged to learn in their mother tongue or regional language, especially in primary and technical education

By: Sandeep Joshi

In a country as richly diverse as India, home to hundreds of spoken languages and countless dialects, language has always been more than a means of communication. It is identity, heritage, and culture. But in the wrong hands, it can also become a tool for division. The Narendra Modi Government has firmly rejected the politics of linguistic discrimination and instead adopted a unifying, inclusive approach that celebrates every regional tongue as a national treasure.

Time and again, PM Modi has demonstrated that India's linguistic plurality is not a challenge to manage but a strength to cherish. From beginning his speeches in the local language of the state he visits to honouring classical languages like Tamil on global platforms such as the United Nations, his Govt has made language a symbol of national pride. This is not accidental. It is central to the ethos of a government that believes in 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas.'

Linguistic Heritage
The Modi Government has taken historic steps in recognising and preserving India's linguistic and cultural richness. Classical language status has been granted to Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali, and Prakrit in 2024, adding to the existing list of Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and Sanskrit. Eleven Indian languages now enjoy this status, a testament to the government's commitment to preserving linguistic heritage.

Initiatives like 'Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat' have fostered cultural exchanges. Kashi-Tamil Sangam, Kashi-Telugu Sangam, and Kashi-Saurashtra Sangam are prime examples of language being used to connect regions, not divide them. Over 200 PM e-Vidya channels under the One Class, One Channel scheme have also been launched to broadcast school education in regional languages, ensuring linguistic inclusion from a young age.

Empowering Indians in Their Own Language
The Modi Government's landmark National Education Policy (NEP-2020) is a transformative initiative that underscores this linguistic commitment. For the first time in independent India's history, students are now encouraged to learn in their mother tongue or regional language, especially in primary and technical education. Engineering and medical courses are being translated into multiple Indian languages including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Gujarati, and Bengali, ensuring that no student is excluded from opportunity due to language.

The policy is not about imposing one language over another but about creating access so that learning is not hindered by the medium of instruction. This stands in sharp contrast to the colonial-era education model, which privileged English and alienated generations from their native cultural context. The Modi Government's vision doesn't stop at the classroom. Competitive examinations like SSC, JEE, NEET, and UGC-NET are now being conducted in 13 to 15 Indian languages with a roadmap to expand this to all 22 Scheduled Languages. The Staff Selection Commission has unveiled its format to allow aspirants to take exams in their mother tongue, addressing long-standing demands from various states and improving the prospects of lakhs of youth.

Three-Language Policy

Much controversy has been generated largely by the Opposition around the Three-Language Policy proposed under NEP. Let us be clear. This policy is not about imposing Hindi or any other language. It is about encouraging Indians to learn more Indian languages, just as English became popular because it was widely taught and available.

The three-language formula, first introduced in the post-1956 era after states were reorganised on linguistic lines, was meant for administrative convenience and national cohesion, not coercion. The Modi government is simply giving it a modern, inclusive interpretation. Encouraging linguistic diversity is not the same as enforcing uniformity. In fact, the policy provides the flexibility to choose languages based on regional preference and practical utility.

This is a step toward healing the damage inflicted by colonial and post-colonial policies that prioritised English over native languages. India is now building a digital, educational, and administrative ecosystem where no citizen feels left behind due to language.

The Dangerous Game of Division

In stark contrast to the Modi Government's inclusive approach, the Opposition, especially the Congress party, has consistently indulged in divisive rhetoric. Be it stoking fear of "Hindi imposition" or promoting North-South binaries, their strategy hinges on weaponising language to fuel identity politics. For instance, a Congress MP recently suggested that South India should demand a separate country, blaming the so-called "Hindi region" for economic imbalance. Such statements are not just irresponsible. They are dangerously seditious. This is against the Rahul Gandhi's political outreach titled "Bharat Jodo". Historically, Congress has presided over linguistic agitations, favoured certain regions, and neglected the preservation of Indian languages. Even now, when the Modi Government launches policies to promote education in regional languages, the Opposition distorts the narrative, calling it "majoritarian" or "regressive." Nothing could be further from the truth.

A Call for Unity, Not Uniformity

The Modi Government's language policy is rooted in a deep respect for India's cultural diversity and a firm belief in empowerment through inclusion. It rejects the old model of top-down imposition and embraces a bottom-up approach, one that strengthens regional identities while weaving them into the national fabric.

During the 75th anniversary of the Constitution in Parliament, the Prime Minister remarked that celebrating India's diversity would be the greatest tribute to Babasaheb Ambedkar. He underscored that the government's policies aim to unify the nation — not divide it — and to reverse the long-standing neglect of linguistic pride that past decades have caused. India's future lies not in homogenisation but in harmonisation. A 'Viksit Bharat' can only be built when every Indian, regardless of their language, feels heard, respected, and included. PM Modi's vision is not to replace one language with another but to build a society where every language is a vehicle of progress. Let us reject divisive politics that seek to pit one region against another and one language against another. Let us embrace the idea of unity in diversity not just as a slogan but as a shared national mission. (Courtesy: The pioneer)

Trump's reciprocal tariffs come into effect globally, including India

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, Aug 7: The initial 25 per cent tariffs announced by the US on Indian imports came into effect Thursday, with President Donald Trump saying billions of dollars from countries that have taken advantage of America will now start flowing into the country.

"It's Midnight!!! Billions of Dollars In Tariffs Are Now Flowing Into The United States Of America!" Trump said in a post on Truth Social as the clock struck 12 midnight in the US, ushering in the August 7 date when the reciprocal tariffs announced on nations by Trump last week came into effect.

"Reciprocal tariffs take effect at midnight tonight! Billions of dollars, largely from countries that have taken advantage of the United States for many years, laughing all the way, will start flowing into the USA. The only thing that can stop America's greatness would be a radical left court that wants to see our country fail!" Trump said in another post.

Last week, the White House announced that India will face tariffs of 25 per cent after Trump issued an executive order listing the various duties that Washington will impose on exports from countries around the world. In the Executive Order titled 'Further Modifying The Reciprocal Tariff Rates', Trump had announced tariff rates for nearly 70 nations.

The 25 per cent "Reciprocal Tariff, Adjusted" imposed on India came into effect on Thursday.

The tariffs in the list ranged from 10 per cent to 40 per cent, with Japan being charged 15 per cent, Laos and Myanmar (40 per cent each), Pakistan (19 per cent), Sri Lanka (20 per cent) and the United Kingdom (10 per cent).

In addition to the 25 per cent tariff announced last week, Trump on Wednesday imposed another 25 per cent levies on India for its purchases of Russian oil, bringing the total duties slapped on India to 50 per cent, among the highest imposed by the US on any country in the world.



The additional 25 per cent duty will come into effect after 21 days or August 27.

India, responding to the tariffs, said that the targeting of India is unjustified and unreasonable.

India said that, like any major economy, it will take all necessary

measures to safeguard its national interests and economic security.

On an additional 25 per cent tariff on India for Russian purchases, Indiaspora, a nonprofit US-based organisation of global Indian diaspora leaders across diverse professions, said in a statement that it believes

the "current setback" in what is otherwise an enduring, robust and broad-based people-to-people relationship will be temporary.

"We remain optimistic that the ongoing discussions, when concluded, will reflect the aspirations of both nations and the global Indian diaspora that believes in them," Indiaspora said. It stressed that with over five million Indian-Americans contributing meaningfully to the US economy, culture, and civic life, the diaspora serves as a living bridge between the world's two largest democracies.

"We believe the US-India relationship is not just important—it is essential. As global dynamics shift, this economic partnership should stand as a cornerstone for stability, innovation, and progress in the 21st century," it said. Ajay Bhutoria, an Indian-American community leader and former advisor to President Joe Biden, said he strongly opposes Trump's decision to impose a 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods.

"India supplies nearly half of

America's affordable generic drugs. These tariffs will inflate prescription prices, hitting families, seniors, and small businesses hard. Everyday items—spices, lentils, Diwali clothing—will become pricier, with reports estimating apparel and footwear costs could rise 37%," he said. Bhutoria noted that Trump granted China a 90-day tariff pause while targeting India, a key democratic ally, for its energy needs.

"This double standard risks undermining the robust USD 186 billion US-India trade partnership and our shared goal of reaching USD 500 billion by 2030."

He underscored that the US and India share a strong, vibrant partnership built on mutual respect, economic ties, and shared values.

"We must work through these challenges together, not through divisive tariffs that hurt both nations. I urge both governments to prioritise dialogue and fair trade solutions that strengthen our alliance and keep costs affordable for our communities." (PTI)

South Korean investigators seek arrest of wife of jailed ex-President Yoon

SEOUL, Aug 7: South Korean investigators on Thursday requested a warrant to arrest the wife of jailed former President Yoon Suk Yeol, a day after questioning her over suspicions including bribery, stock manipulation and political influence-peddling.

Yoon, for the second time in a week, resisted an attempt to compel him to appear for questioning in his wife's case, forcing prison officials to abandon their efforts after an hourlong struggle due to concerns of injury, the investigators said. The detention warrant for Yoon expires Thursday. The investigation targeting Yoon's wife, Kim Keon Hee, is one of three separate special prosecutor probes launched under the government of new liberal President Lee Jae Myung related to Yoon, who was removed from office in April and rearrested last month over his brief imposition of martial law in December.

The investigation team questioned Kim for about seven hours on Wednesday on various allegations, including claims that Yoon and Kim exerted undue influence over the conservative party's candidate nominations for a parliamentary by-election in 2022.

Kim is also suspected of receiving a necklace and other gifts through a fortune teller acting as an intermediary for a Unification Church official seeking business favours, and of possible involvement in a stock price manipulation scheme. The team said they listed multiple charges in the warrant request for Kim, including violations of financial market and political funding laws and acceptance of bribes. In her brief comments to reporters as she appeared for questioning on Wednesday, Kim issued a vague apology for causing public concern but also hinted that she would deny the accusations against her, calling herself "someone insignificant." Yoon, who faces a high-stakes trial on rebellion and other charges, previously resisted an attempt by investigators on Friday last week to bring him to their office for questioning over his wife. Investigators said he took off his prison uniform and lay down on the floor of his cell in his underwear until they gave up. (AP)

Netanyahu to seek approval for expanded Gaza military operations as 29 Palestinians are killed

TEL AVIV, Aug 7: The Israeli security cabinet is set to meet Thursday evening to discuss a possible expansion of Israel's military operations in Gaza, a move that — if happens — would come despite fierce opposition from many in Israel, including the families of hostages who remain in Hamas captivity. The meeting comes on a day when at least 29 Palestinians were killed in airstrikes and shootings across southern Gaza, according to local hospitals. Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis said 12 of the fatalities were from people attempting to access aid near a distribution site run by a US and Israeli-backed private contractor.

At least 50 people were wounded, many from gunshots, the hospital said. Neither the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation nor the Israeli military, which helps secure the group's sites, immediately commented on the strikes or shootings. The Israeli military has accused Hamas of operating in densely populated civilian areas.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been meeting this week with top advisers and security officials to discuss what his office said are ways to "further achieve Israel's goals in Gaza" after the breakdown of ceasefire talks last month.

An Israeli official familiar with the matter said the Security Cabinet is expected to hold a lengthy debate and approve an expanded military plan to conquer all or parts of Gaza not yet under Israeli control.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity pending a formal decision, said that whatever is approved would be implemented gradually and in stages with the idea of increasing pressure on Hamas.

Such a step would trigger new international condemnation of Israel at a time when Gaza is plunging toward famine. It also has drawn opposition across Israel, with hostage families saying it could threaten their loved ones.

Israel's army chief, Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, has warned that the plan would endanger the hostages and further strain Israel's army, which has been stretched thin during a nearly two-year war, according to Israeli media. The comments appear to have exposed a rift between Netanyahu and his army.

Opposition to expansion of the war

Demonstrations were planned across Israel on Thursday evening to protest the expected Cabinet decision. On Thursday morning, almost two dozen relatives of hostages being held in Gaza set sail from southern Israel towards the maritime border with Gaza, where they broadcast messages from loudspeakers on boats to their relatives in Gaza. The families denounced Netanyahu's plan to expand military operations. Yehuda Cohen, an Israeli soldier held hostage in Gaza, said from the boat that Netanyahu is prolonging the war to satisfy extremists in his government and to prevent it from collapsing.

"Netanyahu is working only for himself," he said, pleading with the international community to put pressure on Netanyahu to stop the war and save his son.

Israel returns body of Palestinian activist for burial

Israeli authorities returned the body of a Palestinian activist allegedly killed by an Israeli settler last week, after female Bedouin relatives launched a hunger strike to

protest the authority's decision to hold his body in custody. The hunger strike was a rare public call from Bedouin women who traditionally mourn in private. Witnesses said Awadh Al Hathaleen was shot and killed by a radical Israeli settler during a confrontation caught on video last month. Israeli authorities said they would only return the body if the family agrees to certain conditions that would "prevent public disorder."

Despite dropping some of their demands, family members said Israel set up checkpoints and prevented many mourners from outside the village from attending.

The plight of Palestinians in this area of the West Bank, known as Masafer Yatta, was featured in "No Other Land," an Oscar-winning documentary about settler violence and life under Israeli military rule.

Al Hathaleen, a political activist and an English teacher, was a contributor to the film and close friend of its Palestinian co-directors.

Aid organisations denounce Israeli policies

Two major international aid organisations published reports on Thursday denouncing Israeli policies in Gaza.

Human Rights Watch called on governments worldwide to suspend their arms transfers to Israel in the wake of deadly airstrikes on two Palestinian schools last year.

Human Rights Watch said an investigation did not find any evidence of a military target at either school. At least 49 people were killed in the airstrikes that hit the Khadija girls' school in Deir al-Balah on July 27, 2024, and the al-Zeitoun C school in Gaza City on Sept. 21, 2024.

Doctors without Borders, also known as Médecins Sans Frontières or MSF, accused the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation food distribution sites of causing "orchestrated killing" rather than handing out aid.

According to the United Nations, more than 850 people have died near GHF sites in the past two months. MSF runs two medical clinics very close to the GHF sites and said it had treated nearly 1,400 people wounded near the sites between June 7 and July 20, including 28 people who were dead upon arrival. MSF also treated 41 children who were shot near GHF sites.

The organization said it has also treated almost 200 patients with physical assault injuries from chaotic scrambles at GHF sites, including head injuries, suffocation, and multiple patients with severely aggravated eyes after being sprayed at close range with pepper spray.

GHF did not immediately answer a request for comment. But it has said that its contractors have not shot anyone at its sites.

Hamas-led militants killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted 251 in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that ignited the war. They still hold 50 hostages, around 20 of them believed to be alive, around most of the rest were released in ceasefires or other deals.

Israel's retaliatory military offensive has killed more than 61,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says around half the dead have been women and children. The ministry is part of the Hamas government but is staffed by medical professionals. The UN and other independent experts view its figures as the most reliable casualty count.

