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Trump's 50 pc tariff on Indian goods from today

Export sectors such as shrimp, apparel, leather, gems & jewellery to be impacted



NEW DELHI, Aug 26: The steep 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering the United States will take effect from August 27, severely impacting several labour-intensive export sectors such as shrimp, apparel, leather and gems & jewellery.

The high additional import duties would affect more than half of the USD 86 billion Indian exports to America, while the remaining items, including pharmaceuticals, electronics, and petroleum products, will continue to be exempt from the levy.

According to a US notification, "the duties... are effective with respect to products of India that are entered for consumption, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after 12:01 am Eastern

Daylight Time on August 27, 2025" (or 9:31 AM IST August 27).

At present, a 25 per cent additional duty is already in place on Indian goods entering the US market. Another 25 per cent will be slapped as a penalty for purchasing Russian crude oil and military equipment. According to exporters, this "prohibitive" duty will drive out a number of Indian goods from the US market, as major competing countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and Indonesia have much lower duty on their goods.

Certain firms are front-loading the consignments to America before the increased tariffs take effect. This was reflected in July's trade data. India's goods exports to the US rose 19.94 per cent to USD 8.01 billion in July, while imports increased 13.78 per cent to about USD 4.55 billion during the month.

During April-July, the country's exports to the US increased 21.64 per cent to USD 33.53 billion, while imports rose 12.33 per cent to USD 17.41 billion.

An industry official from the leather and footwear sector said that companies would now be compelled to reduce staff and halt production until there is clarity on the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA) between the two countries. It aims to double the bilateral trade in goods and services to USD 500 billion, from the current USD 191 billion. Sharing similar views, an exporter (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

Father and son killed in road mishap at Moran

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Aug 26: In a tragic incident, a father and his son lost their lives in a road mishap at Khatkhathi in Moran on Tuesday after their car was rammed by a speeding goods-laden vehicle.

The deceased have been identified as Khogon Baruah, aged 45, and his son Jugul Kishore Baruah, both residents of Pthalibam, Moran.

According to reports, the accident occurred when Khogon Baruah was on his way to drop his son at school. Their vehicle was struck by a speeding vehicle carrying goods, leading to the fatal mishap.

The impact of the collision was severe, and both father and son died on the spot.

Jugul Kishore Baruah was a student of Moran St. Joseph Higher Secondary School. Soon after the incident, (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

HM to inaugurate year-long birth centenary celebrations of ex-CM Golap Borbora

Shah to blow war bugle for assembly polls on Aug 29

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Assam BJP general secretary Pallab Lochan Das on Tuesday announced that the 'Panchayat Sammilan', to be held on August 29 in presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, will mark the sounding of the 'war bugle' for the 2026 Assembly elections in the state.

Addressing a press conference here, Das said that the convention will be attended by the top leadership of the NDA, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), Rabha Hasong Joutha Sangram Samiti and Janashakti Party.

"The convention is expected to see the participation of nearly 20,000 elected representatives, including 16,671 panchayat representatives from the BJP and over 1,500 representatives from the AGP," he added.

In addition, elected representatives from all autonomous councils, including the Karbi Anglong



Autonomous Council and Dima Hasao Autonomous Council, will also be present.

However, keeping in view the forthcoming BTC elections, no representatives from the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) will participate, Das clarified.

On August 29, the Union home minister will attend two government programmes and one political event in Guwahati during his day-

long tour.

Prior to the 'Panchayat Convention' at 11 am, Shah will inaugurate the newly constructed building of Raj Bhavan.

Following the 'sammilan' at Veterinary College Playground in Khanapara, he will also inaugurate the year-long birth centenary celebrations of Assam's first non-Congress Chief Minister Golap Borbora. (**PTI**)

Some of those evicted encroached upon acres of land, making indigenous people angry: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said that a section of people who have been evicted during the recent anti-encroachment drives were living on acres of forest land, which had created resentment among the indigenous population.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a programme in Kokrajhar, Sarma said that seeing the size of the land some of those evicted possessed had made his head reel.

"Some of them had occupied 200 to 300 bighas (8 to 9 acres) of land individually. Why will this not make anyone angry?" he asked.

"The situation in Uriamghat made me think of living in a farmhouse there and giving up being a chief minister," he said.

Sarma said that if poor people had settled on small plots, it would not have angered people, but occupying such large tracts of forest

cannot be allowed.

The state government launched an eviction drive in June to clear encroachment on forest land, Village Grazing Reserves, Professional Grazing Reserves, and lands belonging to Satras and Namghars, among others.

Most of those displaced by the eviction drive are Bengali-speaking Muslim communities, derogatorily called the 'Miyas', who say their ancestors settled in these areas after losing land in the 'char' or riverine regions to erosion by the Brahmaputra.

Sarma said that the eviction drive is making people realise the distinction between what is right and what is wrong.

"I am not against sympathising with the 'Miyas'. I have extended benefits to them through various government schemes, but it is our responsibility to guide people in the right direction. They must understand (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

'Deliberate' demographic changes taking place along borders, says Amit Shah

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said demographic changes are taking place in border areas as part of a "deliberate design" and they directly impact the security of the country and its borders.

Shah urged the collectors of border districts to take appropriate action to remove illegal religious encroachments.

He said all illegal encroachments within at least a 30-kilometre radius from the borders should be removed and lauded the Gujarat government for doing "commendable work" in clearing numerous encroachments along both maritime and land borders.

Addressing the inaugural session of the two-day Vibrant Villages Programme workshop here, the home minister said the VVP is based on three key points -- preventing migration from border villages, ensuring that every citizen of border villages receives 100 per cent benefits of central and state government schemes and developing the villages under the VVP into strong tools to strengthen border and national security.

Shah asked the district magistrates to ensure that despite challenging geographical conditions, citizens do not abandon their villages, migration is prevented and the village population also increases.

He said on the occasion of Independence Day,

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said from the ramparts of the Red Fort that demographic changes are a matter of concern.

"The collectors of districts included in the Vibrant Villages Programme need to address this issue with seriousness and attention to detail. Demographic changes in border areas directly impact the security of the country and its borders," he said.

Shah said it should not be assumed that this is happening due to geographical conditions; rather, "it is occurring as part of a deliberate design".

He also asked the chief secretaries of states and the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) to pay attention to this issue.

"The Modi government launched this programme to prevent outward migration from the border villages and 100 per cent saturation of schemes, instructed the officials to evict encroachments within 30 kilometres from the border and ensure that the daily supplies of the CAPFs and Army are sourced locally," he said.

The home minister, who unveiled a VVP logo at the event, said that after implementing the programme in Arunachal Pradesh, the population in many border villages has increased.

"This is a message for all our country's border villages that this trend of reverse (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

BTC goes to polls on September 22

Counting of votes to take place on Sept 26

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Elections to the 40-member Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) in Assam will be held on September 22, State Election Commissioner Ranjan Sarma announced on Tuesday.

The last date for the filing of nominations is September 2, while the scrutiny of the nominations will be held on September 4, he said.

The last date for withdrawal of nominations is September 6, he added.

The counting of votes will be held on September 26, and the entire election process will be completed by September 28.

The polling will be held from 7.30 am to 4 pm on September 22. The counting of votes will begin at 8 am on September 26, Sarma said.

The model code of conduct will come into force with immediate effect in the entire Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), comprising Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Udal-

guri and Tamulpur districts of the state.

A total of 26,57,937 people will be eligible to vote in this election, an increase of 11.35 per cent since the last polls in 2020. Among the eligible voters are 13,23,399 males, 13,34,521 females and 17 persons of other genders.

The total number of polling stations in BTC has increased to 3,359 from 3,146 in 2020, a rise of 6.77 per cent, Sarma said.

Among the 40 seats in the BTC, 30 seats are reserved for Scheduled Tribe (ST) candidates, five for non-STs and the remaining five are open to both ST and non-ST candidates.

A candidate can spend a maximum of ₹ 10 lakh for the campaign.

A coalition of the United Peoples' Party Liberal (UPPL), the BJP and the Gana Suraksha Party (GSP) is in power in the council. The BJP (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

₹ 5.8 crore worth drugs seized, 3 arrested

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Three persons have been arrested and ₹ 5.8 crore worth of drugs have been seized from Cachar and Sribhumi districts in Assam's Barak Valley region, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Tuesday.

Based on specific information, an anti-narcotics operation was launched by the police in the Lakhimpur area of Cachar district on Tuesday, Sarma said in a post on X. The police intercepted a vehicle and seized 417 gms of heroin valued at ₹ 2.8 crore while one person was arrested, he said.

In another operation, two persons were arrested and ₹ 3 crore worth of bottles containing an illegal cough syrup seized from their possession in neighbouring Sribhumi district.

A total of 30,420 bottles containing codeine phosphate were seized from a vehicle intercepted at the Churaibari (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

PM makes pitch for swadeshi, Make in India

AHMEDABAD, Aug 26: A day before US President Donald Trump's additional 25 per cent tariff kicks in, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday made a vehement pitch for swadeshi and Make in India that should help create jobs in the country.

Swadeshi should be everyone's life mantra irrespective of who is investing, production must take place domestically, Modi asserted on a day when Japan's Suzuki Motor Corporation committed to invest over Rs 70,000 crore in the country in the next five to six years.

The government's 'Make in India' initiative has created a favourable environment for both global and domestic manufacturers and the world will drive electric vehicles that are made in India, Modi said.

He was speaking after flagging off exports of Maruti Suzuki's first electric vehicle, the e VITARA, from the Hansalpur facility in Gujarat to over 100 countries and also inauguration of production of lithium-ion battery, cell and electrode manufacturing for strong hybrid electric vehicles.

