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THE HILLS TIMES

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Voice of the hills people

Vol .No. II

Issue No. 156

RNI-ASSEN/2023/86488

GUWAHATI, SATURDAY, AUGUST 9, 2025

PAGES 12

PRICE ₹ 8

10 Bangladeshi infiltrators sent back: CM

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Ten illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators have been 'pushed back' by security forces to the neighbouring country from Assam's Sribhumi district on Friday, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

"Stern action against illegal infiltration continues! In the wee hours today, @assampolice pushed back 10 illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators from the Sribhumi sector", the chief minister posted on X.

Sarma said that attempts to 'alter Assam's demography will not be tolerated. Borders secured, infiltrators repelled!"

Assam police had pushed back 27 illegal infiltrators from Sribhumi, back to Bangladesh last week.

More than 387 alleged illegal infiltrators have been pushed back in recent months.

Sarma claimed the state government was committed to an infiltration-free Assam.

The BSF has intensified its vigil along the 1,885 km-long India-Bangladesh border in the North East since the disturbances began in Bangladesh last year.

Assam Police is also maintaining a high alert along the India-Bangladesh border to ensure that no person can enter the state illegally and any person without any valid citizenship documents will be pushed back, an official said. (PTI)

132 acres of forest land freed; drive to continue

146 families evicted from Nagheribil in Golaghat district

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: The Assam government on Friday evicted 146 families who had allegedly encroached on 132 acres (400 bighas) of forest land in Golaghat district, officials said.

The eviction drive was carried out at Nagheribil in Merapani, located along the Assam-Nagaland border, as part of the ongoing drive to reclaim encroached land in the Doyang Reserve Forest, Special Chief Secretary MK Yadav said.

The drive led to the clearance of 146 households comprising numerous illegal structures, spread across more than 50 hectares of protected forest land, he said.

It was conducted by following due legal process with prior notices issued to the encroachers.

Yadav said the Nagaland government and police had extended active support and cooperation throughout the eviction process, which contributed significantly to the smooth conduct of the drive.

The remaining encroachments in Uriamghat and Nagheribil will be removed from August 16, he said. The Gauhati High Court has di-



rected that those facing eviction from Doyang and South Nambor forests in Golaghat district to submit proof of land rights by August 14 or vacate the land.

A plantation drive will be launched in Uriamghat from Saturday with similar initiatives to follow in other recently cleared areas within the reserve forest, Yadav said.

This was the ninth eviction drive carried out in the state since June. The largest of these had cleared 1,500 hectares of forest land and

displaced around 1,500 families at Uriamghat in Golaghat district last week.

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

The CM had also said all unauthorised occupation of forest land, VGR (Village Grazing Reserve), PGR (Professional Grazing Reserve), Satras, Namghars, and other public (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Scindia urges NE states to update logistics policies

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Union Minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia said infrastructure projects in the northeast should be mapped on the PM GatiShakti Portal for better planning of future initiatives and urged all the states in the region to update their logistics policies as per the metric prepared by the DoNER Ministry, a statement said on Friday.

Scindia, the minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), virtually attended a high-level task force meeting on 'Logistics, Infrastructure Connectivity in NE' on Thursday.

He also asked all the states in the region to develop industrial clusters along transport corridors for



the rapid economic growth of the north-east.

"The Union minister added that all the infrastructure projects in the northeastern region (NER) should be mapped on the PM GatiShakti Portal for better planning of future projects.

"He urged all the NE states that they should update their state logistics policies, as per the metric prepared by the ministry based on the best practices throughout the country, preferably before the next NEC Plenary session," the statement said, quoting Scindia.

The central minister also outlined five suggestions for bridging the gaps in infrastructure and connectivity.

These include convergence of NER infrastructure grids by preparing a regional master plan, establishment of a monitoring mechanism for priority projects, policy push for multimodal logistics park by way of offering various tax and other concessions, boosting (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

US rules out trade talks with India until tariff issue resolved

WASHINGTON/NEW DELHI, Aug 8: After imposing a staggering 50 per cent duty on Indian goods, US President Donald Trump has also ruled out any trade talks between the two countries until the tariff issue is resolved.

"No, not until we get it resolved," Trump said in the Oval Office on Thursday in response to a question on whether he expects more trade negotiations with India after doubling the tariffs on Indian imports to 50 per cent.

A prominent American Congressman Representative Gregory Meeks, a Democrat, meanwhile, said Trump's latest 'tariff tantrum' risks years of careful work to build a stronger US-India partnership.

Over the last few months, India and the US have held several rounds of negotiations for a bilateral trade deal, but it could not be sealed in view of sharp divergences in certain critical areas, including agriculture and dairy.

The next round of bilateral talks for an initial trade agreement was scheduled to be held in August 25 in New Delhi, two days before the 25 per cent penalty on India, which is on top of a 25 per cent tariff, for continued purchase of Russian oil

kicks in.

As India explored various options to deal with Trump's action, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the world today recognises the strengths of India and its demographic advantages.

"1.4 billion people bring aggregate demand, huge domestic market ...why else do you think everybody is vying up to do trade or have a better market access," he told the Business Today India@100 event in Delhi on Friday.

Speaking at the same event, former G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant said India should never lose its strategic autonomy and never yield to pressure while negotiating trade deals with the US, suggesting at the same time that the country should look at a long term perspective and behave in a calm and collected manner.

India should use trade-related uncertainties as an unique opportunity to carry out very vigorous reforms in our economy, he said.

"We still have 20 days for these (US) tariffs to kick in. We should never yield to pressure, but we should negotiate in a very rational manner, in a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

One killed, another injured in mob assault



GUWAHATI, Aug 8: One person was killed and another injured on Friday after they were beaten up allegedly by local shopkeepers and others in Panbazar area here on suspicion of being thieves, a police officer said.

The culprits involved in the assault have been identified, and one of them has been arrested, the officer said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Amitabh Basumatary said the Panbazar police station received information of the incident at around 9.30 am.

"On being informed, our team immediately rushed to the spot. A person was found lying in an injured condition, who was later identified as Atul Das, a rickshaw puller. He was rushed to the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, but succumbed to his injuries," Basumatary said.

A second injured person was also spotted at the incident site, who was taken to the GMCH and is undergoing treatment, he added.

The DCP said an investigation has been launched and a team of the Criminal Investigation Department has visited the spot to collect evidence.

"The culprits have been identified. One of them has been arrested, and the rest will also be apprehended soon," he added.

Asked if local shopkeepers were involved in the thrashing, Basumatary did not rule it out, though he refused to share further details as the probe is still on.

Local people claimed that thefts had been common in the area, mostly a commercial location with several eateries, for the past several days.

The victims were spotted by locals loitering around in the early hours, leading them to beat up the duo on suspicion of being thieves. (PTI)

Rahul alleges problem with electoral process when BJP wins: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma claimed on Friday that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi makes allegations of wrongdoing in the election process whenever the BJP emerges victorious.

He maintained that if the opposition leader was blaming EVMs for Congress' electoral defeats earlier, he is now pointing the finger at 'vote chori' (stealing of votes).

Sarma was responding to Gandhi's claims on Thursday of a 'huge criminal fraud' in polls through collusion between the BJP and the Election Commission, alleging that a 'vote chori model' was being used in many constituencies across the country.



"When Rahul Gandhi wins elections, everything is okay. When the BJP wins, he says there is some 'gondogol' (wrongdoing)," the chief

minister said, speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a programme in Udalguri.

"There is no 'vote chori' in Karnataka or Telangana (where Congress is in power). When we win, 'vote chori' happens," he said.

"Till now, they were saying it was the EVMs (behind BJP's wins), and now saying it is 'vote chori'," Sarma added.

Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, said in a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday that over one lakh votes in the Mahadevapura assembly constituency in Karnataka were found to be fake, duplicate or bulk voters, with invalid addresses and new voters with misuse of Form 6. (PTI)

Need of the hour to revise creamy layer income ceiling for OBCs: Parl panel

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: A parliamentary committee looking into the welfare of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) has said it was the "need of the hour" to revise the creamy layer income ceiling, saying the limit is excluding a large section of eligible OBC families from reservation benefits and government welfare schemes.

In its eighth report presented to Parliament on Friday, the panel noted that the last revision of the income threshold from ₹ 6.5 lakh to ₹ 8 lakh per annum was carried out in 2017.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) rules require the ceiling to be reviewed every three years or sooner, if needed.

"The present threshold is low, covering only a small segment of OBCs," the panel, chaired by BJP MP Ganesh Singh, said, adding in-



flation and rising incomes in even lower income groups had made an upward revision the "need of the hour."

"The Committee is aware of the fact that the income limit for determining creamy layer for OBCs should be reviewed every three years or even before the stipulated period. However, the same has not been revised since 2017," it said.

"The Committee, therefore, in no uncertain words, reiterate their

recommendation for reviewing and accordingly revising the present creamy layer threshold limit to cover more and more persons from the OBCs as this would eventually help in raising their socio-economic condition to a satisfactory level," the panel said.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, however, told the committee that "there is no proposal under consideration" to revise the creamy layer limit.

Another unresolved issue flagged by the panel is the absence of equivalence between posts in autonomous bodies and government positions for determining creamy layer status.

The report said the lack of such equivalence has led to qualified OBC candidates, including those who cleared the UPSC Civil Services (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Oct 2024 agreement been implemented as per modalities, timelines agreed: Govt on LAC issue

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: India and China reached an agreement on patrolling along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in border areas in Depsang and Demchok on October 21 last year leading to disengagement, and terms of the agreements reached prior to that date continue to hold in relevant areas in eastern Ladakh, the government said on Friday.

In a written response to a query in Lok Sabha, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh also said India and China have discussed issues related to de-escalation at various levels including that of External Affairs Minister and Defence Minister.

The Ministry of External Affairs was asked whether the disengagement along the LAC, between India and China, has been in effect for the last nine months, while de-

escalation remains pending, and whether a new roadmap has been formulated for achieving de-escalation.

"India and China reached an agreement on patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control in India-China border areas in Depsang and Demchok on 21 October 2024, leading to disengagement. The agreement has since been effected and implemented as per modalities and timelines agreed," he said.

The MoS added that the "terms of the disengagement agreements reached prior to 21 October 2024 continue to hold in relevant areas in eastern Ladakh".

Until October 2024, India and China remained engaged to resolve issues of disengagement along the LAC through the Working Mechanism for Cooperation and Coordi-

nation (WMCC) and Senior Highest Military Commanders meeting (SHMC) mechanism, he said.

Since the disengagement in 2024, besides mechanisms to address boundary-related issues such as the India-China Special Representatives' Talks and the WMCC, both sides have held various other meetings to stabilise and rebuild ties, with priority on people-centric engagements including the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, direct flight connectivity, transborder rivers and carried out activities to commemorate the 75th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations, the government said.

"Since last year, meetings have been held between the Prime Minister, Raksha Mantri, External Affairs Minister, National Security Advisor, Foreign Secretary and their Chinese (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

IIT-G leads national initiative for setting up nodal centres for defence, security research

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati is leading an initiative to establish 'Manekshaw Centres for Defence and Security Research' throughout the country, which will act as a single window communication to bridge the gap between the armed forces, security agencies and academic and research institutions.

A high-level delegation led by Prof Devendra Jalihal, Director, IIT Guwahati, recently briefed Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on the establishment of the nodal centres in premier institutions, a statement said here on Friday.

Prof Jalihal, who is also the chief patron, Manekshaw Centre of Excellence, said, "This Centre will act as an interface between academia and defence forces. IITs, IISc,



IITs and NITs will be the members of the centre.

"The centre will periodically carry out dialogue with defence agencies and will participate actively in defining and design systems for Indian security needs. It will work towards finding Indian

solutions thus fulfilling the aspiration of Atmanirbhar Bharat."

The delegation also comprised Prof Manindra Agrawal, Director, IIT Kanpur, and deputy chief patron, Manekshaw Centre of Excellence, and Lt Gen Subrata Saha (Retd), executive chairman and

chief operating officer of the Manekshaw Centre of Excellence.

Highlighting the need for inter-institutional collaborations during the meeting, Pradhan expressed his support for the initiative.

He underlined the ministry's commitment to supporting the Manekshaw Centre in building a robust innovation ecosystem that brings academia, defence, armed forces, security agencies and industries together to address the evolving challenges of national security.

The idea of setting up this nodal centre for collaboration among IITs was conceived by Lt Gen Saha (Retd) and Prof Sukumar Nandi, Dean of Administration, IIT Guwahati, the statement said.

Currently, the Manekshaw Centre includes (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam govt recognises Wildlife Genetics Laboratory for wildlife crime investigations

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: The Assam government has recognised North East India's only Wildlife Genetics Laboratory (WGL) for the purpose of assisting wildlife crime investigations and control through forensic evidence gathering using DNA sampling methods.

Biodiversity organisation Aaranyak's Wildlife Genetics Laboratory has been recognised by the Assam government under Section 329 (4) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, WGL Director Udayan Borthakur said on Friday.

Section 329 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, deals with the admissibility of reports from certain scientific experts, recognised by the government, as evidence in legal proceedings.

Assam Governor Laxman Prasad Acharya passed the order on August 4, following which the Special Chief Secretary of the Assam Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department issued the notification recognising both the laboratory and Borthakur under the relevant provision of the Act.

"We regard the government's notification as a significant acknowledgement of our nearly two decades of work in this field and are grateful to the Assam government for entrusting us with this critical responsibility", Borthakur said. The notification will allow the lab and its biologist to function as scientific experts to support law enforcement agencies to gather evidence for forensic analysis in wildlife offences, that will facili-

tate increased conviction rates in the coming days.

Aaranyak Executive Director Bibhab Kumar Talukdar also thanked the state Forest department and other government authorities for bestowing faith and responsibilities to Wildlife Genetics facilities.

WGL, founded in 2008, is Northeast India's only conservation genetics and wildlife DNA forensics facility.

Over the past decade, the lab has provided genetic analysis and on-ground DNA sampling support to 135 wildlife crime investigations by government authorities.

In addition to forensic work, the lab has conducted over two dozen conservation genetic research projects on threatened wildlife species in India and abroad. (PTI)

Markets tank on tariff jitters, foreign fund exodus; Sensex dives below 80k

MUMBAI, Aug 8: Equity benchmark index Sensex tumbled nearly 1 per cent to slip below the 80,000 level on Friday as growing concerns over the impact of the additional US tariff and unabated foreign fund outflows unnerved investors.

Deep losses in market heavyweights Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank and Bharti Airtel also added pressure on equities, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 765.47 points or 0.95 per cent to settle at 79,857.79. During the day, it tumbled 847.42 points or 1.05 per cent to 79,775.84.

As many as 2,507 stocks declined while 1,521 advanced and 145 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 232.85 points or 0.95 per cent to 24,363.30. Extending losing streak for the sixth consecutive week, the BSE benchmark dropped 742.12 points or 0.92 per cent, and the Nifty declined 202.05 points or 0.82 per cent.

"The Indian equity market exhibited downward movement, closing at a three-month low amid growing concerns over the impact of US tariffs on Indian exports.

"FIIs remained net sellers, intensifying the pressure on domestic indices. The pessimism was broad-based, with realty and metals bearing the biggest brunt," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Invest-



ments Limited, said. From the Sensex firms, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Axis Bank and Reliance Industries were among the laggards.

"Selling intensified, with the Sensex ending below the psychological 80k mark, as analysts believe that once the stiff tariff penalty on Indian goods by the Trump administration comes into effect, India's growth could be hit going ahead," Prashanth Tapsee, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

However, NTPC, Titan, Trent, ITC and Bajaj Finserv managed to be in green territory.

The BSE midcap gauge tanked 1.56 per cent, and the smallcap index dropped 1.03 per cent.

All sectoral indices ended lower, realty dropped 2.09 per cent,

telecommunication (1.83 per cent), metal (1.82 per cent), consumer durables (1.68 per cent), capital goods (1.62 per cent) and commodities (1.55 per cent).

"Indian equity benchmarks ended sharply lower on Friday, surrendering the previous session's gains as renewed tariff concerns and persistent foreign fund outflows weighed on sentiment. Market mood soured after US President Donald Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to 50 per cent, stating that no trade talks would take place until the dispute was resolved," Gaurav Garg, Analyst, Lemn Markets Desk, said.

Adding to the pressure, foreign institutional investors sold equities worth Rs 4,997.19 crore on Thursday, while weak global cues from Asian markets and a mixed Wall Street close kept traders cautious,

he added.

US President Donald Trump has ruled out the possibility of trade negotiations with India until the issue of tariffs is resolved.

"No, not until we get it resolved," Trump said in the Oval Office on Thursday in response to a question on whether he expects increased trade negotiations with India since he has announced 50 per cent tariffs on the country.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,997.19 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DII), however, bought stocks worth Rs 10,864.04 crore in the previous trade.

The initial 25 per cent tariffs announced by the US on Indian imports came into effect Thursday.

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

European markets were trading mostly in green during mid-session deals. The US markets ended on a mixed note on Thursday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.59 per cent to USD 66.82 a barrel.

On Thursday, the Sensex edged higher by 79.27 points or 0.10 per cent to settle at 80,623.26. The Nifty went up by 21.95 points or 0.09 per cent to 24,596.15. (PTI)

All-New Renault Triber launched in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Renault India, a fully owned subsidiary of the French carmaker Renault Group, on Friday launched the All-New Renault Triber at TI Renault's Sixmile showroom in Guwahati.

The company described the Triber as India's most innovative 7-seater, now featuring a modern design overhaul and comfort-enhancing features while retaining its unique "Rethink Space" philosophy.

According to an official statement, the new-generation Triber debuts with a completely redesigned front fascia, featuring a bold grille, sculpted hood, refreshed bumper, sleek LED projector headlights with integrated LED DRLs, and new LED fog lamps.

Inside, the cabin has been upgraded with a dual-tone dashboard integrated with an 8-inch floating touchscreen display supporting wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. Other enhancements include new seat upholstery, a modern LED instrument cluster, LED cabin lighting, and blacked-out door handles.

The rear design now features a refreshed bumper, updated LED tail lamps, a new skid plate, and a tailamp-connecting embellisher.

Equipped with 35 new features, the Triber is the first product under the Renault Rethink brand transformation strategy.

It continues to offer best-in-class modular seating with third-row Easy-Fix seats, configurable as a 5, 6, or 7-seater, along with a segment-leading boot space of up to 625 litres. Renault India announced that the All-New Renault Kiger and All-New Renault Duster will be launched soon as part of the ongoing brand transformation.

The All-New Renault Triber is priced from ₹6,29,995 (ex-showroom, Guwahati).

IIT-G launches 'Project Vindhya'

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati, in collaboration with Get Set Learn (GSL), a future-skills-focused learning startup backed by the Arvind Mafatlal Group, has launched the Artificial Intelligence Quotient (AIQ), a structured AI education programme for the K-12 segment. The initiative, introduced under IIT Guwahati's flagship 'Project Vidhya', is aimed at advancing digital and AI literacy through a research-backed curriculum, faculty-led interventions, and outreach to learners across India. The launch comes in the backdrop of AICTE declaring 2025 as the 'Year of AI', alongside national initiatives such as NITI Aayog's AI for All and UNESCO's guidelines on AI in education.

According to an official statement, the AIQ programme is designed to provide students with foundational knowledge, practical skills, and an ethical understanding of emerging technologies.

It covers Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and the Internet of Things (IoT) through a combina-

tion of hands-on projects, guided digital learning, and real-world problem-solving.

Dr Gaurav Trivedi, Principal Investigator of Project Vidhya in the Department of Electronics and Electrical Engineering at IIT Guwahati, said the AIQ is one of the first structured AI programmes in India for middle school students.

He noted that it balances academic depth with accessibility, aiming to foster innovation, creative thinking, problem-solving, and ethical awareness from an early age. GSL Co-founder and CEO Ameet Zaveri said the collaboration reflects both national education priorities and global best practices. He said the programme is designed to ensure that students from all backgrounds can meaningfully engage with AI and contribute to the country's technological future. The AIQ curriculum, jointly developed with IIT Guwahati, includes modules on AI, robotics, IoT, and ethics in technology.

It follows the A3EI learning model — Absorb, Analyse, Apply, Evaluate, and Innovate — with more than 60 percent of the con-

tent being project-based.

Students will take part in real-world challenges through GSL's SOLVE IT platform, receive expert feedback from IIT faculty, and attend thematic workshops on topics such as AI storytelling and prompt engineering.

Structured across three progressive levels, the programme starts with introductory AI learning for students in Grades 6–8, progresses to applied generative AI and robotics for Grades 9–10, and advances to machine learning and ethical innovation for Grades 11–12.

Each level features a custom textbook developed by IIT Guwahati and will be delivered through workshops, technology immersions, and guided digital learning.

Students completing the programme will receive a joint certificate from IIT Guwahati and Get Set Learn. The rollout will begin in the 2025–26 academic year with Grade 6, expanding to higher grades in subsequent years.

This is the first time IIT Guwahati has co-developed a full K–12 AI curriculum with an external partner.

Contd. from Page 1...