Sudanese airstrike hits Darfur airport, kills 40 suspected mercenaries, officials say

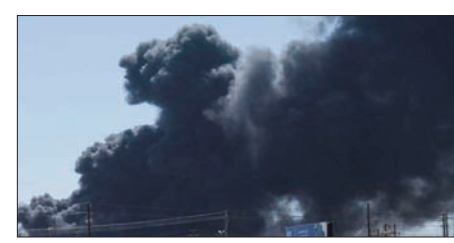
CAIRO, Aug 7: A Sudanese airstrike hit an airport in the country's Darfur region controlled by a notorious paramilitary group, destroying a suspected Emirati military aircraft and killing dozens of suspected mercenaries, Sudanese officials and a rebel advisor said Thursday.

Wednesday's strike on the Nyalat airport killed at least 40 suspected mercenaries from Colombia and destroyed a shipment of arms and equipment that were sent by the United Arab Emirates to the Rapid Support Forces, or RSF, according to two Sudanese military officials and an advisor to a Darfur rebel leader allied with the RSF.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief the media. The advisor also requested anonymity for his safety. Sudan plunged into chaos when simmering tensions between the country's military and the RSF exploded into fighting in April 2023 in the capital, Khartoum, and elsewhere in the country.

The fighting has turned into a full-fledged civil war that killed tens of thousands of people, displaced more than 14 million people and pushed parts of the country into famine. The war has been marked by atrocities, including mass killings and rape in what is being investigated as war crimes and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court.

A 'new equation of deterrence'



State-run Sudan TV reported the aircraft had taken off from a military base in the Arab Gulk region, and that Sudanese fighter jets struck it when it landed at the Nyalat airport. It described the strike as a "blatant message" and a "new equation of deterrence" against foreign interference in Sudan's affairs.

The Emirati Foreign Ministry didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. However, it has repeatedly denied involvement in the Sudan war by backing armed groups. There was also no comment from the RSF. Responding to the reports, Colombian President Gustavo Petro wrote on X overnight that he ordered an investigation into the mercenaries' killing.

The RSF seized Nyalat, the capital city of South Darfur province, last year as part of the paramilitary group's push to control the entire region of Darfur. The Sudanese government has accused the RSF of turning the city's civilian airport into a military hub to receive weapons ship-

ments and smuggle gold.

The Sudanese military has repeatedly struck the airport, saying it targeted aircraft delivering military supplies and mercenaries to the RSF.

UN experts confirmed in a report released in April that Colombian mercenaries were present in Darfur and that those mercenaries were hired by a private security firm to support the RSF.

According to the report, the Colombian Foreign Ministry acknowledged that Colombian mercenaries were in Darfur and announced the establishment of a special immediate response group to ensure the safe return of its nationals.

Sudan says UAE barred Sudanese planes

The Sudanese aviation agency, meanwhile, said the UAE barred Sudanese planes Wednesday from landing at its airports, in what it called a "surprise, uncoordinated" measure.

The Civil Aviation Authority said in a statement that a Sudanese airliner was also barred from taking off at the Abu Dhabi airport, according to a report by the state-run SUNA news agency.

The UAE's Foreign Ministry also didn't respond to a request for comment on the report.

Relations between the military-allied government in Sudan and the UAE have been frayed over Abu Dhabi's alleged support to the RSF. The Sudanese government severed ties with the UAE earlier this year over the allegations. (AP)

Thailand, Cambodia to deploy ceasefire monitors despite deadlock over captured soldiers

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 7: Thailand and Cambodia agreed Thursday to establish interim observer teams to monitor a fragile ceasefire that ended five days of deadly armed border clashes, even as the fate of 18 Cambodian soldiers captured by Thailand remains unresolved.

The first meeting of the General Border Committee concluded after four days of talks in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, with a focus on ensuring the full implementation of the ceasefire brokered by Malaysia on July 28.

Dozens of people were killed and over 260,000 displaced on both sides of the Thai-Cambodian border, when fighting began after a land mine explosion along the border wounded five Thai soldiers.

According to a joint statement from the committee, each country will set up its own interim observer team comprising defence officials



from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and coordinated by the bloc's annual chair Malaysia, pending the deployment of a formal ASEAN observer mission. The interim teams will operate within their respective borders and work closely with local military authorities.

The main meeting Thursday was chaired by Cambodian Defence Minister Gen. Tea Seiba and Thailand's Deputy Defence Minister Gen. Natthaphon Nakpanit. Malaysian Defence Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin, along with

representatives from the US and China, attended as observers.

US Ambassador to Malaysia Edgard D. Kagan said after the meeting that the outcome was an important milestone.

"The US believes this is an important step. However it's important to recognise this is only a step. The goal here is a durable sustainable ceasefire, one that is able to be accepted and enforced by both sides," he told reporters. He said the US would work closely with Malaysia and ASEAN to monitor the truce.

The July 28 ceasefire followed economic pressure from US President Donald Trump, who had warned the warring nations that the US would not conclude trade deals with them if the fighting persisted. Washington lowered tariffs on goods from the two countries from 36 per cent to 19 per cent on August 1. (AP)

Pakistan Army chief Munir expected to visit US again: Report

ISLAMABAD, Aug 7: Pakistan Army chief Asim Munir is expected to visit the US this week for consultations with top American officials, his second trip to Washington since the four-day conflict with India, a media report said on Thursday.

In June, Munir travelled to the US on a rare five-day trip during which he attended a private luncheon with President Donald Trump. That meeting culminated in Trump's announcement of enhanced US-Pakistan cooperation in various fields, including an oil deal.

Field Marshal Munir is expected in the US this week for consultations with his American counterparts, Dawn newspaper reported, citing official sources.

Sources told the paper that this would be a return visit, following a trip to Pakistan by Gen. Michael Erik Kurilla, head of the US Central Command (CENTCOM), in late July.

In a press statement issued on

August 4, CENTCOM recalled Gen Kurilla's recent visit to Pakistan and other countries in the region.

During the visit, Gen Kurilla was also conferred the Nishan-i-Imtiaz (Military) by the Pakistani government.

During his previous visit to Washington, Munir was hosted by President Trump in an unprecedented gesture typically reserved for visiting heads of state or government. There was no official word on the visit from Inter-Services Public Relations or Pakistan's embassy in Washington, but during his previous visit, the army chief had hinted that he expected to return to the US again later in the year.

The development comes just over a month after the US general described Pakistan as a "phenomenal partner" in counterterrorism efforts during a congressional hearing, where he also praised Pakistan's role "in promoting peace and stability" in the region. (PTI)

New US tariffs cloud outlook for exporters in Asia and beyond

BANGKOK, Aug 7: President Donald Trump's new tariff rates on US imports from dozens of countries took effect Thursday, the latest chapter in the saga of Trump's reshaping of global trade. But many questions remain.

Trump has threatened tariffs of up to 200 per cent on imports of pharmaceuticals and has ordered a 100 per cent import tax on computer chips. Most US imports of copper, steel and aluminum are subject to a 50 per cent tariff.

There's still no agreement on what tariffs might apply to products shipped from China. India has no deal yet and faces a potential 50 per cent tariff as Trump pressures it to stop buying oil from Russia.

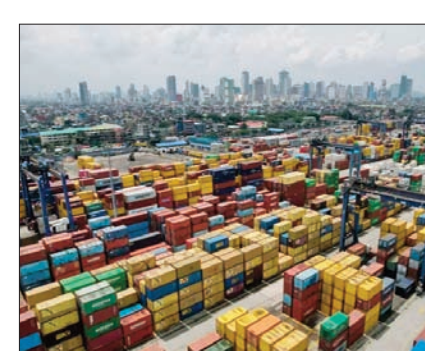
Recent data shows uncertainty is clouding the outlook for exporters around the world as a rush to beat the tariffs during a pause for negotiation tapers off. Companies are reporting billions of dollars in higher costs or losses due to the higher import duties.

Global financial markets took Thursday's tariff adjustments in stride, with Asian shares and US futures mostly higher.

Here's where things stand in what has proven to be a fast-changing policy landscape.

The tariffs taking effect this week

The tariffs announced on August 1 apply to 66 countries, Taiwan and the Falkland Islands. They are a revised version of what Trump called "reciprocal tariffs," announced on April 2: import taxes of up to 50 per cent on goods from countries that have a trade surplus with the United States, along with 10 per cent "baseline" taxes on almost everyone else. That move triggered sell-offs in financial markets and Trump backtracked to allow time for trade talks.



The president has bypassed Congress, which has authority over taxes, by invoking a 1977 law to declare the trade deficit a national emergency. That's being challenged in court, but the revised tariffs still took effect.

To keep their access to the huge American market, major trading partners have struck deals with Trump. The United Kingdom agreed to 10 per cent tariffs and the European Union, South Korea and Japan accepted US tariffs of 15 per cent.

Those are much higher than the low single-digit rates they paid last year, but down from the 30 per cent Trump had ordered for the EU and the 25 per cent he ordered for Japan.

Countries in Africa and Asia are mostly facing lower rates than the ones Trump decreed in April. Thailand, Pakistan, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines cut deals with Trump, settling for rates of around 20 per cent.

Indonesia views its 19 per cent tariff deal as a leg up against exporters in other countries that will have to pay slightly more, said Fithra Faisal Hastiadi, a spokesperson in the Indone-

sian president's office.

"We were competing against Vietnam, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and China ... and they are all subject to higher reciprocal tariffs," Hastiadi said. "We believe we will stay competitive."

The latest situation for China and India

Trump has yet to announce whether he will extend an August 12 deadline for reaching a trade agreement with China that would forestall earlier threats of tariffs of up to 245 per cent.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the president is deciding about another 90-day delay to allow time to work out details of an agreement setting tariffs on most products at 50 per cent, including extra import duties related to illicit trade in fentanyl.

Higher import taxes on small parcels from China have hurt smaller factories and layoffs have accelerated, leaving some 200 million workers reliant on "flexible work" — the gig economy — for their livelihoods, the government estimates.

India also has no broad trade agreement with Trump. On Wednesday, Trump signed an executive order placing an extra 25 per cent tariff for its purchases of Russian oil, bringing combined US tariffs to 50 per cent.

India's Foreign Ministry has stood firm, saying it began importing oil from Russia because traditional supplies were diverted to Europe after the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict, a "necessity compelled by the global market situation."

The hardest-hit countries

Struggling, impoverished Laos and war-torn Myanmar and Syria face 40-41 per cent rates.

Trump whacked Brazil with a 50 per cent import tax largely because he's unhappy with its treatment of former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro.

South Africa said the steep 30 per cent rate Trump has ordered on the exporter of precious gems and metals has put 30,000 jobs at risk and left the country scrambling to find new markets outside the United States.

Even wealthy Switzerland is under the gun. Swiss officials were visiting Washington this week to try to stave off a whopping 39 per cent tariff on US imports of its chocolate, watches and other products. The rate is over 2 1/2 times the 15 per cent rate on European Union goods exported to the United States.

Canada and Mexico have their own arrangements

Goods that comply with the 2020 United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement that Trump negotiated during his first term are excluded from the tariffs.

Even though US neighbour and ally Canada was hit by a 35 per cent tariff after it defied Trump, a staunch supporter of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, by saying it would recognise a Palestinian state, nearly all of its exports to the US remain duty free.

Canada's central bank says 100 per cent of energy exports and 95 per cent of other exports are compliant with the agreement since regional rules mean Canadian and Mexico companies can claim preferential treatment.

The slice of Mexican exports not covered by the USMCA is subject to a 25 per cent tariff, down from an earlier rate of 30 per cent, during a 90-day negotiating period that began last week. (AP)

Governor urges unity on Quit India Day

Governor Parnaik recalls legacy of 1942 call; urges citizens to fight modern-day evils with unity and resolve

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 7: On the solemn occasion of the Quit India Movement Commemoration Day, the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), extended his heartfelt greetings to the people of the state and paid tribute to the courage and sacrifices of the country's freedom fighters.

In a message issued on Thursday, the Governor expressed hope that the indomitable spirit of the Quit India Movement would continue to inspire citizens to stand resolutely against all forms of injustice and inequality.

According to an official statement, the Governor reflected on the historical significance of the Quit India Movement, describing it as one

of the most defining chapters in India's long and arduous struggle for independence.

Recalling the events of August 8, 1942, he said the movement—launched under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi with the resolute call of “Do or Die”—galvanised the nation into action and triggered an unprecedented wave of civil resistance against British colonial rule.

The Governor noted that despite brutal crackdowns, the arrest of top national leaders, and the suppression of civil liberties, the movement ignited a collective consciousness that transcended regional, religious, and linguistic boundaries.

It gave rise to a renewed spirit of self-determination, and its legacy continues to remind the

nation of the extraordinary courage and unity demonstrated by countless unsung heroes in the face of tyranny.

Lt General Parnaik further stated that while the context today is vastly different, the essence of the movement remains deeply relevant.

He stressed that the challenges faced by independent India—poverty, inequality, ignorance, and corruption—are internal struggles that demand the same level of resolve and collective effort.

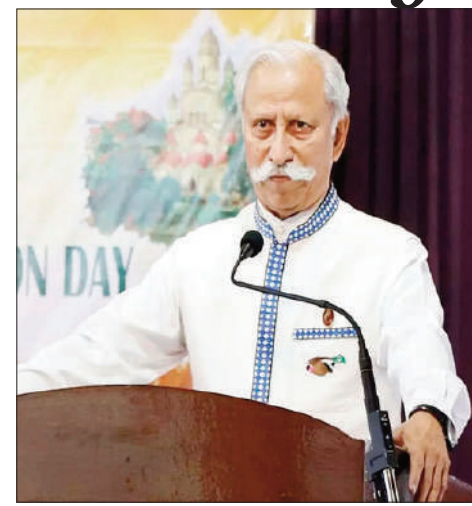
“The call today is no less urgent,” the Governor said in his message, “We must free our nation from the chains that continue to hold us back—not foreign rule, but social and economic evils that weaken the foundations of our democracy and development.”

He urged citizens, particularly the youth, to rise above divisive tendencies and contribute meaningfully to the nation's progress.

Emphasising the importance of unity, inclusivity, and self-reliance, the Governor called upon people from all walks of life to dedicate themselves to building a stronger and more equitable India.

The Quit India Movement Commemoration Day is observed each year to honour the sacrifices of the leaders and common citizens who took part in the 1942 uprising.

The Governor's message serves as a reminder that the legacy of India's freedom struggle is not just a matter of historical pride, but a call to action to continue striving toward justice, equality, and national upliftment in the present day.



Consultative meeting held to strengthen Arunachal's sports ecosystem



ITANAGAR, Aug 7: In a bid to reinforce the structure of sports development and streamline administrative coordination across Arunachal Pradesh, a high-level consultative meeting was recently convened between the Sports Authority of Arunachal (SAA) and the Arunachal Olympic Association (AOA).