"My definition of swadeshi is very simple: it doesn't matter whose money is invested, whether it is dollars, pounds, whether the currency is black or white, it doesn't matter to me. What matters is that in production, the sweat belongs to my countrymen. The money may be someone else's, but the sweat is ours," he asserted.

"By 2047 we will build such a Bharat that your future generations will take pride in your sacrifices, will take pride in your contribu-

tions," he added.

In that way, Maruti Suzuki is also a swadeshi company, he said.

The world will drive electric vehicles that are made in India, he said.

Today is a great day for 'Make in India' as e-vehicles made in the country will be exported to 100 countries. The world will drive electric vehicles that are made in India, he said.

The Make in India initiative has created a favourable environment for both global and domestic manufacturers, Modi said.

Lauding India-Japan ties, he said both countries are "made for each other".

Japanese automaker Suzuki Motor Corporation will invest Rs 70,000 crore in the next five to six years in (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

Shoot-at-sight order to continue in Dhubri during Durga Puja: CM

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said that 'shoot-at-sight orders' at night, enforced since June 13 in Dhubri following communal disturbances in the district, will continue during Durga Puja.

People of Sanatan Dharma are in a minority in Dhubri, and their protection from fundamentalists is a priority of the government, Sarma said.

"The shoot-at-sight orders have not been withdrawn and will continue," Sarma said at the sidelines of a programme in Kokrajhar.

There is no unrest in Dhubri or incidents of violence, but the shoot-at-sight orders will continue during Durga Puja, the chief minister said.

The festival will be celebrated from September 28 to October 2 this year.

"Anyone attempting to create unrest in Dhubri will face severe

consequences," he added.

The chief minister had visited Dhubri on June 13 and announced that shoot-at-sight orders would be in force at night in the district, bordering Bangladesh, as a communal group is trying to create disturbances, which the government will not tolerate.

He had again visited the district 10 days later and said that over 150 anti-socials, including 11 from outside the state who had cases pending against them, have been arrested since June 13.

The day after the Bakrid, a cow's skull was found in front of the Hanuman Temple in the district headquarters, following which members of both Hindu and Muslim communities appealed for peace and harmony.

The next day, however, a cow's head was again kept in front of the temple, while incidents of stone throwing (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)



Assam, Naga bodies to work together to establish rights of indigenous people

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 26: The Assam Sammilita Mahasangha's Security Council (ASMSC) and the Rengma Naga Peoples Council (RNPC) have resolved to work together to establish the rights of indigenous people on the basis of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for their better future.

The resolution was made at a discussion held between the two organisations at Chumoukedima on Monday, a joint release issued by ASMSC secretary general Dr Hemanta Gogoi and RNPC general secretary Cheno Rengma said on Tuesday.

At the discussion, the ASMSC team was led by its president Matiu Rahman and secretary general Gogoi while the RNPC was represented by its president Kenilo Rengma, general secretary Cheno Rengma and adviser Ngasen Rengma. The deliberation focused on various problems facing the indigenous (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

Ex-servicemen can motivate youth towards nation building: Guv

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Tuesday said sharing of experience by ex-servicemen with youth will motivate them to contribute towards nation-building.

He was speaking at an event, 'Rishte Sainik Se', to apprise ex-servicemen and their families on various government schemes and facilities available for them, a Defence statement said.

Addressing the participants, Acharya appreciated the sacrifices of the ex-servicemen in their service to the nation.

He assured all assistance from the governor's office to ensure welfare of ex-servicemen and extend all possible support in achieving it.

The governor maintained that sharing of experiences by ex-servicemen can motivate the youth to contribute towards nation-building in a more meaningful manner.

He appreciated the Directorate of Sainik Welfare,

Assam, for efforts for the welfare of ex-servicemen.

Ex-servicemen, Veer Nari (widows of servicemen) and Veer Matas (mothers of martyred servicemen) from across the state participated in the event, the statement said.

The event was also attended by veteran officers, including Air Marshal Anjan Gogoi (Retd), Lt Gen Rana Pratap Kalita (Retd) and Lt Gen Pranab Kumar Bharali (Retd).

Brig Polish Choudhury (Retd), director, Sainik Welfare, Assam, apprised the participants on various government schemes and facilities meant for the ex-servicemen fraternity.

He highlighted some of the measures, like two per cent reservations for ex-servicemen in class A and B state government jobs, enhancement in cash rewards for gallantry awardees and ex-gratia for battle-war casualties, and reservations for (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: The Assam government has ensured 100 per cent availability of free essential drugs across public health facilities in the state, Health Minister Ashok Singhal said on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference, he said an expenditure of ₹ 378.67 crore was incurred for the procurement of free drugs in 2024-25, and ₹ 445.73 crore has been earmarked for the current financial year.

Singhal said that providing free drugs has improved healthcare outcomes and increased accessibility to medical care for the vulnerable population, reducing their financial burden.

"We have ensured 100 per cent availability of free medicines as per Essential Drugs List (EDL)



across all health facilities in the state, including district hospitals, sub-district hospitals, community health centres, primary health centres, urban primary health centres,

urban Ayushman Arogya Mandir and sub-health centres," he said.

Singhal said that the free drugs service is a flagship programme of the Centre, launched under the Na-

tional Health Mission (NHM).

The state government, in collaboration with the Assam Medical Services Corporation Limited (AMSC), adopted the scheme and is committed to providing free medicines to all citizens, he said.

Quality of medicines is being guaranteed, and healthcare professionals and patients are being made aware of the initiative, he added.

"Our government remains committed to providing quality healthcare services to all citizens. The free drugs initiative is a significant step towards achieving this goal, and we will continue to work towards ensuring that all citizens have access to essential medicines and quality healthcare services," he said. (**PTI**)

Sensex tumbles 849 pts amid widespread selloff; ends below 81K ahead of additional 25 pc US tariffs

MUMBAI, Aug 26: Benchmark BSE Sensex tumbled 849 points to close below the 81,000 level on Tuesday due to widespread selling pressure after the US issued a draft notice on the implementation of an additional 25 per cent tariff on Indian products. The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 849.37 points, or 1.04 per cent, to close at 80,786.54 with 25 of its constituents ending lower and five with gains. During the day, the index nosedived 949.93 points, or 1.16 per cent, to hit a low of 80,685.98.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 255.70 points, or 1.02 per cent, to finish at 24,712.05. In the intra-day session, it dived 278.15 points, or 1.11 per cent, to hit a low of 24,689.60.

Persistent foreign fund outflows and losses in global equities following US President Donald Trump's firing of a Fed governor also dampened investor sentiment, analysts said.

Realty, pharma, banking and metal stocks bore the brunt of the selling, while FMCG shares displayed relative resilience with marginal gains.

Sun Pharmaceutical was the biggest laggard among Sensex firms, declining by 3.40 per cent following reports that Donald Trump had suggested a cut in drug prices of between 1,400 per cent and 1,500 per cent.

Trump's latest remarks came as his administration adopts an aggressive stance on pharmaceutical pricing and plans to impose higher tariffs on imported medicines.

Tata Steel, Trent, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Reliance Industries, Axis



Bank, Tech Mahindra, Adani Ports, Titan, BEL, and Larsen & Toubro were also among the losers.

However, Hindustan Unilever, ITC, Tata Consultancy Services and UltraTech Cement were the gainers.

Maruti Suzuki India gained 1.85 per cent as the company kicked off exports of its first electric vehicle e VITARA to 100 countries and also inaugurated the production of lithium-ion battery cells for strong hybrid electric vehicles at its facility in Gujarat.

"Sentiment was largely dampened by caution ahead of the upcoming tariff deadline, which weighed heavily on export-sensitive sectors," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking, said.

The pressure was compounded by sustained foreign institutional selling, a weakening rupee, and a rebound in crude oil prices, prompting investors to reduce risk exposure, Mishra said.

"Domestic market sentiment turned cautious as the US penalty

tariff deadline expires tomorrow. The persistent depreciation of the INR is adding pressure and may further impact foreign institutional inflows," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments, said.

Investors are closely monitoring the central government's efforts to support economic growth, including proposed GST rate revisions and sector-specific relief measures for industries affected by higher tariffs, Nair said.

Broad-based selling was observed across sectors, except for FMCG, which gained on expectations of increased consumption, he added.

The US has issued a draft order implementing an additional 25 per cent tariff on Indian products, which President Donald Trump announced earlier this month, beginning August 27.

According to the draft notice released by the Department of Homeland Security, the additional tariffs will cover Indian products "that are entered for consumption,

or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after 12:01 am Eastern Daylight Time on August 27, 2025".

The notice explained that the higher levies were linked to "threats to the US by the government of the Russian Federation," with India targeted in line with that strategy.

Market breadth was negative as a total of 2,891 stocks declined, while 1,220 advanced and 130 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The BSE Smallcap index went lower by 1.68 per cent, while Midcap gauge slipped 1.34 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, Realty plunged by 2.24 per cent, followed by metal (2.10 per cent), Telecommunication (2.04 per cent), Energy (1.68 per cent), Healthcare (1.65 per cent), Utilities (1.61 per cent), Industrials (1.59 per cent) and Power (1.53 per cent).

FMCG was the only gainer.

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

The European markets were trading lower. US markets ended lower on Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.48 per cent to USD 67.78 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors offloaded equities worth Rs 2,466.24 crore on Monday, according to the exchange data.