132 acres of forest

areas would be cleared in a phased manner. Most of the people displaced due to the eviction drives are from the Bengali-speaking Muslims community 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 were washed away due to erosion by the River Brahmaputra. (PTI)

Scindia urges NE

cross-border connectivity to promote international trade with neighbouring countries and enhancing digital connectivity and power transmission. The meeting was chaired by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Arunachal Pradesh CM Pema Khandu, Mizoram Minister of Public Health Engineering & Rural Development Prof Lalnilawma and Sikkim Minister of Commerce and Industries Tshering Thendup Bhutia, along with DoNER officials, were present at the meeting. The Assam CM emphasised the strategic importance of the northeastern region as a gateway to Southeast Asia.

He pointed out that since 2014, the government has taken several steps to boost infrastructure connectivity in the northeastern region, but high transportation cost for goods remains a major bottleneck that needs to be addressed. He also stated that the execution of the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP) has been expedited, and it will connect the NE to the Sittoung Port in Myanmar.

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister highlighted that due to the high geographical spread and sparse population distribution in the state, there are a large number of villages that lack road connectivity. He suggested that the high-level task force may explore providing connectivity to these villages through PMGSY and other relevant central government schemes. He further stated that the air connectivity to the Hollongi Airport can be enhanced by increasing the frequency of flights.

Khandu also called for the need to reorient the North Eastern Council (NEC) to function as a think-tank, on the lines of NITI Aayog, for a holistic growth of the region. The Mizoram minister highlighted the issue of high logistics fare in NE, due to which the cost of local produce and commodities increases by more than 20 per cent, making these items less competitive. He also outlined the need for improving digital connectivity in the state. The Sikkim minister pointed out that an alternative road alignment to the existing NH-10 needs to be developed as the national highway gets affected every year by torrential rainfall and landslides.

He emphasised the need for developing climate-resilient infrastructure in NE to boost trade with Nepal.

During the meeting, critical gaps were discussed in the sectors of roads, railways, waterways, logistics and digital connectivity, the statement said. To bridge these gaps, a comprehensive Infrastructure Master Plan must be formulated, it said. The plan will be developed in consultation with all eight northeastern states and central ministries, ensuring a collaborative approach to regional development. The key points of discussion during the meeting included identification of state-specific bottlenecks and challenges, critical connectivity gaps and prioritised infrastructure needs, integration of state budgets and national investments for capital formation, and an implementation roadmap for 'Viksit NE @ 2047'. Earlier this year, the Centre had formed eight high-level task forces, with each headed by one of the chief ministers of the NE region. (PTI)

US rules out trade

sensible manner, and I think there is plenty of time to be able to arrive at an agreement." The 16th Finance Commission Chairman Arvind Panagariya told the same event that India faces a pivotal moment in the current geopolitical order of higher tariffs on exports and the country should now push the pedal on its reform agenda.

"At this pivotal moment we should aggressively pursue the Free Trade Agreement with the European Union. That is very, very important. As one market seems to be kind of closing, we need to open wider another market... EU agreement needs to be done and then there are reforms that need to be done particularly with labour market and land market." Panagariya also dismissed Trump's "dead economy" jibe at India, saying the Indian economy is growing at 7 per cent and more than that in dollar terms. "May be, dead bodies do move."

"You don't grow at 7 per cent plus (if the economy is dead), and actually in dollar terms we are growing at more than 7 per cent. I don't know what the definition (of dead economy) means. May be, dead bodies do move," he said when asked if India is a 'dead economy'. Mounting a sharp attack on India, Trump had remarked that India is a "dead economy". "I don't care what India does with Russia. They can take their dead economies down together, for all I care," Trump had said in a social media post on August 3.

US Representative Meeks said the US has "deep strategic, economic, and people-to-people ties" with India. "Trump's latest tariff tantrum risks years of careful work to build a stronger US-India partnership," he said in a post on X. "Concerns should be addressed in a mutually respectful way consistent with our democratic values." Kerala Finance Minister K N Balagopal said the 50 per cent tariff decision on Indian goods was a "bullying tactic" to control the country's economy.

The minister said the US was trying to bully India into accepting more imports from America as "our purchasing power has increased manifold". "Therefore, it is a time when all should stand united to safeguard India's interests and oppose such moves which can harm the Indian economy," he told reporters in Thiruvananthapuram. Moody's Ratings said India's GDP growth is likely to slow down by about 30 basis points to 6 per cent in the current fiscal if the US implements the total 50 per cent tariffs from August 27.

However, resilient domestic demand and the strength of the services sector will mitigate the strain on India, Moody's said, adding that India's response to high US tariffs will ultimately determine the effect on its growth, inflation and external position. (PTI)

Oct 2024 agreement been

counterparts," Singh said. Issues related to restrictive trade measures and roadblocks to economic cooperation have been raised by the External Affairs Minister and Foreign Secretary with their counterparts. Discussions on these matters have also been held at the working level, he added. (PTI)

Need of the hour

Examination, being denied service allocation because their parents' salaries were counted without considering post equivalence. The committee urged the ministry to expedite work with the inter-departmental committee set up by the DoPT in 2023 to resolve the matter. While 10 of the panel's 12 recommendations from its earlier third report were accepted by the government, the two on creamy layer revision and post equivalence were reiterated.

Accepted proposals include reviewing parental income limits for scholarships, expanding the Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme under PM-YASASVI to start from Class V, increasing slots for "Top Class" school and college education schemes for OBCs, Economically Backward Classes (EBCs) and Denotified Tribes (DNTs), and enhancing central grants for OBC welfare.

The panel also voiced concern over a sharp fall in scholarship beneficiaries. Under the pre-matric scheme, beneficiaries dropped from 58.6 lakh in 2021-22 to 20.29 lakh in 2023-24, while expenditure fell from ₹218.29 crore to ₹193.83 crore. Post-matric beneficiaries fell from 38.04 lakh to 27.51 lakh, with spending down from ₹1,320 crore to ₹988 crore in the same period.

States' incomplete or delayed proposals, slow fund utilisation, and transition issues to Aadhaar-based direct benefit transfer and online portals were cited as key reasons. On budget allocation, the committee said OBCs make up 52 per cent of India's population as per the Mandal Commission, yet their central grants are far lower compared to those for Scheduled Castes, who comprise about 16.6 per cent of the population.

While allocations for OBC schemes such as PM-YASASVI have risen from ₹1,581 crore in 2022-23 to ₹2,190 crore in 2025-26 the panel wants proportional increases to reflect the community's size and needs.

Unspent funds were another sticking point. The report pointed to unused amounts, including ₹86 lakh in pre-matric, ₹98 lakh in post-matric, and ₹15 lakh in hostel construction schemes as signs of "lack of supervision and foresightedness." It recommended stricter monitoring, more awareness campaigns in local languages, and better coordination with states to ensure timely utilisation of funds.

The committee warned that without timely policy updates and efficient execution, procedural delays and outdated eligibility norms could undermine the government's stated goal of uplifting backward classes through education, skills, and social welfare. (PTI)

IIT-G leads national

IITs - Guwahati, Madras, Kanpur, Jodhpur, Dharwad, Delhi, Bombay and Kharagpur, BHU-Varanasi, ISM-Dhanbad, IISc-Bangalore and IIIT-Delhi, with more institutions to join soon, the statement added. (PTI)

Treasury, forex gains help SBI post 10 pc growth in Q1 net profit

MUMBAI, Aug 8: State Bank of India on Friday reported a 9.71 per cent increase in its consolidated net profit to ₹21,201 crore in the June 2025 quarter, helped by a handsome performance on the treasury and forex income.

On a standalone basis, the country's largest lender's net profit grew to ₹19,160 crore from ₹17,035 crore in the year-ago period.

Despite an 11.6 per cent jump in overall advances, the core net interest income declined by 0.13 per cent to Rs 41,072 crore, as net interest margins contracted by 0.33 per cent to 3.02 per cent, following the RBI's deep rate cuts and the time taken for deposit rate repricing impacted the spreads.

Its chairman CS Setty told reporters that the NIMs will follow a U-shaped trajectory in FY26, pointing out that there will be challenges on NIMs in the second quarter before the number inches up, and added that it aims to have

a NIM of 3 per cent for FY26 on an annual basis.

A 55 per cent jump in the overall non-interest income at ₹17,346 crore helped the bank deliver the profit growth for the quarter. This was led by a 352 per cent rise in forex income at ₹1,632 crore and the profit on sale of investments being 144 per cent higher at ₹6,326 crore.

Additionally, restricting the growth in operating expenses, which were up 7.88 per cent to ₹27,874 crore, also helped the bottomline.

From a loan growth perspective, Setty said the bank is maintaining its target of growing at 12 per cent for FY25. Corporate advances increased by 5.7 per cent, and the domestic retail segment rose 12.56 per cent, and overseas book was higher by 14 per cent year-on-year during the reporting quarter.

The chairman said the bank has a pipeline of Rs 7 lakh crore, in-

cluding proposals and cleared loans yet to be disbursed, and added that the current uncertainties stemming from geopolitical issues are delaying disbursements.

The bank is hoping for an acceleration in the corporate loan disbursements in the remainder of the year and close FY26 with a 10 per cent loan growth in the segment, he said.

Setty said companies are not investing because of the lack of clarity on the consumption demand front, and sectors like renewable power and data centres, which are seeing maximum credit demand at present.

Acknowledging that the bank has exposures to the 4-5 sectors directly impacted by the US move on tariffs, he said the banking sector will not be impacted by the measures unleashed by the Trump administration because its overall contribution is under 2 per cent to bank credit. (PTI)

Topcem Cement, Indian Red Cross Society holds annual blood donation camp

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Topcem Cement, a leading cement brand in Northeast India, organised its annual voluntary Blood Donation Camp in association with the Indian Red Cross Society, Assam State Chapter, in Guwahati on Friday.

The initiative forms part of the company's ongoing employee volunteering programme aimed at promoting community health and wellness.

According to an official statement, the camp was inaugurated by Chairman Kailash Chandra Lohia in the presence of Director Bajrang Lohia and Senior President (Sales & Marketing) of Meghalaya Cements Ltd, Dr Anil Kapur.

Also present were Dr Dipankar Baruah, In-charge of the GMCH Blood Bank; Deba Prasad Sarma, General Secretary of the Indian Red Cross Society, Assam State Branch; Laba Kumar Sarma, State Manager of

the Indian Red Cross Society, Assam State Branch; and senior management personnel of the Lohia Group.

The event was held at the Topcem Cement office premises at Mega Plaza, GS Road, Guwahati.

Dr Kapur expressed the company's gratitude to the Indian Red Cross Society for partnering in the initiative and said they looked forward to more such collaborations in the future.

The camp witnessed enthusiastic participation from employees of Topcem Cement, their partners, associates, and volunteers from the Lohia Group of Companies. Participants underwent medical screening before donation, and by the end of the day, over 25 units of blood were collected. The statement added that the initiative reflects Topcem Cement's commitment to humanitarian causes and aligns with its broader goal of driving impactful social change by addressing critical public health needs.

Govt to make no changes in DPDP Act; FAQs to be issued soon: Sources

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: The government does not see any scope for making changes in the Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023

and may issue a detailed reply soon to explain issues raised by journalists and civil rights bodies, an official source said on Friday.

Civil rights and journalists' bodies on Wednesday expressed apprehension over the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, saying the provisions under it may fail the Right to Information (RTI) Act and end press freedom.

"The (DPDP) Act has been passed by Parliament. Therefore no changes can be made now. Rules are being processed which can only be framed within the ambit of the Act," the source said.

Government sources said the DPDP Act and draft rules under it have been framed after receiving thousands of inputs from multiple entities. About government assurance on frequently asked questions (FAQs), the source said it will be issued soon.

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday said deletion of the proviso in the RTI Act that recognises citizens' right to information as being at par with that of legislators is "completely unwarranted", and urged IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to pause, review, and repeal the amendment made to the original legislation of 2005.

Vaishnaw had responded to Ramesh, saying that personal de-

tails that are subject to public disclosure under various laws will continue to be disclosed under the RTI Act after the implementation of the new data protection rule.

Supreme Court lawyer and convener of The Campaign for Judicial Accountability & Judicial Reforms (CJAR) Prashant Bhusan alleged that the Act bars and amends RTI Act to stop sharing of personal identifiable information without consent.

According to the civil rights bodies, the provision not only kills the RTI Act but also discourages journalists and whistleblowers from exposing names of corrupt officials without their consent.

According to civil rights bodies and activists, the DPDP Act removes provisions under the RTI Act that will enable government bodies to withhold information under the garb of personal information. Former High Court Justice A P Shah in an open letter to Attorney General of India on July 28 said Section 44(3) of the DPDP Act replaces the narrowly tailored exemption in Section 8(1)(j) with an overbroad provision for withholding information, and removing the "public interest" override. (PTI)

NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from Mohammed Yakub Ali to Yakub Ali by swearing a affidavit at Executive Magistrate, Nagaon (Assam)

AFFIDAVIT

I, DEBWATI DEVI, W/O Late Mathura Sharma, Vill-Mori-Aragao, P.O. & P.S.-Morigao (Assam) declared through an Affidavit before Notary Public, Morigao that Debwati Devi and MRS. Debawati Devi Sarma is the same and one person who is myself and Mathura Sarma and Mathura Prasad Sarma is the same and one person who is my husband. Debwati Devi Vill-Mori-Aragao P.O. & P.S.-Morigao District - Morigao (Assam)

LOST

I had lost my following documents like original marksheet of class X bearing Roll No.3105960, original marksheet of Class XII bearing Roll No. 3604305, registration certificate of Class X bearing Roll No. 3105960, registration certificate of Class XII bearing Roll No. 3604305, migration certificate of Class XII bearing Roll No. 3604305, marksheet of B.A (1st to 6th semester) bearing Roll No. 16D11001 and registration certificate of Mahabodhi College, Namsai on 19th September, 2024.

Name: Shri/Smti Chow Sadin Lungking, S/O Chow Jetamang Lungking

Address: Empong village, PO&PS - Chongkham. District: Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh.

Assam Cabinet approves 'Year of Books' initiative, boosts age limit

Cabinet announces cultural, welfare, and investment measures with ₹1,843 crore projects

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: The Assam Cabinet, in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday, approved a series of key decisions, according to an official statement.

The Cabinet decided to increase the upper age limit for promotion of Anganwadi Helpers to Anganwadi Workers from 45 years to 50 years, aimed at enhancing opportunities for service tenure extension and better working conditions.

In a major cultural push, 2025 will be celebrated as the 'Year of Books'.

Under the initiative, financial support of ₹25,000 will be provided to 1,000 young writers engaged in creative, scientific and academic writing.

The Assam Prakashan Parishad will receive funds to organise Granth Melas, with ₹5 lakh allocated for each district and ₹2.5 lakh for each co-district headquarters.

All official gifts at government functions will be in the form of books, and Assam government employees will receive a one-



time grant of ₹1,000 for book purchases.

The government will also publish a book on the life and works of Late Dr Bhupen Hazarika for distribution to eminent personalities and institutions within the state and across the country.

The Cabinet also approved an increase in the monthly ration allowance for the Assam Forest Protection Force and Wildlife Wing frontline staff from ₹2,000 to ₹2,500.

For infrastructure development, the revised estimate for constructing six District

Science Centres cum Planetariums at Majuli, Diphu, Kaliabar, Silchar, Amingaon and Bongaigaon was sanctioned at an estimated cost of ₹178.129 crore.

The Cabinet further decided to complete the reorganisation of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) with 23 development blocks, including the creation of a new Gobarhaha Development Block, where only gazetted posts will be created by the state government, while non-gazetted posts will be provided by the BTC.

The one-time infrastructure cost will be borne by the state.

To encourage private investment and job creation, the Cabinet approved customised incentives under the Industrial and Investment Policy of Assam, 2019, for projects by Valley Strong Cements (₹480 crore, 250 jobs), Star Cement North East Ltd (₹650 crore, 200 jobs), Maxin Infrastructure and Real Estate Pvt Ltd – Unit II (₹130 crore, 200 jobs), and Varun Beverages Ltd (₹583 crore, 200 jobs), with a combined proposed investment of around ₹1,843 crore and an estimated 850 direct jobs.

Indigenous groups give August 15 quit notice to Miyas



HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Aug 8: Even as the Sivasagar District Administration called for utmost restraint to all individuals and organisations in the interest of peace and harmony two days ago, 20 indigenous groups today held a chinton-baithak (consultative discussion) at KPM Hall and called on all Miyani people to leave Upper Assam by August 15.

The group leaders later addressed a press meet.

Calling for an illegal citizen-free Upper Assam, the meeting adopted an 11-point charter of resolutions and urged the government to identify and deport all suspected citizens illegally residing in the state in the interest of building an indigenous people-dominated Assam.

In a significant move, the organisations unanimously resolved that the base year for identification of foreign nationals should be 1951, though the Assam Accord made it March 24, 1971.

Through another resolution, the meeting fully supported the current Assam Government's campaign to free government land, forest land, tribal belt land, etc, from encroachers of suspected citizenship throughout Assam.

They demanded the eviction of encroachments on all lands belonging to ancient monuments, Debuttar land, forest reserves, swamps and reservoirs.

In this regard, the meeting demanded an eviction drive in Jamuna canal, Khatopathar Chintamonigarh, and lands near river Dikhow close to Durbur Field

in Sivasagar town.

The meeting demanded that the names of suspected citizens be deleted from the voter lists of Assam as soon as possible to build a foreigner-free Assam.

The Government of Assam and various ethnic groups of Assam should openly support the eviction programme and arrest those who threaten indigenous people under the relevant provisions of law immediately.

The police administration, the meeting opined, should check the documents of suspected citizens who are tenants in various parts of Upper Assam and arrange for their deportation to Lower Assam as soon as possible.

It also urged the police administration to identify suspected citizens employed in various activities such as private contractors, brick quarries, dumps, etc., and issue notices to them to report to the police station.

It also called upon Assamese people to refrain from selling land to foreign suspects for a secure future.

The meeting called upon indigenous organisations to support and cooperate with the indigenous Muslim people of Assam in this campaign to build a foreigner-free Assam.

The participant groups resolved to hold a massive rally on August 20 to determine the next phase of agitation.

The leaders attending the meeting included Debajit Dutta, Chitu Baruah, Mahendra Ahom, Diganta Tamuly, and many others.

AASU stages protest in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Aug 8: As part of the state-wide stir called by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) to protest against the State Government's decision to withdraw cases pending in Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs) against illegal Hindu Bangladeshi immigrants, the Jorhat district unit of the students' body staged a demonstration here on Friday.

The protestors also burnt copies of the government directive on the withdrawal of cases against illegal Hindu Bangladeshi migrants.

Holding AASU flags, they shouted slogans against the government, demanding the revocation of the decision.

They alleged that the move was another step against the indigenous people of Assam following the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, terming it a blatant attempt to legitimise illegal immigration and a direct violation of the Assam Accord.

Describing the decision as a betrayal of the people of Assam, the protestors said that if it was not opposed, it would further endanger the culture, language and literature of the native population.

Bokajan Police Station gets New Building

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Aug 8: Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang inaugurated the new building of Bokajan Police Station. The police station, established in 1956, had been operating without a new building for over a decade.

At the inauguration ceremony, Ronghang was flanked by District Commissioner Nirola Phangchopi, SP Sanjib Kumar Saikia, Bokajan BJP MLA Dr Numal Momin, and ADC Kakumoni Saikia.

The new building was declared open for use after the ceremonial ribbon-cutting.

The Bokajan Police Station plays a crucial role in combating narcotics smuggling, gun running, and stolen vehicle trafficking due to its strategic location.

It has been actively involved in seizing psychotropic drugs, handling gun running cases, and dealing with inter-state criminals.

The police station has also confiscated marijuana, Burmese supari, foreign-origin cigarettes, and other contraband goods.

NFR's Lumding division sets up USFD training lab to boost track safety

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: The Lumding Division of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) on Friday inaugurated a state-of-the-art Ultrasonic Flaw Detection (USFD) Laboratory, aimed at enhancing rail safety and improving technical training standards.

The facility was inaugurated by Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Samir Lohani, reflecting the division's commitment to adopting advanced technologies and building workforce competency.

According to an official statement, the USFD Laboratory will play a key role in detecting internal flaws in rails and welds, thereby improving the safety and reliability of railway operations.

It features standard calibration samples, various types of ultrasonic probes, technical guidelines, operational procedures, and photographic displays of fractured components.

These resources will be used extensively for hands-on training, enabling personnel to gain practical expertise in flaw detection and preventive maintenance practices.



The lab houses an extensive collection of defective sample pieces, including welds, rails, and Switch Expansion Joints identified during past USFD testing.

It is also equipped for PowerPoint presentations and practical demonstrations, creating a comprehensive learning environment for P.Way supervisors and engineers.

As part of the initial training programme,

nine Assistant Divisional Engineers and 95 Senior Section Engineers from the P.Way department are undergoing training, which is expected to conclude by the end of August 2025.

The statement said the initiative is part of the Lumding Division's ongoing efforts under NFR to strengthen track safety and maintenance standards through innovation and advanced training.