The meeting took place at the SAA Conference Hall in Chimpu and was chaired by Shri John Neelam, Chairman of the Sports Authority of Arunachal.

According to an official statement, the meeting was convened to deliberate on key initiatives and institutional reforms aimed at aligning the state's sports activities with the Arunachal Pradesh Sports Policy 2017.

It also focused on enhancing collaboration between core sporting bodies and ensuring a structured approach to athlete development, infrastructure planning, and welfare mechanisms.

The consultative session brought together a broad spectrum of sports administrators and stakeholders. Attendees included Bengia Yayang Tadar, Vice-Chairman of the SAA; Gumnya Karbak, Director of the SAA; Bamang Tago, Secretary General of the AOA; Abharham K Techi, Senior Vice-President of the AOA; and Toko Teki, Vice-President of the AOA.

Executive Members of the Arunachal Olympic Association and senior officers and officials from the Sports Authority of Arunachal were also present during the proceedings.

In his opening remarks, Chairman John Neelam emphasised the need for a unified approach to sports governance, calling for enhanced synergy between the AOA and SAA to advance the state's sporting aspirations.

He reiterated the importance of aligning ongoing and future programmes with the State Sports Policy to ensure consistency, transparency, and efficiency in the delivery of sports initiatives. One of the central areas of discussion was the formulation and eventual implementation of the State Meritorious Athletes Welfare Act.

According to the official statement, participants collectively agreed on the urgency of this legislative initiative, which aims to provide comprehensive support systems for outstanding athletes.

The Act is expected to institutionalize welfare measures such as financial assistance, employment support, education provisions, and recognition frameworks for sportspersons who have brought laurels to the state.

The meeting also explored strategies for promoting grassroots sports development across districts, with a strong focus on nurturing talent from remote and tribal areas.

Delegates underlined the necessity of long-term planning for infrastructure development, while also calling attention to the pressing need for maintenance, modernisation, and equitable access to existing facilities.

Strengthening the role and functioning of State Sports Association

affiliated with the Arunachal Olympic Association formed another key part of the discussions.

Speaking on behalf of the Arunachal Olympic Association, Secretary General Bamang Tago welcomed the collaborative spirit of the meeting and expressed hope that such platforms would pave the way for integrated policymaking and programme execution.

He further urged all stakeholders to uphold transparency, accountability, and athlete-centric governance in every tier of sports administration.

The gathering also witnessed a free exchange of views and on-ground experiences shared by executive members of the AOA and officials from the SAA.

The discussions reflected a common commitment to building a sporting culture that is inclusive, progressive, and geared toward long-term excellence.

As per the official statement, all participants reaffirmed their dedication to strengthening institutional frameworks and working in tandem to create a sustainable and vibrant sports ecosystem in Arunachal Pradesh.

The meeting concluded with a collective resolve to hold regular consultative sessions going forward, thereby ensuring continuity in vision and execution.

The consultative meeting marks an important step in Arunachal Pradesh's journey toward becoming a competitive sporting state, while also prioritising the welfare and recognition of its athletes and sporting communities at all levels.

Ojing Tasing chairs high-level review meet on rural livelihood schemes

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 7: In a move aimed at intensifying rural development efforts and strengthening livelihood interventions across Arunachal Pradesh, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Ojing Tasing, chaired a comprehensive review meeting on the implementation of two major central schemes—Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)—under the aegis of the Arunachal State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ArSRLM).

The meeting was convened at the State Mission Management Unit (SMMU) Conference Hall in Itanagar and adopted a workshop-styled format that allowed for detailed deliberations on operational progress, internal mechanisms, and field-level challenges.

According to an official statement, the format enabled thematic presentations by vertical leads across various critical domains including Institution Building and Capacity Building (IBCB), Model Cluster Level Federations (MCLF), Social Inclusion and Social Development (SISD), Farm and Non-Farm Livelihoods, Financial Inclusion, Human Resources, Monitoring and Evaluation, Management Information Systems (MIS), Financial Management, and updates on DDU-GKY and Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs).

The proceedings began with an opening note by the CEO-cum-State Mission Director of ArSRLM, who outlined the vision, current performance indicators, and forward-looking strategies of the Mission.

This was followed by remarks from the Secretary of the Department of Rural Development and



Panchayati Raj, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, who stressed the importance of inter-departmental coordination and robust data-backed decision-making in driving outcomes.

The highlight of the session was the extensive address and advisory issued by the Minister, which covered strategic priorities, governance directions, and programme recalibrations for enhanced impact.

Commending the workshop format, Minister Ojing Tasing noted that the interactive structure gave him valuable insight into the inner workings and cross-functional synergies of the Mission.

He directed the Chief Operating Officer (Program) to institutionalize such meetings on a monthly basis, assuring his regular presence and participation in these engagements.

He emphasised that periodic reviews would serve as a vital tool in driving accountability, policy responsiveness, and outcome-oriented governance.

While acknowledging the efforts of the ArSRLM team and their commitment to rural upliftment, the Minister urged officials to aim beyond the routine and collectively push the Mission into a phase of innovation-driven transformation.

He remarked that ArSRLM had emerged as a consistent performer and a point of pride during Ministry-level reviews, positioning it as

a critical flagship institution within the state's development framework.

The Minister assured that all challenges raised by the thematic leads were being taken seriously and pledged full cooperation in resolving them. He further acknowledged that while some systemic issues may take time, he remained committed to co-creating progressive solutions in partnership with the Mission's leadership and staff.

One of the major concerns raised during the review was the high number of non-operational Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) across the state. Expressing his concern, the Minister reaffirmed his commitment to revitalising these centers, which play a vital role in unlocking tribal and forest-based economic potential.

He stated that a concerted push would be made to revive and operationalise the VDVks so that they serve their intended purpose of community empowerment and income generation.

The Minister also highlighted the need for comprehensive last-mile connectivity, calling upon officials to ensure that no household is excluded from the Mission's interventions, regardless of geographical or logistical barriers.

According to the official statement, he emphasised that inclusivity must remain a non-negotiable principle in all aspects of programme execution.

Further, as part of long-term human resource and institutional strengthening, the Minister proposed exploring opportunities under the Centre's Mission Karmayogi initiative to deliver administrative and leadership training for Mission functionaries at various levels.

He noted that such capacity-building efforts would enhance operational efficiency and professionalise the management cadre, thereby improving service delivery at the grassroots.

The review meeting has laid the foundation for renewed momentum and collective accountability across all tiers of ArSRLM.

By bridging strategic planning with grassroots realities, the government's leadership has underscored its commitment to equitable and sustainable development in rural Arunachal Pradesh.

The official statement added that the Minister's engagement not only served as a morale booster for the Mission team but also set a precedent for participatory and results-oriented governance.

With a focus on convergence, innovation, and inclusivity, the review meet signalled a strong push towards making rural livelihoods programmes more resilient, scalable, and aligned with the developmental aspirations of the people of Arunachal Pradesh.

Governor Parnaik calls for revival and pride in traditional weaving on National Handloom Day

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 7: Marking the celebration of National Handloom Day, the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), extended heartfelt greetings to the weavers, artisans, and entrepreneurs of the State, acknowledging their vital role in preserving and promoting the enduring tradition of handloom weaving.

According to an official statement issued from the Raj Bhavan, the Governor paid special tribute to the hardworking women of Arunachal Pradesh who, through their craft and commitment, have remained the torchbearers of the State's handloom legacy.

Referring to these women as “custodians of a beautiful legacy,” the Governor lauded their efforts in keeping alive the vibrant textile traditions

of the indigenous communities.

In his message, the Governor reiterated his consistent advocacy for the “Vocal for Local” movement, underscoring the cultural and economic significance of the State's handloom sector. He described handloom weaving as more than a livelihood—calling it a “living tradition” that continues to shape the identity of Arunachal Pradesh.

He noted that this art is intricately embedded in the social fabric of the region, passed lovingly from one generation of women to the next, each pattern and motif bearing the signature of a distinct tribal culture.

Emphasising the emotional and historical weight behind each woven piece, the Governor remarked that every thread carries with it a story of resilience, creativity, and womanhood.

He called upon the people of the State to make a conscious and collective effort to safeguard this inheritance.

Preserving the handloom tradition, he said, is not only an act of cultural continuity but also a step towards realising the national vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India).

The Governor also used the occasion to appeal to the younger generation, particularly the educated women of the State, to take pride in the traditional weaving practices of their forebears.

In particular, he encouraged active participation from Self-Help Groups and the enterprising “Lakshmi Didis”—women achievers under government livelihood missions—urging them to see traditional weaving not merely as a craft, but as a powerful tool of personal empowerment and community upliftment.

SASI urges Arunachal Govt to intensify ILP checks amid concerns over influx of illegal immigrants

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 7: The Save Arunachal Save Indigenous (SASI) forum has called upon the Government of Arunachal Pradesh to undertake strict and comprehensive checking of Inner Line Permits (ILPs) to curb the alleged influx of illegal immigrants into the state.

The forum submitted a four-point representation to the state's Home Minister on Thursday, urging the government to intensify ILP enforcement measures at all check gates across the state and address concerns about demographic changes. Addressing a press conference at the Arunachal Press Club, SASI Chairman Ronjir Rakshap said that although the forum could not meet the Home Minister in person due to his engagements, the memorandum was formally submitted to his office.

According to an official statement issued by the forum, the representation highlights the perceived increase in illegal entry into Arunachal Pradesh and requests urgent action to preserve the demographic balance and security of the indigenous population.

Rakshap claimed that the recent eviction drives in neighbouring Assam, spearheaded by the Hemanta Biswa Sarma-led government targeting illegal encroachment on forest land, may have triggered a spillover of displaced settlers into Arunachal Pradesh. He warned that such movements could result in long-term socio-cultural disruptions within the state.

“There is a serious apprehension that a large number of illegal immigrants may have crossed over into Arunachal Pradesh through informal and illegal channels. This could lead to demographic imbalance and poses a threat to the safety and security of the indigenous population,” Rakshap said.

He added that the issue of unchecked migration must be treated with urgency and seriousness, noting that current enforcement mechanisms might prove inadequate if not strengthened immediately.

ITANAGAR, Aug 7: Arunachal Pradesh Textile and Handicrafts minister Nyato Dukam on Thursday launched the state Handloom and Handicrafts Policy 2025 at Tezu in Lohit district.

The new policy, launched as part of the 11th National Handloom Day celebrations, provides a comprehensive framework to address longstanding challenges in the handloom and handicrafts sector and unlock its immense economic and cultural potential, an official statement said.

Key components of the policy include creation of weavers and artisans' database, establishment of raw material and tool banks, improved access to credit, promotion of research and development, e-commerce and digital initiatives, one tribe, one weave initiative, comprehensive livelihood promotion scheme, legal protection of indigenous designs and knowledge.

The Department of Textile and Handicrafts will serve as the nodal agency for the effective implementation of these initiatives. Dukam emphasised the cultural and economic importance of handloom in the state.



“There are 26 major tribes in Arunachal, and it is only because of our weavers that these identities are visibly preserved. Handloom is not just cultural—it also holds economic promise. This policy is a roadmap to guide and support our weavers as they move forward,” he said.

Tezu-Sunpura MLA Mohesh Chai highlighted the historical relevance of the National Handloom Day, commemorating the 1905 Swadeshi Movement, and revived in 2015 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

“Our traditional attire is beautiful, but the real challenge is to keep it alive as a living culture. Change is natural, but our core traditions and designs must be preserved,” he said.

He also announced the establishment of new Craft Building Centres at Tezu and Sunpura, and expressed hope that such infrastructure will further energise the handloom movement in the state.

Weavers and artisans from across the state participated in the celebration and showcased their products at exhibition stalls, offering a vibrant display of tribal craftsmanship.

The event was organised by the Department of Textile & Handicrafts in collaboration with the Development Commissioner (Handlooms), Union Ministry of Textiles. (PTI)

Rahul's poll fraud allegation a calculated deceit, Cong's larger conspiracy against democracy: BJP

'The Leader of Oppn, has made irresponsible and shameless comments'

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: The BJP on Thursday termed Rahul Gandhi's allegation of poll fraud against the Election Commission a "calculated deceit" and accused the Congress of "systematically" attacking the constitutional institutions under a larger conspiracy against India's democracy and the Constitution.

The ruling party also accused Gandhi of insulting the "discerning decision" of the people of the country by calling its election victory a "fraud" and said the voters will continue to reject the Congress for such "irresponsible and shameless" character and conduct.

Gandhi has made allegations against the poll panel out of "frustration and anger" because people are not giving their mandate to the Congress, the BJP charged as it slammed the Congress leader for adopting "double standards" over the election results and asked him to understand that his family's victory is not the definition of democracy.

This came after Gandhi claimed before the media here that an analysis of the voter data pertaining to a Lok Sabha constituency in Karnataka showed that elections were rigged by the Election Commission at the behest of the BJP to help the saffron party "steal" votes and win the seat in the 2024 general elections.

There is a huge "criminal fraud" being perpetrated across the coun-



try by the Election Commission and the "party in power", the Congress leader charged, in an apparent reference to the BJP.

Condemning the Congress leader's remarks, BJP MP and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said, "Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition, has made irresponsible and shameless comments." He has called the Election Commission a fraud, crossing all limits of "shamelessness", the BJP leader charged.

"Narendra Modi has been winning elections since 2015, and you (Rahul Gandhi) are calling that also a fraud. You are insulting the people of the country who voted for Modi for his work, honesty and progress of the country under his leadership," Prasad told reporters at the Parliament House complex.

"You keep roaming across the country to get bail in defamation cases and you call somebody a fraud. I strongly condemn Rahul Gandhi for his utterances. He is irresponsible and does not know what to speak, even about the constitutional body," the senior BJP leader added.

Prasad said that Gandhi was attacking the EC out of "frustration and anger" because people are not giving their mandate to the Congress and will continue to do so after his brazen allegations against the poll panel.

"People will not vote for you (Congress) due to your such behaviour, character and conduct," he said.

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan accused Gandhi of insulting the "discerning decision" of the people by attacking the Elec-

tion Commission.

"Bayan bahadur" Rahul Gandhi has completely lost his composure in the agony of losing power," he said in a post on X.

"The ideologically hollow Congress party is systematically attacking constitutional institutions. It cannot be ruled out that there is a larger conspiracy against India's democracy and Constitution behind this calculated deceit," the senior BJP leader said in a post on X.

"After all, their family's history is also filled with the dark chapter of the Emergency," he added.

Pradhan slammed Gandhi for adopting "double standards" on the poll outcomes.

"This double standard will no longer work -- praising the Election Commission when victorious and calling it biased when defeated," he said.

Rahul Gandhi needs to understand that his family's victory is not the definition of democracy, he added.

"Where was Rahul Gandhi when the Election Commission invited every party to file complaints regarding SIR in Bihar?" Pradhan asked, adding, "Neither Congress nor any party from the INDI alliance approached the Election Commission at that time."