On Monday, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 329.06 points to settle at 81,635.91. The 50-share NSE Nifty rose 97.65 points to close at 24,967.75. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Ex-servicemen can motivate

wards of ex-servicemen in medical and dental colleges. Choudhury also mentioned of various initiatives undertaken by the Directorate of Sainik Welfare to reach out to the ex-servicemen to ensure their rehabilitation. (PTI)

Assam, Naga bodies to

Naga and Assamese people. The RNPC pointed out that as per the Indian Constitution, 1951 is the base year for identification of foreigners and said other than that no other date is acceptable to the Rengma Naga people in this regard. It added that the Rengma Naga people fully support the Assam Samilita Mahasangha, the indigenous people's confederation of Assam, for identification of foreigners with 1951 as the base year.

During the meeting, ASMSC president Matuier Rahman handed over his book, Indigenous Rights, to RNPC president Kenilo Rengma.

PM makes pitch for

India to strengthen its operations in the country, its Representative Director and President Toshihiro Suzuki said on Tuesday. Speaking at the event, Suzuki Motor Corporation Representative Director and President Toshihiro Suzuki said, "Suzuki will invest over ₹ 70,000 crore in India, over the next 5-6 years."

Later, in an interaction with reporters, Maruti Suzuki India Chairman R C Bhargava said the investments would be to meet the company's target of achieving 40 lakh units annually.

"We are expanding to 4 million (units annually). So the expansion of 4 million units capacity, with all the supporting infrastructure and investment in R&D, and new technologies, all of that takes a lot of money," Bhargava said when asked about areas where the investments are proposed to be made. About the finalisation of the second plant to be set up in Gujarat, which was announced last year for an investment of ₹ 35,000 crore, Bhargava said, "I am hoping we will be answering that question more specifically after the GST Council meeting (on September 4) because after that everybody will be making an estimate of what the impact of the GST decisions are going to be on future growth." He, however, declined to comment on the implications of the proposed changes in GST slabs. Suzuki Group, of which Maruti Suzuki India is a part, has already invested over ₹ 1 lakh crore in India.

These investments have also led to the creation of over 11 lakh direct jobs in the value chain.

On the e VITARA, Bhargava said it will be for the export markets, and no timeline has been set for launching the vehicle in the domestic market. Manufactured exclusively at Suzuki Motor Gujarat (SMG), a unit of Maruti Suzuki India, the first batch of export-bound e VITARA will be shipped from Pipavav port to the European region, including the UK, Germany, Norway, France, Denmark, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Austria, and Belgium. (PTI)

₹ 5.8 crore worth drugs

outpost at the Assam-Tripura inter-state border. "@assampolice intercepted a massive drug haul at Churaibari check post, seizing 30,420 bottles of Codeine Phosphate worth ₹ 3 crore. 2 drug peddlers are behind bars. Solid strike against the drug menace," Sarma posted on X.

Codeine phosphate is a drug made from opium or morphine to treat mild to moderate pain, cough, and diarrhoea.

It belongs to the group of medicines called narcotic analgesics (pain medicines), and if used for a long time, it may become habit-forming, causing mental or physical dependence. (PTI)

'Deliberate' demographic changes

migration to these villages is moving in the right direction," he said.

He said when Prime Minister Modi presented the idea of the VVP, it was decided that it would be implemented in a phased manner.

"Not only would every border village be equipped with all facilities, but every citizen living in these border villages would be provided with all the schemes of the government of India and state governments to improve the lives of the people living there," he said.

Additionally, Shah said, these villages would be developed as strong tools for the security of the country and its borders.

He said Prime Minister Modi, by designating the last village of the country as the first village, has changed people's perspective towards border villages.

The villages identified early under the VVP in a few years will prove to be very significant tools in the security of the country and its borders, he said. The home minister said through this programme, efforts have been made to promote infrastructure development, preserve and enhance culture, generate employment through tourism, and make village life vibrant in every way, with a vision of multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral development. Shah said in Arunachal Pradesh, the ITBP has successfully experimented with purchasing daily essentials such as milk, vegetables, eggs and grains from vibrant villages and emphasised the need to implement this experiment on the ground in every border village.

The Army deployed at the borders should take responsibility for generating employment in vibrant villages in coordination with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Defence, he said.

The home minister said border villages should have facilities for telecommunications, road connectivity, education, healthcare and clean drinking water. He emphasised that the VVP should not remain just a government programme but should become the spirit of administration. Shah said in VVP-1, efforts were limited to the programme itself, but in VVP-2, there is a need to change the administrative approach. (PTI)

BTC goes to polls

has decided to contest the upcoming polls independently, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma campaigning actively in the region for the last one month.

In the last polls, held in December 2020, the UPPL had won 12 seats, the BJP nine and GSP one seat.

The Bodoland Peoples' Front (BPF), which was in power in the council for the previous three terms, emerged as the single largest party with 17 seats, and Congress secured one seat with its elected member later joining the BJP. The BPF was then BJP's partner in the state government, but the ruling party decided to join hands with the UPPL and the GSP to assume power in the council. The polls were held after a fresh Bodo Accord was signed in New Delhi on January 27, 2020. (PTI)

Some of those evicted

that forest lands, VGRs and PGRs cannot be encroached upon," he said. Sarma said they should remain where they originally lived and not move to Upper Assam or the northern parts of the state. "The threat to Assam is from the demographic change that has taken place over the years, and this is evident from the change in the voters' list," he said.

He said the "problem" will be solved by the "steps we have taken", and "we will slowly poison their system".

"We have no animosity towards all those permanent residents who came here before 1971, and we have given affidavits in the court that those who came before are Indians," he said.

Sarma said there have been no eviction drives in Dhubri or Goalpara, but all must acknowledge that forest lands should not be encroached upon.

"The destruction of forests is the very reason behind the unbearable heat today, and it is not only that we are sweating; the 'Miyas' are also facing the same problem," he said.

The CM said there was a massive protest when a single tree was chopped in Guwahati's Dighalipukhuri for building a flyover, but no one raised their voice when thousands of trees in forest areas were destroyed.

"As per law, except for tribal communities and families that have lived there for three generations, no one has the right to occupy forest lands. Let me remind you, this law was enacted by the Congress," Sarma said.

He said that along with minorities, people of other communities were also evicted during the drive in Uriamghat. "It is, however, only the Miyas who protest and do not want to follow the law. This cannot be allowed as India is a country based on laws," he said. "What we are doing today is constructive. It will help those who truly believe in justice, but those who choose to listen to the members of Assam Nagarik Samaj (organisers of the meeting attended by Prashant Bhushan and Sayeeda Hamid) will ultimately be misled," he said. (PTI)

Trump's 50 pc tariff

from gems and jewellery said that "job cuts will happen for sure in the jewellery and diamond sectors as the US is our largest market."

"We need a long-term export strategy to deal with these high tariffs. We need interest subsidy, ease of doing business, timely refund of GST dues and reformed special economic zone law," the exporter said.

Mithileshwar Thakur Secretary General, AEPC (Apparel Export Promotion Council), said the textiles sector, with exports of USD 10.3 billion, is one of the worst-impacted sectors.

"The industry was reconciled to the 25 per cent reciprocal tariff announced by the US as it was prepared to absorb a part of the tariff increase. But, the additional burden of another 25 per cent... has effectively driven the Indian apparel industry out of the US market as the gap of 30-31 per cent tariff disadvantage vis-a-vis major competing countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Indonesia is well-nigh impossible to bridge," he said. Economic think tank GTRI said that US tariffs will impact 66 per cent of India's USD 86.5 billion exports to America. It said that USD 60.2 billion worth of goods will face 50 per cent duties from August 27, including textiles, gems, and shrimp.

"The United States' new tariff regime, effective August 27, 2025, marks one of the most severe trade shocks India has faced in recent years. With over two-thirds of India's USD 86.5 billion exports to the US now subject to prohibitive 25-50 per cent duties, critical labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, gems and jewellery, shrimp, carpets, and furniture face sharp declines in competitiveness and employment," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said. He said India's exports to the US are expected to decline steeply to approximately USD 49.6 billion in FY2026 due to Washington's new tariff regime. (PTI)

Shoot-at-sight order

were reported. On June 8, Sarma had said that a number of cattle were allegedly slaughtered illegally at several places during the Bakrid festival and parts of the meat were thrown at multiple locations across Assam.

Sarma asserted that the state government was fully committed to ensure enforcement of law and order in the state and defeat all communal forces. (PTI)

Father and son killed

police personnel reached the spot and sent the bodies for post-mortem examination.

Confirming the accident, a police official said, "The accident happened due to over speeding. Two people were killed in the road accident after they were hit by another vehicle."

The official further stated that over speeding continues to be a major cause of road mishaps in the region. "Most of the accidents take place due to over speeding. We have organised lots of awareness programmes to create awareness among the people," he added.

IT Dept, ICAI hold outreach programme on trusts and charitable institutions in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: The Income Tax Department, Guwahati, in association with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), Guwahati Branch, organised an Outreach and Awareness Programme on "Trusts & Charitable Institutions" at ICAI Bhawan, Manik Nagar, here on Tuesday.

According to an official statement, the initiative aimed at sensitising stakeholders about tax provisions, statutory compliance, and governance mechanisms relating to charitable institutions.

The programme witnessed active participation with around 150 assesses, representatives of charitable trusts, NGOs, and professionals attending the session.

Senior officials of the Income Tax Department, including Manish Kumar Jha, IRS, Commissioner of Income Tax (Exemption), Kolkata, Robindro Huidrom, IRS, Commissioner of Income Tax, Kolkata, and BN Jha, IRS, Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax (Exemption), Kolkata, along with eminent members of ICAI, graced the event. The proceedings began with the National Anthem and Lighting of the Lamp, followed by the felicitation of dignitaries.

Addressing the gathering, Manish Kumar Jha highlighted the importance of transparency and accountability in the functioning of charitable organisations, while Robindro Huidrom stressed the necessity of strict adherence to statutory requirements.