Indian Association of Pediatrics celebrates Breastfeeding Week in Tezpur

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Aug 8: In observance of World Breastfeeding Week, the Indian Association of Pediatrics (IAP), Tezpur Branch, in collaboration with the Indian Medical Association (IMA) Tezpur, organised an awareness meeting at the IMA Conference Hall, Tezpur, on Thursday.

The theme of the event was "Prioritise Breastfeeding: Create Sustainable Support Systems", with the slogan "Invest in Breastfeeding, Invest in the Future".

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Shyama Saikia emphasised the vital role of breastfeeding in ensuring a child's health and future.

"Breast milk is not just food, it is the first vaccine a child receives," he said.

Dr Saikia stressed the importance of family and institutional support in empowering mothers to continue exclusive breastfeeding for the recommended six months.

Child specialist Dr Rupam Das highlighted the need for public health systems to be more responsive.

"Creating sustainable support systems means having policies, workplaces, and communities that stand by mothers at every stage," he added.

Taking part in the discussion, Dr Ranjan Kr Mahanta underlined the economic and social impact of investing in breastfeeding.

Elaborating on its importance,

Dr Mahanta said, "Every rupee invested in breastfeeding brings manifold returns in terms of reduced healthcare costs and improved lifelong health."

Principal of the Nursing School, Nirmala Pradhan, praised the students' engagement, calling it a reflection of the next generation's commitment to maternal and child health.

Dr Dwipen Kr Mahanta, President of IMA Tezpur, and Dr Rahimuddin Ahmed, Secretary of IMA Tezpur, also addressed the gathering.

They reiterated the need for continued collaboration between healthcare professionals, educators, and policymakers to ensure breastfeeding remains a top public health priority.

During the programme, an essay writing competition was also organised among the nursing students, drawing participation from nearly 50 students.

The top three winners were awarded certificates and cash prizes for their insightful essays reflecting the theme of the week.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from IMA members and nearly all the nursing students of the School of Nursing, Kanaklata Civil Hospital, Tezpur, and concluded with a call to action for communities and institutions to create inclusive environments where mothers feel supported and empowered to breastfeed.

SSB DG reviews security scenario along Bhutan border

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Sashstra Seema Bal (SSB) Director General Amrit Mohan Prasad reviewed the security scenario along the India-Bhutan border in Assam and operational preparedness of the force during a two-day visit, an official statement said on Friday.

Prasad emphasised on adopting modern technology in border management and development of the frontier locations.

The SSB DG visited the 31st battalion of the force at Gossagaon, in Kokrajhar district, on Wednesday and laid a wreath at the martyr memorial there, as a mark of respect to those who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty.

He took stock of the security scenario of the border and operational preparedness, the SSB statement said.

He also interacted with the personnel about the difficulties they are facing and gave necessary instructions for its mitigation.

The SSB DG visited the 15th Battalion at Kajalgaon, Kokrajhar, and Sector Headquarters, Bongaigaon, and interacted with officers and troops and reviewed border management.

Prasad, on his visit to the SSB Frontier Headquarters, Guwahati, on the second day, interacted with the personnel, listened to their problems and assured them of timely redressal.

The DG emphasised on adopting a healthy lifestyle, physical fitness, sports and the use of modern technology in border management and development of border areas.

He was also apprised about the improved welfare schemes being implemented for the SSB personnel.

The DG also held a review meeting with the Inspector General, Guwahati Frontier, and all commanders, in which he gave directions stressing on issues like technological and structural development of the SSB as well as development of rural areas along the border. (PTI)

KMB promotes clean drinking water and sustainability

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 8: In a significant step to promote eco-friendly practices and raise awareness on the importance of clean drinking water, Kokrajhar Municipal Board Chairperson Pratibha Brahma distributed bamboo-insulated water bottles to students of DN Himatsingha High School in Ward No 3, Kokrajhar, on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Brahma said the initiative aims to instil healthy habits among students while encouraging the use of sustainable alternatives to plastic.

The bamboo bottles, she added, serve as a reminder of the need to protect both personal health and the environment.

The programme forms part of the Board's ongoing "Clean and Green Kokrajhar" campaign, which focuses on waste management, water safety and environmental conservation.

Rahul's claims establish SIR needed to correct voters' list: Assam CM

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma referred to a section of Rahul Gandhi's criticism of the special intensive revision of electoral rolls, contending that the Congress leader extended "indirect support" for the exercise through his comments.

Sarma asserted that the SIR is essential for the north-eastern state to remove the names of "Bangladeshis".

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday, Gandhi claimed that over one lakh votes in the Mahadevapura assembly constituency in Karnataka were found to be fake, duplicate or bulk voters, with invalid addresses and new voters with misuse of Form 6.

"Rahul Gandhi has himself given a certificate that SIR should be conducted. There should be a unique name along with an Aadhaar number. He (Gandhi) took some North Indian names. In Assam, we have names of Bangladeshis in our voter rolls. (PTI)

BJP in Karbi Anglong leaves no stone unturned to reign supreme

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Aug 8: The BJP in Karbi Anglong is gearing up for the coming assembly election by inducting opposition workers into its fold through a Mass Joining Programme at Kuligaon Sports Association Stadium in Borjan.

Similar to other BJP Mass Joining Programmes in the district, a large number of opposition workers from Congress, All Party Hills Leaders Conference, and CPI(M) joined the BJP.

Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang, who has been at the forefront of the BJP's preparations, attended as the chief guest.

He welcomed the new members and reiterated the BJP's promise of development, progress, and peace, along with the demand for an Autonomous State under Article 244(A) of the Indian Constitution.

Ronghang emphasised the need for cooperation with the authority while placing demands, rather than resorting to confrontational agitation.

He said development should go hand-in-hand with the demand for an Autonomous State. The Mass Joining Programme was attended by BJP leaders, including Roland Killing, Sundor Tisso, Darsing Ronghang, Raju Tisso, Surjya Rongphar, Richard Tokbi, Tilutama Hasnu, and Bilimohan Khaklary, among others.

Eviction fear triggers mass departure of suspected citizens from Margherita

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Aug 8: Various organisations of Margherita Co-District have become active regarding the eviction of suspected citizens, as on Friday many illegal encroachers packed their belongings and left the Maulang area of Ledo under the 83rd Margherita Legislative Assembly Constituency in Tinsukia district.

Numerous suspected citizens, who had been occupying government land for years, have packed their bags and are preparing to leave Margherita and Upper Assam.

A few days ago, the Asom Jatiyotabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) Margherita Regional Committee burnt tyres, staged a dharna and issued an ultimatum for suspected citizens residing in Margherita and nearby areas of Ledo to leave Upper Assam.

Additionally, former ULFA leader Jiten Dutta arrived in Margherita and issued a warning for suspected illegal encroachers to leave Upper Assam before August 15. Following this, suspected citizens have started leaving Margherita, with some already selling their livestock at low prices to prepare for departure.

It is reported that, due to panic, suspected citizens have sold milch cows valued from ₹30,000 to ₹40,000 for just ₹10,000 to ₹15,000.

In short, the roar of these organisations has left suspected citizens in Upper Assam disoriented.

Notably, former ULFA leader Jiten Dutta has commented that another eviction drive will be conducted after August 15.

NEPDF celebrates 11th National Handloom Day 2025 at Morigaon

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Aug 8: The 11th National Handloom Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm at Bihutoli Auditorium, Morigaon, Assam, organised by the North East People's Development Federation (NEPDF), Assam, under the sponsored program of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, in association with the Tiwa Autonomous Council, Government of Assam, on August 7, 2025.

The day-long celebration aimed to honor and promote the contributions of the handloom weaving community, acknowledging their pivotal role in the nation's socio-economic development.

The event drew participation from thousands of weavers and local residents, along with dignitaries including Pranab Jyoti Mosrong, Executive Member, and Ajit Deka, Member of Tiwa Autonomous Council; Orpah Baglary, Principal Secretary, Tiwa Autonomous Council & Chairperson, NEPDF; N N Rana Patgiri, Principal Advisor, NEPDF and former senior official in the



Handloom & Textiles sector; Chetana Das, Eminent Assamese Cine Artist; Nirupam Roychoudhury, I/C Assistant Director, Sericulture, Govt. of Assam, Morigaon; Kamal Kumar Baruah, Additional Director, NEPDF; and Bidyut Rana Patgiri, Director & CEO, NEPDF.

A highlight was the inauguration of a 45-day Skill Development Training on Handloom Weaving under the SAMARTH

Scheme by the Weavers' Service Centre, Guwahati, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, in collaboration with NEPDF.

The inauguration was graced by Binda Bordoloi, Ex-Executive Member, Tiwa Autonomous Council; Phuleswari Das, Member, Bhurbandha Anchalik Panchayat; Phulsing Das, President, Bhagavad Gita Satra, Bhathkhowabari; officials from the Weavers' Service Centre and NEPDF; Mas-

ter Trainers; and other guests.

The program featured a facilitation ceremony honoring handloom weavers nominated by the Office of the Assistant Director, Handloom & Textiles, Morigaon.

An Exclusive Exhibition-cum-Sale was organised from August 5 for five days, with participation from 20 Handloom Weavers, Entrepreneurs, SHGs, and Societies.

A Seminar-cum-Workshop was conducted, with sessions led by Praneta Baruah, Assistant Director, Handloom & Textiles, on Marketing of Assam Handlooms, and Shyamal Kumar Saikia, Assistant Education Officer, Assam Cooperative Union, on Formation of Cooperative Societies in Tiwa Autonomous Council areas.

The day included a vibrant cultural program showcasing the region's rich heritage, with traditional dance performances, a Fashion Show on Assam Handloom, Classical Dance Presentations, and Chorus Performances.

The day concluded with a resounding message of pride and commitment towards sustaining the heritage of handlooms.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

When one must, one can.
—Charlotte Whitten

Future of Indian industries tense

Announcement by Tata Consultancy Service (TCS), India's largest private sector employer employing about 600,000, to lay off its 12,000 employees, has instilled a grave insecurity feeling not only among the workers, but has also raised serious concern in the entire IT sector. TATA is known for providing lifetime employment, and therefore, TCS shedding about 2 per cent of its workers is a serious matter. Deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been changing the IT sector faster than any other industry or sector across the world, and India is not an exception. Nevertheless, the CEO and managing director of TCS K Krithivasan has attributed the move not to AI adoption, but to "limited deployment opportunities and skill-mismatch". Taken on face value, it may be possible that AI may not be the factor for the current lay off in the TCS, but there is no reason to believe that "limited deployment opportunities and skill-mismatch" has nothing to do with the adoption of AI in the IT sector. Hence, the IT sector in generally sees the layoffs as a sign of broader and disruptive changes underway, only to be amplified by the growing influence of AI. Revenues of all major service provider Indian IT companies are either falling or almost stagnated, chiefly because of adverse economic, trade, and tariff conditions of US and European countries and AI automation.

All these show that the business model in the IT sector has been changing fast across the world along with deployment of new technology such as AI and unavailability of skilled workforce, that TCS called "limited deployment opportunities and skill-mismatch". It should be noted that TCS and many other Indian IT companies have traditionally been relying on India's vast pool of low-cost skilled labour. They were engaged by and large in providing software services. It is clear from the TCS layoffs that this service model is now lagging behind and is not able to compete with the changing ground realities. Their global clients are demanding services at competitive prices and technologically better. They have been rapidly deploying AI driven automation that has already automated many of their tasks, many of which were repetitive. Not only entry level routine jobs are being displaced, but also it is transforming the mid-level jobs. For many of the tasks, the global companies no longer require to higher services of the Indian IT companies.

This is the general condition of the IT sector, and it can't be ignored only on account of a few IT companies' announcements that they will be employing more people in near future. For example, Infosys has announced that they have hired 17,000 people in the first quarter of the current financial year and they plan to hire another 20,000 graduates this year itself. The CEO of Infosys has credited AI, cloud, and cost efficiency as key growth driver for such a growth.

Growing American terror on global economy and India

By: Prof. Mahesh Chand Gupta

Being one of the largest economies of the world, America has been dominating global economic policies for a long time. This dominance has now taken the form of open bullying, especially when US President Donald Trump is trying to subjugate countries economically by imposing arbitrary tariffs. After imposing a 25 percent tariff on India, the announcement of an additional 25 percent tariff has made this bullying even more clear. That is, a total tariff of 50 percent - this will not only affect business competition, but will also affect the global trade balance.

Trump objects to India buying oil from Russia, while the irony is that China is also doing the same and America itself is buying uranium and fertilizers from Russia. That is, in theory and practice, American policy is full of double standards. The question is why should India work under American pressure by putting its interests at stake?

For the first time after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of tariff hike on India yesterday, the reaction at the MS Swaminathan Centenary International Conference has put forward India's firm stand even more strongly. India's firm attitude is reflected in it. Modi has clearly said that for us, the interest of our farmers is the top priority, no matter what price has to be paid for it. India will never compromise on the interests of farmers, fishermen and dairy farmers. This statement shows that India will no longer bow down to global pressures.

According to the data of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), the annual trade between India and America is Rs 11 lakh crore. India exports goods worth Rs 7.35 lakh crore to America, which includes medicines, telecommunication equipment, gems-and-jewellery, petroleum, electronics, engineering products and textiles. At the same time, India imports goods worth Rs 3.46 lakh crore from America, which includes crude oil, coal, diamonds, aircraft and spacecraft parts. But the worrying thing here is that America has not imposed such heavy duty on countries like China, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Indonesia, due to which their products will be cheaper in the American market than Indian products. Still, the attitude of the Modi government is firm. In the sixties, we were dependent on America even for wheat and milk, but it seems that Trump has read some book written in those days as if it were fresh. He is still seeing the old India, which he is thinking of bowing down. He should understand that India is no longer the same India as before. It is self-reliant and the fastest growing economy in the world. India's dominance is increasing all over the world.

The industry is also seeing this pressure as an opportunity. Industrialist Harsh Goenka says that America can impose tariff on exports, but not on our sovereignty. Anand Mahindra even said that just as the foreign exchange crisis of 1991 opened the way for liberalization, similarly this tariff crisis can also give us momentum in the direction of self-reliance. Through a social media post, Lalit Modi has reminded Trump of the 2023 report, which was released by the US company Goldman Sachs. It is worth noting that Goldman Sachs had said in this report that India is on its way to becoming the world's second largest economy by 2075, which will leave behind not only Japan and Germany, but also the United States.

The report estimates that by 2075, India's GDP will be \$ 52.5 trillion, which will be less than China's \$ 57 trillion but more than America's \$ 51.5 trillion. Currently, India is the fourth largest economy in the world and is growing rapidly.

America's economic bullying is nothing new. Since the First World War, it has been imposing its conditions in global economic policies, but now the situation is changing. China is already not coming under its pressure and now India is also giving clear indication that its priority is its national interests. Recently, India completely rejected America's attempt to take credit for stopping the Indo-Pak war during Operation Sindoor. The same attitude is now visible in the tariff dispute as well.

The goal of the Modi government is clear - to make India the second largest economy in the world by 2047 through policies like Make in India, Vocal for Local and India First. In such a situation, Trump's tariff politics can further accelerate India's self-reliance campaign. Leading with patience and restraint is India's strength. That episode of Ramcharitmanas comes to mind when Vibhishan told Shri Ram during the war that Ravana has everything, but you have nothing. Then Shri Ram replied that the biggest strength is patience, peace and tolerance. This policy is reflected in the leadership of India today. Where Trump is arrogant, India is moving ahead with determination and peace.

History has proved that America has never been a permanent friend of India. Trump's policies are being opposed even within America. In such a situation, changing equations can open new opportunities for India. Trump may be adopting an arbitrary attitude, but he is also getting trapped. He is also being opposed in America on the issue of tariff. There are possibilities of new global equations being formed in the changed scenario. Trump's attitude can change India's relations with China.

PM Modi is going on a visit to China after seven years at the end of this month. He will attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit to be held in Tianjin from 31 August to 1 September. Modi's visit to China is going to take place at a time when efforts are being made to improve relations between the two countries. India is a very big market, which China desperately needs. Whenever the issue of Swadeshi is raised in India, China considers it against itself. The concept of Swadeshi has the greatest impact on Chinese products. In such a situation, why would China not want to have cordial relations with India. Especially, when America itself is increasing distance from India. China needs India's huge market, and with the increasing distance in India's relations with America, Beijing will be eager to improve its relations.

America's economic bullying may still continue, but in the changing global scenario, India's self-confidence, firm stand and visionary leadership are not only capable of withstanding it, but can also make it a ladder of its development. In the times to come, moving forward on its own terms in the world while protecting its interests will be India's real strength. Even after reaching the peak of the economy, India will follow the path of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. India's thinking is the welfare of all. We have thought of Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah since ancient times. Bullying is not our nature. *(The author is a renowned educationist, thinker, philosopher and speaker.)*

India's Tit for Trump's Tat

The trade winds between India and the United States are beginning to stir with tension once again. Former U.S. President Donald Trump's recent statements advocating a blanket 50% tariff on all imports, including those from long-standing trade partners like India, have sent a jolt through global markets and policy circles. While Trump's protectionist rhetoric isn't new, the scale and bluntness of this proposed tariff — if enacted in a future administration — would represent an unprecedented escalation in U.S. trade policy.

India, one of the largest trading partners of the United States, cannot afford to ignore such a move. With nearly \$118 billion in bilateral trade in goods and services in 2024 alone, the stakes are high. A 50% tariff would disproportionately affect key Indian sectors like textiles, pharmaceuticals, IT services, and steel — putting millions of Indian jobs at risk and shaking investor confidence. But India is not without leverage. With growing geopolitical clout, a rising economic profile, and strategic partnerships beyond Washington, New Delhi has both the tools and the resolve to respond. The question is not whether India should retaliate — it's how to retaliate smartly.

Why Trump's 50% Tariff matters is the burning debate today in the country. Congress and Trinamul Congress wanted answer from Prime Minister in the Parliament. They insisted why Trump's friend who even campaigned in Texas for his victory will have to reply. Parliament is facing turmoil everyday on this issue and sessions are adjourned many times.

Donald Trump's America First agenda has always viewed trade through a transactional lens. The proposed 50% tariff, if realized, would essentially act as a non-tariff barrier, pricing Indian goods out of the U.S. market. This threatens India's export competitiveness in key sectors: Pharmaceuticals is one of them. India is the world's largest supplier of generic medicines to the U.S. In the field of Textiles and Apparel we know India exports over \$8 billion worth of garments annually to the U.S. The other is IT Services and India's technology sector provides services worth billions through U.S.-based contracts. Beyond the economic blow, the tariff also signals a troubling shift: treating strategic partners like India on par with adversaries. This has broader implications for diplomatic trust and geopolitical collabora-

tion — especially in an era where counterbalancing China remains a shared interest. India's Options can be guessed. First it can be a measured retaliation. India indeed has a range of options — both headline and diplomatic — that it can deploy in response. Each has its own trade-offs and strategic weight. Here's how India can respond with a calibrated "tit for tat."

1. Reciprocal Tariffs on Key U.S. Exports
India could target American exports with mirror tariffs, leveraging its own large consumer base. Sectors that could feel the brunt of such a move include: Agricultural products like almonds, walnuts, and apples — California's \$1.5 billion trade with India could take a direct hit.

Energy imports, including liquefied natural gas (LNG) and crude oil, which the U.S. has been increasingly selling to India. Luxury goods and high-end electronics, which are non-essential imports and easier to target without domestic backlash. This move sends a clear message: if Indian businesses are being hurt, U.S. exporters will feel the pain too.

2. Diversify and De-Americanize Trade Partnerships

One of the best ways to retaliate without escalating is to reduce dependence on the U.S. market.

India can accelerate trade agreements with the EU, UK, and Australia. These markets offer comparable purchasing power and geopolitical alignment. India can strengthen its presence in ASEAN and African economies, where Indian pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, and education services are already well-regarded. Indian can play a bigger role in forums like B R I C S , Global South Summits, and the Shanghai

Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to build alternate coalitions. By diversifying its economic footprint, India reduces vulnerability to U.S. tariffs and makes itself less susceptible to the whims of American domestic politics.

3. India is trying to boost Domestic Resilience

In Atmanirbhar Bharat 2.0, Trump's protectionism could be the unexpected catalyst for a second wave of Atmanirbhar Bharat — the self-reliant India initiative. This involves i) Scaling up domestic manufacturing in electronics, textiles, and medical devices

ii) Ncentivizing R&D and innovation in high-tech sectors like semiconductors and AI. India will be supporting MSMEs (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises) to become export-ready and resilient to global shocks. The objective is not autarky, but rather strategic autonomy — ensuring that external disruptions do not derail India's growth trajectory.

Fourthly, India needs to challenge the Tariff Legally at the WTO. If implemented, a flat 50% tariff would almost certainly violate World Trade Organization (WTO) norms, especially most-favored nation (MFN) obligations. India could: India has to file a formal dispute at the WTO against the U.S., arguing that such a tariff is discriminatory and protectionist. India seeks support from other affected nations, including EU members, Japan, and South Korea — creating a coalition of resistance.

India uses the legal process to create pressure for a negotiated rollback. Although the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism has weakened in recent years, a multilateral legal challenge still carries significant diplomatic and moral weight.