People of Bihar are now ready to give a befitting reply to "such opponents" of democracy and the Constitution, Pradhan said. (PTI)

Rahul claims 'proof of huge criminal fraud' in polls; alleges EC-BJP collusion

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday cited an analysis of data from a Lok Sabha constituency in Karnataka from the 2024 elections to make explosive claims of "huge criminal fraud" in polls perpetrated by the BJP through the Election Commission, and asserted that this was a "crime" against the Constitution.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha also said that the judiciary needs to get involved in this because the democracy that "we love so much does not exist".

Gandhi said what his party had collected was "criminal evidence" and alleged that the Election Commission was busy destroying such proof across the country.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC's Indira Bhawan headquarters here, Gandhi also hit back at the Election Commission for demanding from him a signed declaration on his claims and said he had made the remarks publicly and they can "take it as an oath".

"I am a politician, what I say to the people is my word. I am saying it to the people publicly, take it as an oath. Interestingly, they haven't denied the information."

"They haven't said the voter lists (shown by me) are wrong, they are saying Rahul Gandhi should say it under oath... they know the truth. We know you (EC) have done this across the country," the former Congress president said.

Talking to the media while taking them through an online presentation, Gandhi said they analysed the voter data of the Lok Sabha constituency of Bangalore Central and the Mahadevapura Assembly segment in it from the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

"Our internal polls indicated that we were expected to win 16 seats in Karnataka (in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections). However, we won nine. We then focused on the seven unexpected losses and chose the Mahadevapura Vidhan Sabha constituency. All the data we have here is from the 2024 elections, sourced from the Election Commission," he asserted.

Gandhi cited that in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP secured 6,58,915 votes in the Bangalore Central seat, winning with a margin of 32,707.

"In the Mahadevapura assembly segment, the Congress received 1,15,586 votes, whereas the BJP garnered 2,29,632 votes."

"The Congress won all the Vidhan Sabhas except Mahadevapura, where the BJP swept and secured a victory margin of 1,14,046 votes. This seat significantly contributed to their election win, and the Lok Sabha result went in their favour on that seat," he said.

"This discrepancy is a huge imbalance. So, we started examining



the details and discovered that approximately 1,00,250 votes were stolen in the Mahadevapura assembly," he claimed.

Gandhi alleged there was "vote chori" of 1,00,250 votes in the Mahadevapura segment, with 11,965 duplicate voters in the segment, 40,009 voters with fake and invalid addresses, 10,452 bulk voters or single address voters, 4,132 voters with invalid photos and 33,692 voters misusing Form 6 of new voters.

Gandhi backed his claims of discrepancies with data displayed on the giant screen, citing examples of fake voters, duplicate voters and single address voters.

"This is EC data, and the EC is saying it is getting free and fair polls done. In one assembly segment, one lakh fake voters are there, we are telling the people of the country, this is your future. The whole system is being stolen. This evidence is 100 per cent in black and white," the Congress leader asserted.

"We see there is a pattern, we are absolutely convinced that this crime is being done on a huge scale across the country in state after state after state. CCTV footage and voter list are evidence in crime and the Election Commission is trying to destroy it," he alleged. "I want the nation to know that there is a huge criminal fraud being perpetrated on this country. It is being done by the Election Commission and the party in power and we have given you undoubtable proof," he said.

"If the Election Commission now does not give us electronic voter data of the last 10-15 years, and if it does not share the CCTV footage, they are partaking in the crime," he said.

Gandhi also batted for the judiciary to get involved in the issue.

"I think the judiciary needs to get involved in this. We need to understand what is going on. Because, what we love so much -- our democracy, doesn't exist."

"What is the difference between us and other places, it is the democracy, it's gone... if this is true," he said.

In a warning to those involved in perpetrating "electoral fraud",

Gandhi said there are going to be consequences for every single polling officer who is doing this.

"It doesn't matter how senior or junior you are. One day, the Opposition is going to come to power and then you see what we do to you; because you are attacking the foundation of what our forefathers who fought for India's freedom built and we are not going to allow you to do that, no matter who you are," he said.

Gandhi said his message to the Election Commission is that they are not in the business of destroying Indian democracy but in the business of protecting it.

"This is a crime that is being committed against the Indian Constitution, against the Indian flag. This is nothing less than that," he said, alleging poll rigging in various parts of the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the PM with a slender majority and needed to "steal" only 25 seats to stay in power, he said, adding the BJP won 25 seats in the Lok Sabha polls with less than 33,000 votes. He said the foundation of the Constitution is based on the fact that one person gets one vote. "When we look at polls, the fundamental thing is how to secure 'one man, one vote' idea. Are the right people allowed to vote? Are fake people being added? Is the voter list true or not?" he said.

"For some time there has been suspicion among the public. Anti-incumbency hits every single party, but the BJP is the only party that does not suffer anti-incumbency in a democratic framework," he said.

Exit polls go massively wrong and so do internal surveys, he said. Gandhi alleged that elections are "choreographed" these days lasting months, when earlier, with minimal technology, the polls were conducted in the country together.

"The Election Commission is not giving us data because they are afraid that what we did in Mahadevapura, we will do in the remaining Lok Sabha seats, and then the truth of the country's democracy will come out," he said.

The Election Commission is colluding with the BJP and helping them, he alleged. (PTI)

70 rescued, over 50 missing in Uttarkashi flash floods: Army

DEHRADUN, Aug 7: As rescue operations in the flash floods-ravaged Uttarkashi entered the third day on Thursday, the Army said 70 people have been rescued so far and more than 50 are missing.

According to officials, at least four people have been killed in the disaster that struck the ecologically fragile area on Tuesday afternoon. Rescuers recovered two bodies on Wednesday, but it was not clear if these were among the four deaths reported the previous day. The district administration said 65 people who were stranded at different locations were airlifted to Matli town, 432 km from here, on Thursday.

Efforts were also stepped up to airlift advanced equipment to the worst-hit Dharali village to speed up the search for those trapped under the rubble, officials said. The Indian Army said its troops reached Dharali within 15 minutes of the tragedy. It ramped up Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations in the Himalayan village and nearby Harsil. The region remains cut off due to multiple landslides and road breaches.

Seventy civilians have been rescued so far and more than 50 are missing, the Army said in an official release issued here. Nine Army personnel -- one junior commissioned officer and eight jawans -- are also reported missing, it said.

Nine Army personnel and three civilians were evacuated to Dehradun by helicopter. Three critically injured civilians were shifted to AIIMS Rishikesh and eight were admitted to the Uttarkashi district hospital, it added.

Road access is severely disrupted at multiple locations, including Bartwari, Linchigad, near Harsil, Gangnani and Dharali. Civilian and military teams are working round the clock to rescue stranded people, provide relief and restore connectivity, the Army said. The military helipad in Harsil and another in Nelong are operational and connected by road to Gangotri, enabling convenient movement of tourists. A civil helipad in Dharali remains non-functional due to a mudslide.

According to the Army, more than 225 troops, including engineers, medical teams, and rescue specialists, are on the ground. Search and rescue dogs have also been deployed.

One Reeco Radar team is in Tekla village and another Reeco Radar is being inducted for further deployment, the release said.

Chinook and Mi-17 helicopters are waiting at the Jollygrant airport in Dehradun and are likely to commence evacuation of civilians from Thursday if the weather improves, it said. Five civil helicopters from Sahastradhara have been operating between Matli, Bhatwari and Harsil for the rescue operations in co-ordination with the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF).

An ad hoc aviation base is being set up at the Matli helipad.

Approximately 180-200 tourists stranded in Gangotri are being provided food, shelter, and medical support by the Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), the release said. (PTI)

Over 80 lakh public grievances redressed since 2022: Jitendra Singh

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: More than 80 lakh public grievances have been redressed during 2022-June 2025, Union minister Jitendra Singh said on Thursday.

The government introduced the 10-step reforms for Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) in April 2022 to make grievance redressal timely, effective and accessible to the citizens, he said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

"In the years 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025, the CPGRAMS 10-step reforms enabled redressal of 80,36,042 grievances, mapped 1,05,681 Grievance Officers (GROs), reduced timelines of grievance redressal from 28 days in 2019 to 16 days in 2025 and reduced pendency to 62,620 public grievances as on 30th June, 2025 for central ministries," said Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel.

The CPGRAMS allows citizens to raise grievances against government departments online.

The government issued the comprehensive guidelines for effective redressal of public grievances on August 23, 2024 reducing the grievance redressal timelines from 30 days to 21 days, he said.

These guidelines mandate the integration of public grievance platforms, establishment of dedicated grievance cells within ministries and departments, and appointment of experienced and competent nodal and appellate officers, the minister said.

They also give emphasis on root cause analysis and action on citizen feedback, and the strengthening of

grievance escalation mechanisms, he said.

As on June 30, 2025, the feedback call centre has completed 23 lakh surveys. An appeal mechanism, with 90 nodal appellate authorities and 1,597 sub-appellate authorities, is available to the citizens in case they are not satisfied with the resolution, Singh said.

"In the years 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 (till 30th June), a total of 7,75,240 appeals have been resolved," he said.

The government had constituted the National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment (NeSDA) to boost the e-government endeavours and drive digital government excellence, Singh said.

Further, for capacity building of the civil servants, the Rashtriya Karmayogi Large Scale Jan Seva Programme has been launched by the Capacity Building Commission (CBC), the minister said.

The program uses an innovative, interactive digital pedagogy that encourages reflective discussions and teamwork.

"So far 15,690 officials from 81 Ministries/Departments have been trained under the Phase-I of Rashtriya Karmayogi Large Scale Jan Seva Programme. This initiative is a significant stride toward creating a skilled, agile, and citizen-centric public service workforce," he said.

Phase II of the programme intends to cover the attached/subordinate/field offices through a three-tiered approach, Singh said. (PTI)

Delhi Assembly Speaker directs inquiry by privileges committee, Kejriwal to be summoned

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: Asserting that there was no 'Phansi Ghar' on Delhi Assembly premises, its Speaker Vijender Gupta said on Thursday that the matter will be referred to the Privileges Committee for inquiry that will summon former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, along with others.

Gupta had earlier told the House that the structure, which was renovated and inaugurated in 2022 by then chief minister Kejriwal as a "Phansi Ghar" (execution room), was actually a "tiffin room" as per records.

Displaying a 1912 map of the assembly complex, he had said on Wednesday that there was no documentation or evidence indicating that the space was used for executions. Giving directions on the matter on Thursday, Gupta said he has referred the matter for inquiry to the Privileges Committee.

"The committee will summon former chief minister

Arvind Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia, the then Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel, former deputy speaker Rakhi Birla," he said. He reiterated his allegation that "falsehood" was spread in the name of Phansi Ghar and history was distorted.

The Speaker said he had given the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) time to present "concrete facts and documents" in support of their claims of the existence of Phansi Ghar, but they had failed to do so. "The plaque bearing Kejriwal and Sisodia's names outside Phansi Ghar will be removed. The 1912 map depicting it as tiffin room will also be displayed," he said in the House.

There was no immediate reaction from AAP. Gupta, who was among the opposition members during the AAP rule, said that when the Kejriwal government had announced that there was an "execution room", they used to revere it as a site of martyrdom. (PTI)

Phansi Ghar row

Complete breakdown of law and order under Mamata Banerjee government: Nadda

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: BJP president J P Nadda on Thursday slammed West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for the attack on the convoy of the state's Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari "in the presence of state police", alleging that it is a telling reflection of the complete breakdown of law and order under her government.

Mamata Banerjee must be held accountable for "fostering this culture of lawlessness and political violence", he said on X.

Participants of a BJP rally aimed at highlighting crimes against women in the state were allegedly pelted with stones and shown black flags by a section of people on Wednesday. The BJP has blamed workers of the ruling Trinamool Congress for the incident.

Nadda said, "I strongly condemn the attack on West Bengal Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari's convoy in Cooch Behar by TMC goons. What's even more alarming is that this brazen assault took place in the presence of state police, a telling reflection of the complete breakdown of law and order under Mamata Banerjee's government."

This wasn't just an attack on an elected representative but an attack on democracy itself, he said. (PTI)

Kharge, Sonia other Oppn MPs protest against SIR in Parl

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: Several MPs of the INDIA bloc parties, including Congress parliamentary party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, staged a protest in the Parliament House complex on Thursday against the Election Commission's voter roll revision in Bihar.

Holding banners and posters against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, Samajwadi Party's Dharmendra Yadav, TMC's Sagarika Ghose, as well as other opposition MPs raised slogans and demanded a rollback of the SIR as they staged their protest near Parliament's Makar Dwar.

This was the 12th day of their protest with only one day gap in between on Monday when the opposition skipped their protest in view of the demise of former Jharkhand chief minister Shibu Soren. There was a huge banner in front of the protesting MPs which read 'Discussion not deletion'. Another banner carried by the protesting MPs read 'SIR - Silent Invisible Rigging'. With 'Stop SIR' placards along with posters, alleging collusion between the EC and the government, in hand, the MPs of the opposition, including those of the Congress, DMK, TMC, and Left parties, among others, participated in the protest.

The opposition has been protesting in both Houses of Parliament against the SIR, alleging the EC's exercise was aimed at "disenfranchising voters" in Bihar ahead of the Assembly elections. They have been demanding a discussion on the issue in both Houses. There has been a logjam in Parliament over the SIR in Bihar. Barring discussions on Operation Sindoor in both Houses, Parliament has seen little business ever since the Monsoon session began on July 21 due to repeated adjournments, mostly over the SIR issue. (PTI)

Streak of global temperature records over for now, says European climate agency

A permanent breach of the 1.5-degrees Celsius limit refers to long-term warming over a 20 or 30-year period

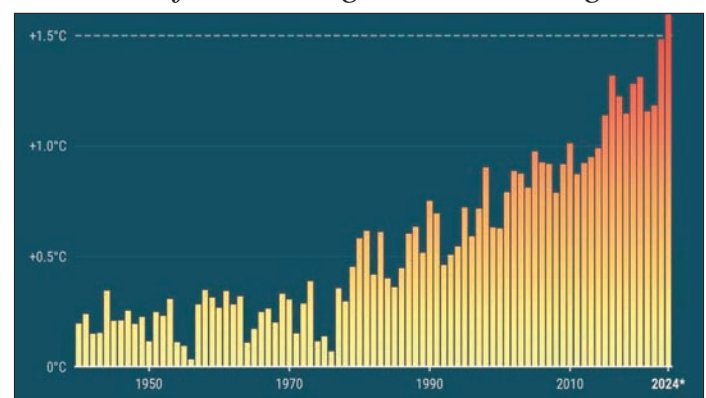
NEW DELHI, Aug 7: The recent streak of record-breaking global temperatures is over for now, according to Europe's climate agency Copernicus, even as July 2025 ranked as the third-warmest July on record worldwide.