Speaking on behalf of ICAI, CA Raginee Goyal, Chairperson of the Guwahati Branch, underlined the role of non-profit organisations in nation-building and emphasised the importance of such awareness initiatives to ensure compliance.

CA Harish Kumar Agarwala, Past Chairman of the



Guwahati Branch, shared practical difficulties faced by assesses in the region and offered professional insights on overcoming them.

A technical session led by BN Jha provided a detailed overview of the provisions of the Income Tax Act relating to exemptions, registration, and compliance applicable to trusts and NGOs.

He also addressed common mistakes and compliance challenges while offering practical solutions.

The programme concluded with a Vote of Thanks by CA. Jay Prakash Gupta, Secretary of ICAI Guwahati Branch. Income Tax Officer Joyo Singh coordinated the event.

According to the official statement, the outreach initiative was widely appreciated by the participants for its practical value and clarity.

The large turnout and interactive discussions reflected a growing awareness among stakeholders about compliance and governance in the charitable sector, while also showcasing the government's supportive approach in easing compliance and addressing concerns of assesses.

ITC chief hails PM's reform vision, says GST overhaul to spur growth

KOLKATA, Aug 26: ITC Ltd Chairman Sanjiv Puri on Tuesday hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for next-generation reforms, particularly in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) framework, saying the move will trigger a virtuous cycle of consumption, investment, growth and employment.

He said the government's focus on affordability and accessibility of essential items, including food, will provide significant relief to the middle class, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and farmers. "The government's resolve to ensure ease of living by enhancing affordability and accessibility of all items meant for daily consumption will benefit the sizeable middle-class population, MSMEs and farmers," Puri said in a statement. A transparent, simplified and growth-oriented tax structure will not only improve competitiveness of enterprises but also promote ease and cost efficiency in doing business, he added. "The proposed measures will enable formalisation of the economy, create a more tax-compliant society and strengthen the foundations of Atmanirbhar Bharat," Puri said. (PTI)

Aakash Educational Services launches ANTHE 2025, announces scholarships worth ₹250 crore

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL), the national leader in test preparatory services, has launched its flagship annual initiative, the Aakash National Talent Hunt Exam (ANTHE) 2025, marking the 16th year of the programme.

According to an official statement, the initiative is aimed at empowering students from Classes V to XII to rise above challenges and prepare themselves to become problem solvers of tomorrow.

ANTHE 2025 will offer scholarships of up to 100 percent worth a total of ₹250 crore for students opting for Classroom, Aakash Digital, and Invictus courses.

In addition, cash awards worth ₹2.5 crore will also be given to meritorious candidates. The exam, described as one of the largest scholarship tests in the country, seeks to provide opportunities to lakhs of students aspiring for careers in medicine and engineering by giving them access to expert coaching for NEET, JEE, State CETs, NTSE, and Olympiads. Ajay Bahadur Singh, regional director of AESL, said that ANTHE had become a symbol of possibility for students across India.

He remarked that over the past 16 years, the programme had enabled students from diverse financial and geographical backgrounds to pursue their dreams.

"We believe every student has the potential to become a problem solver, someone who can think critically, face challenges, and create impact. ANTHE 2025 continues this legacy by providing deserving students with the resources, support, and motivation to rise and shine," he said. He added that with AESL's wide network and hybrid learning approach, quality education was being made more inclusive and outcome-focused. The popularity of ANTHE has grown steadily over the years.



In 2025, more than one million students appeared for the exam, setting a new record. Many of AESL's current toppers began their academic journey through ANTHE.

Notably, 22 of the top 100 rank holders in NEET 2025 and 10 of the top 100 in JEE Advanced 2025 were ANTHE alumni.

ANTHE 2025 will be conducted in both online and offline modes.

The online exam will be held from October 4 to 12, 2025, allowing students to select a convenient one-hour slot.

The offline test will be conducted on October 5 and 12 across more than 415 Aakash centres in 26 states and union territories.

Registrations for the examination are open and can be completed either online through the official website or at the nearest Aakash centre.

The fee for both modes is ₹300, with a 50 percent discount available for early applicants.

The last date to apply is three days prior to the chosen online test date and seven days before the selected offline exam. Admit cards will be issued five days before the exam. The results of ANTHE 2025 will be declared in phases.

Results for Class X will be announced on Oc-

tober 24, followed by Classes VII to IX on October 29, Classes V and VI on November 1, and Classes XI and XII on November 4.

All results will be available on the official ANTHE website.

ANTHE will be a one-hour examination consisting of 40 multiple-choice questions, with the content tailored to the grade and stream aspirations of students. For Classes V to IX, the test will cover Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, and Mental Ability.

For Class X, medical aspirants will attempt Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Mental Ability, while engineering aspirants will be tested on Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Mental Ability.

For Classes XI and XII, the NEET stream will comprise Physics, Chemistry, Botany, and Zoology, while the JEE stream will comprise Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics.

AESL said the examination continues to serve as a gateway for students across the country to access quality coaching, irrespective of their background, and remains committed to nurturing academic excellence and supporting young aspirants in building their careers.

NFR upgrades healthcare facilities across railway hospitals



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has taken major steps to upgrade healthcare facilities across its network of hospitals, demonstrating a strong commitment to the well-being of its employees, their families, and the general public.

Under the leadership of Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, General Manager/NFR, significant investments have been made to modernize hospital infrastructure with advanced diagnostic equipment, state-of-the-art operation theatres, and fully equipped intensive care units.

On August 15, 2025, the renovated Female Surgical Ward, Orthopaedic Ward, and a Haemodialysis Unit under the Public-Private Partnership model were inaugurated at the Central Hospital, Maligaon.

This year, several new health and medical facilities have been introduced across Railway Hospitals under NFR. At the Divisional Railway Hospital, Katihar, a Digital X-ray unit and a fully automated Auto Analyzer were inaugurated. The Sub-Divisional Railway Hospital at Rangpara North is now equipped with a new CR System X-Ray machine. At Central Hospital, Maligaon, an advanced Lasotronix Laser Diode System has been installed. Additionally, a newly constructed Post Graduate Doctor's Hostel and Dormitory, along with renovated semi cabins, have also been inaugurated at Central Hospital, Maligaon.

During the Ambubachi Mela 2025, a First Aid Booth was established at Kamakhya station premises from June 20-26 to provide health check-up facilities for pilgrims.

Aligned with the Digital India Initiative, NFR hospitals have implemented Electronic Health Records (EHRs) to streamline patient care and improve coordination of medical services. Continuous training and skill development programmes are also being conducted to ensure medical staff remain updated with the latest practices and technologies. Furthermore, NFR actively engages in community outreach by organizing health camps and awareness programmes, benefiting thousands of people.

NFR's hospitals have demonstrated a strong commitment to excellence in healthcare, which has been recognized through numerous accolades and awards received by their medical personnel over time, honouring their unwavering dedication to lifesaving services.

Minister Rai reviews Silchar projects ahead of CM's visit

HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, Aug 26: Silchar is witnessing a flurry of activity as the town prepares for the upcoming visit of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. In a significant move, Minister for Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs, Mines & Minerals, and Barak Valley Development, Kaushik Rai, on Tuesday spearheaded a comprehensive review of major development projects and key welfare initiatives, reaffirming the state government's commitment to fast-tracking infrastructure upgrades and delivering citizen-centric schemes in Cachar district.

The day began with an inspection drive at Rangirkhari's NS Avenue, where Minister Rai, accompanied by Rajya Sabha MP Kanad Purkayastha, Silchar MLA Dipayan Chakraborty, and Cachar District Commissioner Mrdul Yadav, IAS, reviewed preparations for the installation of a new statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The statue, expected to be unveiled by the Chief Minister during his visit, symbolizes the region's enduring respect for the legendary freedom fighter. The Minister expressed satisfaction with the arrangements and emphasized that the memorial would serve as an inspirational landmark for future generations.

Following the inspection, Minister Rai chaired a high-level review meeting at the District Commissioner's office to assess the progress of three long-pending infrastructural projects aimed at transforming connectivity in



Silchar and adjoining areas. The projects included the much-anticipated elevated road from Trunk Road to Capital Point and Rangirkhari, the proposed construction of a new bridge over the Barak River at Madhuraghat, and the upgradation of the Silchar-Hailakandi road from Birbal Bazar to Silchar Medical College into a four-lane stretch. Once completed, these projects are expected to ease traffic congestion, improve inter-district connectivity, and accelerate economic growth in the Barak Valley.

Minister Rai reiterated the importance of timely execution and directed all stakeholders to work in close coordination to ensure that deadlines are met without compromising on quality. He highlighted that these initiatives reflect the vision of the Assam Government under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to create robust infrastructure and improve the quality of life for citizens.

He also reviewed the status of new ration card inclusion under the

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Aug 26: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) marked a significant political and environmental milestone in West Karbi Anglong's Chinthong MAC Constituency with a series of events aimed at connecting with local communities and promoting eco-tourism.

Led by Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member (CEM) Tuliram Ronghang, a BJP team embarked on a journey starting from Taralangso, Diphu, passing through Volongkom Aji, Nilbagan, Dongkamukam, Vothalangso, and Amereng, before concluding in Chinthong Constituency.

The team engaged with villagers through a vibrant bike rally and a mass joining program held on Tuesday under the 03 Number Chinthong MAC Constituency within the 112 Number Amri (ST) LAC. The initiative, organized by the BJP Chinthong Mandal Committee, aimed to listen directly to the challenges and needs of the local populace.

In a significant development, 1,007 families formally switched



their allegiance from the Congress and the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHL) to the BJP, strengthening the party's foothold in the region.