India uses Strategic Diplomacy — Not Just Trade Tools. India has proven its diplomatic dexterity time and again. Rather than a knee-jerk retaliation, New Delhi can:

India should engage with U.S. lawmakers, governors, and industry bodies — many of whom oppose such blanket tariffs of Trump. In his own party there is a difference of opinion and Trump is being criticized for his steps against India , the imposition of highest tariff. Leverage lobbying power in sectors where U.S. companies rely on Indian talent and supply chains — like tech and pharmaceuticals is to be sought.

India can make use of platforms like the Quad, G20, and Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) to frame the tariff as a threat to global stability and cooperation. By appealing to American self-interest — particularly in countering China — India can argue that penalizing friendly democracies weakens the broader strategic alignment. India's messaging must walk a fine line: assertive, not antagonistic. The public posture should be that India is committed to free and fair trade. India is opposed to unilateralism. India's proportionate retaliation only is a last resort. This approach will help India maintain interna-

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee

Quit India Movement: The turning point towards Independence

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The Quit India Movement of 1942 stands as one of the most decisive and defining moments in the history of India's long struggle for freedom, marking a shift from political negotiation to a final, resolute demand for independence. It was a movement born not out of gradual persuasion but from an unyielding assertion that the British must leave India immediately. By the early 1940s, the political climate in India was charged with frustration, disappointment, and a simmering discontent that spanned across classes and regions. The Second World War had further intensified this atmosphere. Britain had involved India in the war without consulting its leaders, and the growing economic strain, political suppression, and broken promises of constitutional reform deepened the sense of betrayal.

The failure of the Cripps Mission in 1942 became the last straw. Sir Stafford Cripps, sent by the British government to secure Indian cooperation in the war effort, offered only a vague assurance of dominion status after the war, with no guarantee of immediate independence. For a country whose political awakening had been growing steadily since the late 19th century, such proposals were not only inadequate but insulting. It was against this background that Mahatma Gandhi, at the All India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay's Gowalia Tank Maidan on 8 August 1942, gave his historic call for the British to "Quit India," declaring "Do or Die" as the rallying cry for the nation.

The decision to launch the Quit India Movement was not one taken lightly. Gandhi himself had been committed to the principle of non-violence, and he understood the risks of unleashing a mass movement at a time when the world was engulfed in war. Yet, he also recognised that the moment had arrived when nothing short of complete independence would satisfy the aspirations of the Indian people. The speech at Gowalia Tank was not merely a political declaration; it was a moral proclamation that the subjugation of India had to end, and it had to end now. The British reaction was swift and brutal. Within hours of the resolution being passed, the colonial government arrested Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and almost the entire Congress leadership. The intention was clear: to decapitate the movement before it could gather momentum. But instead of crushing

the spirit of resistance, the arrests sparked a spontaneous, decentralised uprising across the country.

The leaderless nature of the movement became both its challenge and its unique strength. With the top leaders in prison, ordinary citizens, students, women, peasants, and workers took the lead in organising protests, strikes, and acts of defiance. The movement spread like wildfire, from urban centres to remote villages. In many places, government offices were attacked, communication lines disrupted, and railways sabotaged to paralyse the colonial administration. While Gandhi had insisted on non-violence, the repression unleashed by the British provoked violent outbursts in several parts of the country. This was one of the rare moments in the nationalist struggle when civil disobedience and sabotage operated side by side, reflecting both the desperation and determination of the masses.

The Quit India Movement was remarkable for the breadth of its

fined or destroyed for harbouring rebels. By the end of 1942, the movement had been physically suppressed, but its political impact was irreversible. For the first time, the British realised that governing India without the cooperation of its people was becoming impossible. The sheer scale of the uprising, cutting across regional, linguistic, and communal lines, sent a clear message that the demand for freedom was now an unstoppable force.

Internationally, the Quit India Movement also altered perceptions of the Indian struggle. The war had placed Britain in a precarious position, dependent on the goodwill and support of allies like the United States, which was increasingly uncomfortable with Britain's colonial policies. The contradiction of fighting a war for democracy while denying it to colonies like India did not go unnoticed. Although the movement did not lead to immediate independence, it significantly weakened Britain's moral authority and bargaining position in the post-war world. The political landscape in India after 1942 was markedly different.

The Quit India Movement had instilled in the masses a heightened political consciousness and a willingness to act independently of central leadership when necessary.

Perhaps the most enduring legacy of the Quit India Movement lies in the way it shifted the balance of the freedom struggle. Earlier movements such as the Non-Cooperation Movement of the 1920s and the Civil Disobedience Movement of the 1930s had been powerful but ultimately reversible in their impact. The Quit India Movement, however, created a point of no return. From this moment on, the question was not whether India would become free, but when and under what terms. The British, exhausted by the war, economically weakened, and politically isolated, could no longer hope to maintain their hold over India indefinitely. The repression of 1942 did not break the back of the nationalist movement; instead, it hardened its resolve.

The years between 1942 and 1947 were shaped by the political momentum generated by Quit India. The release of political prisoners in 1944, the naval mutiny in Bombay in 1946, and the mounting labour and peasant unrest all drew upon the spirit of defiance unleashed in 1942. Even as communal tensions and the eventual partition cast a shadow over independence,

the Quit India Movement remained a reminder of the unity and collective will that had powered the struggle. Gandhi's vision of non-violent resistance, though challenged by the violence that erupted in parts of the country, still provided the moral backbone of the movement, demonstrating that moral courage could be as potent a weapon as physical force.

Looking back, the Quit India Movement occupies a unique place in India's history. It was not a carefully orchestrated campaign with a clear beginning and end; rather, it was a people's uprising that transcended organisational control. It represented the culmination of decades of political awakening, uniting millions under the shared conviction that the time for freedom had arrived. It also underscored the transformative power of mass participation in shaping political destiny. While it faced criticism for lacking concrete planning and for allowing violence to erupt, its significance cannot be measured solely by its immediate outcomes. It was a movement that shook the foundations of British rule, both materially and psychologically.

When independence finally came in August 1947, it was the result of multiple forces—political negotiations, global shifts in power, and the cumulative pressure of decades of struggle. But the Quit India Movement was the definitive moment that ensured there would be no turning back. It was the final assertion of a nation's will, a collective declaration that the people of India would no longer accept subjugation in any form. The slogan "Do or Die" was not merely rhetorical; it captured the essence of a people prepared to sacrifice everything for their freedom. The movement proved that the spirit of a united populace could withstand even the harshest repression and that the will to be free, once ignited, could not be extinguished.

Today, as India reflects on its journey from colonial rule to a sovereign republic, the Quit India Movement continues to inspire. It stands as a testament to the courage, resilience, and unity of ordinary Indians, who, in the absence of their leaders, rose to the occasion and carried the struggle forward. It is a reminder that history is shaped not only by leaders and negotiations but by the collective actions of those who refuse to accept injustice. In the annals of India's freedom struggle, 1942 will always be remembered as the year when the final chapter began—when a nation, weary of waiting, declared in one voice that the British must quit India, and when that declaration became the turning point towards the independence that followed five years later.



Raksha Bandhan: A sacred thread beyond time and ties

By: Dipak Kurni

In the grand mosaic of Indian festivals that spill color, devotion, and familial warmth across the subcontinent, Raksha Bandhan—or simply “Rakhi”—occupies a uniquely tender space. Celebrated each year on the full moon day of the Hindu lunar month of Shravana, typically in August, it is, at its surface, a charming occasion of sibling affection. A sister ties a decorative thread on her brother’s wrist, prays for his well-being, and in return receives his pledge of protection, often accompanied by gifts. Yet beneath this simple exchange lies a vast reservoir of cultural philosophy, historical resonance, and spiritual symbolism. Far from being a mere domestic ritual, Raksha Bandhan has, over centuries, evolved into a civilizational narrative—one that intertwines myth and history, devotion and duty, emotional intimacy and societal ethics.

The very term is steeped in meaning: “Raksha” denotes protection, and “Bandhan” signifies a bond or tie. Together they convey more than familial loyalty; they speak of a sacred covenant rooted in the moral conscience of dharma. It is a promise that transcends personal affection, reaching into the realm of spiritual responsibility and social duty. To tie a rakhi is to acknowledge the sanctity of human relationships and to bind oneself to the ideal that strength should always shelter, never subdue.

The festival’s roots reach deeply into the mythic soil of Hindu tradition. One of its earliest references lies in the Bhavishya Purana, where Indrani, the consort of Lord Indra, fashions a sacred thread and ties it around her husband’s wrist before his battle with the asuras. Her mantras, woven into the thread, invoke divine protection. Indra’s subsequent victory lends the rakhi a talismanic aura—a belief that a sanctified thread can summon cosmic strength. Though no sibling relationship is depicted here, the symbolism of a bond sanctified by prayer becomes the seed from which Raksha Bandhan would grow.

Equally enduring is the episode from the Mahabharata where Lord Krishna, upon wounding his finger, receives Draupadi’s instant gesture of



and moral courage. Other legends add layers to the festival’s ethos. In one, Yamuna ties a rakhi to Yama, the god of death, who grants her immortality and declares that any brother honored with a rakhi tied in sincerity will be blessed with longevity. In yet another tale from antiquity, the wife of Alexander the Great ties a rakhi to King Porus before battle, persuading him to spare Alexander’s life.

History, too, records the rakhi as a token of moral duty beyond the family. In the sixteenth century, Rani Karnavati of Chittor, threatened by the forces of Bahadur Shah, sent a rakhi to the Mughal emperor Humayun, seeking protection. Rising above religious and political divides, Hu-

across India. In the north, it is marked by intimate sibling rituals. In Maharashtra, it coincides with Narali Purnima, when fishermen offer coconuts to the sea in prayer for safety. In South India, it aligns with Avani Avittam, a day when Brahmins renew their vows and sacred threads. The Skanda Purana and Bhagavat Purana connect it to the Vamana avatar of Vishnu, where humility and service triumph over pride. Across all these interpretations runs a common thread—literally and figuratively—of surrendering ego, upholding protection, and placing service above self-interest.

Yet Raksha Bandhan is not immune to the erosions of modernity. In an era dominated by consumerism, its sacredness is often eclipsed by the lure of gifts, the display of designer rakhis, and the relentless need to broadcast personal moments on social media. Where once the rakhi symbolized an intimate bond and a lifelong moral commitment, it risks being reduced to a brief, transactional exchange. Sisters dress elaborately for photographs; brothers fulfill the ritual with the detachment of a formality; the thread itself becomes secondary to the spectacle. This hollowing out of meaning demands reflection. For the festival to retain its soul, it must be rescued from the grip of showmanship and restored to its original essence—a vow rooted in reverence, protection, and mutual respect.

Such restoration requires both brothers and sisters to revisit the moral foundation of the ritual. For men, the promise of protection cannot remain a poetic phrase recited over sweets; it must translate into consistent action—standing against injustices, respecting boundaries, and fostering environments where women feel secure in all spheres of life. For women, Raksha Bandhan can be a platform to assert dignity and agency, to reaffirm that the bond it celebrates is one of equals, not of guardians and dependents. In this evolving context, many families now encourage mutual rakhi-tying, where siblings, regardless of gender, pledge to protect and support one another. This shift underscores a truth long embedded in Hindu thought: protection is not a function of physical strength alone, but of moral integrity and empathy.

The festival’s universality is perhaps most visible when it extends beyond the household. Across India, soldiers stationed far from home receive

or the kalava tied during pujas—serve as carriers of blessings and mantra-shakti. A rakhi, properly consecrated, is thus not an ornament but a vessel of intent. Every knot contains a silent prayer; every thread, a current of protective energy; every exchange, a reaffirmation of values.

Against the backdrop of rising crimes against women, the moral vision of Raksha Bandhan gains urgency. It must be seen not merely as an annual expression of personal affection but as an ongoing, lived commitment to creating a society where women feel safe, valued, and empowered. The rakhi tied to a single brother’s wrist should symbolize a broader pledge—to extend protection, respect, and solidarity to all women, regardless of relation. When internalized in this way, the festival becomes a cultural movement, a moral summit, a ladder of noble vows stretching beyond the familial to the societal.

To view Raksha Bandhan only as a brother-sister ritual is to diminish its potential. It is, in its deepest form, a festival of self-reflection, a moment to examine whether one’s actions match one’s promises, whether one’s relationships are guided by respect and responsibility. It invites us to redefine human connections, to bind our lives not only with threads of silk but with threads of ethical commitment. In this sense, the rakhi is less a yearly token than a lifelong covenant—a reminder that to care for another is among the most sacred duties one can undertake.



rakhis from schoolchildren and local women—a gesture that transcends personal ties to embrace national solidarity. Spiritual leaders, teachers, and even neighbors have long been recipients of rakhis, emphasizing that the duty to protect is not bound by blood but by humanity. In its most expansive form, Raksha Bandhan resonates with the ancient ideal of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam—the world as one family. It calls for a recognition that every woman, every vulnerable person, is deserving of dignity and safety.

Modern adaptations have also redefined the festival without severing its roots. The growth of eco-consciousness has inspired biodegradable rakhis, plantable seed rakhis, and threads made from recycled materials, aligning the ritual with environmental stewardship. Technology bridges distances, with rakhis sent across continents and rituals performed over video calls. These innovations reflect Raksha Bandhan’s ability to evolve gracefully while preserving its essential spirit.

The symbolic weight of the rakhi in Hindu culture draws on the broader Vedic tradition where threads—whether the yajnopavita of the Brahmin

Through centuries of myth, history, and adaptation, Raksha Bandhan has endured because it speaks to something universal. From Indrani’s protective thread to Draupadi’s impulsive act of compassion, from Karnavati’s political plea to a soldier’s anonymous wrist, it tells us that bonds forged in sincerity can outlast battles, transcend boundaries, and resist the eroding forces of time. In an age fractured by isolation and mistrust, it stands as a quiet but potent call: to shield without domination, to love without possession, to protect without expectation.

The true rakhi is invisible. It is not the thread tied on the day of the festival, but the web of trust and care that holds a society together. It is every moment in which someone stands up for the vulnerable, offers shelter to the threatened, or simply listens without judgment. The thread may fray, but the vow it carries—if honored—can be eternal. And in that sense, Raksha Bandhan is less an annual celebration than an enduring way of life, weaving together affection and duty into threads of eternity. (the writer can be reached at dipakkurnigpltd@gmail.com)



compassion as she tears her sari to bind his injury. Moved by her selflessness, Krishna vows to protect her always—a vow he fulfills in the Kaurava court when her dignity is threatened. This moment stands as an archetype of raksha that transcends bloodlines, rooted in gratitude, dharma,

mayun responded with military aid. These episodes reveal the rakhi’s power to invoke solidarity, moral obligation, and mutual respect, even between strangers and across cultures.

Such breadth of meaning explains why Raksha Bandhan today is celebrated in diverse forms

The changing meaning of Rakshabandhan: From tradition to modernity

The thread of Rakshabandhan is not just tied on the wrist, but on the heart. It is a promise - to stay together, to protect, and to understand without saying. There is an innocent prayer in the sister's Rakhi that cannot be expressed in words, and there is a resolve in the brother's eyes that gives courage to fight every challenge.

No matter how much time changes, no matter how much the distance is, this thread brings back the warmth of relationships every time. Rakshabandhan is not a festival, it is a feeling - which unites us every year

By: Dr. Priyanka Saurabh

India is a country full of diversity, where every festival not only symbolizes religious faith, but also strengthens social and cultural relationships. One of these special festivals is Rakshabandhan, which symbolizes the sweetness, love and protection of the brother-sister relationship. But with changing times, society, technology and thinking, the meaning of Rakshabandhan is also changing. This change is not limited to rituals only, but can also be clearly seen in the soul of this festival, its purpose and its social context.

Raksha Bandhan has its roots deep in Indian history, mythology and social traditions. Whether it is the story of Draupadi and Shri Krishna or the Rakhi sent by Queen Karnavati to Humayun, this festival has always been a symbol of a moral pledge between the protector and the protected. In earlier times, Rakhi was limited only to the blood relation of brother and sister. The sister would tie a Rakhi on the brother's wrist and the brother would promise to protect her throughout his life. This relationship was full of affection, trust and dedication.

Now the scope of Raksha Bandhan is not limited to blood relations only. Today many women tie Rakhi to their friends, colleagues, teachers, soldiers and even nature. This shows that “Raksha” is no longer the responsibility of a particular person, but has become a wider responsibility of social and emotional relations. The best example of this is that now sisters also say to their younger brothers - “I will also protect you.” That is, the relationship of protection is no longer one-sided, it has become mutual.

Technology has changed the equation of relationships today. Earlier, one had to go to the post office to send a Rakhi, but now digital

Rakhis, video calls, online gifting and virtual ceremonies are happening in just one click. Brothers and sisters living abroad may be far away now, but the tradition of tying Rakhi on video call, Tilak on the screen and digital sweets have created a new kind of feeling of connection. Some people may call it a lack of emotions, but the truth is that technology has also provided a means to bridge the distance.

Earlier, on Raksha Bandhan, brothers used to give sweets and gifts to their sisters. This was a kind of expression of love. But now many sisters say - “Brother, I don't want gifts, I want some leisure, time, understanding.” Today's sister is self-reliant. She wants emotional security, mental support and equal participation. Instead of gifts, transparency, communication and time have become more important in relationships.

In the olden days, the meaning of Raksha Bandhan was - “Brother will protect sister.” But today this definition is changing. Girls are also self-reliant today, helping their brothers, giving them mental and financial support. Raksha Bandhan no longer says that only the brother will be the protector, rather it shows that both brother and sister can be protection, support and inspiration in each other's life.

In today's time, Raksha Bandhan is not only a festival of brothers and sisters, it has also become a symbol of protection of nature, social harmony and equality. In many places, the tradition of tying rakhi to trees has started - “Vriksha-Raksha Bandhan”. Children and women are giving the message by tying rakhi to trees that we are committed to protect not only humans but also nature. Similarly, sending rakhi to soldiers shows that we are also emotionally connected with the heroes who protect the country. Sisters are no longer just seekers of protec-

tion, but are also self-respecting, self-reliant and sensitive. In many families, sisters are helping their brothers financially, educationally or socially. This change indicates that Raksha Bandhan is now coming out of the mould of masculinity and femininity and is standing on the ground of human values and equality.

In today's busy life, the ways of expressing emotions may have changed, but their importance has not diminished. Brothers and sisters now remain supportive of each other's lives throughout the year, not just on the day of Rakhi. Rakshabandhan is an excuse to relive those relationships, which sometimes had fights, sometimes sweetness, sometimes anger and sometimes immense affection. This festival reminds us that relationships are not made, they are maintained.

Today Raksha Bandhan is not limited to Hinduism or Indian culture. This festival has now become a symbol of communal harmony, national unity and social harmony. In many places, Muslim girls tie rakhis to Hindu brothers, Christian children send rakhis to soldiers - all these are indications of the fact that the pledge of protection is the pledge of humanity, not just of any religion, caste or community.

The changing meaning of Raksha Bandhan makes us understand that festivals are not just rituals, they are ideas, emotions. Today's Raksha Bandhan teaches us this: that protection is not one-sided, but mutual. That relationships are not made of blood, but of emotions. That nature, society and country also deserve our protection. And that a woman can not only be protected, but also a protector. Raksha Bandhan is no longer just a festival, it is a philosophical viewpoint - which says that society and relationships can survive only with love, dedication and equality.

Raksha Bandhan Time to rethink the thread of ‘Protection’



By: Soma Mohapatra

Every year, millions across India celebrate Raksha Bandhan. A sister ties a sacred thread on her brother's wrist, and in return, he vows to protect her. But I cannot help but ask — why? Is Raksha Bandhan truly a bond of mutual love and respect between siblings?

Or is it, as tradition frames it, a ritual that reinforces an age-old belief — that the girl is inherently in need of protection, while the boy is inherently the protector? “The brother has to protect her.”

Why? Why must she tie this bandhan — this bond — with her brother to safeguard herself?

And more importantly, from whom? From “someone else's brother”? Or, in some dark irony, from the brother himself?

Why does this girl need protection at all? Why is she expected to weave a network of such threads to ensure her safety?

Why can't she protect herself? And here's the glaring imbalance: the brother never

has to tie a rakhi back to her.

He doesn't “need” protection?

He doesn't require anyone to save him?

It is only the “weak, pity little lady” — as society would have her — who must walk around seeking this protection as though asking for alms.

Should we not, in a world that is striving towards equality, change the name of this festival?

Why not call it “Siblings and Cousins Day” — a day where threads are exchanged both ways, celebrating companionship, friendship, love, and mutual care?

Because let's face it — protection is not gendered. Strength is not a male monopoly.

And safety should never be something a woman must “request” or “secure” through a symbolic contract.

“She is the power, she is the strength. Who can protect her? She doesn't need it. Simply doesn't.”

Traditions evolve when society evolves. Raksha Bandhan can be more than a ritual of dependency. It can be a celebration of equals, where the thread on your wrist says not, “I will protect you because you are weak”, but “I will stand with you because you are my equal.” (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

China welcomes PM Modi's planned visit to attend SCO Summit

BEIJING, Aug 8: China on Friday welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned visit to the Tianjin Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to be held later this month, expressing hope that the event will be a "gathering of solidarity, friendship and fruitful results".