The agency also reported that the past 12 months (August 2024 to July 2025) were 1.53 degrees Celsius warmer than the pre-industrial average. The agency said July's global average surface air temperature of 16.68 degrees Celsius was 0.45 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average for the month. It said July 2025 was 0.27 degree Celsius cooler than the record of July 2023 and 0.23 degree Celsius cooler than July 2024, which was the second warmest.

Scientists at Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said July 2025 was 1.25 degrees Celsius

above the estimated 1850-1900 average used to define the pre-industrial level. "It was only the fourth month in the last 25 with a global temperature less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level," the European climate agency said in a statement.

"Two years after the hottest July on record, the recent streak of global temperature records is over -- for now. But this does not mean climate change has stopped. We continued to witness the effects of a warming world in events such as extreme heat and catastrophic floods in July. Unless we rapidly stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, we should expect not only new temperature records but also a worsening of these impacts -- and we must prepare for that," C3S Director Carlo Buontempo said.



Human activities, especially the burning of fossil fuels, have pumped large amounts of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. This has raised the planet's temperature, altered the climate and led to more frequent and severe floods, droughts, storms and

other extreme weather events. At the UN climate conference in Paris in 2015, countries pledged to limit the average global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. The year 2024 was the first calen-

dar year with a global average temperature 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

However, a permanent breach of the 1.5-degrees Celsius limit refers to long-term warming over a 20 or 30-year period. Scientists at Copernicus said the average sea surface temperature (SST) for July 2025 was 20.77 degrees Celsius, the third-highest value on record for the month, 0.12 degree Celsius below the July 2023 record.

Arctic sea ice extent was 10 per cent below average, ranking joint second-lowest for July in the 47-year satellite record, virtually tied with 2012 and 2021. Antarctic sea ice extent was 8 per cent below average, ranking third-lowest on record for the month, a less extreme anomaly than those seen in July 2023 (15 per cent below average) and 2024 (11 per cent below average). (PTI)

Nagaland reservation policy

Five tribes committee slams cabinet's stand; plans joint meeting

KOHIMA, Aug 7: The five Tribes Committee on Review of Reservation Policy (CORRP) on Thursday strongly criticised the Nagaland Cabinet's decision on Backward Tribes (BT) reservation issue, calling it a repeat of its June 12 decision that failed to address their key demands.

In a press statement, CORRP convener Tesinlo Semy and member secretary GK Zhimomi expressed disappointment that the state government has again ignored their core concerns and proceeded with the formation of a reservation review commission, including civil society organisations such as the Central Nagaland Tribes Council, Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation, and Tenyimi Union Nagaland.

CORRP's core demands are framing the terms of reference and the composition of an independent commission to review the decades-old reservation policy.

The committee alleged that the composition announced by the government lacks neutrality and reflects a partisan approach.

It also took strong exception to remarks made by government spokesperson and minister KG Kenye during a media briefing fol-



lowing the cabinet meeting held here on Wednesday.

Citing official data, Kenye said, "Five non-backward tribes currently occupy 64 per cent of government jobs, whereas the 10 backward tribes hold only 34 per cent."

However, to address this imbalance, the government will constitute a reservation review commission, led by a retired senior government official, he added.

The commission has been tasked to submit its report within six months from the day it is formally appointed, but the implementation of the reforms may coincide with the caste-based cen-

sus scheduled by the Centre in January 2026, the minister said.

Rejecting Kenye's justification, CORRP alleged, "The partisan attitude of the government spokesperson in justifying 48 years of indefinite reservation policy and throwing up wild imaginary figures in government employment as well as interlinking the reservation review commission outcome with the next census has only added insult to our movement."

CORRP announced that it will hold a joint sitting with the five apex tribal bodies in Kohima on Saturday to decide the next course of action.

The push for a review of Nagaland's reservation policy intensified after the five tribal apex bodies under the banner of CoORRP submitted a joint memorandum to the state government recently.

They argued that the policy, which has been in place since 1977, no longer reflects the current socio-economic and educational realities of the various communities in the state.

The committee held at least two phases of agitation — on May 29 and July 9 — in the form of protest rallies across multiple district headquarters (Dimapur, Kohima, Mokokchung, Wokha, Tsemnyu, Zunheboto, Chümoukedima, Nuland).

Initially, 25 per cent reservation was allocated for seven tribes in non-technical and non-gazetted posts for a period of 10 years. These tribes were designated as 'backward' based on educational and economic disadvantages, and limited representation in state services.

Over the years, the reservation increased to 37 per cent, comprising 25 per cent for seven Eastern Nagaland Backward Tribes and 12 per cent for four other backward tribes of the state. (PTI)

Tripura HC orders probe into lower court's grant of bail to 6 murder accused



AGARTALA, Aug 7: The Tripura High Court has asked the Registrar Judicial to probe the grant of bail to six murder accused by the Additional District and Sessions Court, Belonia, despite rejection of their application by the high court, a senior lawyer said on Thursday.

Justice Biswajit Palit of the high court also issued a notice to the six murder accused, asking them to explain why their bail should not be cancelled.

Badal Shil, a CPI (M) candidate of South Tripura Zilla Parishad elections, was brutally attacked by a group of people in Chottakhola area on July 12 last year. He succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment at GBP Hospital in Agartala the following day.

Based on an FIR, police arrested seven persons for their alleged involvement in the murder of the CPI(M)

candidate. After conducting the probe, the investigating officer submitted the charge-sheet before the additional district and sessions court, accusing the seven persons of the murder.

"Since the charge-sheet was filed, the seven accused moved bail petitions before the trial court. But considering the gravity of the case and evidence against the accused persons, the additional district and sessions court rejected the bail pleas," advocate Purushottam Roy Barman said.

Of the seven accused persons, six of them then approached the high court challenging the lower court's rejection of their bail pleas.

"After hearing the case, Justice Palit dismissed the bail petitions of the six accused in March this year, stating that bail cannot be granted at this stage because evidence against them appeared solid," he said.

Having failed to secure bail, the six accused again moved the additional district and sessions court, seeking bail as the trial had already begun.

"The lower court then granted bail to the six accused persons on July 25," he said.

"We took up the issue before a bench headed by Justice Palit on Wednesday and pointed out that the additional district and sessions court granted bail to six accused, violating the high court's ruling. The lower court's grant of bail to the persons facing serious charges is against the discipline in the judicial system," he said.

Roy Barman said Justice Palit, after hearing the arguments, asked the Registrar Judicial to probe the matter and also issued notices to the six accused persons asking them to reply why their bail should not be cancelled, he added. (PTI)

Tripura Human Rights body takes suo motu of assault on doctors, seeks probe reports



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 7: The Tripura Human Rights Commission (THRC) has taken suo motu cognizance of the assault on two on-duty doctors at GB Pant Hospital and has sought detailed inquiry reports from both the Director of Health Services and the Superintendent of Police, West Tripura.

In an official order issued by THRC Chairperson Justice Arindam Lodh, the Commission stated that on August 4, two Medical Officers were reportedly assaulted by members of a patient party while carrying out their duties within the hospital premises.

Citing media reports, the Commission noted: "The manhandling of medical officers during the course of their duty within the hospital premises constitutes a serious violation of their human rights. The authorities appear to have failed in ensuring their protection, despite the presence of security personnel at GB Hospital."

Justice Lodh emphasized that the incident warranted immediate attention and intervention from the Commission. As such, a notice has been issued to the Director of Health Services, seeking an explanation as to why adequate protection was not provided to the medical staff on duty. Simultaneously, the Superintendent of Police, West Tripura, has been asked to submit a report on the actions taken against the miscreants and the measures initiated to safeguard the hospital staff.

The Commission has directed both officials to submit their respective reports by August 21.

Tripura govt pays ₹ 6 lakh to family of driver who died after being trapped in lorry

AGARTALA, Aug 7: Tripura Social Welfare Minister Tinku Roy on Thursday visited the parents of the driver who died after being trapped in a cement-laden lorry earlier this week, and handed over a financial assistance of ₹ 6 lakh to them.

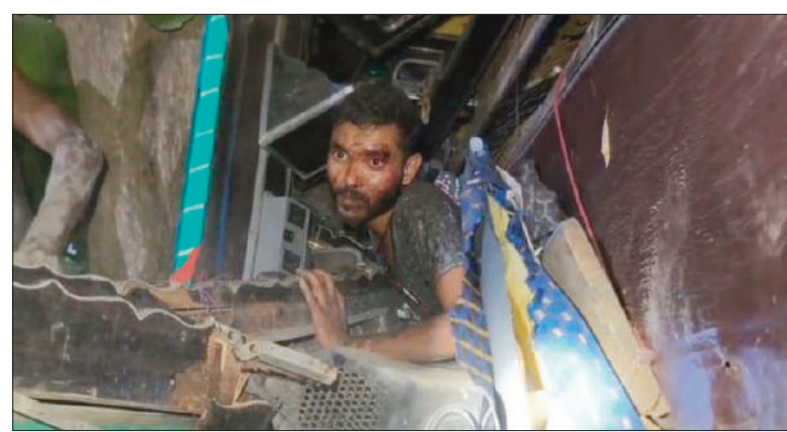
The driver, identified as Mihir Lal Debnath, was a resident of Dasda in North Tripura.

He was trapped inside the cabin of the lorry after the vehicle hit a tree in Khowai district's Chakmaghat in the early hours of Tuesday. He died as a prolonged rescue operation failed.

While the District Magistrate of Khowai has been served a show cause notice, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Teliamura has been suspended, and the officer in charge of Teliamura Fire Service station was show-caused for their alleged negligence in the incident.

"Following an instruction from Chief Minister Manik Saha, we arrived at Dasda to stand by the bereaved family in the hour of crisis. ₹ 6 lakh has been given to the family, and the government will also arrange social pension," Roy told reporters.

Terming the incident as tragic, the minister, who was accompanied by In-



dustries & Commerce Minister Santana Chakma and District Magistrate Chand Chandran, said it would have been avoided had the local administration been more alert.

Meanwhile, the Left's workers under the banner of CITU and Tripura Motor Sramik Union (TMSU) on Thursday staged a rally protesting what they called "the insensitivity of the government" in handling the emergency situation.

"The government is spending substantial money in the name of disaster management, but failed to act at the crit-

ical time. The death of a lorry driver at Chakmaghat has exposed the administration's ill-preparedness to handle a difficult time," CITU state secretary Manik Dey told the reporters.

He demanded that the government compensate the family and order a magisterial-level probe into the Chakmaghat incident.

The state government has already constituted a three-member committee headed by Revenue Secretary Brijesh Pandey to probe into the tragic incident. (PTI)

Nagaland job quota review committee unhappy with govt decision, to decide next course of action

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 7: The 5 Tribes Committee of Review of Reservation Policy (CoRRP) on Thursday expressed displeasure over the Wednesday's Nagaland cabinet's decision on its demands. The committee said it will have a joint sitting with the five apex tribe bodies and decide the next course of action.

CoRRP convener Tesinlo Semy and member secretary GK Zhimomi, in a release, said the August 6 state cabinet meeting chose to ignore the committee's core demands and rather went ahead with the composition of the Reservation Review Commission, which includes civil society organisations such as Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation, Central Nagaland Tribes Council and Tenyimi Union Nagaland. It added that the outcome of the state cabinet meeting on the backward tribe reservation issue is a repetition of their June 12 meeting.

On June 12, the state cabinet had decided in principle to constitute a commission to examine all aspects of the reservation policy in government employment.

The committee said the "partisan attitude" of the government spokesperson KG Kenye on Wednesday in justifying 48 years of indefinite reservation policy and throwing up wild imaginary figures in government employment, as well as interlinking the Reservation Review Commission outcome with the next census, only added insult to its movement.

The committee has been demanding that the 48 years of indefinite job quota for seven backward tribes in Nagaland, introduced in 1977 with an initial duration of 10 years, either be scrapped or the remaining unreserved quota be reserved exclusively for the five tribes of Sumi, Ao, Lotha, Angami and Rengma.

The CoRRP put its proposed third phase agitation on hold after a meeting with chief secretary Sentyiyanger Imchen in Kohima on August 4. Imchen told the committee that the state cabinet will take a final call on its core demands, including the framing of terms of reference and composition of a commission to look into the demands within the next fortnight, in its sitting on August 6.

Tripura records normal rainfall in July; Sepahijala gets highest, Unakoti the lowest

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 7: Tripura witnessed a normal monsoon pattern in July 2025, marked by 26 rainy days, according to the latest report from the Meteorological Department in Agartala.

The report outlined that monsoon activity in the state varied throughout the month—vigorous on two days, active on four, normal on thirteen, and weak on twelve

days. Despite these fluctuations, rainfall remained within the normal range.

Quantitatively, the state recorded 449.9 mm of rainfall in July, surpassing the average monthly norm of 379.8 mm. This represents a positive departure of 18 per cent, indicating a healthy spell of monsoon activity. Cumulatively, Tripura received 850.9 mm of rainfall up to July 31—considered the halfway mark of the mon-

soon season. This total reflects a 6 per cent surplus over the normal seasonal average of 805.7 mm.

Among the individual rainfall stations, Mohanbhog in Sepahijala district recorded the highest rainfall during the month, with an impressive 825.6 mm. The highest single-day rainfall was recorded in Belonia, South Tripura, which experienced a deluge of 295.0 mm on July 9.

Mizoram University researchers discover new snake species

AIZAWL, Aug 7: Researchers from the Zoology Department of Mizoram University have discovered a new species of snake -- 'Smithophis laptofasciatus'.

The new species was discovered after studying its scales, morphological features and DNA during herpetological expeditions. Professor H T Lalremsanga, who heads the Zoology Department, said. The findings of the new research were published in the international scientific journal, 'Taprobanica' (The Journal of Asian Biodiversity) on August 5, he said.

According to Lalremsanga, five Smithophis snake species have been discovered so far worldwide.

They are mainly found in India's Northeast and neighbouring regions, he said.

Of the five species, two species -- Smithophis atemporalis and Smithophis mizoramensis -- were discovered in Mizoram, he said.

Although the new finding was described as Smithophis bicolour, which was discovered in Meghalaya in 1855, a thorough study revealed that Smithophis laptofasciatus differs from the latter in its DNA and morphological features by 11.5 per cent,

which confirmed it to be a new species, he said. Smithophis laptofasciatus is non-venomous and mainly feeds on worms, he said, adding it lives in dense forests. (PTI)



Lok Sabha passes Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: The Lok Sabha on Thursday passed The Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2025, to implement the decisions approved by the GST Council. The bill seeks to replace the Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025.

The Bill was passed by a voice vote amid din in the Lok Sabha.

Moving the bill for discussion and passing, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the amendment is a constitutional necessity which has to be taken up now.

"If it doesn't pass now, the state will have difficulty in implementing the amendments which has long been approved by the Council. Their revenue will get affected because they won't have the authority to charge (tax) on certain items," Sitharaman said.