The event was graced by prominent leaders, including Lok Sabha MP Amarsing Tisso, MLA Darsing Ronghang (Howraghat), MLA Rupsing Teron (Baitalangso),

KAAC Chairman Raju Tisso, Deputy Chairman Avijit Kro (local MAC), and several KAAC Executive Members and MACs. BJP West Karbi Anglong District President Radip Ronghang, along with KAAC Board Chairpersons, district and mandal office bearers, and party workers, also participated, underscoring the event's importance.

Tezpur University inaugurates Nelson Mandela international hostel

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Aug 26: Tezpur University inaugurated the newly constructed two-storey Nelson Mandela International Hostel on Monday to accommodate the increasing number of international students. The hostel was inaugurated by Vice-Chancellor Prof. Shambhu Nath Singh.

In its first phase, the hostel has 44 single-seater rooms, each designed for comfort and privacy. Prof

Singh said the facility will not only provide quality living spaces but also promote diversity and international collaboration, further enhancing the University's global standing.

At present, Tezpur University hosts students from 22 countries across Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Africa, and Northern Europe. Plans are in place to expand the hostel's capacity to 140 students, with additional facilities like an Activity Centre and Library.

Capacity-building programme on wildlife tourism held near Pobitora

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: A capacity development and sensitisation programme for community members, aimed at bolstering efforts for rhino conservation through community participation, was organized at the Elephant Camp of Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary on August 23.

This long-awaited initiative was highly appreciated by the local community and the Pobitora Jeep Safari Owners' Association, reflecting a strong demand for skill development in wildlife-based tourism.

The programme was jointly facilitated by Aaranyak, WWF-India, Pobitora Jeep Safari Owners' Association, local NGO SHIPA, and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary authority, with support from IUCN CAG and Zoo Berlin.

Forty participants, including both men and women from local communities, took part in this knowledge-sharing session aimed at equipping participants with skills and knowledge aligned with sustainable wildlife tourism in Pobitora.

Although the sanctuary, known for its treasure trove of one-horned rhinoceroses, lies in close proximity to Assam's capital Guwahati, the tourism industry here has remained at a nascent stage despite significant potential for community participation and livelihood generation.

The programme began with a message from Alekh Saxena, DFO, Guwahati Wildlife Division, emphasizing the role of tourist guides as ambassadors between nature and visitors, advocating responsible and respectful tourism. His message, read by Aaranyak official Kakali Baishya, set the tone for the session. The event

was anchored by Jomi Rongchon and Kakali Baishya.

Dr Deba Kumar Dutta, Deputy Director of Rhino Research and Conservation Division (RRCD) of Aaranyak, explained the programme's objectives. This was followed by a technical session led by Dr. Anupam Saramah, Team Leader—Brahmaputra Landscape, WWF-India, who highlighted the ethical dimensions of wildlife tourism, focusing on sustainability, cultural preservation, and local enterprise development.

An inspiring interaction was led by Axom Gaurav awardee Dharanidhar Boro, who shared his journey in rhino conservation, motivating participants to stay committed to the cause. Pranjal Baruah, Range Officer, underscored the importance of adhering to legal norms for the protection of Pobitora and its rhinos.

Arif Hussain, Senior Manager of RRCD, Aaranyak, conducted an insightful session on "Birding Skills for Tourist Guides," introducing bird identification techniques and promoting ethical bird-watching practices.

In his concluding remarks, Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Executive Director and Secretary General of Aaranyak, who joined online, expressed his vision for empowering local communities through conservation-based employment opportunities to reinforce harmony between people and wildlife.

The programme concluded successfully, thanks to the coordinated efforts of Ujjal Bayan, Ayush Deb Nath, Rupak Bora, and Abhinav Bardoloi, leaving participants motivated and better equipped to contribute to sustainable wildlife tourism and rhino conservation.

ACIL Tea Garden workers to receive 20% Durga Puja bonus

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Aug 26: A crucial meeting was held on Tuesday at the office of Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) in Dibrugarh, where authorities of Assam Company India Ltd (ACIL) and representatives of ACMS finalized the annual Durga Puja bonus for tea garden workers for the financial year 2024-2025.

The meeting, attended by senior officials and labour leaders, focused on ensuring timely disbursement of festival bonuses to workers engaged in the tea industry.

According to Assam cabinet minister Rupesh Gowala, who is also the General Secretary of ACMS, an agreement was signed for the payment of a 20% bonus to tea garden workers. Gowala posted on X, "An agreement was signed today at the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha office in Dibrugarh between Assam Company India Limited and worker representatives to provide a 20% bonus for 2024-25. Workers will receive 15% before Durga Puja and the remaining 5% before Magh Bihu."

ACMS president Paban Singh Ghatowar and other senior officials were present at the meeting, which aimed to ensure the timely payment of bonuses to workers. With this development, workers can now look forward to a more festive season.

Two-Day training on coffee entrepreneurship begins at Diphu

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 26: A two-day awareness training programme on Entrepreneurship Opportunities in the Coffee Sector got under way at the conference hall of the Regional Coffee Research Station (RCRS), Six Miles, on the Diphu-Manja Road on Tuesday. The programme has been organised by RCRS, Diphu.

District Commissioner Nirola Phangchopi, ACS, inaugurated the programme by lighting the ceremonial lamp. The event was attended by Deputy Director (Research), RCRS, Dr Atiqur Rahman Bora, along with other officials and staff.

Speaking at the inaugural function, the DC said that young entrepreneurs and individuals aspiring to take up coffee as a business have joined the training. "Through this training, educated unemployed youths will be able to set up their own ventures," she stated.

The DC added that coffee, being a popular and refreshing beverage across the world, offers huge potential. With proper training, people can pursue coffee cultivation, and RCRS is ready to support interested individuals and partners. "Instead of wasting time waiting for government jobs, unemployed youths can start coffee cultivation, which can help them sustain their livelihood," she said. The DC also inspected the coffee garden behind the RCRS office and expressed her appreciation for the vast plantation area.

Deputy Director (Research), Dr Bora, said that with increased coffee production, proper marketing has become essential, and

this can only be achieved by promoting local entrepreneurs. "With this objective, the two-day training has been organised. Entrepreneurs will be trained in coffee processing, packaging, marketing, and café management," he explained.

He also said that coffee consumption in India has increased by 8% as more people are turning to coffee. "In Karbi Anglong, cafés can be opened on roadsides, generating employment for local youths. RCRS has been conducting training on coffee cultivation, improving quality, developing market facilities, and business opportunities," Dr. Bora added.

Altogether 16 entrepreneurs are participating in the training—8 from Karbi Anglong and the rest from Guwahati, Jorhat, and Nagaland. They will be trained in the selection of coffee, identifying good and bad beans, and developing different tastes from the same coffee.

Dr Bora also mentioned that when he joined RCRS, Diphu, in 2023, there were only 46 hectares of coffee under cultivation with 13 growers in Karbi Anglong. "People here are still not fully aware of coffee cultivation. Since 2024, RCRS has made extra efforts to promote it through awareness and training programmes. Last year, eight awareness programmes were conducted with 120 participants, of whom 31 showed interest and purchased seeds from RCRS for nursery development. If these participants begin planting, the coffee plantation area will expand significantly," he said.

UPPL organises harmonious rally in Kokrajhar ahead of BTC polls

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 26: The ruling United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) on Monday organised a massive rally for a "Harmonious Bodoland" in Kokrajhar town to garner public support ahead of the upcoming BTC elections.

The rally began from Kokrajhar Govt. Higher Secondary & Multi-purpose School playground and culminated at Green Field via JD Road. Tens of thousands of workers and supporters from six BTC constituencies under Kokrajhar district participated, along with senior party leaders.

BTR Chief Executive Member and UPPL president Pramod Boro, Assam Cabinet Minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma, MP Joyanta Basumatary, MLA Lawrence Islay, and other leaders led the rally, which showcased strong grassroots support.

Addressing the gathering, CEM Boro said: "An atmosphere of peace now prevails in Bodoland, where people no longer live in fear. The love, affection, peace, and harmony that once disappeared must be revived forever. Today, every community in BTR feels safe, with their language and culture protected."

He added: "The people of Kokrajhar have made their choice clear—only UPPL can fulfill the aspirations of BTR. On voting day, their blessings will be reserved for UPPL—the party that brought peace and progress."

Minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma echoed this sentiment, saying: "There is no conflict among different communities in the region. The peace established in the last four years cannot be destroyed by any evil force. There is no first-class or second-class citizen in BTR. All citizens and communities are equal here."

Party leaders said the massive participation reflects people's trust in the UPPL for development, peace, and prosperity.



Governor calls on faculty to foster curiosity and experiential learning under NEP 2020

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Assam Governor Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya, while addressing the Vice-Chancellors' meet at Gauhati University on Monday, urged faculty members to become mentors and innovators by adopting student-centric teaching methods that foster curiosity and connect classroom learning with real-life experiences. He emphasised the importance of experiential learning through projects.

The meet, organised by Raj Bhavan on the theme Transformative Reforms in Pedagogy, Curriculum and Assessment System: Immediate Need of NEP 2020, saw participation from vice-chancellors, senior faculty members, and academic leaders from across Assam.

The Governor said NEP 2020 has brought about comprehensive reforms, and faculty members must adapt by incorporating emerging technologies and innovative methods in teaching. He called for full and meaningful implementation of the policy, stressing the creation of a robust, inclusive, and innovative academic ecosystem.

The deliberations resolved that at least 20% of each course content will be taught in project mode outside the classroom. Greater



use of e-materials and e-courses was also encouraged, along with the development of teaching resources by faculty members themselves.