PM Modi is expected to travel to China later this month, after a gap of over seven years, to attend the annual summit of the SCO, people familiar with the matter in Delhi said this week.

"China welcomes Prime Minister Modi to China for the SCO Tianjin Summit," Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Guo Jiakun said while responding to a question on reports about Modi's visit to China to attend the Tianjin summit to be held from August 31 to September 1.

"We believe that with the concerted effort of all parties, the Tianjin summit will be a gathering of solidarity, friendship and fruitful results, and the SCO will enter a new stage of high-quality development featuring greater solidarity, coordination, dynamism and productivity," Guo said.

Guo said that leaders of over 20 countries, including all member states of the SCO and heads of 10 international organisations, will attend relevant events. "The SCO Tianjin Summit will be the largest summit in scale since the establish-



ment of the SCO," the spokesperson added.

Modi is expected to embark on a visit to Japan around August 29, and after concluding the trip, he will travel to the Chinese city of Tianjin for the SCO summit.

There is no official confirmation yet on Modi's two-nation visit to Japan and China.

Modi last visited China in June 2018 to attend the SCO summit. Chinese President Xi Jinping visited India in October 2019 for the second "informal summit".

However, the relationship came under stress due to the eastern Ladakh border face-off.

The military standoff in eastern Ladakh began in May 2020 and the clashes at the Galwan Valley in June that year resulted in a severe strain in ties. The face-off effectively ended fol-

lowing completion of the disengagement process from the last two friction points of Demchok and Dapsang under an agreement finalised on October 21 last year.

In the last few months, both sides revived the Special Representative dialogue on the boundary question and other dialogue mechanisms.

The decision to revive various dialogue mechanisms was taken at a meeting between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi at Kazan in Russia on October 23, 2024.

The Modi-Xi meeting came two days after India and China signed a pact for a disengagement pact for Dapsang and Demchok.

The two sides also took a number of initiatives to rebuild the ties, which included the resumption of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and New Delhi restarting issuance of tourist visas to Chinese nationals. Both sides are also discussing modalities to resume direct flight services between the two countries.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval visited China in the last two months to attend the SCO meetings.

China is the current chair of the SCO. It is not immediately clear whether PM Modi and President Xi will hold a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the SCO summit. (PTI)

17 killed, 33 missing in torrents, landslides in China

BEIJING, Aug 8: At least 17 people have died and 33 others are missing in torrents and landslides in China in the last 48 hours, official media here reported on Friday.

President Xi Jinping has urged all-out search and rescue efforts, and flood prevention and disaster relief work after mountain torrents hit northwest Gansu province on Thursday, state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Friday. At least 10 people were killed and 33 others listed missing in mountain torrents in Gansu province, it said.

In another incident, seven people died and seven others injured following a rain-triggered landslide in Guangzhou, the capital of China's southern Guangdong province, on Wednesday, local officials said on Friday. The landslide occurred in Dayuan Village in Guangzhou's Baiyun District, trapping 14 people and damaging multiple houses, according to the district's emergency management bureau.

The injured were sent to the hospital. On-site cleanup work is ongoing, along with geological hazard risk assessments in affected and surrounding areas. Safety inspections and evaluations of residential buildings will also be carried out to support follow-up work, Xinhua reported.

In Gansu, torrential rain pounded Yuzhong, which is under the jurisdiction of the provincial capital city of Lanzhou, and other areas of Lanzhou on Thursday evening, with the maximum precipitation reaching



220.2 mm by noon Friday. Several townships in Yuzhong have been seriously affected, the report said.

Flood waters mixed with uprooted trees blocked the roads with mud deposits. The torrents also damaged several houses and vehicles.

More than 2,700 rescue personnel have been dispatched by provincial authorities, along with 980 vehicles and pieces of machinery and 8,530 sets of emergency supplies. Search and rescue efforts for the missing, infrastructure repairs, and the evacuation and resettlement of affected residents are underway.

Several provinces in China, including Beijing, are currently experiencing heavy rains and floods. Forty-four people were killed and nine went missing in rain-triggered floods in Beijing two weeks ago. The dead included 31 people from a nursing home in the Miyun district of Beijing. (PTI)

Trust in Zelensky is diminished even after reversal of law that fuelled anti-corruption protests

KYIV, Aug 8: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky quickly reversed course last month on a law that would have curbed the independence of the country's anti-corruption watchdogs after widespread protests that threatened the stability of his leadership for the first time since Russia's invasion.

It's unlikely that the damage to the president's image can be changed as easily. Zelensky's reversal followed years of public discontent that simmered around his inner circle, some of whom have been accused of corruption. But Ukrainians have been largely deferential toward their president in wartime, trusting him to lead the fight against the Kremlin and even acquiescing in the suspension of some civil liberties. The protests showed the limits of that goodwill after the public concluded that Zelensky's fast-tracking of the law was a step too far.

"People will support Zelensky in whatever he does as it relates to the war. But the previous level of trust "that he will carry out everything correctly, without outside interests, has been damaged," said Tetiana Shevchuk, a board member of the Ukrainian nonprofit Anti-Corruption Action Centre, which fights graft. Zelensky "will need to work hard to get it back."

A Gallup poll released Thursday found that about two-thirds of Ukrainians approve of the way Zelensky is handling his job as president, down from 84 per cent in 2022. Another poll released Wednesday by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology found a similar pattern, with trust in Zelensky down from just before the war started and a sharp decrease since after the signing of the law.

Both polls were conducted in July and excluded adults living in regions of the country that were not controlled by Ukraine or were under entrenched Russian control. The initial decision to sign the proposal hurt Zelensky's standing among Ukrainians, loyal lawmakers and Western allies, including one foreign minister who told The Associated Press that his willingness to backtrack on the law would help restore "lost trust."

Zelensky says bill was designed to root out Russian influ-

ence

Zelensky sparked the outcry when he signed measures to reduce the powers of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau, or NABU, and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, or SAPO.

Zelensky said the initial bill was meant to root out Russian influence in those agencies, but he did not provide evidence to support the claim. The bill became a law so quickly that lawmakers said they barely had time to read it. For the Ukrainian people, patience wore thin.

From the outset of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, the public tolerated restrictions such as martial law and postponed elections. But critics also argued that the consolidation of the president's authority undermined the country's democratic institutions, along with the checks and balances necessary for transparency. Members of Zelensky's inner circle and the corruption allegations fuelled public resentment.

The resulting anti-corruption protests in July in Kyiv and other cities were among the largest in years, drawing thousands of demonstrators and reflecting widespread public demand for transparency and accountability even during wartime.

"It's not one law that brought people to the streets, but a series of events and mostly an accumulation of feelings and wanting to show the government there are certain red lines," Shevchuk said.

Ukrainian leaders have been sensitive to public opinion ever since the Euromaidan protests of 2013 and 2014, which ignited extraordinary political changes, including the ousting of pro-Russia President Viktor Yanukovich. Those protests marked a decisive moment in Ukraine's history and galvanised public intolerance toward corruption and abuse of power.

Until recently, Zelensky's decisions and public statements aligned mostly with public opinion. He watches polls closely. For instance, he did not say that Ukraine would be unable to win back occupied territory militarily until polls showed that Ukrainians were willing to end the war for territorial concessions. (AP)

Israel's Security Cabinet approves plan to take military control of Gaza

JERUSALEM, Aug 8: Israel's Security Cabinet has approved Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plan to take military control of Gaza City as part of a five-point aim primarily to "disarm" Hamas, a decision that triggered fears of further escalation in the nearly two-year war in the enclave.

The controversial decision to take control of Gaza City came amid massive anti-government protests across Israel demanding an immediate end to the war and ensuring immediate return of over 50 hostages held captive by Hamas for the last 22 months.

"A decisive majority of Security Cabinet ministers believed that the alternative plan that had been submitted to the Security Cabinet would neither achieve the defeat of Hamas nor the return of the hostages," Netanyahu's office said. It is not immediately clear what the alternative plan was.

The plan cleared by the Security Cabinet featured five principles.

These are: disarming of Hamas, return of all the hostages, the demilitari-

sation of Gaza, Israeli security control in Gaza and establishment of a civil administration that is neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority.

Netanyahu's office said the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) will prepare for taking control of Gaza City while distributing humanitarian assistance to the civilian population outside the combat zones.

Earlier, Israeli Armed Forces' Chief of Staff, Lt Gen Eyal Zamir, cautioned against full military conquest of Gaza City and said it would be a "trap". Israel launched the war in Gaza after Hamas attacked Israeli cities on October 7, 2023 killing about 1,200 people. Hamas also took 251 people as hostages and over 50 of them are still in its captivity.

Israeli military operations have killed over 60,000 Palestinians since then, according to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry.

Gaza has been reeling under a massive humanitarian crisis largely due to scarcity of food and medicines. The

World Health Organisation said last month that Gaza's malnutrition rates have reached "alarming levels".

Ahead of the Security Cabinet meeting, Netanyahu told a group of visiting Indian journalists that Israel doesn't want to annex or occupy Gaza and its sole aim is to destroy Hamas and hand over the strip to a transitional government. The prime minister also said that Israel wants to take control of Gaza's security.

Asked about the food crisis in Gaza, Netanyahu said over two million tonnes of food were sent to Israel, but the supplies were "interdicted". "Our plan is not to occupy or annex Gaza. Our goal is to destroy Hamas and get our hostages back, and then handover Gaza to a transitory government," Netanyahu said.

The Israeli Security Cabinet's decision drew sharp reactions from families of the hostages as they feared that taking control of Gaza City would further delay the possibility of the release of the hostages. (PTI)

Israeli airstrike kills Palestinian official, bodyguard in east Lebanon

BEIRUT, Aug 8: An Israeli airstrike on eastern Lebanon killed a number of people, including a senior member of a Palestinian group and his bodyguard as they were on their way to Syria, news reports and his group said Friday.

The airstrike near the Lebanese border crossing of Masnaa on Thursday afternoon killed Mohammed Wishah, a member of the central committee of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, or PFLP, the group said in a statement. The Israeli army confirmed the airstrike, saying that Wishah was responsible for coordinating with other militant groups in the region and strengthening ties between the PFLP and Iran's so-called axis of resistance.

The military said that Wishah was advancing attacks against Israel and took his job as the PFLP's top security official in Syria after his predecessor was killed in an airstrike in Beirut in September.

In a post on social media, senior PFLP official Marwan Abdel-Al mourned the death of Wishah and his bodyguard, Mufid Hussein.

"We have lost two of the most

loyal comrades who gave their precious souls to freedom," Abdel-Al wrote. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency, or NNA, said that the airstrike on east Lebanon killed six people and wounded 10 others, without identifying the victims.

Since the Israel-Hamas war began in October 2023, Israel has targeted Palestinian officials in Lebanon, including PFLP members. Three PFLP members were killed in an airstrike on a Beirut apartment in September.

A PFLP official said that Wishah had been in Lebanon to meet with other officials with the group and was on his way back to Syria when the airstrike happened. The official, who wasn't authorised to speak with the media, spoke on condition of anonymity. The PFLP statement said Wishah was born in the Gaza Strip in 1954 and spent five years in Israeli jails shortly after he joined the Palestinian group in 1973. For many years, the leftist and secular PFLP has been the No 2 member of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation after Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah group. (AP)

Imposition of additional duty on India 'national security issue': White House trade adviser

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, Aug 8: The imposition of an additional 25 per cent duty on India is a "national security issue" associated with New Delhi's "abject refusal to stop buying Russian oil", White House Trade Adviser Peter Navarro has said.

Last week, US President Donald Trump had announced 25 per cent reciprocal tariffs on India that came into effect from August 7.

The US president on Wednesday also signed an executive order slapping an additional 25 per cent levy on India for New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil, bringing the total duties to 50 per cent, among the highest imposed by the US on any country in the world.

Navarro, while talking to reporters at the White House on Wednesday, said it is important to understand that the "rationale for the India tariffs is very different from the reciprocal tariffs".

"This was a pure national security issue associated with India's abject refusal to stop buying Russian oil," he said, and added that



"every American needs to understand the math of this because it is related to the trade situation".

"You start with the fact that India is the 'maharaja' of tariffs, it's the highest tariffs in the world charging on American products and it's got a high non-tariff barrier so we can't get our products in," he said.

The US sends a lot of dollars overseas to India to buy their products in an "unfair trade environ-

ment", he claimed.

"India then uses American dollars to buy Russian oil. Russia then uses those American dollars that come from India to finance its armaments, to kill Ukrainians, and American taxpayers are then called upon to pay for the weapons that have to defend Ukraine against Russian armaments paid for by American dollars that came from India," Navarro said.

He said that it has "got to stop". "That math does not work. The president understands the connection between economic security and national security so that was the bottom line there," he added.

Navarro was asked why China, which buys more Russian oil than India does, has not been targeted the way Delhi has been with the doubling of its tariffs. "As the boss says, let's see what happens. Keep in mind that we have over 50 per cent tariffs on China already...so we don't want to get to a point where we actually hurt ourselves," he said.

"The president certainly will be working with China on that issue," he added.

Meanwhile, White House Homeland Security Adviser Stephen Miller said, "It probably surprised people to know that India is one of the largest purchasers in the world of Russian oil and they could easily access oil from many other markets around the world."

"They are one of the largest funders of Russia's army for that reason," he claimed. (PTI)

Govt. of Assam

Office of the District Adult Education Officer, Karbi Anglong, Diphu

No.: DAE/KA/Civil works/2025-26/122

Dated: 08-08-2025

EXTENSION OF LAST DATE

In continuation of this office tender notice No. 110 Dated 09-07-2025 and corrigendum No. 114 Dated 10-07-2025, it is hereby notified that due to technical reason, the last date for submission of tender is extended up to 14-08-2025 and will be opened on the same date at 3.00 pm in presence of the tenderer or authorized agent, if any.

Sd/-

I/C., District Adult Education Officer, Karbi Anglong, Diphu.

Memo No.: DAE/KA/Civil works/2025-26/122-A

Dated: 08-08-2025

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

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

No. C/S-10,144/2025/1088

Dated 06/08/2025

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Superintending Engineer PWD(R&B), Diphu Circle-1, Diphu, on behalf of Governor of Assam invites tender for the 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 and Class II contractors of Diphu Circle-1. 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. Repairing of road from Dhansiri railgate to Dimugathang gaon via Dimaidi gaon under AAP(SOPD) for the year 2025-26.
Estimated amount: Rs 1,49,48,701.00
2. Repairing of road from Sawmill to Aharsha field village under AAP(SOPD) for the year 2025-26.
Estimated amount: Rs 97,20,573.00

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-10,144/2025/1089-(A)

Dated: 06/08/2025

Arunachal Cabinet clears youth policy, welfare expansion, recruitment reforms

Approvals include disability pension relaxations, higher education boost, and updated service rules across key departments

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 8: The Arunachal Pradesh State Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Pema Khandu, has approved a series of far-reaching decisions aimed at empowering youth, expanding the social security net, strengthening education, and reforming recruitment procedures across various departments, according to an official statement.

A major highlight of the meeting was the approval of the Arunachal Pradesh State Youth Policy 2025, described as a pivotal step towards holistic youth development.

The policy sets out nine Youth Development Goals focusing on quality education, sustainable employment, entrepreneurship, innovation, skill enhancement, healthy lifestyles, youth leadership, civic engagement, arts, culture, sports, promotion of biodiversity, and building an inclusive and just society.

The government said the policy

would follow a collaborative approach involving departments, NGOs, community-based organisations and youth bodies, with the goal of transforming Arunachal into a hub for sports, adventure activities, and cultural preservation.

In a significant welfare measure, the Cabinet approved relaxations in the Chief Minister Disability Pension eligibility criteria under the Chief Minister Social Security Scheme.

The age limit has been removed, making all persons with disabilities eligible regardless of age, compared to the earlier threshold of three years and above.

The required disability percentage has also been reduced from 70 per cent to 40 per cent, while other conditions remain unchanged.

The government said the move is intended to provide broader coverage and support to the Divyangjan community in the state.

For the education sector, the Cabinet cleared the creation of 18 new posts in



the science stream at Donyi Polo Government College, Kamki, including 10 assistant professors, four laboratory assistants and four multi-tasking staff.

It also approved the creation of five new principal posts for government colleges at Geku, Basar, Palin, Roing and Tawang, as part of efforts to strengthen higher education infrastructure.

Recruitment rules in several departments have also been updated.

In the Animal Husbandry Department, the rules for the posts of stockman and laboratory assistant have been revised to include updated age criteria, revised educational qualifications, streamlined selection procedures and a reconstituted Departmental Promotion Committee.

In another change, the outdated 1999 recruitment rules for statistical inspectors and marketing inspectors have been replaced with the Agriculture Statistical Inspector Group-C Recruitment Rules, 2024, enabling direct recruitment of fresh statistical graduates.

The Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has also seen amendments in the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Service Rules, 2019 for Group-A gazetted officers and the Range Forest Officer Recruitment Rules, 2019 for Group-B gazetted officers.

The government said these changes reflect its commitment to effective governance and environmental protection. The Cabinet further approved the

Arunachal Pradesh Arun Parivar Patra Authority Rules 2025 to standardise procedures and ensure operational clarity for all stakeholders.

These rules are expected to improve enforcement of data protection and consent norms while maintaining public trust in the fairness and transparency of the system.

During the meeting, the Cabinet was also briefed on the upcoming inauguration of the new Gauhati High Court, Itanagar Permanent Bench building on August 10, 2025.

The government described the new facility as a milestone in providing swift and seamless justice delivery to the people of the state.

According to the statement, these collective decisions reaffirm the state government's commitment to inclusive governance, youth empowerment, academic excellence, social welfare expansion, and transparent administrative reforms.

Arunachal Pradesh opens patient guest house in Vellore



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 8: Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday virtually inaugurated the Arunachal Pradesh Patients' Guest House in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, to provide affordable accommodation for residents of the state seeking treatment at the Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore, according to an official statement.

The facility has been developed to ease the accommodation challenges faced by patients and attendants who travel to Vellore for specialised medical care.

Official data shows that around 466 patients from Arunachal Pradesh visit CMC every month, with the annual number exceeding

5,500.

Many of them have long struggled with high lodging costs and congested living conditions during their stay.

Situated about 4 km from CMC, the newly built guest house offers 28 clean rooms, with air-conditioned rooms available at ₹600 per day and non-AC rooms at ₹400 per day.

Self-cooking facilities have also been provided to allow families to prepare their own meals during extended treatment periods.

In his address, Khandu said the guest house was more than just an infrastructure project, describing it as a promise that the govern-

ment would stand by its people during their most difficult times.

He stressed that the initiative was aimed at providing comfort, dignity and support to patients and their families far from home.

According to the statement, the project has been widely lauded by patients, their families, and members of the public, particularly those who have previously incurred heavy expenses while staying in cities such as Vellore, Mumbai, New Delhi, Guwahati and Dibrugarh for medical purposes.

Many expressed hope that the facility would go a long way in easing the financial and emotional strain faced by the needy and economically weaker sections, as well as others accompanying patients for treatment in major hospitals across the country.

The state government said the Vellore guest house is part of its broader commitment to extend similar support in other major medical hubs, ensuring that people from Arunachal Pradesh have access to safe, affordable and dignified accommodation whenever they seek advanced healthcare outside the state.

Mobile Science Exhibition flagged off in Itanagar

HT Bureau

ITANAGAR, Aug 8: The Arunachal Pradesh Science Centre on Friday witnessed the flag-off of the Mobile Science Exhibition (Lab-on-Wheels), an initiative aimed at taking interactive science learning directly to schools and communities.

The programme is being organised under the aegis of the Arunachal Pradesh State Council for Science & Technology (APSCS&T) in collaboration with the National Science Centre, Guwahati, as part of the flagship outreach programme of the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM), Kolkata.

The ceremony was graced by Dr Tage Taki, Chairman, APSCS&T, accompanied by Er C D Mungyak, Director-cum-Member Secretary, APSCS&T, and Nabam Hina Sera, Block Education Officer, DDSE, ICR.

Officials and staff from DBT, CoEBRSD, APSCS&T, and Science Centre were also present.

Often described as a "museum on wheels", the Mobile Science Exhibition is equipped with 20 interactive exhibits based on everyday machines.

It aims to ignite curiosity towards science, enable learning of scientific principles through



hands-on experiments, promote a scientific culture and STEM career pathways, and complement the school science curriculum with accessible science education.

The programme began with introductory remarks from Er C D Mungyak, underscoring the role of experiential science education in cultivating inquisitive minds.

Dr Vivek Kumar, Curator, Arunachal Pradesh Science Centre, briefed the gathering on the scope and agenda of the Mobile Science Exhibition.

In his address, Chairman Dr Tage Taki said that "curiosity is the spark of knowledge" and stressed that equipping students with the tools and mindset to explore can nurture future innovators.

Nabam Hina Sera highlighted the importance of balancing theoretical knowledge with practical, inquiry-based learning to better prepare students for real-world challenges.

Following the speeches, the dignitaries jointly cut the ribbon and flagged off the specially designed bus. Students from Govt Secondary School, ESS Sector, Itanagar, accompanied by their teachers, participated in the event and interacted with the exhibits.