Among other amendments, the bill seeks to make changes to Section 9 of Manipur GST Act, 2017, allowing the state to "levy State tax on un-denatured extra neutral alcohol or rectified spirit used for manufacture of alcoholic liquor for human consumption".

The GST council, chaired by the Union finance minister and comprising state ministers, had in its 52nd meeting in October 2023 recommended keeping Extra Neutral Alcohol (ENA) used for the manufacture of alcoholic liquor for human consumption outside GST. (PTI)

Lok Sabha passes Manipur Appropriation Bill

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: The Lok Sabha on Thursday passed the Manipur Appropriation Bill, 2025, amid din by opposition members over revision of Bihar electoral rolls.

Soon after the passing of the Bill by voice vote, the House proceedings were adjourned for the day.

The Bill authorises payment and appropriation of certain sums from and out of the Consolidated Fund of the State of Manipur for the services of the financial year 2025-26.

The Bill was passed without any discussion as opposition members did not relent.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman slammed the opposition over disrupting the proceedings and said while they talk of Manipur, they do not want money to go to the state, which is under President's rule. (PTI)

SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

(A State University of the Govt. of Assam)

NARAKASUR HILLTOP, BHANGAGARH, GUWAHATI-781032, ASSAM

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No. SSUHS/309/2025/5451

EDUCATIONAL NOTICE

COUNSELLING FOR SELECTION OF CANDIDATES FOR ADMISSION INTO MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY (PARAMEDICAL) - DEGREE / DIPLOMA COURSES IN THE MEDICAL COLLEGES OF ASSAM FOR THE SESSION 2025-26 UNDER SSUHS

It is for information of all concerned candidates that counselling for selection of candidates for admission into **Medical Technology (Paramedical) Degree/ Diploma courses** in the 5(five) Medical Colleges of Assam at Gauhati Medical College, Guwahati/Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh/ Silchar Medical College, Silchar/ Jorhat Medical College, Jorhat/ Pragjyotishpur Medical College, Guwahati for the **session 2025-26** under Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health Sciences (SSUHS) will be held on **22 to 27 August, 2025 from 10.00 AM onwards** at the SSUHS Premises. The Schedule of counselling is as follows:

(A) All DIVYANG candidates	= 22/08/2025
(B) From Rank 1 to Rank 250 (Unreserved & EWS candidates)	= 22/08/2025
(C) From Rank 251 to Rank 500 (Unreserved & EWS candidates)	= 23/08/2025
(D) From Rank 1 to 1500 (OBC/MOBC- NCL candidates)	= 24/08/2025
(E) From Rank 1 to 1500 (SC candidates)	= 25/08/2025
(F) From Rank 1 to 2000 (ST(P) candidates)	= 26/08/2025
(G) From Rank 1 to 3000 (ST(H) candidates)	= 27/08/2025

(Rank wise seats will be allotted till the availability of seats in that particular category)

The candidates are requested to bring the following original documents along with one set of self-attested photocopies at the time of counselling.

- Passport size photograph
- Admit Card of H.S.L.C. Examination (Age Proof).
- Mark Sheet and Pass Certificate of H.S.S.L.C. or equivalent examination.
- Caste Certificate (wherever applicable).
- Permanent Resident Certificate of Assam.
- Score Card of Entrance Examination
- Counselling fee payment receipt.

Name of the Courses:

- 1) Medical Laboratory Technology
- 2) Medical Radiology and Imaging Technology
- 3) Cardiac Care Technology
- 4) Trauma and Emergency Technology
- 5) ICU Technology
- 6) OT Technology
- 7) Anaesthesia and Critical Care Technology
- 8) Blood Banking Technology
- 9) Dialysis Technology
- 10) Physiotherapy
- 11) Optometry

A non-refundable counselling fee of Rs.1000/- (Rupees one thousand) only is to be paid online before appearing in the Counselling through the link available in University website (www.ssuhs.in → Fee Collect → Student Category → Counselling Fee → Medical Technology) and a copy of E-receipt shall have to be submitted at the time of counselling. Course fee of Rs.25,000/- (Rupees twenty five thousand) only per semester shall have to be paid by the candidates if selected.

Sd/-
Registrar,

DIPR /D/HLT/109/8-Aug-25

Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health Sciences

PUBLIC NOTICE

Office of the Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil), Maibang, Dima Hasao District, Assam
Memo No.: MBG/MPE-30/2007-08/ Date: 4th August 2025

In accordance with the Hon'ble High Court Order vide W.P.(C) No. 5813/2021 (Sabita Roy vs. SOA & Others), the following individual is hereby summoned to appear in person before the undersigned:

Name: Smti Sabita Roy **W/o:** Lt. Mani Kanta Roy, Ex-M.R. Labour, PWD(R&B) Division, Maibang **Address:** Relief Yard, Lumding, P.O. & P.S. Lumding, District Hojai, Assam

Despite repeated summons, the individual has failed to appear for hearings. Therefore, through this public notice, she is directed to:

- **Appear in person on 19th August 2025 at 11:00 AM**
- **Venue:** Office of the Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil), Maibang, Dima Hasao District
- **Bring all relevant supporting documents and witnesses**

Failure to comply may result in further legal action as per the directives of the Hon'ble High Court.

Issued by: Assistant Commissioner & Executive Magistrate Office of the Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil), Maibang Dima Hasao District, Assam

DIPR /D/HLT/108/8-Aug-25

NOT JUST A COMEDIAN: CLOONEY PRAISES ADAM SANDLER'S DRAMATIC TURN IN 'JAY KELLY'



MUMBAI, Aug 7: Hollywood star George Clooney has praised Adam Sandler, his co-star from the upcoming film "Jay Kelly", calling him "not just a great comedian" but also a "soulful actor." The two actors share the screen space for the first time in the drama movie from filmmaker Noah Baumbach. "I kept telling the cast, 'Don't call him Sand Man. Don't talk to him like he's just some goofy comedian.' He's actually a really beautiful, wonderful actor," Clooney told news outlet Vanity Fair.

Clooney added, "Because of what his

paycheck is, which is doing big goofy comedies, when he does these other, beautiful, Uncut Gems kinds of movies, it reminds people of that. He's not just a good comedian." Clooney headlines "Jay Kelly" in the title role.

Written by Baumbach and Emily Mortimer, the film stars the Oscar winner as a world famous movie star in his 60s who faces a personal reckoning when he travels to an Italian film festival to receive a tribute award. Laura Dern stars as Jay's publicist, while Sandler plays his manager.

About the movie, the actor said, "This film, more than any film Adam has done, shows what a beautiful, heartfelt, soulful actor he is." With comedies such as "Just Go With It" and "Grown Ups" under his belt, Sandler has previously challenged himself with dramatic roles in "Punch Drunk Love" in 2002 and 2017's "The Meyerowitz Stories", which was also directed by Baumbach.

"Jay Kelly" will be released in the US theatres on November 14. It will premiere on Netflix on December 5. (PTI)

Amitabh Bachchan begins shooting for 'Kaun Banega Crorepati' season 17

MUMBAI, Aug 7: Megastar Amitabh Bachchan has commenced shooting for the 17th season of the long-running quiz show "Kaun Banega Crorepati".

The new season is set to feature not only new contestants and challenging questions, but also special surprises in celebration of the show's 25-year journey, the makers said in a statement.

"With a new season and the legendary host at the helm, KBC 17 promises to be one of the most sought after shows on Indian television. The opening episode will not only present some new announcements but also brings with it a fresh wave of excitement," it added.

To mark the 25th anniversary milestone, the Sony TV show has also launched a campaign -- #JahanAkalHaiWahaanAkalHai -- which reflects how intellect today is worn

with pride — celebrating not just knowledge but the confidence that comes with it. Bachchan, who has been the face of KBC since its inception in 2000, except for one season in 2003, took to his blog on the eve of the new season to share his thoughts.

"At work .. early rise, early work .. first day of KBC new season .. and as always .. the nerves .. the shaking knees the apprehension," he wrote, reflecting his continued humility and excitement even after 24 years.

"The contestants and the audience in the great KBC floor make all the difference .. they are so we are .. Truly .. So to them all .. my wishes and prayers .." he wrote on Wednesday.

"Kaun Banega Crorepati" season 17 will premiere on August 11 and will air Monday to Friday at 9 pm on Sony Entertainment Television and stream on SonyLIV. (PTI)

Netflix announces crime caper film 'Inspector Zende', starring Manoj Bajpayee, Jim Sarbh

MUMBAI, Aug 7: Streaming service Netflix on Wednesday announced "Inspector Zende", a gripping crime drama headlined by actors Manoj Bajpayee and Jim Sarbh. The film, inspired by true events, will begin streaming on the platform from September 5, Netflix said in a statement.

Set in the bustling bylanes of 1970s and 1980s Mumbai, "Inspector Zende" follows the story of a determined police officer and the infamous "Swimsuit Killer" who escapes from Tihar Jail in New Delhi, according to the official logline. The cat-and-mouse chase between the two unfolds as a quirky blend of crime, comedy, and nostalgia. Bajpayee steps into the role of Inspector Madhukar Zende, while Sarbh portrays the charming and notorious "swimsuit killer" Carl Bhojraj. The character appears to be a nod to the real-life serial killer Charles Sobhraj -- infamously known as the "Bikini Killer" -- who made headlines with his dramatic escape from Tihar Jail in 1986. Sobhraj was recently played by actor Sidhant Gupta in Vikramaditya Motwane's series "Black Warrant". "Inspector Zende" is directed and written by Chinmay D Mandekar, marking his Hindi directorial debut. It also features Bhālchandra Kadam, Sachin Khedekar, Girija Oak and Harish Duthade in pivotal roles.

Produced by Jay Shewakramani and "Tanhaji" director Om Raut under the banner Northern Lights Films, the project is described as a salute to old-school police work and 'jugaadu' justice. "Inspector Zende's" story is one that deserves to be seen, remembered and celebrated. A gripping chase that's as entertaining as it is inspiring, and most essentially, it was my father's dream to make a film on 'Inspector Zende'. Bringing this film to life with Netflix has been an incredible journey," Raut said. Shewakramani added, "Netflix's support for distinctive, true-spirited stories and their global reach make them the perfect partner for this film. We're excited for audiences to discover this unforgettable character."

Ruchika Kapoor Sheikh, director of Original Films at Netflix India, said the film offers a fresh take on the traditional cop-versus-criminal narrative. "Inspector Zende" flips the classic formula by deftly blending comedy and crime to deliver something truly unexpected. At Netflix, we're continually drawn to stories that celebrate heartland heroes and victories woven into our cultural fabric," she said. (PTI)

I love when people around me are funny: Stephanie Beatriz on 'Twisted Metal'

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: Hollywood actor Stephanie Beatriz says moving from the popular sitcom "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" to the wild world of "Twisted Metal" was thrilling as she found herself among a talented group of actors who pushed her to perform at her best.

"I just love jokes and I love when people around me are funny and just killing it in jokes," Beatriz, who shot to fame for her deadpan portrayal of police officer Rosa Diaz in "Brooklyn Nine-Nine", told PTI in an interview.

In "Twisted Metal", the 44-year-old actor plays the role of Quiet, a fierce and unpredictable car thief with a tragic past, who teams up with Anthony Mackie's John Doe on a high-stakes journey across a post-apocalyptic wasteland.

The show, based on the popular video game of the same name, started in 2023 and recently returned with its second season on

SonyLIV.

Beatriz, also known for her work in Disney's animated film "Encanto" and filmmaker Jon M Chu musical "In the Heights", called "Twisted Metal" a "structurally different" project.

"My role on 'Brooklyn Nine-Nine' was really to be the straight man for a lot of really zany comedians around me. And in this, I get to be the straight man to John's zaniest, but I too get to play in that goofy world. It's very different and it's fun," she said, adding that the new season features many characters who are "funny".

"One of the coolest things about being on set was that you're surrounded by these really funny people, comedians, actors, who are sort of making you step your game up. That was really joyful and fun. I loved that," Beatriz said.

"Twisted Metal" is set in a dystopian America where civilization has collapsed and society is divided into

JAVED AKHTAR SAYS HE WANTED TO ASSIST LEGENDARY GURU DUTT AND BECOME A DIRECTOR



MUMBAI, Aug 7: Veteran poet-lyricist-screenwriter Javed Akhtar has revealed the late actor-filmmaker Guru Dutt had a profound influence on him, so much so that he harboured a dream of becoming a director and even assisting the "Pyaasa" maker.

At a special session organised to pay tribute to the Hindi cinema legend as part of his centenary celebrations in Mumbai on Wednesday night, Akhtar, 80, shared that his dream to work with Dutt remained unfulfilled.

"After my graduation, I thought I'll go to the film industry and join Guru Dutt for a couple of years and then I'll become a director. When you're 18-year-old things are simpler and easier, so that is what I had decided. It is so unfortunate that I came to Bombay (now Mumbai) in 1964, on October 4 and he passed away on October 10, so I could never ever see him," Akhtar said.

"I had really thought that I when I go (to Mumbai) somehow I'll manage (to work with Guru Dutt) because (poet-lyricist) Sahir (Ludhianvi) sahab was a good friend of Guru Dutt and he had written songs for 'Pyaasa', I thought this connection will work. I had thought I'll assist him for a while but it didn't work," he stated.

Akhtar, known for penning iconic films such as "Sholay", "Deewar", "Zanjeer", and "Don" along with Salim Khan, said he was impressed by the way Dutt would communicate complex narratives through visuals.

"I was highly impressed by Guru Dutt in my college days, that when I was 17 or 18-year-old I refused to see films of certain superstars because I believed they're bad actors. It means I had some choice. Guru Dutt had a deep impression on me as a teenager.

"We had great directors like Mehboob (Khan), Bimal Roy, but Guru Dutt was the first person who spoke through visuals. There were other directors who could give good performances, shoot at right locations, create right ambience in the film, and well-written films but talking through visuals is something that was taught to us by Guru Dutt," Akhtar noted.

The session was attended by filmmakers like Sudhir Mishra, Hansal Mehta, and R Balki, and film critic-author Bhawana Sommaya, each echoing Akhtar's sentiments of reverence for Dutt. The event concluded with a special screening of "Pyaasa", which was attended by Dutt's family including, his granddaughters Gouri and Karuna Dutt, late actor Johnny Walker's son Nasir, filmmaker Anubhav Sinha, actor Akshay Oberoi, and others.

Mishra recalled watching Dutt's film "Saheb Bibi Aur Ghulam" at least six times as a teenager, with his grandmother.

"Guru Dutt is an experience, one could see him again and again. At the age of 22, he would mean something else, and today he would mean something else. I keep revisiting him. There's nothing in my life that I've done that is not influenced by him, and I haven't measured up to him, but I'm trying to.

"He taught us how to make films, how to see a scene, how to take a blueprint, which is a script, and he rewrite it in a film," the filmmaker said.