Discussions also focused on reducing excessive course content as per UGC norms, promoting critical thinking, and empowering students to become problem-solvers.

Considerable time was devoted to creating

new cells within universities for holistic student development. Steps were also suggested to improve NAAC and NIRF scores.

The meet proposed capacity-building initiatives for faculty and the creation of a Vice-Chancellors' WhatsApp Group to enable collaboration and sharing of best practices on pedagogy reforms and assessment systems.

Among those present were Prof. Debabrata Das, Advisor, Higher Education, Government of Assam; Dr Harbansh Dixit, Advisor to the Raj Bhavan Secretariat; Prof. Bechan Lal, OSD to the Governor; Commissioner and Secretary to the Governor S.S. Meenakshi Sundaram; Prof. Nani Gopal Mahanta, Vice-Chancellor of Gauhati University; and other academic dignitaries.

SC order on stray dog

The Supreme Court has modified its dog-order of August 11 and “dog-lovers” are beyond relief, except that the order doesn’t meet everybody’s expectations. The best thing about the order is that dog-lovers have been told not to feed strays on the streets and roads, in the vicinity of schools and at the entrances to gated communities. Food is not always a distraction but dogs might take exception to a stray child or elderly man invading the public feeding areas randomly selected by the compassionate dog-lovers. The problem is every dog-lover who feed stray dogs selects his or her feeding place. The dog-lover is as territorial as the dog! The Supreme Court’s modified order says the strays should be captured, sterilized and immunized and then released back into the human population. And because the stray dogs have been vaccinated against Rabies, children wouldn’t be in danger. The most that will happen will be fear of dogs instilled in the child, a fear that will stay for the rest of his/her lifetime. Fear of stray dogs is an international phenomenon. In Netherlands, it led to strong measures taken and today Netherlands is beyond the ken of stray dogs. But India being ‘Sanatani’, Indians are default animal-lovers, not just dog-lovers. The Supreme Court directed the Municipal Corporation of Delhi to release sterilised and vaccinated stray dogs back into their localities but not before the dogs are tested and declared rabies-free. Stray dogs betraying aggressive behaviour must be kept separate from the rest of the freely roaming stray dogs.

Is the MCD capable of carrying out this task? As it is, dog-lovers have been questioning the commitment of the inept MCD. The feeling drummed into the average Indian that our justices are a notch above common mortals. The stoppage of public feeding of stray dogs is a great relief to people who use roads for a smooth travel from ‘Point A’ to ‘Point B’. Stray dogs often take a liking for unprotected ankles and calves. So, while dedicated public feeding zones are a relief, the rider that sterilized and vaccinated stray dogs should be released back into their territorial biting grounds is still scary for the child and the majority of the elderly. Predicting dog behaviour is not in the domain of children and the elderly.

The top court’s order says designated feeding zones must be created and animal lovers can adopt stray dogs using the services of the MCD. A lot has been alleged about the MCD, will the municipal body up to the task? Only time will tell, but the three-judge bench of the Supreme Court has taken up the challenge with all sincerity with the hope that no dog breaches its trust. Dog-lovers have been saying that parents should doggy-train their kids just like they’re potty-trained, adding that children provoking stray dogs is a common sight on India’s thoroughfares, keep the children on a leash! Dog-lovers are wholly with the “voiceless dogs”. So much so, they take exception to even “It’s a dog’s life”, stray dogs are worthless.

Power Crisis and the Potential of Renewable Energy

Electricity is an indispensable component of modern life. Without it, societal progress, industrial development, educational expansion, healthcare facilities, and routine daily activities come to a standstill. Electricity is no longer merely a convenience but has become a fundamental necessity of life. From lighting homes to powering industrial machinery, facilitating irrigation in agriculture, and enhancing transportation systems, the role of electricity is unparalleled. However, the power crisis remains a complex and severe issue in various parts of the world. The causes of this crisis are multifaceted—rapid population growth, intensified industrialization, excessive energy consumption, and the limitations of traditional energy sources. Moreover, over-reliance on fossil fuels has led to environmental degradation and the depletion of energy resources. In this context, the importance of renewable energy has become immense. Renewable energy sources such as solar power, wind energy, hydropower, geothermal energy, and bioenergy offer solutions to the power crisis while also creating new possibilities for environmental conservation.

The power crisis is a persistent and intricate issue in many regions globally. One of its primary causes is population growth. As the world’s population continues to rise, so does the demand for electricity. From households to industries, agriculture, educational institutions, and healthcare services, the need for electricity is paramount. However, power generation capacity has not kept pace with this demand. Many rural areas still lack access to electricity, and even urban areas face frequent power outages due to shortages.

These outages disrupt daily life and cause economic losses. Industries suffer production setbacks due to the lack of electricity to operate machinery. In agriculture, irrigation pumps rely on electricity, and power shortages lead to reduced agricultural output. Educational institutions face obstacles in teaching and learning, as modern education systems depend heavily on electricity-powered tools like computers and projectors. In the healthcare sector, power shortages create challenges in emergency medical services, as hospitals require electricity to operate medical equipment, refrigerate medicines, and provide lighting for surgeries. These examples highlight the depth of the power crisis. Another significant

cause is the over-reliance on fossil fuels. Coal, oil, and natural gas reserves are finite, and their use has adverse environmental impacts. Carbon emissions exacerbate climate change, disrupting environmental balance. Rising temperatures, excessive rainfall, droughts, and increasing natural disasters affect agriculture, human life, and economies. It is evident that addressing the power crisis requires an alternative that meets energy demands while being environmentally sustainable. In this scenario, the importance and potential of renewable energy become clear. Renewable energy sources not only address electricity needs but also help combat climate change. These sources, derived from nature, are inexhaustible, making their use sustainable and environmentally friendly in the long term. Before delving into the various aspects and potential of renewable energy, it is essential to consider the social and economic impacts of the power crisis. Power shortages affect the quality of life across different societal strata. In rural areas, poor households rely on kerosene lamps for lighting, which impacts health. Children face barriers to education due to inadequate lighting at night. These issues underscore that the power crisis is not merely an energy shortage but a significant obstacle to societal progress.

The potential of renewable energy has emerged as a beacon of hope for resolving the power crisis. The defining feature of renewable energy is its ability to regenerate. Derived from natural sources, these energy reserves are inexhaustible. Solar power, wind energy, hydropower, geothermal energy, and bioenergy not only meet electricity demands

but also address climate change without harming the environment. Solar energy is one of the most promising renewable energy sources. Solar panels convert sunlight into electricity, enabling power supply from households to large industries. A key advantage of solar energy is its decentralized application, allowing installation in remote rural areas to provide electricity access. This improves the quality of life in rural communities. Solar energy production generates negligible carbon emissions, minimizing environmental impact. However, challenges exist. Solar energy availability depends on seasons and geographical locations, and production is not possible at night or on cloudy days. Energy storage sys-

tems, such as batteries, are needed to address this, but their cost and durability pose challenges. Nonetheless, technological advancements are gradually overcoming these issues. The cost of solar panel production has decreased, and new technologies have improved efficiency. Solar energy not only addresses rural power shortages but also creates new opportunities in the industrial sector. By meeting electricity demands and contributing to environmental conservation, solar energy paves the way for economic and social progress. As solar technology advances, its scope will expand, making electricity more accessible worldwide.

Wind energy is another vital renewable energy source. Wind turbines convert wind energy into electricity, particularly effective in coastal areas. Its environmentally friendly nature is a significant advantage, as it produces no harmful emissions. Additionally, the cost of wind energy production is relatively low, with minimal maintenance expenses after turbine installation. However, wind energy has limitations. Wind speed varies by location and depends on natural conditions. Large land areas are required for turbine installation, raising concerns about land use. Noise and visual impacts from turbines can cause local discontent, potentially affecting quality of life and natural aesthetics. Nevertheless, ongoing research and technological advancements are addressing these challenges. New designs reduce noise levels, and turbine efficiency is improving. Wind energy holds significant potential in areas with consistent wind speeds, contributing to electricity supply, environmental protection, and local economic growth through job creation.

Hydropower is another crucial renewable energy source. Dams and hydropower plants convert the kinetic energy of water into electricity, a method used for decades. Its reliability is a key advantage, as consistent water flow ensures steady power generation with minimal carbon emissions. However, large-scale hydropower projects require significant land and can impact local ecosystems, disrupting river flows and aquatic life. Dam construction may also displace local communities. Small-scale hydropower projects offer a solution, meeting local electricity needs with reduced environmental impact and lower maintenance costs. These projects are particularly effective in regions with consistent river flows, supporting rural electrification and economic development.

Geothermal energy, derived from Earth’s internal heat, is another promising

source. Its continuous availability, independent of weather conditions, is a major advantage, with minimal environmental impact. However, it requires specific geological conditions, limiting its use to areas with high geothermal activity. Initial investment costs are also high, though long-term benefits make it economically viable. Geothermal energy can address power shortages and support environmental conservation in suitable regions.

Bioenergy, produced from organic materials like agricultural waste and animal manure, is another valuable source. Its abundance in rural areas makes it accessible, and its use aids waste management. However, the quality and quantity of organic material affect production, and advanced technology may not be readily available in rural areas. Nonetheless, bioenergy holds significant potential for addressing rural power shortages, reducing waste, and boosting local economies.

Addressing the power crisis requires not only renewable energy but also technological advancements and policy support. Reduced production costs have made renewable energy more affordable, but initial investments remain a challenge. Government and private sector collaboration, subsidies, and policy frameworks can promote its adoption. Public awareness campaigns are also essential, as many remain unaware of renewable energy’s benefits. Renewable energy projects create jobs, from solar panel production to wind turbine installation, boosting rural economies and reducing reliance on fossil fuel imports. This strengthens national economies and supports environmental conservation.