The Mobile Science Exhibition will run from August 8 to September 17, 2025, visiting various schools in the Itanagar Capital Region to give students an opportunity to engage with science beyond the classroom.

Arunachal marks 11th National Handloom Day in Tezu

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, Aug 8: The Department of Textile and Handicrafts, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, commemorated the 11th National Handloom Day at Amik Ringya Hall, Tezu, according to an official statement.

The event was graced by Minister of Textile and Handicrafts Nyato Dukam as the chief guest, while Moresh Chai, advisor to the minister, attended as the guest of honour.

Commissioner of Textile and Handicrafts Mimum Tayeng, along with several dignitaries and officials, also participated. National Handloom Day, celebrated annually since August 7, 2015, was instituted under the guidance of the Prime Minister to preserve and promote India's diverse cultural heritage. The programme in Tezu highlighted the importance of handloom, local crafts, traditional attire, and self-employment opportunities.

The state government has been taking initiatives to promote local culture and empower communities through livelihood generation. Chai is scheduled to distribute several machines to local women in Tezu in the near future to support weaving and related activities.

Representatives from various tribes across different districts of Arunachal Pradesh showcased their traditional clothing and crafts during the event, underscoring the continuity of their cultural identity. The celebration aimed to honour the contribution of handloom weavers, promote indigenous craftsmanship, and inspire the younger generation to value the rich textile traditions of the state.

'Not possible for govt to address all issues'

ITANAGAR, Aug 8: Arunachal Pradesh Home Minister Mama Natung has said that it's not possible for the government alone to address all issues and problems.

In an interactive meeting with Community Based Organisations (CBOs) organised by the Indigenous Affairs department here on Thursday, Natung, who is also the minister in charge for Inter-State Border Affairs and Indigenous Affairs, said that at some point in time, the intervention of stakeholders, especially CBOs becomes important in solving critical issues. He praised the CBOs for taking the lead role in addressing issues like drug menace, peace and harmony with other states, etc.

The minister appealed to them to continue with the same zeal.

Several issues related to illegal immigrants, Inner Line Permit, weekly markets, drug menace, communal harmony among tribes, peaceful co-existence with neighbouring states and importance to preserve rich cultural heritage were thoroughly discussed. (PTI)

Two-day workshop on Panchayat Advancement Index 2.0 begins in Namsai

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, Aug 8: A two-day district and block-level workshop on Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) 2.0 commenced on Friday at the DC's Conference Hall, Namsai.

The programme is being organised by the State Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (SIRD&PR) in collaboration with the District Administration, Namsai.

The training, chaired by Deputy Commissioner C R Khampa, was attended by ZPC Namsai Nang Urmila Manchechkun, ADC-cum-DPDO Namsai Nang Kalyani Namchoom, Dr Narayan Sahoo, Deputy Director-cum-Course Director, SIRD&PR, heads of departments, and Gram Panchayat chairpersons of the Namsai Zilla Parishad segment.

In his inaugural address, Khampa informed that Namsai district ranked 10th in the state with a PAI score of 54.38 for the financial year 2022-23.

He urged all HoDs and line functionaries to cooperate in sharing departmental data for 2023-24 to help improve the district's score.

He also stressed identifying gaps in developmental progress across themes linked to the localisation of sustainable development goals, including poverty-free and enhanced livelihoods, healthy villages, child-friendly panchayats, water-friendly panchayats, clean and green panchayats, self-sufficient village infrastructure, socially just and secure panchayats, good governance, and women-friendly panchayats.

ZPC Manchechkun called for the cooperation of all line departments for the successful rollout of PAI 2.0 in the district.

Course Director Dr Sahoo briefed participants on the programme's policy framework for evidence-based planning at the Gram Panchayat level, baseline findings from PAI 1.0, key learnings and challenges, the standard operational procedure, and the PAI 1.0 Gram Panchayat scorecard.

RGU hosts Leadership Engagement Workshop

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, Aug 8: The Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies (AITS) at Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU), in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), successfully organised a one-day Leadership Engagement Workshop under the multi-state implementation research project titled "Suicide Risk Reduction and Improving Mental Well-being among School and College Students", according to an official statement. The workshop brought together principals and heads from six institutions in the Naharlagun area — Good Shepherd Public School, Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 1, CV Raman Academy, Royal International School, Indira Academy and Donyi Polo Institute.

The objective was to strengthen the capacity of institutional leaders to promote mental health awareness, develop supportive environments, and put in place structured mechanisms for emotional well-being within their institutions. Welcoming the participants, Dr Tarun Mene, Principal Investigator of the ICMR-AITS project, outlined the objectives of the initiative, stressing the urgent need for proactive and evidence-based interventions to reduce suicide risk among young people.

He also felicitated the dignitaries present, underlining the importance of their commitment to the cause. The technical component of the programme comprised three focused sessions.

The first, "Understanding Mental Health and Well-being", was conducted by Project Research Scientist-Chara Lowangcha, who provided participants with foundational knowledge on identifying and addressing mental health concerns within educational settings.

The second session, "Child, Adolescent & Youth Development and Mental Health", led by Clinical Psychologist and Project Research Scientist-Mayuri Handique, examined the psychological and emotional development stages of young people and discussed how institutions can foster enabling environments for their holistic growth.

The final session, "Action Planning – Mental Health Support and Protocols", was jointly facilitated by Lecyir Ete and Tadu Rimi.

This segment engaged participants in preparing institutional action plans for implementing mental health support systems and establishing clear protocols to respond to students in distress.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Co-Principal Investigator Dharmeshwari Lourenbam, who commended the proactive involvement of educational leaders in advancing this crucial initiative.

Certificates of participation were presented to all attendees.

Trading units booked in Namsai for violating legal metrology and food safety norms

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, Aug 8: A joint surprise inspection was conducted today by Assistant Controller (in-charge of Inspector Legal Metrology) C S Singpho and Food Safety Officer A Taloh from the Department of Health, Namsai.

During the inspection, six trading units were booked under Section 24 of the Legal Metrology Act, 2009 for using unverified weighing scales, instruments, and weights.

Another trading unit was booked under Section 18(1) for stocking packaged commodities without mandatory declarations such as the manufacturer's name and address, and the date of manufacturing or packing on the label. Additionally, five businesses were found operating without valid food licences. They were served notices under Sections 31 and 63 of the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act, 2006.

Officials instructed the trading units to ensure annual verification of weights and measures, renew food licences on time, and avoid stocking packaged commodities without the mandatory labelling that must be clearly legible to consumers before purchase.

Preliminary National Space Day celebrated in Tawang

HT Correspondent

TAWANG, Aug 8: The preliminary National Space Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm at Kalawangpo Hall here on Friday, commemorating the successful landing of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander on the lunar south pole on August 23, 2023.

According to an official statement, the event was part of nationwide observances leading up to the final celebration in New Delhi, marking India's achievements in space exploration.

Deputy Commissioner of Tawang, Namgyal Angmo, IAS, attended the programme as the chief guest and, in her inaugural address, underscored the importance of science and scientific thinking in everyday life.

She urged students to take a deep interest in science, aim high, and aspire to become scientists.

Angmo further stressed that the essence of the celebration should not remain confined to the event but be carried forward into the lives and aspirations of all participants.

The programme featured Jayasimha, project director of Chandrayaan-5, ISRO, Bengaluru, as guest of honour and re-

source person.

He delivered an engaging lecture on ISRO's legacy and milestones, supported by an audio-visual presentation that captured the audience's attention.

Jonali Goswami from the North Eastern Space Applications Centre (NESAC) also addressed the gathering, focusing on capacity building and outreach initiatives in the space sector.

A quiz competition on space science added a lively dimension to the celebrations, with teams from GHSS Tawang, GSS Town, GSS Bomba, and Manjushree School participating.

GSS Town claimed the top position, while GSS Bomba finished as runner-up.

The event drew officials from the Department of Science and Technology, including its Director and Deputy Directors, along with school principals, teachers, and a large number of students.

The atmosphere was one of learning, curiosity, and inspiration.

Trophies and certificates were presented to the winners of the quiz competition, while all participating students received certificates from the chief guest.

Kameng Kings unveil Jersey, Logo; back Spin Star TNR Mohit

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 8: In a high-energy event that combined cultural pride with sporting ambition, the Kameng Kings officially unveiled their team jersey and logo ahead of their debut in the Tech Tagar Arunachal T20 Championship, according to an official statement.

The launch, held in Itanagar, also served as the formal introduction of the team's icon player — young spin sensation TNR Mohit — whose rapid rise in domestic cricket has made him one of Arunachal Pradesh's most promising cricketers.

Representing the resilient Kameng region, the Kameng Kings are one of eight teams set to compete in the state's premier T20 tournament, which will be staged entirely in Guwahati.

The event drew dignitaries, media personnel, cricket enthusiasts and community members from across the region, all eager to witness the beginning of the franchise's journey.

Among the prominent guests were



Nabam Vivek, MLA and Honorary Secretary of the Arunachal Cricket Association

(ARCA), recognised for his pivotal role in strengthening sports governance and ad-

vocating youth-focused sports development, and Geda Kabak, Vice President of ARCA, known for his efforts in promoting grassroots cricket and nurturing emerging talent from across the state's districts.

The spotlight, however, was firmly on TNR Mohit, who has emerged as a beacon for the state's cricketing aspirations.

Mohit's breakout first-class season for Arunachal Pradesh featured 19 wickets, including an extraordinary nine-wicket haul on debut against Sikkim — a performance that brought him into the national spotlight.

His consistent bowling displays in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy further cemented his reputation as a calm and effective match-winner under pressure.

Speaking at the event, Mohit said wearing the Kameng Kings jersey was "not just about playing cricket — it's about representing the hopes of a region," adding that while his debut haul was special, he was more excited about what the team could achieve together in the upcoming season.

The franchise's principal sponsor, Arvind Tadakamalla, said supporting Kameng Kings was "more than a sponsorship — it's an investment in the youth and future of Arunachal," underscoring the team's vision of creating opportunities for local talent and fostering sporting excellence.

The launch also highlighted the Kameng Kings' broader mission — to inspire, unite and elevate Arunachal cricket through a culture of talent, humility and teamwork.

With the backing of passionate supporters, a talented roster and committed leadership, the franchise aims to make a strong impression in its maiden appearance, and to contribute to raising the profile of cricket across Northeast India.

According to the statement, the Kameng Kings see the Tech Tagar Arunachal T20 Championship not just as a competition, but as a platform to showcase homegrown skill, strengthen community bonds, and nurture the next generation of cricketers from the region.

PM Modi speaks to Putin, leaders reaffirm commitment to deepening bilateral ties

Trump on Wednesday signed an executive order, slapping an additional 25 per cent levy on India for purchasing Russian oil

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin over phone and the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further deepening the India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.

Putin briefed Modi on his country's ongoing conflict with Ukraine, with the prime minister reiterating India's consistent position for the peaceful resolution of the issue.

The conversation between the two leaders came amid US President Donald Trump ratcheting up pressure on India over its purchase of Russian oil.

Trump on Wednesday signed an executive order, slapping an additional 25 per cent levy on India for New Delhi's purchases of Russian



oil, bringing the total duties 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 on August 27.

In a post on X, Modi said, "Had a very good and detailed conversa-

tion with my friend President Putin. I thanked him for sharing the latest developments on Ukraine. We also reviewed the progress in our bilateral agenda, and reaffirmed our commitment to further deepen the India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership. I look forward to hosting President Putin in India later this year."

It will be the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit.

Modi on Thursday received a phone call from Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, whose country has also been at the receiving end of Trump's tariffs, and the two leaders agreed to enhance cooperation in trade, technology, energy, defence, agriculture, health, and people-to-people ties. (PTI)

650 rescued in Uttarkashi, Army builds bridge over river to speed up evacuation

UTTARKASHI, Aug 8: Sniffer dogs nosed their way through high piles of rubble, drones circled overhead and rescue personnel searched for the missing through the sludge in disaster-hit Dharali on Friday, four days after raging waters buried half the village and left scores missing.

Since Tuesday, 650 people have been rescued, 400 Thursday and 250 on Friday, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said, adding the rest will also be evacuated soon.

Communication lines were restored on Friday in the disaster-hit areas of Uttarkashi after remaining disrupted for three days with authorities hoping it will help in pacing up rescue operations.

"Internet connectivity has been restored. Airtel has begun to function in the affected area. It will speed up rescue operations," Dhami told reporters after returning from Dharali.

However, roads are still blocked or broken between Dharali, Harsil and Uttarkashi and power supply has been badly hit, he said.

He said a generator set has been brought to Uttarkashi to be flown to the affected area.

"The situation is of course difficult but we are trying to bring things back on track at the earliest," the chief minister, who camped here for the last three days to keep a close eye on the rescue operations, said.

Construction of a bailey bridge over Lincha Gad near Gangnani has also been started after the collapse of a bridge there, he said.

The bailey bridge will be ready within two days, Garhwal Commissioner Vinay Shankar Pandey said.

Officials have said four people were killed in the flash floods. Two bodies were recovered on Wednesday.

The Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority (USDMA) said 16 people, including nine Army personnel and seven civilians, are missing.

According to residents of nearby villages, like Mukhba, who witnessed the disaster, the number of missing is likely to be higher as locals and labourers from Bihar and Nepal were working at under-construction hotels and there were guests in about two dozen big hotels in Dharali when the disaster struck.

Dharali is the main stopover on the way to Gangotri, from where



the Ganga originates, abounding in hotels, homestays, restaurants and guest houses.

The USDMA said more than 800 rescue personnel drawn from the Army, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and police are engaged in the rescue operations on the ground.

Sniffer dogs and radars are being used to search for survivors and detect bodies buried under the huge mounds of debris.

The ITBP airlifted people stranded in Harsil, with some of the injured being carried into helicopters on stretchers.

To speed up rescue operations, the Army built a bridge over the Bhagirathi river in the district.

"Today we have established a bridge over the Bhagirathi river, using which the injured and stranded tourists are being evacuated safely," an Army official said. To help people contact their family members, the Army activated its communication networks, including satellite and radio relay systems.

Many of those rescued made brief calls to their family members, letting them know they were safe.

Lt Gen D G Mishra said efforts are on to get the stranded tourists out of Gangotri.

"With the aid of the civil administration, civil helicopters and the Indian Air Force, we have been able to pull out approximately 355 people from Harsil to Matli, south of Uttarkashi, from where the Uttarakhand government is sending them down to Dehradun," he said.

"Our present focus remains on ensuring that we have road connectivity between Uttarkashi, Harsil and Dharali. Secondly, we are also trying to get mobile connectivity and electricity to the vil-

lagers north of Harsil, which is an immediate necessity," he said.

Lt Gen Mishra said the Army has moved in medical supplies and deployed its resources.

"All people who have been affected by this incident are being provided medical assistance," he said.

Advanced equipment required to dredge through the debris in Dharali to search for the missing is being flown to the spot in helicopters.

Two Chinook helicopters, two Mi-17s of the Indian Air Force and eight choppers of the Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Development Authority have been deployed.

Rummaging through the debris is an uphill task as the rubble heaps are 50-60 feet high at several places.

With roads breached at various points, the thrust is on air support both for the evacuation of the stranded people and transporting food supplies and other essentials to the affected areas, an NDRF official said.

Dhami reached Dharali and interacted with locals and NDRF personnel in the village.

Earlier in the day, he met ITBP DG, NDRF DG, Uttarakhand Police DGP and other officials to take stock of relief and rescue operations. Necessary guidelines have been given to the officials on the restoration of roads, communication, electricity and food supply, Dhami said in a Facebook post.

He also announced that he will contribute a month's salary towards disaster relief operations in Uttarkashi and appealed to public representatives, officials, voluntary organisations and common citizens to make their contributions to the ongoing relief work in the disaster-hit areas of the district. (PTI)

EC says websites up and running, electoral rolls can be downloaded

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: The Election Commission on Friday rejected claims that its websites in various states were down and the electoral rolls available on it were missing and asked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to give a written declaration about his claims on wrongful entries in voters list.

Sources in the poll authority said that if Gandhi is not able to give the declaration he should "apologise to the nation for his absurd allegations". The Congress leader hit back asserting he has already taken oath in Parliament to uphold the Constitution.

As Gandhi continued with his attack on the EC alleging vote theft in at least three states, the poll panel said if he believes in his analysis and feels that his allegations against it are true, he should have "no problem" in signing the declaration under electoral rules and submit names wrongfully added or removed from voters' list.

However, if Gandhi does not sign the declaration, it would mean that he does not believe in his analysis and resultant conclusions and "absurd allegations". In which case he should apologise to the nation, the sources said. (PTI)

DU issues guidelines to curb defacement ahead of DUSU polls

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: The University of Delhi on Friday issued guidelines for the upcoming DUSU polls, mandating a bond of ₹ 1 lakh from candidates and banning the use of posters, wall writing, rallies, loudspeakers, and roadshows on the varsity campus.

The move comes nearly a year after the Delhi Court criticised the university over defacement of the campus during the students' union elections and stalled the results until defacement material, including posters, hoardings, and graffiti, was removed from public property.

The advisory was issued by DU Registrar Vikas Gupta, calling for strict compliance from students, colleges, and university departments. It is based on various legal provisions, court orders, and recommendations of the Lyngdoh Committee.

Speaking on the guideline, DUSU president Ronak Khatri said, "The guideline is not suitable for students, as someone from a lower-income background may not be able to afford the ₹ 1 lakh bond required for nomination, which could prevent them from participating despite their willingness."

To discourage defacement, the University has mandated that every contesting candidate submit a bond

of ₹ 1 lakh while filing nominations. This amount will be liable for forfeiture if the candidate or their supporters are found violating defacement norms, it added.

In a bid to sensitise students early on, the University has proposed introducing an "anti-defacement affidavit," similar to the anti-ragging affidavit, to be submitted at the time of admission.

According to the guidelines, colleges and departments have been directed to conduct awareness programmes to encourage students to maintain decorum on campus during the election season.

Colleges should promote and organise debates for candidates contesting the student elections, which may be uploaded on the respective websites, the guidelines read.

Colleges have also been asked to increase the size of the "walls of democracy" at two locations dedicated to putting up poll-related material, it stated. Outside these designated areas, the use of posters, wall writing, rallies, loudspeakers, and roadshows has been strictly prohibited, it added.

As per the guidelines, candidates have also been instructed to immediately remove any unauthorised posters, especially those with misspelt names aimed at evading ac-

countability, and report such instances to the nearest police station within 24 hours.

"Failing to do so may invite a fine of ₹ 25,000, suspension, rustication, or even disqualification from contesting elections," it stated.

It further mentioned that a dedicated portal to report defacement and raise awareness on related issues will also be launched by the University and affiliated colleges.

Use of electronic media for campaigning is allowed, and colleges have been encouraged to host debates between candidates, which may be uploaded on official websites for wider viewing, the guidelines said.

The University has made it clear that the use of dhols, loudspeakers, and similar equipment is banned in and around campus premises, even after the elections are over. Additionally, entry of outsiders has been restricted, and colleges have been asked to consider installing biometric or facial recognition systems for access control.

"A committee at both college and university levels will be set up to monitor defacement and implement preventive steps. Details of these committees will be displayed on notice boards and websites," it read. (PTI)

TN CM unveils new education policy in response to NEP, reaffirms commitment to bilingual policy

CHENNAI, Aug 8: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Friday unveiled the state's new education policy in response to the Centre's NEP that he considers to be against social justice and aimed at "imposing" Hindi upon the state.

Tamil Nadu, he said, was firm in following the bilingual policy of Tamil and English, and the new state education policy has been framed to make the students future-ready and well equipped, the Chief Minister said at the event.

The policy was deep-rooted in the progressive ideals and was aimed at grooming students to think and ask questions rather than merely learn by memorising. "We want to provide the necessary energy for future life. We want to create students who are technologically minded, creative, future-ready and well equipped," Stalin said while speaking at a state-level felicitation for school students and release of the State Education Policy 2025.

Also, it has been proposed to give importance to physical activities, he added.

"Mother tongue Tamil is our identity, our pride. The bilingual policy of Tamil and English will be our firm stand. And I reaffirm this," Stalin said at the event organised by the school education department. The CM gave away certificates of appreciation and laptops to the government school students who secured admissions in institutes of higher education.

"It is a great joy to release the Tamil Nadu State School Education Policy 2025. Tamil Nadu has a unique character in everything. There is progressive thinking. Based on that, we have created this education policy with the necessary vision for the future," he said. Irrespective of the party that came to power in the state, Tamil Nadu has always been following the two-language policy of Tamil and English since the times of former Chief Minister C N Annadurai.

The state's language policy and also the politics revolved around the anti-Hindi agitation of 1937 in the then Madras Presidency when the C Rajagopalachari government made Hindi compulsory in schools. (PTI)

Scindia slams Rahul for statements

BHOPAL, Aug 8: Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Friday slammed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for statements against the Election Commission and the country's economy and asserted it reflected the latter's "bankrupt mentality". Gandhi has been attacking the ECI for what he claimed was "vote theft" to favour the Bharatiya Janata Party. The Congress leader had also endorsed US President Donald Trump's statement in which India's economy, among the fastest growing in the world, was referred to as "dead".