Mehta revealed that during his FTII days in Pune in the early 1990s, he created a music video which was a "plagiarised" song sequence from Dutt's iconic film, "Kaagaz Ke Phool".

He candidly described his work as a "vulgar replication", and added that he hopes to pay tribute to the late filmmaker someday by making a movie that talks about "heartbreak and love". "I grew up knowing about him through my closest friend, who was his nephew. I used to hear stories about his uncle. I discovered his (Dutt) films much later, 'Pyaasa' is the first film I saw and it left a lasting impression on me. More than the number of films I've made, I've had more heartbreaks, and love.

"Guru Dutt has taught me that pitying oneself can be beautiful, I began to think of self-sympathy as a virtue and that I should celebrate it, and that heartbreak is cinematic. I wish I can make a film that talks about heartbreak and love to pay tribute to the person who influenced me," Mehta noted. (PTI)



Canadian teen Mboko reaches Montreal final, beating Rybakina in 3rd-set tiebreaker

MONTREAL, Aug 7: Canadian teenager Victoria Mboko rallied to reach the National Bank Open final, beating ninth-seeded Elena Rybakina 1-6, 7-5, 7-6 (4) on Wednesday night.

The 18-year-old Mboko dropped to the court after Rybakina's shot sailed long on match point as the crowd — lined with "Allez Vicky" — erupted. Mboko saved a match point in the third set and broke Rybakina twice to force the tiebreaker.

"Incredible match, thank you to everyone for supporting me," Mboko told the crowd in French. "It was really difficult, but anything can happen."

On Thursday night, she'll face Japanese star Naomi Osaka, a 6-2, 7-6 (7) winner over 16th-seeded Clara Tauson of Denmark in the second semifinal.

Mboko, ranked 85th in the world, is seeking her first WTA Tour title and trying to join Faye Urban (1969) and Bianca Andreescu (2019) as the only Canadians to win the home event in the open era.



"Playing in front of the home crowd, obviously, has its advantages," Mboko said. "You always have everyone pumping you up as much as they can. It really pulls me through in the tough moments where I'm maybe not as positive. Really blessed to have that kind of support."

Born in Charlotte, North Carolina, to Congolese parents, Mboko grew up in Toronto. She upset top-seeded Coco Gauff 6-1, 6-4 on Saturday to reach the quarterfinals, then topped Jessica Bouzas Maneiro 6-4, 6-2 on Monday. At 2 hours, 46 minutes, the match Wednesday was the longest of Mboko's short tour career.

From Kazakhstan, Rybakina won at Wimbledon in 2022. She has nine career WTA Tour victories, winning in May on clay at Strasbourg. Rybakina beat Mboko 6-3, 7-5 last month in Washington.

"I knew that she was a tough opponent," Rybakina said. "She served really well in these important moments. It was a very close match, like a big fight. So it could

go any way, but it went hers."

Mboko overcame 11 double-faults and battled through a wrist injury after stumbling awkwardly to the ground in the second game of the third set. She'll move up to at least 34th in the world after starting the year outside the top 300. Mboko said her wrist felt "a lot better" after the match, but in the moment, the fall almost crushed her spirits.

"She was playing really great tennis on top of that, but I'm happy that I kept my composure," Mboko said. "I was patient in the right moments. I just feel really happy that I was able to bounce back after being down, even a match point, I think." Osaka, the four-time Grand Slam champion who reached No. 1 in the world, continued her best performance in a WTA 1000 tournament since reaching the Miami final in 2022. She stepped for 15 months toward the end of that season and had daughter Shai in July 2023. She's seeking her eighth title and her first since the 2021 Australian Open. (AP)

Velammal Vidyalaya wins gold medal at World Schools Team Chess Championship



NEW DELHI, Aug 7: Chennai's Velammal Vidyalaya, the alma mater of the youngest reigning world champion D Gukesh and Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa, has won the gold medal at the World Schools Team Chess Championship in Virginia, USA.

The Velammal Vidyalaya, located in the Mogappair neighbourhood, has been lauded as the force behind the chess revolution in Chennai as it provides expert training to hundreds of budding chess players.

"After eight exciting rounds, the 2025 World Schools Team Championship wrapped up today in Alexandria, Virginia," global chess governing body FIDE announced in a press release on Thursday.

Velammal Vidyalaya's Pranav KP, who played reserve on board five, along with Imangali Akhilbay (Kazakhstan NSPM) on board two and Edisa Berdibaeva (Kazakhstan NSPM) finished with perfect scores (eight out of eight).

In all, Velammal Vidyalaya ended their eight games with 16 points.

"Rising above the rest with a perfect score, Velammal MHS School from India claimed the gold medal, winning all eight of their matches," the FIDE stated.

FIDE said the triumph for Velammal School adds another chapter to India's "growing collection" of titles in chess.

"With India continuing to make waves across all levels and formats of chess, this victory adds yet another title to the country's growing collection," it said.

"Velammal MHS is no stranger to success—former students include Grandmasters R. Praggnanandhaa and Leon Mendonca. So it came as little surprise when the team entered the final round with the top spot already secured," FIDE added.

The Velammal School has produced several Grandmasters over the years including SP Sethuraman, Mendonca, K Priyadarshan, B Adhiban, Vishnu Prasanna, Visakh NR, Vignesh NR, M Karthikeyan, C Aravindh, Karthik Venkataraman, V Pranav, S Bharath, Arjun Kalyan, P Karthikeyan and N Srinath.

Among the Women Grandmasters from the school are R Vaishali, a Grandmaster and sister of Praggnanandhaa, Varshini S, R Rakshit and B Savitha Shri.

"They also have a champion like Anand to look up to," the school's chess co-coordinator S Velavan had told PTI in December last year.

"Since most of the children coming here have a genuine interest in chess, we don't have to push them. They combine studies and chess well, and, in fact, the students who play chess have done even better in their studies," he added. Velammal Vidyalaya, which won the FIDE World School Teams Championship for five consecutive years in the past, follows the '7 to 17 programme' which was introduced by former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalithaa in 2013. (PTI)

Vancouver Whitecaps sign former Bayern Munich forward Thomas Müller



VANCOUVER, Aug 7: Former Bayern Munich forward Thomas Müller is joining the Vancouver Whitecaps in arguably the biggest signing in club history.

Müller, who won the World Cup with Germany in 2014, will join the Whitecaps for the remainder of the season in an open roster spot.

Terms of the deal were not released. It includes a Designated Player option for 2026.

"Whitecaps — let's make history," Müller said in a video he posted online Wednesday that showed him unboxing a Vancouver jersey. The 35-year-old Müller has spent the last 17 years with Bayern Munich in the German Bundesliga, helping the club win 13 league championships and 33 total titles during that span. He scored 250 goals in 756 appearances with Bayern across all competitions, but his contract was not renewed after last season.

At the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, Müller scored five goals. He also scored five goals at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, winning the Golden Boot.

Müller's final match with Bayern came this summer at the Club World Cup, losing 2-0 in the quarterfinals to Paris Saint-Germain in Atlanta. He came into the match as a late substitute.

Müller joined Bayern's academy as a 10-year-old in 2000. He made his senior debut under Jurgen Klinsmann in 2008 and his breakthrough

came under Louis van Gaal the following season.

The club announced in a joint statement in April that it would be his last season. In a post on social media, Müller said he understood Bayern's decision "even if this did not reflect my personal wishes."

"Thomas Müller is the definition of a Bavarian fairytale career; he grew in Bavaria and with Bayern," club president Herbert Hainer said. "Nobody has won more Bundesliga titles, and 33 trophies in total so far speak volumes. He ranks among the most outstanding personalities in FC Bayern history."

Müller retired from international soccer after last year's European Championship, having scored 45 goals in 131 appearances for Germany.

The Whitecaps obtained Müller's MLS discovery rights from FC Cincinnati in exchange for up to \$400,000 in General Allocation Money to complete the signing. He will occupy an international roster spot. "Thomas is a natural leader whose passion for the game is infectious. This is a statement signing by our club and our ownership — a transformative moment for our club and our city," Vancouver sporting director and CEO Axel Schuster said in statement.

Müller is set to arrive in Vancouver next week. His first practice and introductory news conference with the club are scheduled for Thursday. (AP)

India drawn with Iran, Palestine, Chinese Taipei and Lebanon in U17 Asian Cup Qualifiers

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: Hosts India have been placed in Group D alongside Iran, Palestine, Chinese Taipei and Lebanon for the AFC U-17 Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers, following the draw held at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday.

Ahmedabad's The Arena will host Group D of the Qualifiers from November 22-30.

India will begin the Qualifiers with a clash against Palestine (November 22) before taking on Chinese Taipei (November 26), Lebanon (November 28) and Iran (November 30).

The draw saw 38 teams divided into seven groups — three of six teams each and four of five.

They will contest the Qualifiers in a single round-robin centralised league format, with the seven group winners progressing to the 21st edition of the finals, where they will join the nine AFC representatives from the FIFA U17 World Cup 2025 who have automatically qualified — Qatar, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, North Korea, Japan, Tajik-



istan, United Arab Emirates and Indonesia.

For the Qualifiers draw, the 38 teams were seeded into six pots based on a points system derived from their final rankings across the previous three editions of the Finals.

India were seeded in Pot 2, and placed in a separate hosts Pot before the draw to ensure they were not drawn in the same group as

other hosts.

The AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026 will take place from May 7 to 24, 2026, and the top eight finishers will qualify for the FIFA U17 World Cup Qatar 2026.

After missing out on qualifying for the 2025 tournament, India will aim to bounce back and appear in the upcoming edition of the tournament for the 10th time

Gaurav Gill to lead Indian challenge at Sumatera Utara Rally

MEDAN (INDONESIA), Aug 7: The three-time champion Gaurav Gill will spearhead India's challenge at the Sumatera Utara Rally, third round of the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship's (APRC) Asia Cup section, here from August 8 to 10.

Gill will start as hot favourite as a combination of Team JK Tyre and Vamcy Merla Motorsports has fielded a five-car challenge from India at the rally.

The qualifiers from Asia Cup and Pacific Cup will fight for the APRC title in the final round in Japan later.

Gill, an Arjuna awardee, is the only driver in APRC history to win all rounds of a season in 2016. But as he aims to reclaim his dominance in Indonesia's treacherous terrain, he is likely to face fierce competition from local heroes and rising stars, more so when it rains.

The campaign marks India's largest-ever factory-backed entry in APRC history with support from Vamcy Merla and Lokesh Gowda, promoter of Indian National Autotocross Championship.

The squad will thus look to make its mark in the 12-stage and 200.6 kilometres battle across jungle tracks and volcanic gravel.

Vamcy Merla, also the promoter of APRC, has imported two top-tier international rally-spec cars for India's campaign.

"Nothing makes me happier than seeing so many cars from India and a strong grid of 15 cars which augurs well for APRC," said Vicky Chandhok, president of the APRC Working Group.

Gill will have Florian Barral as his co-driver while Goa's first rallyist and state government entry, Vaib-

hav Marathe will team up with the experienced Ashvin Naik as JK Tyre entries. The other three VM Motorsports teams are M Bopaiah (Kodagu) and PV Srinivasa (Bengaluru), Abin Rai (Kodagu) and the experienced Srikanth Gowda (Chikkamagaluru), and Nikeeta Takale (Pune) with Sudheendra BG as her navigator.

Nikeeta will take part in a two-wheel drive car in the Ladies, Junior and RC4 category of the APRC.

After the ceremonial start on Friday, the APRC rally, which is run concurrently with the Indonesian Rally championship round, will have six competitive special stages each on Saturday and Sunday.

The special stages distance is 154.14 kilometres and along with 46.46 kilometres of transport section, the total distance is around 200

kilometres. The next round of APRC is in China.

"This five-car effort shows our commitment to developing all rally talent. From Gill's title hunt to Nikeeta's Ladies Cup campaign, each driver gets world-class support," said Merla.

"Providing competitive international machinery like the Skoda Fabia R2 evo and Ford Fiesta Rally3 Evo to Team JK Tyre is about giving our top Indian drivers the tools they need to shine globally," it added.

Sanjay Sharma, head of motorsport, JK Tyre added: "This five-car assault, particularly with the international-spec Skoda and Ford acquired through our partnership with Vamcy Merla Motorsports, marks a bold new chapter for Team JK Tyre." (PTI)

Scottie Scheffler will take being rested and ready over practice for FedEx Cup playoffs

MEMPHIR (US), Aug 7: Scottie Scheffler returned home from his British Open victory, made a few brief appearances in New York and used the claret jug to get 15-month-old son Bennett into the men's grill at Royal Oaks in Dallas.

He is rested. The key for Scheffler, regardless of the tournament, is to be ready. But this is the time of the year, even with \$15 million at stake, not to be grinding on the range.

"At this point in the year, that extra practice is maybe only going to be draining for me a little bit, and that's something that I've learned to manage as my career has gone on," Scheffler said Wednesday after his program round in the FedEx St. Jude Championship.

The tournament at TPC Southwind is the start of three straight FedEx Cup playoff

events that culminate with the FedEx Cup title to whoever wins the Tour Championship.

In a revamped postseason, the \$25 million to the winner has been split up into three parts. Scheffler already picked up \$10 million for leading the FedEx Cup in the regular season (along with \$8 million from the Comcast Business Top 10 bonus program).

The FedEx Cup leader after the BMW Championship next week gets \$5 million, and the winner of the Tour Championship — all 30 players start from scratch this time — gets \$10 million.

The TPC Southwind is where Scheffler last missed a cut in 2022 (when the postseason was for the top 125 players, not the top 70). This year he comes to the postseason off a double major season — the PGA

Championship and the British Open — and has finished in the top 10 in his last 11 tournaments dating to March.

It's safe to say his game is in reasonably good shape. Now it's about conserving energy for August stops in Memphis, Baltimore and Atlanta.

"I would say my prep week last week definitely looked a bit different than it would have looked before the Scottish Open (in July) and definitely looked a little bit different than it would have looked if you go back to the beginning of the year when I was coming off injury," he said. "So making sure I'm rested, ready to play," he said. "My game is in a good spot, and I feel like some extra practice at this point in the year can almost be detrimental in terms of just physical and mental fatigue."

Scheffler stopped in New



York for a brief appearance on the Jimmy Fallon Show and to attend the Happy Gilmore 2 premier. A lot of time included that silver claret jug he picked up from a dominant victory at Royal Portrush.

"We had a party two weeks ago at home with some of our friends, and everybody got to drink out of it. It was a lot of fun," Scheffler said.

He also has brought golf's oldest trophy to his home course at Royal Oaks — Justin Leonard brought the claret jug to the course when he won the Open in 1997 — and there was one time he went with just his son.