The social and economic impacts of renewable energy are profound. It improves quality of life in remote areas by enhancing access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. However, the transition from traditional industries like coal and oil requires retraining programs for affected workers. Renewable energy reduces dependence on fossil fuels, strengthening economies and protecting the environment.

In conclusion, addressing the power crisis demands a multifaceted approach. Technological advancements, supportive policies, and public participation can maximize renewable energy’s potential. Beyond resolving the power crisis, renewable energy fosters environmental conservation and economic progress, ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come. Every step, from small-scale initiatives to large projects, plays a vital role in this endeavor.

Newspapers, books and magazines: Enduring or fading?

By: Satyabrata Borah

The question of whether newspapers, books, and magazines will survive in the near future is both timely and complex, as the world navigates an unprecedented digital transformation. These traditional forms of media have long been pillars of knowledge, culture, and communication, shaping societies and preserving ideas. However, the rise of digital platforms, social media, and instant information has cast doubt on their longevity. With smartphones, e-readers, and online content dominating modern consumption habits, can print media adapt and endure? This essay explores the challenges and opportunities facing newspapers, books, and magazines, examining their cultural significance, economic viability, and potential for reinvention in the digital age.

Newspapers have been a cornerstone of public discourse for centuries, delivering news, opinions, and stories to communities worldwide. In regions like Assam, local newspapers have played a vital role in preserving language and culture while informing readers about regional and global events. However, the digital revolution has disrupted their traditional model. Online news portals, social media platforms, and 24/7 news cycles offer instant updates, often for free, challenging the relevance of daily print editions. The decline in print circulation is evident globally, with many newspapers struggling to maintain readership as younger audiences turn to platforms like X or news aggregators. Advertising revenue, once the lifeblood of newspapers, has shifted to digital giants like Google and Meta, further straining print publications. Despite these challenges, newspapers possess unique strengths that could ensure their survival. Investigative journalism, in-depth reporting, and local coverage remain unparalleled in print media, offering a level of trust and credibility that many online sources lack. In Assam, newspapers like those in the Assamese language continue to serve as cultural touchstones, connecting communities to their heritage.

Books, too, face a transformative landscape. The rise of e-books and audiobooks has reshaped how people consume literature. Platforms like Amazon Kindle and Audible have made reading more accessible, allowing users to carry thousands of titles on a single device or listen to books on the go. While this has expanded the reach of literature, it has also raised concerns about the future of physical books. Bookstores, once bustling hubs of discovery, are closing in many parts of the world, unable to compete with online retailers offering lower prices and instant delivery. In smaller markets like Assam, where Assamese-language books hold cultural significance, the challenge is even more pronounced. Limited distribution networks and a growing preference for English-language content among younger readers threaten local publishing. Yet, physical books retain a timeless appeal. The tactile experience of turning pages, the smell of paper, and the aesthetic of a bookshelf are irreplaceable for many readers. Moreover, books remain a symbol of intellectual depth, offering immersive narratives and complex ideas that digital distractions often fail to match.

Magazines, with their blend of visuals, features, and niche content, face similar pressures. Lifestyle, fashion, and literary magazines have seen declining print sales as readers turn to blogs, YouTube channels, and social media influencers for similar content. In Assam, magazines focused

on literature and culture, such as those inspired by the legacy of literary figures, continue to hold a special place, but their readership is shrinking. The high cost of production, coupled with competition from free online alternatives, makes it difficult for magazines to remain financially viable. However, magazines have an advantage in their ability to cater to specific audiences. Niche publications, whether focused on art, science, or regional culture, can attract dedicated readers who value curated content. The challenge lies in balancing print and digital formats to meet evolving consumer preferences.

The digital age presents both threats and opportunities for print media. One of the most significant challenges is the shift in consumer behavior. Modern audiences, particularly younger generations, prioritize convenience and immediacy. Social media platforms provide real-time updates, while e-readers and streaming services offer instant access to books and articles. In contrast, print media requires time and effort, whether it’s picking up a newspaper, visiting a bookstore, or subscribing to a magazine. This shift is particularly evident in regions like Assam, where urban youth are increasingly drawn to globalized content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. The fast-paced nature of modern life leaves little room for the slower, reflective engagement that print media demands. Additionally, the environmental impact of print production, from paper usage to distribution, has raised concerns, pushing some consumers toward digital alternatives perceived as more sustainable.

Economic pressures further complicate the survival of print media. Newspapers and magazines rely heavily on subscriptions and advertising, both of which have been disrupted by digital platforms. Online ads are cheaper and more targeted, drawing revenue away from print publications. Similarly, the rise of self-publishing and free online content has reduced the profitability of traditional book publishing. In Assam, small-scale publishers of Assamese-language books and magazines face additional hurdles due to limited markets and high production costs. Many rely on government grants or cultural organizations to stay afloat, but these are not always sustainable. The decline in physical retail spaces, such as newsstands and bookstores, further limits access to print media, particularly in rural areas.

Despite these challenges, there are compelling reasons to believe that newspapers, books, and magazines can survive, albeit in adapted forms. One key factor is their ability to offer unique value. Newspapers, for instance, excel in providing in-depth analysis and local perspectives that online platforms often overlook. In Assam, regional newspapers remain a trusted source for community news, from local politics to cultural events. By focusing on hyper-local content and investigative journalism, newspapers can differentiate themselves from digital competitors. Similarly, books offer a depth of storytelling and intellectual engagement that short-form digital content cannot replicate. The resurgence of independent bookstores and literary festivals in some parts of the world suggests that physical books still hold cultural cachet. Magazines, too, can thrive by targeting niche audiences with high-quality, visually appealing content that digital platforms struggle to match.

Adaptation is key to survival. Many newspapers have already embraced digital editions, offering e-papers and subscription-based apps to reach

wider audiences. In Assam, some publications have launched online portals that complement their print editions, allowing them to stay relevant in a digital-first world. Books are undergoing a similar transformation, with publishers investing in e-books, audiobooks, and interactive formats to appeal to tech-savvy readers. In Assam, efforts to digitize Assamese literature, such as creating audiobooks of classic works, are gaining traction. Magazines are experimenting with hybrid models, combining print issues with vibrant online content, including videos and podcasts. These adaptations allow print media to meet modern demands while preserving their core strengths.

Cultural and educational institutions also play a crucial role in ensuring the survival of print media. In Assam, organizations like the Assam Sahitya Sabha have historically supported Assamese literature through events, publications, and discussion groups. By promoting local authors and hosting literary festivals, such institutions can keep print media relevant. Schools and universities can further this effort by incorporating newspapers, books, and magazines into curricula, fostering a love for reading among students. In Assam, some colleges have introduced book discussion groups and literary clubs, encouraging students to engage with both Assamese and global literature. These initiatives not only preserve cultural heritage but also cultivate a new generation of readers. The role of community engagement cannot be overlooked. Book discussion groups, literary festivals, and subscription drives can create a sense of belonging among readers, encouraging them to support print media. In Assam, community-driven initiatives, such as local book clubs or reading events, have helped sustain interest in Assamese literature. Similarly, newspapers and magazines can build loyal audiences by engaging readers through events, contests, and interactive content. Crowdfunding and subscription models, such as those used by some independent magazines, offer a way to involve readers directly in sustaining print media.

Technological innovation also offers hope. Advances in printing technology, such as print-on-demand services, can reduce costs and make small-scale publishing more viable. In Assam, this could benefit local publishers producing Assamese-language books and magazines. Augmented reality and interactive e-books could enhance the reading experience, blending the tactile appeal of print with digital interactivity. Additionally, the growing popularity of audiobooks and podcasts suggests that print media can evolve into new formats while retaining their storytelling essence.

The survival of newspapers, books, and magazines hinges on their ability to balance tradition with innovation. While the digital age has disrupted their traditional models, it has also opened new avenues for engagement. By embracing hybrid formats, focusing on niche content, and leveraging cultural and educational support, print media can remain relevant. In Assam, where literature and language are deeply tied to identity, the preservation of newspapers, books, and magazines is particularly significant. These mediums carry the stories, ideas, and voices of a community, ensuring that its heritage endures. With collective effort from publishers, readers, and institutions, print media can adapt to the demands of the future while continuing to enrich lives. The legacy of print, from the pages of a newspaper to the chapters of a book, remains a powerful force, capable of thriving in the near future and beyond.

Myanmar's Geopolitical Crossroads: A Crisis in India's Backyard

By: Bhaskar J Mahanta IPS(Retd)

Myanmar today is not a single, unified entity but a complex mosaic of competing forces. The military junta, or the State Administration Council (SAC), is losing its grip on the country, ceding territory and influence to a determined resistance movement composed of People’s Defence Forces (PDFs) and powerful ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). For India, particularly its northeastern states, this unfolding crisis is not just international news; it is a matter of immediate and vital concern, impacting security, trade, and regional stability. This article examines the current state of the conflict, the rise of the Arakan Army, and the delicate geopolitical dance involving India and China, with a specific focus on the strategic importance of the India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway.

The Unravelling of the Junta and the Humanitarian Crisis

Since the February 2021 coup, Myanmar has been in a state of escalating civil war. The military, known as the Tatmadaw, has faced unprecedented resistance, suffering its worst losses in history. Its forces have been routed from numerous towns and military outposts, particularly in the northern and western parts of the country. A key turning point was Operation 1027, a sweeping offensive launched in late 2023 by the Brotherhood Alliance that demonstrated the military’s vulnerability and inspired resistance forces nationwide. The junta has since resorted to brutal tactics, including indiscriminate airstrikes and forced conscription, which have only fuelled popular opposition.