"Those who consider India's economy 'dead' and question our institutions like Election Commission, judiciary, armed forces show their bankrupt mentality," the Union minister said here without naming the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha. "The Election Commission has established India's electoral process and India's democracy at the global level. But, they (Congress and Rahul Gandhi) always try to belittle our constitutional institutions by raising questions and seeking proofs. The ECI is a constitutional body and it works with transparency to hold free and fair elections," Scindia asserted. (PTI)

অসম লোকসেৱা আয়োগ
ASSAM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022.

No.65PSC/DR-34/3/2022-23

NOTIFICATION

This is for information to all concerned that the Assam Public Service Commission will hold the Screening Test (OMR Based) for recruitment to the post of **Junior Engineer (Civil) under Water Resources Department** (Advt. No. 14/2025, Dated Guwahati the 11/04/2025) as per programme given below:

PROGRAMME OF SCREENING TEST			
Name of Post	Date & Day	Time	Subjects
Junior Engineer (Civil) under Water Resources Department.	31-08-2025 (Sunday)	10:00 AM to 12 Noon	Civil Engineering (Paper - I)
		1:30 PM to 3:30 PM	General Studies & General English (Paper - II)

No intimation letter to the eligible candidates shall be sent separately by post. The list of candidates shall be uploaded on **20-08-2025** and e-Admission Certificate shall be uploaded on **26-08-2025** in the Commission's official website (www.apscc.nic.in). The candidates shall have to download their own e-Admission Certificate from the aforesaid website.

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

PwBD candidates willing to apply for scribe for the said Screening Test may inform in writing with supporting documents to the Commission or send mail to apscc-asm@nic.in on or before **22-08-2025**.

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

DIPR /D/ HLT 111 9-Aug-25

SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES
(A State University of the Govt. of Assam)
Narakasur Hilltop, Bhangagarh, Guwahati-781032, Assam.
Phone: 06026177313 E-mail: ssuhs_assam@yahoo.in Website: www.ssuhs.in

No. SSUHS/25/2025/5558

EDUCATIONAL NOTICE
(Online Counselling for selection of candidates for admission into B.Sc. Nursing course in the 5(five) Govt. Nursing Colleges of Assam for academic session 2025-26)

This is for information of all the candidates who have appeared in the Entrance Examination held on 22-06-2025 and obtained the minimum eligibility score that the online counselling form for filling of choices shall be available in the University website (Notices) www.ssuhs.in from 12-08-2025 to 17-08-2025.

Candidates are requested to carefully go through the instructions given in the application portal before filling up as no change / modification will be possible once the students lock their choices/ preferences. The candidates are also to pay requisite counselling fee through the payment gateway available with the application form at the time of submission. No application will be considered, if counselling fee is not paid within the stipulated period.

The selection shall be solely on the basis of rank of the students secured in the Entrance Examination conducted by SSUHS.

The first selection list shall be published on 22nd August, 2025 and admission in the allotted Colleges shall be held from 26th to 28th August, 2025.

However, the applicants may call the Helpline No. 7977259728/ 8108014947 for any assistance.

Sd/-
Registrar
Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health Sciences

DIPR /D/HLT /110/9-Aug-25

HDFC BANK Registered Office: HDFC Bank House, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai - 400 013 and having one of its office as Retail Portfolio Management at HDFC Bank Ltd, 1st Floor, I-Think Techno Campus, Kanjurmarg (East), Mumbai - 400042.

SALE INTIMATION AND PUBLIC NOTICE FOR SALE OF SECURITIES PLEDGED TO HDFC BANK LTD.

The below mentioned Borrowers of HDFC Bank Ltd. (the "Bank") are hereby notified regarding the sale of securities pledged to the Bank, for availing credit facilities in the nature of Loan/Overdraft Against Securities.

Due to persistent default by the Borrowers in making repayment of the outstanding dues as per agreed loan terms, the below loan accounts are in delinquent status. The Bank has issued multiple notices to these Borrowers, including the final sale notice on the below-mentioned date whereby, Bank had invoked the pledge and provided 7 days' time to the Borrower to repay the entire outstanding dues in the below accounts, failing which, Bank would be at liberty to sell the pledged securities without issuing further notice in this regard. The Borrowers have neglected and failed to make due repayments, therefore, Bank in exercise of its rights under the loan agreement as a pledgee has decided to sell / dispose off the Securities on or after **16th August 2025** for recovering the dues owed by the Borrowers to the Bank. The Borrowers are, also, notified that, if at any time, the value of the pledged securities falls further due to volatility in the stock market to create further deficiency in the margin requirement then Bank shall at its discretion sell the pledged security within one (1) calendar day, without any further notice in this regard. The Borrower(s) shall remain liable to the Bank for repayment of any remaining outstanding amount, post adjustment of the proceeds from sale of pledged securities.

Sr. No.	Loan Account Number	Borrower's Name	Outstanding Amount as on 06 th August 2025	Date of Sale Notice
1	XXXX3793	RHEMBORG G SAIBON	9,96,582.78	07-08-2025
2	XXXX2286	NATHU SAH	5,475.85	07-08-2025
3	XXXX6934	JAMES K SANGMA	44,90,364.82	07-08-2025

Date : 09th August 2025 Sd/-
Place : MEGHALAYA **HDFC BANK LTD.**

No.A/BKD/Tender/Mahal/630-632 Date 08/08/2025

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing a non-refundable Court fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only with validity period of 180 days, will be received up-to 2 PM on 22/08/2025 in the office of the undersigned for granting of different Mining Contract as per the provision of the Assam Minor Mineral Concession Rule, 2013 in certain specified areas of Mahals within this Division as per the schedule below. The Notice containing the details of the Mining Contract along with the terms and condition of the grant may be procured from the office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Baksa Forest Division, Mushalpur during working hours. The Tender Papers are available on payment of Rs.1000/- (Per Copy) by Demand Draft of SBI in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar payable at Kokrajhar SBI.

SCHEDULE

Sl. No.	Name of Mahals in Which the Mining Contract will be granted	Name of the Minor Minerals	Mining Contract period
1	Bamadi Sand Gravel & Stone Mahal No-11	Sand Gravel & Stone	2025-2032

Sd/-
Divisional Forest Officer,
Baksa Forest Division, Mushalpur

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/2469

No.TECH-213/NIT/KOK (BLDG)/2023-24/2151 Dated Kokrajhar the 08/08/2025

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing a non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight & paise twenty five) only with a validity period of 180 days, which will subsequently be converted and drawn up in the printed F-2 form are invited from the registered contractors under PWD of all classes of the Assam PWD Building and BTC according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the works stated below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 1.30 P.M on 14/08/2025 and will be opened on the same date & place at 2.30 P.M.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Amount	Earnest Money(2% for GNL and 1% for ST&SC)	Cost of Tender Document	Time of Completion
1	Construction of Rabha Community Development Centre at Chirang District	Rs.19,99,878.00	Rs.39,998.00 (2%) and Rs.19,999.00(1%)	Rs 500.00	6 (Six) Months
2	Construction of Rabha Community Development Centre at Kokrajhar District	Rs.19,99,892.00	Rs.39,998.00 (2%) and Rs.19,999.00(1%)	Rs 500.00	6 (Six) Months

Detail N.I.T. may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractor or their authorized agent upto 1.30 PM on all working days from 08/08/2025 to 14/08/2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Bank Draft/ Demand Draft, duly pledged to the Principal Secretary, BTC.

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

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/2481

ADITI RAO HYDARI TO RECEIVE DIVERSITY IN CINEMA AWARD AT INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL OF MELBOURNE 2025

HYDERABAD, Aug 8: Actor Aditi Rao Hydari will be felicitated with the Diversity in Cinema Award at the upcoming edition of the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM), the organisers announced on Friday.

The actor will attend the festival as guest of honour. She will be recognised for her immense contribution to cinema and her impactful performances across mediums, a press release said. "Aditi, who captured hearts with her unforgettable portrayal of Bibbo Jaan in 'Heeramandi', continues to mesmerize global audiences with her poise, talent, and effortless screen presence. Her participation in IFFM 2025 is expected to elevate the excitement and add a regal charm to the gala celebration of Indian cinema on foreign shores," it added.

The 2025 edition of IFFM will be held from August 14 to 24 across Melbourne, featuring a packed schedule of screenings, red carpet galas, industry panels, and the IFFM Awards.

Hydari, known for her roles in films such as Padmaavat, Kaattru Veliyidai, Chekka Chivantha Vaanam, Sufiyum Sujatayum, and the series Jubilee, described the Diversity in Cinema Award as a "special honour."

"Melbourne has always been warm and welcoming, and to be celebrated in a city that celebrates cinema with such passion is deeply humbling," the actor said in a statement.

Festival director Mitu Bhowmik Lange praised the actor's artistic achievements and said she is the "epitome of grace and excellence". "Her work speaks volumes of her versatility and strength as an artist. We are absolutely delighted to welcome her to IFFM 2025 and to honour her with the Diversity in Cinema Award," she added. The 2025 edition of IFFM will be held from August 14 to 24 across Melbourne, featuring a packed schedule of screenings, red carpet galas, industry panels, and the IFFM Awards. (PTI)



FROM 'JISM' TO GEOPOLITICS: JOHN ABRAHAM WORKS ON BUILDING A CINEMATIC LEGACY

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: When he got into movies it was all about "the body" with films such as "Jism" and "Dostana", says John Abraham disarmingly. Two decades later, he seems to have found quite another world with his almost nerdy interest in geopolitical issues.

The actor-filmmaker spends hours in making sure he's up with the news. And not surprisingly, the filmography has undergone a dramatic change. So the list now includes films that marry commerce with stories about hot button issues and how they impact India, be it "Madras Cafe", "Parmanu", "The Diplomat" or his upcoming film "Tehran".

"It's important now to build a legacy around the kind of films I'm doing and to be known for them... Earlier, I didn't understand what the audience felt about me because we're insulated most of the times. But when I travel and meet people, they say, 'Oh, John we love The Diplomat. Oh, we love Madras Cafe.' That's when you realise you've slowly started creating a story for yourself," Abraham told PTI in an interview.

The conversation is peppered with talk about Donald Trump, tariffs, Palestine, Israel and Russia-Ukraine.

He wants his audiences to associate him with sensible cinema, the kind that inspired him to get into movies. He remembers the moment it happened -- when he watched Steven Spielberg's 1993 Holocaust drama "Schindler's List".

"I'm not lying, I was affected for days... And because that impacted me so much, I decided that when I become a producer, or when I get into films these are the kind of films I want to do," he said.

When he did enter showbiz, however, it was all about "Jism", he said, tongue firmly in cheek as he referred to his 2003 debut film, an erotic thriller.

"It was all about the body (then). And I didn't shy away from it. There's a huge audience that appreciates that. And I love it. But it was also very important for me to make a point. So 'Kabul Express', 'New York', 'Madras Cafe' and 'The Diplomat', these relevant films started coming in. But once I became a producer, I've gone full out." Abraham's production house JA Entertainment began with "Vicky Donor" in 2012 for which it got the National Award. Then came "Madras Cafe", "Batla House" and "Attack" and several others, many of which he acted in too. (PTI)

'Manpasand Ki Shaadi' our most modern show: Sooraj Barjatya

MUMBAI, Aug 8: Filmmaker Sooraj Barjatya says his upcoming TV show 'Manpasand Ki Shaadi' is unlike anything he has made before and it tackles the institution of marriage from a modern perspective.

Produced by Barjatya's banner Rajshri Productions, the show revolves around an Aarohi Shinde (Esha Suryawanshi), who challenges the family's traditional way of marriage, and expresses her desire to choose her life partner. It will explore the clash between tradition and modernity and the complexities of family and societal pressure. Actor Akshun Mahajan plays the male lead in the show. "If you've seen my movies, each film starts with an arranged marriage setup, and here, for the first time, we are showing that a father is telling his daughter to find a boy for herself. This is the most modern subject that we have made in our space," the filmmaker told PTI in an interview.

"It is challenging for us. But it's something that we need in today's time, like how a father-daughter, mother-daughter relationship should be. The love story is also different. There are ups and downs, and we see a relationship from a mature perspective," he said. Barjatya, celebrated for films like "Hum Aapke Hain Koun", "Hum Saath Saath Hain", and "Uunchai", said the concept for this TV show has been brewing in his mind for a while.

"Marriage is such a relevant and debatable subject today, and the values that we have carried for 25-30 years, it's all different today. For instance, I got married at the age of 21. But today everyone gets married at the age of 27 or 29, including my children. "When I saw all this from their point of view, I felt that a story should be made on this, in which we can say something to society about what I've learned and experienced," he said.

Barjatya said he admires the younger generation for their open-minded approach to life, however, he believes they need to respect the institution of marriage.

"Children today are non-judgmental, they do not judge by rich, poor, caste, creed, or business, they are professional, you respect everyone, but this is what I want in life (referring to a partner)."

"Earlier, people would be like, we need a handsome man, but handsome today is personality-wise, and all of this is okay. Some are like, I want a car, I don't work, I want to have a good time, so they are very clear, and all of this is okay. But you should respect society and marriage," he said.

Barjatya said all his films and the TV show, "Manpasand Ki Shaadi" draw inspiration from his life experiences and the people he encounters. "Whatever I've seen around me, I've made films around it. Like, I made 'Hum Saath Saath Hain', when my mother passed away. I felt how important family is.

Similarly, "Manpasand Ki Shaadi" started with the idea to make something around today's marriage," the filmmaker said, adding that he is excited to explore the Maharashtrian backdrop for the first time with the TV show.

"Manpasand Ki Shaadi", also starring Milind Gawli, Suchitra Bandekar, Avinash Wadhwan, and Gungun Upri, will debut on Colors TV channel and JioHotstar from August 11. (PTI)



RUKMINI VASANTH JOINS RISHAB SHETTY IN 'KANTARA: CHAPTER 1'

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: Actor Rukmini Vasanth is set to feature alongside Rishab Shetty in "Kantara: Chapter 1", the makers said on Friday.

Vasanth made her acting debut in 2019 with the Kannada film "Birbal Trilogy Case 1: Finding Vajramuni". She later went on to star in projects such as "Baanadariyali", "Bagheera", and her latest film "Ace", where she acted alongside Vijay Sethupathi.

Slated to release in theatres worldwide on October 2, the pan-India movie from Hombale Films is the prequel to 2022's National Award-winning "Kantara". It is written, directed, and fronted by Shetty.

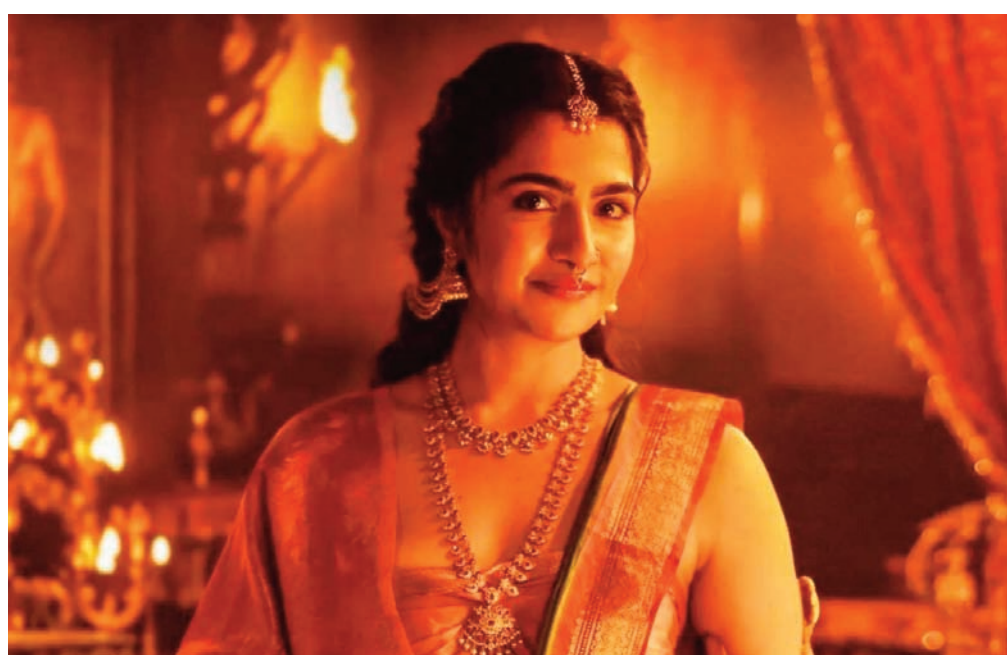
Production banner shared the news with a post on its official Instagram handle. It featured the poster from the film featuring

ing Vasanth. The 28-year-old actor will essay the role of Kanakavathi in the film.

"Introducing @rukmini_vasanth as 'Kanakavathi' from the world #KantaraChapter1. In cinemas #KantaraChapter1onOct2," read the caption of the post.

The story of "Kantara" was set around a small community living in the woodlands of Kaadubettu in the southern coastal state of Karnataka.

"Kantara", which was mounted on a reported budget of Rs 16 crore, went on to earn over Rs 400 crore across the globe. It won the National Award for Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment and earned Shetty his first Best Actor National Award at the 70th National Film Awards. (PTI)



No Basanti or Radha, we just had two armymen and a dacoit in mind: Javed Akhtar on 'Sholay'

MUMBAI, Aug 8: There was no Basanti or Radha to begin with and Jai and Veeru started off as former army men sacked for indiscipline. And that's how the story of "Sholay" first took root in the minds of Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar.

At that point, the two ace screenwriters had only a dacoit in mind, Akhtar told PTI as he looked back at 50 years of the cult classic. "It was Salim sahab's idea that we should make a film about a retired major and two recruits from the army who have been removed because of indiscipline so the story was about them. But then we had limitations from the army and we couldn't take liberty, hence we changed the characters to a cop and (two) hoodlums," he said.

"At that point, we didn't think of Basanti or Radha, we just had a dacoit in mind. But gradually when the story got developed a lot of characters came into the picture and we felt it could be a great multi-starrer. We did not plan it as a multi-starrer, and a grand spectacle," he added ahead of the 50th anniversary of the film.

"Sholay", directed by Ramesh Sippy and featuring an ensemble cast includ-

ing Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Sanjeev Kumar, Amjad Khan, Jaya Bachchan and Hema Malini, released on August 15, 1975. It failed initially and picked up as the weeks went by.

Salim-Javed had no inkling they were making a "timeless" Hindi cinema classic, Akhtar said.

Be it dialogues, the friendship between Amitabh Bachchan's Jai and Dharmendra's Veeru, Sanjeev Kumar's vengeful turn as Thakur or Amjad Khan's portrayal of the dreaded dacoit Gabbar Singh who went on to redefine the Hindi film villain, "Sholay" has stayed at the top of the pop culture charts—for five decades and counting.

"I believe the canvas of the film was such that it just became timeless; it was not done intentionally. There was no deliberate attempt to do that (make it timeless)."

"It had a sargam of human emotions, whether it is vendetta, spoken or unspoken love, friendship, simplicity of the village, smartness of two urban hoodlums. It was a symphony of all human emotions." The film just happened, said Akhtar. There was no conscious effort.

"Any product of art which is relevant

in their own times and in the other times, and has timeless quality to it, irrespective of the changes in the industry over the years, that piece of art remains relevant," the 80-year-old said.

The year 1975 is often celebrated as a landmark period in Indian cinema, with "Sholay" along with other classics like "Deewar", also penned by Salim-Javed, and "Aandhi" redefining storytelling in Hindi cinema.

Akhtar said the year changed his and Salim Khan's lives, both personally and professionally.

"With the release of 'Deewar' and 'Sholay', we earned money, garnered recognition, and made a name for ourselves. So the year 1975 was an important year," he said.

The film's cast also includes Sachin Pilgaonkar as Ahmed, Asrani as Jailer, AK Hangal as Imam Saheb, Mac Mohan as Sambha, Jagdeep as Surma Bhopali and Viju Khote as Kalia among others.

If he were to rewrite "Sholay" today, is there anything he would do differently?

"I would not change anything in 'Sholay'. I would never rewrite 'Sholay'. We made it the way it is. I'm

glad so many people appreciated the film, and still talk about it with fondness," Akhtar said.

In June, a restored version of "Sholay" featuring six minutes of extra footage, including its original ending where Gabbar is killed by Thakur, was screened at an international film festival in Italy.

The restoration process was spearheaded by Film Heritage Foundation and Sippy Films Pvt Ltd and took more than three years.

In the original version of the movie, Sanjeev Kumar's Thakur extracts his revenge by killing Gabbar in the final moments. This was changed by the censor board during the Emergency. In the released version, Thakur walks away from an injured Gabbar as cops swoop in to arrest him.

"At that time, I was unhappy and disappointed that the ending was being changed but we had no choice but to do it," Akhtar said.

And what would Jai and Veeru be doing if they were in 2025?

"They would be in the corporate world. They are so badmaash. Where else would they go?" was Akhtar's prompt answer. (PTI)

Ousmane Dembélé and Chloe Kelly nominated for men's and women's Ballon d'Or awards

PARIS, Aug 8: Paris Saint-Germain forward Ousmane Dembélé and England forward Chloe Kelly are among the contenders to win the men's and women's Ballon d'Or award.