"He whacked some golf balls around, and we hung out for a bit," Scheffler said. "I took him to the 19th hole with me, and I got some pretty funny pictures with Bennett sitting in the 19th

hole at the men's only grill where you've got to be — I think you've got to be 19 to get in there, but I figured if we bring in a couple major championship trophies with us, they'll let the rules slide on that one."

And now it's back to work. The points are quadrupled for the postseason, but Scheffler has such a lead — and Rory McIlroy is sitting this one out — that he is assured of staying at No. 1.

This is one of the most important tournaments of the year because the top 50 after this week not only advance to the BMW Championship, they are assured of getting in all the \$20 million signature events next year.

Among those on the bubble for that is Jordan Spieth at No. 48, who is also trying to keep his shrinking Ryder Cup hopes alive. (AP)

I never considered not going out to bat against India: Chris Woakes



LONDON, Aug 7: England all-rounder Chris Woakes says not going out to bat due to a dislocated shoulder against India on the final day of the fifth Test was something he never considered, even as he wondered if his career was at risk when he suffered the injury.

Woakes came out with his left hand wrapped in a sling and tucked inside his sweater at the fall of the penultimate wicket with the fifth Test — which India won narrowly — tantalisingly placed.

Woakes said he felt it was his "duty to do it for everyone" and that he is still gutted that England lost the game.

"I don't know what it is. You just know you're part of something bigger. It's not just you that you're playing for out there," Woakes, awaiting further scans, told The Guardian.

"It's your team and your teammates, all the hard work and the sacrifices they put in, the people watching at home and in the ground. You just feel a duty to do it for everyone."

"I'm still gutted, devastated really, that we couldn't get the fairy tale. But I never considered not going out there, even if it had been 100 runs still to win or whatever," he added.

Woakes said it felt nice to walk out to a standing ovation but does not read much into his heroic act.

"It was nice to have the ovation and some of the Indian players came over to show their respect. But any other player would have done the same. You couldn't just call it off at nine wickets down," he said.

Woakes revealed he began practising batting one-handed from the fourth day onwards with England assistant coach Marcus Trescothick.

"I defended one normally and, oh mate, it was agony," he said.

"We soon worked out that a left-hander's stance would shield the shoulder and at least allow me to sort of block with my top hand in control. I hit a few, missed a few, but it felt like the only way to survive," he added.

The senior England player also revealed the exchanges he had with India skipper Shubman Gill and his deputy Rishabh Pant, who himself put on a similar act of bravery in the fourth Test when he batted with a broken foot.

"Shubman said something like: 'That was incredibly brave,'" he said.

"I told him: 'You've had an unbelievable series, well played, and credit to your team'. Both sets of players had been through the mill in the series and deserve credit for the show we put on. Both teams wanted the win, of course, but it does kind of feel fair that it was drawn."

"I saw Rishabh (Pant) had put an image of me on Instagram with a salute emoji, so I replied thanking him: 'Appreciate the love and hope the foot is OK,' etc."

Woakes added, "He then sent me a voice note saying: 'I hope all is OK, good luck with the recovery and I hope we meet again out there some day'. I obviously said sorry for the broken foot."

Woakes, who did not get to face a ball, said running between the wickets was the toughest.

"The first one was the worst. All I had taken was codeine and it was just so sore. Instinct took over here — even with my arm strapped down I tried to run as you naturally do," he said.

"I genuinely worried my shoulder had popped back out again, hence you saw me throw my helmet off, rip the glove off with my teeth, and check it was OK."

"It was bittersweet in the end. (A) part of me wondered what it might be like, to see if I could have defended the ball, seen out an over maybe, squeezed a run or carved a four."

He continued, "But the other side of it was: 'Thank God I didn't face a 90mph bouncer, one-handed, facing the wrong way around'. I knew I was going to have to wear a few bouncers if I did get on strike." Woakes wondered if the injury was career-threatening right after his slide on the first day of the Test.

"The outfield was wet from the rain, almost greasy, and my hand slipped as I landed and my full body weight went through my shoulder. I heard a pop and knew I was in trouble," he said.

"The pain came on pretty quickly and my arm was just hanging there. It was grim and my thoughts were racing. 'Is it game over? Is it career done?' It was a horrible place to be," he added. (PTI)

New Zealand pace dismantles Zimbabwe top-order as Taylor stands firm in comeback match

BULAWAYO (ZIMBABWE), Aug 7: Brendan Taylor made a resolute return to international cricket after a ban of more than three years but his Zimbabwe teammates struggled to cope with an all-out New Zealand pace attack in the second test on Thursday.

First test standout Matt Henry and debutant pace bowler Zakary Foulkes picked up two wickets each to leave Zimbabwe in trouble at 67-4 by lunch on Day 1.

With wickets falling all around him in the opening session, Taylor played with lot of grit and was unbeaten on 33 off 89 balls that featured four boundaries. Taylor replaced Ben Curran at the top order in one of the two changes Zimbabwe made from the first test.

Taylor's 3 1/2-year ban for violating ICC's anti-corruption codes ended late last month and he was immediately included in the second test squad.

He had a shaky return to international cricket when Jacob Duffy's short ball flew off the edge of his bat and went over the head of the wicketkeeper to fine leg boundary for four.

But Taylor grew in confidence against some steady bowling by four New Zealand fast bowlers while his teammates had similar struggles to the first test, which New Zealand won by nine wickets inside three days.

Henry struck off his ninth ball of the match when Will Young took a smart catch of Brian Bennett in the second slip as the opener couldn't get off the mark. Henry then struck again in his nine-over opening spell when he pinned



Nick Welch (11) leg before wicket off a delivery that nipped back into the right-handed batter.

Foulkes continued to trouble the top-order batters and beat the outside edge of Sean Williams' bat a number of times before the left-hander finally edged one to Young in the second slip. Captain Craig Ervine (7) added 24 runs with Taylor but Foulkes struck in the last over before the lunch break as Young took his third catch in the slips cordon.

New Zealand, already without several star

players like Kane Williamson, Kyle Jamieson and Glenn Phillips for the series, suffered twin blows when fast bowlers Nathan Smith and Will O'Rourke were ruled out after picking up injuries in the first test.

Michael Bracewell also left the team to play in The Hundred in England.

The Black Caps awarded test caps to fast bowlers Duffy, Matthew Fisher and Foulkes as it opted to go with four pace bowlers, including Henry, who bagged a nine-wicket haul in the first test. (AP)

I obviously said sorry for the broken foot: Woakes reveals exchange with Pant

LONDON, Aug 7: England all-rounder Chris Woakes has revealed that he said "sorry" to Rishabh Pant for the delivery that broke his toe during the recent Test series at the end of which he was left quite touched by his Indian rival's generosity.

Woakes had struck Pant's foot during the fourth Test in Manchester, ruling him out of the series-deciding fifth game. India battled past the setback to win the finale at the Oval by six runs to tie the series at 2-2.

Both Woakes and Pant became symbols of heroism for their respective teams by coming out to bat despite major injuries. While Pant padded up with his broken toe in Manchester, Woakes came out during the fifth Test despite a dislocated shoulder.

"I saw Rishabh (Pant) had put an image of me on Instagram with a salute emoji, so I replied thanking him: 'Appreciate the love and hope the foot is OK,' etc," Woakes recalled in an interview to 'The Guardian'.

"He then sent me a voice note saying: 'I hope all is OK, good luck with the recovery and I hope we meet again out there some day'. I obviously said sorry for the broken foot." (PTI)

Lovlina accuses BFI official of disrespectful behaviour, IOA inquiry panel to convene meeting soon

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: Tokyo Olympics bronze-winning boxer Lovlina Borgohain's allegations of "disrespectful and gender-discriminatory behaviour" against national federation's executive director Col Arun Malik are being investigated and a report would be submitted soon, a Sports Authority of India (SAI) official has said.

In a formal complaint addressed to Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, Sports Authority of India (SAI) Director General, the TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme) division, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), and the Boxing Federation of India (BFI), Lovlina alleged that Malik humiliated her and undermined her achievements during a Zoom meeting on July 8, which was attended by SAI and TOPS officials.

On the call Lovlina requested that her per-

sonal coach, who was also present in the on-line meeting, be allowed in the national camp, something that goes against the BFI policy. She also wanted the coach to be allowed to travel with her to train in Europe.

According to Lovlina, Malik responded aggressively and spoke to her in a demeaning manner.

"He blatantly told me to 'shut up, lower your head and do as we say.' His words were not only disrespectful but also carried an alarming tone of gender-discriminatory and authoritarian dominance — something that no one, especially a woman who has brought honour to the nation, should be subjected to," Lovlina stated in her complaint.

"I was made to feel small, unheard, and powerless. It was not just a personal insult -

- it was an attack on every woman athlete who dreams of standing tall, both in and outside the ring," Lovlina stated in her complaint.

She further asked for a "fair and swift inquiry" and also "necessary disciplinary action if these actions are found to be in violation of acceptable conduct."

Malik, however, "categorically and unequivocally" denied the allegations, calling them "devoid of any merit."

"Lovlina's requests were considered and respectfully declined, as they are inconsistent with the policies of the Boxing Federation of India."

"As per BFI's Selection Policy published in January 2025, it is mandatory for all athletes to participate in the National Coaching Camp to be considered for evaluation and

selection for international competitions," Malik said in his reply.

"BFI, in the interest of fairness and uniformity, does not permit personal coaches or support staff within the National Camp."

Taking note of the complaint, the IOA formed a panel, comprising TOPS CEO N S Johal, IOA's athletes commission vice chairperson Sharath Kamal and a woman advocate.

The entire interaction between Lovlina and Malik was recorded during the meeting and a member of the inquiry panel said a report would be submitted soon.

The committee was to give the report within two weeks of receiving the complaint but has been unable to convene a meeting due to "some prior commitments of its members". (PTI)

High on confidence with improved fitness, Manpreet targets Asian Games 2026

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: Two Olympic medals, over 400 International caps and still going strong, Manpreet Singh, the second-most capped player in Indian hockey, has found a second wind by tweaking his lifestyle and diet.

The former India captain, who led India to a historic bronze at the Tokyo Olympics, realised after the Paris Games last year that staying relevant in the fast-paced world of modern hockey meant one thing: transforming his fitness.

"After last year's Paris Olympics and Asian Champions Trophy, I felt that if I have to extend my career, I will have to work on my fitness," the 32-year-old told PTI Bhasha in an interview.

"I am 30-plus and now I have to maintain my fitness at the level of the young players in the team to compete with them. Experience alone is not enough," added Manpreet all geared up for the Asia Cup, a World Cup qualifier, to be held in Bihar later this month.

For the last one year, Manpreet who has played 402 matches for India — second only to Dilip Tirkey's 412 — in an illustrious career of 14 years, has now drastically altered his diet and training regimen.

He has cut down on sweets and junk food, shifted to a high-protein, low-carb diet, and incorporated specialised workouts focused on speed and core strength.

"I have almost stopped eating sweets and junk food. I eat that only once a week but in very small quantities. Apart from gym, I started working on core workouts, speed and lost seven kilos of weight," added the veteran from Mithapur, Punjab who made his debut for India in 2011 at the age of 19.

"With less weight, the speed on the field improved. I also got very good results in YoYo and speed tests. I am feeling very good about myself."

While there will be speculation whether he will aim for the 2028 Los An-



geles Olympics, Manpreet is not making long-term commitments just yet.

"My first target is the Asian Games 2026. I know that I can continue till then with my current fitness. After that I will assess and if I feel otherwise then I will make room for another player. I consider Cristiano Ronaldo as my idol who is so fit even at the age of 40," he said.

He also said the current Indian team is at par with heavyweights Australia, Netherlands and Germany on fitness, intensity and skills and the only difference is of execution.

"Even before the Tokyo Olympics, the team had the confidence to defeat big teams. In terms of fitness and skill, we are at par with them. The only difference is in the execution and we are focusing on that," he said.

Asked how he managed the workload in such a long career while playing fast-paced international hockey, he said, "We have a big pool of players and also have India A team. Young players also get opportunities and workload management is taken care of."

"If I talk about myself, I want to play every match, it is a matter of pride to play for the country and I do not want to lose

even a single opportunity of it. I know how much and what kind of recovery is needed after the tournament and I keep doing that," he added.

Confident of World Cup berth via Asia Cup

He is confident that India will qualify for next year's World Cup through the Asia Cup to be held in Rajgir, Bihar from August 29.

India have won only one World Cup so far in 1975 and in the last tournament held in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela in 2023, the host team finished ninth.

"Earlier it was said that we are not able to play well in the Olympics, but in Tokyo we won a medal after 41 years and repeated it in Paris. We are sure that we will perform well in the World Cup as well."

"It is very important to capitalise on the opportunities in the knockout stage of a big tournament. In the last World Cup, we made a mistake in the match against New Zealand which cost us dearly but we have learned our lesson," he said.

He does not underestimate any team in the Asia Cup and believes that India will have to play by focusing on its strengths.

"Every team is coming with the goal of World Cup qualification and anything is possible in modern hockey. South Africa had defeated Germany in the Olympics. We have to focus on our strength, not on which team is in front of us."

In the Europe leg of FIH Pro League this year, the scorelines of six consecutive losses suggest a tough fight by the Indians, but it also reflects a worrying trend of conceding last minute goals and defensive lapses under pressure.

"The European tour was not that bad and there were many close matches. We worked a lot on the defense after that, how not to give easy opportunities to opponents and convert our chances," he said. (PTI)

India to face Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan in U17 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: India will face Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in Group G of the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup China 2026 Qualifiers in Bishkek.

The draw was conducted at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday.

The draw saw 27 teams divided into eight groups — three of four teams each, and five of three. They will contest the Qualifiers in a single round-robin centralised league format from October 13 to 17.

India last participated in the Asian Cup in 2005. The Young Tigresses will aim to script history by qualifying for the continental stage for the first time via the qualifiers route.

Groupings
Group A: Philippines, Malaysia, Tajikistan (H), Syria
Group B: Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia (H)
Group C: Indonesia, Myanmar (H), Mongolia, Macau
Group D: Vietnam (H), Hong Kong, China, Guam
Group E: Australia, Singapore (H), Northern Mariana Islands
Group F: Thailand (H), Nepal, Turkmenistan
Group G: India, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic (H)
Group H: Bangladesh, Chinese Taipei, Jordan (H)

India's schedule
October 13: Kyrgyz Republic vs India
October 17: India vs Uzbekistan. (PTI)

OM SHANTI



Dr. DHRUBA HOJAI

Date of Birth : 22/05/1952

Date of Death : 08/08/2024

1st Death Anniversary

We fondly remember my Husband/Father late Dr. Dhruba Hojai who left for his heavenly abode on the 8th of August, 2024 and Pray to the almighty for the eternal peace of his departed soul.

Fondly remembered by :

Usha Hojai (Wife)
Thairingdao Hojai (Son)
Ronlikdi Hojai (Daughter)
Bangham Hojai (Son)
Brother, Sister, Brother-in-law
and Sister-in-law
And all family members.

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