The 30 men's and 30 women's nominees were revealed Thursday by France Football magazine, with the winners to be announced at a ceremony in Paris on Sept. 22.

The 28-year-old Dembélé was inspirational in leading PSG to its first Champions League title after years of falling short and helped the French club complete a treble. He scored a career-high 35 goals overall for

PSG last season.

Teenage star Lamine Yamal, whose mesmerizing performances lit up the Champions League and helped Barcelona win the Spanish league title, is among the other men's nominees.

When England won the women's European Championship last month, the 27-year-old Kelly blasted home the decisive penalty in the final against World Cup winner Spain. She also played a key role earlier in the tense knockout stages.

Last season, Kelly played on the right flank as Arsenal won

the women's Champions League with another against-the-odds win over powerhouse Barcelona.

She faces competition from defender Lucy Bronze and goalkeeper Hannah Hampton — her England teammates who both play for Chelsea — and from Barcelona midfielder Aitana Bonmati, the winner of the past two awards.

Barcelona players have won the past four women's awards. Bronze was runner-up in 2019 to U.S. forward Megan Rapinoe. Dembélé was one of nine PSG players nominated for the men's award, including goal-

keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, forward Désiré Doué, who scored twice in the 5-0 rout of Inter Milan in the Champions League final, and inspirational winger Khvitcha Kvaratskhelia, who joined from Napoli in the January transfer window.

The other men's nominees include Egypt striker Mo Salah, whose 29 league goals helped Liverpool win the Premier League, and prolific Real Madrid striker Kylian Mbappé, who netted 44 times for Madrid last season.

Midfielder Rodri won the Ballon d'Or last year after impressing with Manchester City



and Spain but missed most of last season with a knee injury.

Real Madrid snubbed the star-studded ceremony last year in apparent protest because its forward Vinicius Júnior finished in second place. After staying away, Madrid and its players then vented their feelings on social media.

The Ballon d'Or was created by France Football magazine and has been awarded since 1956 for men, and since 2018 for women. It is voted for by journalists from the top 100 countries in the FIFA rankings for the men's award and the top 50 FIFA-ranked countries for

the women's award.

Each journalist, one per country, selects players in ranked order with points attributed to each position. The winner is the player who receives the most points. PSG coach Luis Enrique was among the nominees for best men's coach and England's Sarina Wiegman best women's coach.

Donnarumma, whose shot-stopping in the knockout stages proved crucial to PSG's success, is favored to win the Lev Yashin award for best men's goalkeeper, while Hampton is among the five women's candidates for that award. (AP)

Ben Shelton rallies to beat Karen Khachanov in Toronto final

TORONTO, Aug 8: Ben Shelton won the National Bank Open for the third and biggest title of his young career, rallying to beat 11th-seeded Karen Khachanov of Russia 6-7 (5), 6-4, 7-6 (3).

The 22-year-old Shelton, seeded fourth, became the first American winner in the Masters 1000 hard-court event since Andy Roddick in 2003. Shelton also won on hard courts in Tokyo in 2023 and on clay in Houston last year.

"It's a surreal feeling," Shelton said. "It's been a long week, not an easy path to the final. My best tennis came out when it mattered most. I was clutch, I persevered, I was resilient. All the qualities I like to see in myself."

Shelton will move up a spot to a career-high sixth in the world. He beat Khachanov a night after topping second-seeded Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-3 in an all-American semifinal match.

"I feel like it was a perfect storm for me this week," Shelton said. "A lot of tight matches and long matches. I played some of the best tennis I've played this year."

The winner had seven of his 16 aces in the third set, and ended the match by winning 14 consecutive points on serve. He held at love to force the final-set tiebreaker.

"He went for his shots, trusted the work that he's put in and he executed," said Bryan Shelton, his father and coach.

"Sometimes you do and sometimes you don't. But it's always nice when you can leave a tournament and hold a trophy up in your hands because it's rare."

The 29-year-old Khachanov has seven career victories — all on hard courts.

In the semifinals, he survived a match point in another third-set tiebreaker against top-seeded Alexander Zverev.

"It's a positive, a great tournament, a great run," Khachanov said. "I had some great battles and great wins against top guys."

Top-ranked Jannik Sinner — the 2023 winner in Toronto — and No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz skipped the expanded event as they prepare the U.S. Open.

Julian Cash and Lloyd Glasspool won the all-English doubles final, saving four match points in a 6-3, 6-7 (5), 13-11 victory over Joe Salisbury and Neal Skupski.

The second-seeded Wimbledon champions have won 19 straight matches. (AP)

Mohammedan Sporting thump BSF to end Durand Cup campaign on a winning note

KOLKATA, Aug 8: Mohammedan Sporting Club ended their Durand Cup 2025 campaign in emphatic fashion, producing a dominant all-round display to ease past BSF FT with a 3-0 win in Group B of the 134th IndianOil Durand Cup match which was played here at the Kishore Bharati Krirangan.

All 43 matches of the 134th IndianOil Durand Cup will be broadcast LIVE on the Sony Sports Network (Sony Ten2 HD) as well as livestreamed on the SonyLiv OTT platform.

Mohammedan Sporting Club Head Coach Mehraj Ud Din Wadoo made three changes to his starting line-up bringing in Upen Tudu, Maharabam Maxion and Lalngaihsaka in place of Dinesh Mitei, Thokchom Adison Simgh and Ashley Alban Koli in 4-3-3 formation with experienced Sajal Bag leading the team while BSF FC Head Coach Gurjit Singh Atwal made only one change to his starting line-up bringing in defender Agou Lenthang in place of Ishan Gupta in a 4-4-2 formation.

From the outset, the Kolkata Giants looked determined to bounce back from their first two defeats and it took them just five minutes to get on the scoresheet. A penalty was coolly converted by their experienced player Sajal Bag, who showed calm nerves under pressure to give his side an early lead.



The early goal rattled BSF FT, and Mohammedan took full advantage.

After a powerful strike was saved by goalkeeper Harpreet Singh, Mohammedan capitalized on the rebound with a swift and ruthless finish from Maxion, doubling their advantage and sending their supporters into raptures in the 21st minute.

The attacking intent didn't waver as the half progressed, with the midfield trio orchestrating smart passing patterns and stretching the BSF defense.

The highlight of the half came in the 35th minute when Mohammedan SC added a third with a beautifully worked team goal. A precise cross from the right flank found Maxion lurking inside the box. With perfect vision and awareness, he slammed the ball

past the helpless goalkeeper to complete a superb move showcasing both flair and teamwork.

BSF had a chance to respond late in the half when Kishori found Navjot Singh with a low ball across the face of goal, but the forward failed to capitalize.

With a comfortable cushion from the first half, the Kolkata Giants adopted a more controlled approach after the break, focusing on retaining possession and absorbing pressure.

BSF FT showed glimpses of resurgence, with Kishori Singh orchestrating a few promising moves from midfield and Navjot Singh finding himself in a great position, only to miss a golden opportunity that could have reduced the deficit.

Despite BSF's growing urgency, Mohammedan's backline, led by their composed defenders, remained unbreached.

Substitute Shiba Mandi added energy to Mohammedan's attack and came close to extending the lead, but his strike narrowly missed the target.

As the clock wound down, Mohammedan maintained their grip on the game, closing spaces and frustrating BSF's attempts to break through.

Mohammedan maintained their three-goal cushion till full-time, sealing a confident and morale-boosting 3-0 victory in the Group B fixture to end their campaign on a high. (PTI)

Aston Villa sign forward Evann Guessand from French club Nice



BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND, Aug 8: Aston Villa made its first major signing of the summer by landing Ivory Coast forward Evann Guessand from French club Nice for a reported fee of at least 30 million euros (\$35 million) on Friday.

The 24-year-old Guessand scored 13 goals in total last season playing mainly as a winger and was named Nice's player of the season.

Villa described him as "a versatile operator capable of playing across the front line." Neither team disclosed financial terms. The deal reportedly includes another 5 million euros in potential add-ons.

"This club is special," Guessand said in Villa's announcement. "History, pride, passion, the belief. When I heard the club wanted me, I didn't think twice."

Unai Emery's team begins its Premier League campaign Aug. 16 when it hosts Newcastle.

Nice issued a statement hailing the French-born Guessand as a "model of resilience." He rose through the team's youth system and made his first-team debut in January 2020. (AP)

Bhatia shoots career-best 62 to lead St Jude Championship on PGA

MEMPHIS (USA), Aug 8: Indian-American golfer Akshay Bhatia stole the show in the first round of the FedEx St. Jude Championship at TPC Southwind here, carding a career-best 8-under 62 to take outright lead after day one. It was a day of birdie streaks and ensured great early drama in the first of the three FedExCup play-offs on the PGA Tour.

The 23-year-old Bhatia, a two-time winner on the PGA Tour, was brilliant in his final few holes.

After a fine front nine of four-under, Bhatia birdied 11th but gave back a shot on the 12th. Then he was on fire on the final stretch. He eagled the par-5 16th and that was followed by consecutive birdies on 17 and 18.

He said, "I just felt really in rhythm. The course sets up well for my game, and once I made that

eagle, everything clicked. I wasn't trying to chase anything — I just stuck to my process and got into a great zone."

Bhatia had seven birdies, one eagle, and one bogey and it was a personal best on the PGA Tour. It sets him up with a great chance to not only win his first playoff event, but also move into contention for the FedEx Cup. Indo-British Aaron Rai shot an even par 70 with two birdies and two bogeys. He was tied 39th. He is currently 55th and needs to be inside Top-50 to play the next event.

Meanwhile, one shot behind Bhatia was Tommy Fleetwood, who shot a 7-under 63 that included a four-birdie run to close his round. The Englishman has been in great form this season, but he's still seeking his first PGA Tour win.



Three players sit tied for third at 6-under with Harry Hall, Justin Rose, and Bud Cauley. All three had bogey-free rounds at the TPC Southwind, which can play tricks. With just two strokes separating the top five players, the championship is wide open.

World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler began his playoff campaign with a steady 3-under 67, which was still five shots behind the leader. Scheffler, as is his style, avoided mis-

takes and gave himself room to climb up.

Having won two Majors this season, Scheffler enters as a favorite. Another notable performance came from Ludvig Åberg, the Swedish star, who matched Scheffler with a 3-under 67. Rory McIlroy is conspicuous by his absence. He opted to skip this week's tournament under a new PGA Tour rule that allows players ranked inside the top 10 of the FedEx Cup standings to miss one playoff event.

Currently second in points, McIlroy will return for the BMW Championship next week and will rely on his season-long performance to remain in contention for the Tour Championship.

The St. Jude Championship is the first of three playoff events in 2025. (PTI)

I dream of playing in World Cup and Olympics: Manisha Kalyan

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Trailblazing Indian woman footballer Manisha Kalyan on Friday said she harbours the dream of playing in the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics, a belief that has been bolstered by the national team's qualification for the AFC Women's Asian Cup in Australia next year.

Manisha, the only Indian footballer to have played in the UEFA Champions League for women, was the cynosure of all eyes at the ASMITA under-13 league for girls at Nehru Stadium here on Friday. She said ASMITA is a "rare platform for young girls to realise their football dreams."

"I am still dreaming of playing in the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics and after we qualified for the AFC Women's Asian Cup in Australia next year, our belief has been bolstered," the 23-year-old Manisha told the eight teams taking part in the Guwahati leg of ASMITA aimed at scouting talent at the grassroots level across India. "You now have a platform like ASMITA and the more quality matches you play, the better you will get," she added.

Manisha was present alongside two emerging talents from Assam — Rekha Kataki and Dosomi Row-

tia. Both Rekha and Dosomi are products of the ASMITA league.

While Dosomi has made it to the national camp, Rekha has captained NorthEast United Football Club in the Indian Women's League Division 2.

"Football is in the genes of North-East people. I grew up watching Bala Devi and now 11 of my colleagues in the senior national team are from this region. This only shows how much talent is present here."

"Maybe, five years from now, one of these kids will play for Assam and then India. Just work hard and only think about football. The ecosystem is surely developing and with government's support, we can only do better," said Manisha.

Sports in north-east is a focus area for the sports ministry.

Sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya has already announced that a NorthEast-specific Games will be added to the Khelo India calendar. "That will be a great addition. Not only football, this region is contributing to all sports and to give them more exposure is the right way to go," said Manisha, who has played professionally in Cyprus and Greece. (PTI)

NWSL's Courage abruptly fires coach for a 'multitude of factors' but offers no specifics

NORTH CAROLINA, Aug 8: A "multitude of factors" went into the firing of North Carolina Courage coach Sean Nahas, franchise sporting director Ceri Bowley said Thursday, but would not elaborate.

The team released a terse statement on Wednesday night that said Nahas' contract had been terminated.

"The North Carolina Courage remain focused on the continued development of the team and maintaining a professional, competitive environment for players, staff, and supporters," the statement said.

Bowley then spoke at a news conference Thursday morning during which he said: "There's always a multitude of factors that are considered, and a multitude of factors were considered in this situation."

"The standards of this club are extremely high and it was



felt that there were reasons that we needed to make a change in order to uphold the standards of the North Carolina Courage."

Bowley, named to the job in April, repeatedly said that he would not discuss the team's internal practices.

Nahas had been with the team for nearly four years. He was at practice Wednesday morning and posted a photo of his smiling staff on social media. The team would not say when the players were informed.

Nahas became interim coach of the Courage in 2021 when Paul Riley was fired amid allegations of sexual harassment and coercion.

Riley, who has denied wrongdoing, was among five head coaches in the league who were either fired or resigned that year because of misconduct allegations.

Later investigations found

that emotional abuse and sexual misconduct were systemic in the sport and the league and players' union both implemented measures to protect the players.

Nahas became permanent head coach in 2022 and led the team to the playoffs in 2023 and 2024.

The Courage are currently 5-4-4 and in ninth place in the league standings. The team visits the Houston Dash on Friday.

Bowley was asked whether there was anything beyond performance involved in Nahas' dismissal.

"The decision was made with multiple factors in mind and we took a decision in the best interest of the club moving forward to allow us to achieve our goals on the pitch of being a successful soccer club and upholding the standards of North Carolina," he said. (AP)

Villarreal signs midfielder Thomas Partey after he gets bail on rape charges

VILLARREAL, SPAIN, Aug 8: Spanish soccer club Villarreal signed midfielder Thomas Partey on Thursday, two days after he was granted bail on rape charges in England.

Villarreal said the 32-year-old Ghana international, who became a free agent when his Arsenal contract expired in June, has joined "for the 2025-26 season."

The club's announcement touted Partey's on-field attributes before turning to his legal case.

"The player firmly maintains his innocence and denies all charges against him. The club respects the fundamental principle of the presumption of innocence and will await the outcome of the judicial process, which will be responsible

for clarifying the facts of the case," Villarreal's statement said. "Due to the law in England in relation to ongoing proceedings the club is unable to comment further."

Partey was granted bail Tuesday after appearing at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London charged with five counts of rape. He has also been charged with one count of sexual assault. The alleged offenses, between 2021-22, relate to three women. Villarreal added that it "wishes to clearly reiterate its strong commitment to respect and diversity and firmly condemns any act of violence in all its forms, including gender-based violence, discrimination, racism, xenophobia, or any behavior that undermines the dignity of individuals." (AP)

Conway's first test century in over 2 years boosts New Zealand's lead over Zimbabwe



BULAWAYO (ZIMBABWE), Aug 8: Devon Conway overcame his patchy form in test cricket with his first hundred in over two years as New Zealand eyed an imposing lead against Zimbabwe in the second test on Friday.

Conway moved to a flawless 140 not out and Henry Nicholls was unbeaten on 41 at lunch on

Day 2 with New Zealand cruising along to 306-2 for an overall lead of 181 runs. Zimbabwe tried six bowlers in the session but only Vincent Masekesa (1-45) got success when the leg-spinner dismissed nightwatcher Jacob Duffy for 36.

Resuming on 174-1 with a 49-run lead, New Zealand had another productive session of 132-

1 as Conway led the charge with his fifth test century. He showed plenty of aggression against the fast bowlers and smashed Tanaka Chivanga through point boundary off the first ball of the day.

Conway then reached his century off 143 balls when he drove Blessing Muzarabani through mid-off for his 13th boundary of the innings, raising both arms to celebrate his much-awaited hundred in the longest format.

Conway's last test hundred came against Pakistan at Karachi in Jan. 2023. Since then the left-hander had played 16 test matches without a century.

Zimbabwe resorted to its spinners in the latter half of the first session in order to keep the fast bowlers fresh for the second new ball but only Masekesa could bring the home team success.

Masekesa struck off his second ball but not before debutant Duffy had frustrated Zimbabwe by raising a 73-run stand with Conway. Brian Bennett held onto a spectacular catch to his right at short mid-wicket as Duffy tried to pull the short delivery. Zimbabwe lost the first test by nine wickets inside three days and its batting order once again crumbled for 125 on Day 1 against a new crop of New Zealand fast bowlers with Matt Henry and debutant Zakary Foulkes sharing nine wickets between them.

The two-match series is not part of the World Test Championship. (PTI)

Australia name U-19 squad for home series against India

MELBOURNE, Aug 8: Two cricketers of Indian origin - Aryan Sharma and Yash Deshmukh - were on Friday named in Australia's 15-member squad for the upcoming home series against India Under-19 team next month.

While Sharma hails is a batter from Victoria, all-rounder Deshmukh is among five players from New South Wales picked in the squad, which will be coached by former Australia head coach Tim Nielsen.

The multi-format series will begin with three 50-over matches to be played on September 21, 24 and 26 at the Ian Healy Oval in Brisbane. It will be followed by two four-day matches scheduled from September 30 to October 3 in Brisbane and from October 7 to 10 in Mackay. The assignment will be Nielsen's first as in charge of the U-19 side. Nielsen previously coached the senior Australia men's team between 2007 and 2011.

"We're also thrilled to welcome Tim Nielsen as Head Coach of the National U19 squad. His extensive international experience and leadership will be instrumental in guiding and inspiring Australia's next generation of cricketers," Sonya Thompson, Cricket Australia Head of National Development, said in a release. The series is part of Cricket Australia's long-term player development strategy, aimed at providing young players international exposure in both white-ball and red-ball formats.

Australia Men's U-19 squad:

Simon Budge, Alex Turner, Steve Hogan, Will Malajczuk, Yash Deshmukh, Tom Hogan, Aryan Sharma, John James, Hayden Schiller, Charles Lachmund, Ben Gordon, Will Byrom, Kasey Barton, Alex Lee Young, Jayden Draper.

Reserves: Zed Hollick, Tom Paddington, Julian Osborne. (PTI)

Veer Ahlawat placed 43rd, Shubhankar 77th in Nexo Championship

ABERDEENSHIRE (SCOTLAND), Aug 8: India's Veer Ahlawat opened with a round of 1-over 73 and was placed 43rd, while compatriot Shubhankar Sharma endured another rough start before settling for the tied 77th position in the first round of Nexa Championship on the DP World Tour here.

Ahlawat opened with four pars and then had five birdies, four bogeys and a double bogey in his 73. Sharma shot 3-over 75 in the opening round at Trump International Golf Links.

Starting from the first tee he double bogeyed the third and then had three more bogeys to turn in 5-over. He did pick three birdies on the back nine against one bogey, but that was not enough to give him breathing space. South African Richard Sterne battled breezy conditions to post a flawless five under par round of 67 and take a one-shot lead after day one.

Norwegian Andreas Halvorsen and South African Thomas Aiken, who teamed off together in the opening group, nearly joined Sterne at five under, but both players bogeyed the last to sit one behind in second place alongside South Africa's Louis Albertse. (PTI)

IPL buzz: Ashwin in talks with CSK about future amid speculation of possible move

CHENNAI, Aug 8: Senior Indian off-spinner R Ashwin is in discussions with the Chennai Super Kings about his future in the IPL franchise amid speculation that he might seek his release from the team.

With over two months still left before the deadline for retentions, Ashwin, it is reliably learnt, has had conversations with the CSK brass about his role going forward.

"It is early stages to decide on any player's future. The cut off date for retention is yet to be announced. So we have time," an IPL source told PTI.

"It's a pre-auction plan to hold discussions with players and Ashwin, being a senior, is part of it. It is a mutual discussion to understand his role in the team

ahead of next IPL season," he added.

The 38-year-old Ashwin, who retired from international cricket last year, was bought for Rs 9.75 crore in the mega auction before the 2025 season.

It was a homecoming of sorts for the Chennai-based player, who earlier turned up for CSK from 2009 to 2015.

He later went on to play for the now-defunct Rising Pune Super Giant and the then Kings XI Punjab (currently Punjab Kings) in 2018.

He played nine games in the season

gone by, picking up just seven wickets in a largely disappointing season for the team as it finished bottom of the heap with four wins and 10 losses.

There are speculations that CSK might rope in wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson, who wants to leave his current team -- Rajasthan Royals.

"We have certain players in our mind to add to our line up next season. But so far, we have not had discussions with anyone, as I said there is a lot of time for player retention etc," the source said. (PTI)



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