The humanitarian situation is dire. As of late 2025, over 3.5 million people are internally displaced, and a staggering 19.9 million are in need of humanitarian assistance. Public services have collapsed, and the economy is in a state of freefall, with widespread poverty and food insecurity. The country was also hit by a major earthquake in March 2025, adding another layer of devastation to the already worsening crisis.

The Arakan Army's Ascendancy and its Strategic Implications

For India and Bangladesh, the most consequential development is the rapid rise of the Arakan Army (AA) in Rakhine State. The AA has seized control of a majority of the townships in the state, including the entire 271-kilometer border with Bangladesh. They are now a de facto governing body in much of the re-

gion, administering justice and controlling trade. The AA’s ultimate goal, rooted in their ethno-nationalist ideology, is to restore the sovereignty of the ancient Kingdom of Arakan, which they believe was a distinct entity from the rest of Burma.

This presents a profound geopolitical puzzle. The AA’s territorial gains put them in control of critical infrastructure projects that are central to the strategic interests of both India and China.

India’s Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project: This project, a cornerstone of India’s “Act East Policy,” is designed to provide a sea-river-road route from Kolkata to the northeastern states via the Sit-twe Port in Rakhine. With the AA now controlling this region, the project’s success is entirely contingent on their cooperation.

China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Similarly, the deep-sea port and oil and gas pipelines in Kyaukphyu are central to China’s BRI. While Beijing has reportedly intensified its backing of the junta, it also appears to be preparing for a scenario where the AA controls the facility, given the group’s stated commitment to protecting foreign investments.

The Chittagong-Rohingya connection further complicates the situation. The AA’s territorial ambitions have raised concerns in Dhaka, while its shifting stance on the Rohingya—caught between a history of ethnic tensions and recent exploitation by the junta—adds a delicate layer to the crisis for both Bangladesh and the international community.

The IMT Trilateral Highway: A Stalled Dream

Crucially, the conflict has directly impacted the India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway, a project of immense strategic and economic importance to India. This 1,360 km road network, connecting Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand, is envisioned as the physical embodiment of India’s “Act East Policy.”

For Northeast India, the highway carries transformative potential: it would transform the landlocked region into a gateway for trade with Southeast Asia, significantly reducing logistics costs and creating a new economic corridor. It is a key enabler for India to strengthen its economic and diplomatic presence in the ASEAN region and a crucial counter to China’s growing influence.

However, despite its immense promise, the project is decades behind schedule. While the sections in

India and Thailand are largely complete, the crucial stretches in Myanmar are stalled, with a new deadline now set for 2027.

Security Challenges: The highway passes through active conflict zones, creating an extremely dangerous environment for construction workers. Key sections, such as the 120 km Kalewa-Yagyi road and the Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa bridge projects, have faced repeated delays due to the violence.

Political Instability: The lack of a stable central government has complicated the signing of a Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA), which is essential for the seamless flow of goods and people. The absence of a reliable partner in Naypyitaw has forced New Delhi to re-evaluate its approach.

The highway’s fate will depend on New Delhi’s ability to navigate the complex and dangerous landscape of a civil war in its own backyard. Recent high-level visits by Indian officials to Myanmar highlight a continued commitment to the project despite the immense challenges.

India's Delicate Balancing Act

The influx of Chin and Kuki refugees from Myanmar into Mizoram and Manipur has strained resources and caused community tension. While the Mizos share a strong ethnic affinity with the Chin, the issue of illegal immigration has become a flashpoint in Manipur’s ongoing ethnic conflict.

The era of dealing exclusively with the central government in Naypyitaw is over. India’s traditional “neighbourhood first” policy is being tested by a new reality where non-state actors like the Arakan Army wield significant power in key border regions. The situation demands a nuanced and flexible approach from New Delhi, one that recognizes the de facto authority of groups controlling the ground while maintaining diplomatic channels with all stakeholders.

The super highway dream, the Rohingya crisis, and the fight for autonomy in Myanmar are all part of a single, complex tapestry that demands a strategic and forward-looking response from India. The outcome of this war will directly impact the economic future and security of India’s Northeast, making the conflict in Myanmar a defining geopolitical challenge for New Delhi. (The author is the former DGP (HoPF) of Assam and the General Secretary of the Think Tank called Society to Harmonise Aspirations for Responsible Engagement—SHARE)

TAIWAN'S PATH TO TRUE ENERGY RESILIENCE

By: Milena de Andrade

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

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

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

The Energy Achilles' Heel

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

Taiwan holds a critical position as the world's sixth-largest importer of liquefied natural gas (LNG), as of 2025. This heavy reliance is further exacerbated by a strategic energy reserve estimated to last only 11 to 14 days under normal consumption conditions. Such vulnerability exposes the island to sharp fluctuations in global energy prices, as seen in 2022 when fuel costs surged due to the war in Ukraine.

In a scenario marked by geopolitical tension this energy dependency becomes Taiwan's "Achilles' heel," posing an existential risk to the island's security. Defense and security experts have pointed out that a maritime blockade would likely be among the People's Liberation Army (PLA)'s strategies in a conflict over Taiwan, directly targeting these supply lines and potentially crippling Taiwan's energy infrastructure within weeks. Therefore, moving away from imported fossil fuels toward domestically sourced energy is not merely an environmental priority, but a matter of national security.

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



island-wide.

Distributed Resilience

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

Battery storage lies at the heart of this architecture, playing a vital role in stabilizing intermittent renewable inputs, absorbing excess energy, and redistributing it during peak demand. It also enhances system reliability during grid failures. The strategic benefits of combining decentralized energy with storage include not only greater efficiency, sustainability, and cost savings, but also critical backup capacity for essential infrastructure — such as hospitals, data centers, and military facilities.

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

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

As part of its push toward a more resilient and flexible energy system, Taiwan is actively developing its battery storage infrastructure. The government has set a target of reaching around 590 megawatts (MW) of installed battery storage by 2025, combining efforts from both public initiatives and private sector investments. Although rel-

atively small in scale compared to Taiwan's overall electricity demand, this capacity would play a crucial role in managing fluctuations from renewable sources and ensuring backup power during emergencies.

Looking further ahead, Taiwan plans to expand its energy storage capacity significantly, aiming for up to 20 gigawatt-hours (GWh) by 2030. This long-term goal reflects the country's commitment to integrating distributed storage into its broader strategy for energy security and national preparedness. Complementing these developments is Taiwan's considerable potential in renewable energy, particularly in solar and offshore wind. Geothermal energy also offers significant promise, though it remains largely untapped due to location constraints, regulatory complexity, and land use conflicts.

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

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

What About Nuclear Energy?

Taiwan's nuclear energy policy has been politically contentious for decades, culminating in the decommissioning of its last reactor in May 2025, as part of its ambition to become a "nuclear-free homeland." However, the more vulnerable the population feels, the more divided public opinion has become regarding nuclear power in the country. The 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan deeply impacted public perceptions of nuclear safety in Taiwan. In its aftermath, widespread protests broke out across the island, reflecting growing anxiety about the risks of nuclear power. By 2014, this rising public concern had translated

into strong majority support for phasing out nuclear energy, leading the government to suspend work on the almost-finished Lungmen (Fourth) Nuclear Power Plant.

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

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

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

The Limits of Nuclear Energy

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

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

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

Simultaneously, the economic and logistical uncertainty caused by such operations would suppress industrial activity, which accounts for over 50 percent of Taiwan's total power use, leading to a steep decline in overall energy demand. Under these reduced-demand conditions, existing coal plants, combined with an expanding portfolio of renewable energy sources, could sustain the island's electricity needs for over a year. This directly challenges the argument that nuclear baseload energy would be "essential" for survival in such a situation.

Furthermore, one of China's key strategic objectives in implementing a blockade or quarantine would be to avoid provoking a direct military response from the United States and its allies. To achieve this, China would aim to force the Taiwanese government to surrender — or at least lose its capacity to resist — as quickly as possible, ideally before any external intervention becomes feasible. If China can impose enough economic and logistical pressure on the island for a sustained pe-

riod, it may either coerce Taiwan into negotiations or create favorable conditions for a full-scale invasion.

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

Nuclear Energy as a Dangerous Liability in an Open Conflict

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

The case of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, captured by Russian forces in March 2022, underscores this risk. Since its occupation, the site has faced repeated shelling and drone strikes, sparking global concern over nuclear safety. Similarly, Chinese military exercises have included simulated attacks on Taiwan's energy infrastructure, suggesting that such facilities are seen as viable targets for disruption, if not total destruction.

The inherent risks of operating nuclear facilities in a seismically active, densely populated, and geopolitically volatile region are significantly magnified in wartime. During such periods, safety protocols may be compromised, and external power supplies may be disrupted. The possibility of a nuclear incident whether due to direct attack, collateral damage, or loss of control, is so catastrophic that it transforms nuclear energy into a dangerous liability in a warzone, regardless of China's initial intentions. The risk-reward analysis for Taiwan strongly favors avoiding such a potential disaster. The consequences of even a minor failure are so severe that the risk becomes simply unacceptable. Therefore, it becomes evident that the issue is not merely that nuclear power is unnecessary or dangerous in isolation, but rather that it fails to address the root causes of Taiwan's energy vulnerability, and introduces new, uncontrollable risks in the process.

Charting a Truly Resilient Future for Taiwan

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

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

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

Strengthening India's green shield for climate and disaster resilience

By: Satendra Singh

India is currently facing a rise in disasters. The record-breaking heatwaves of 2024, with temperatures in parts of Rajasthan exceeding 50 °C, served as a stark warning of the extremes ahead. Cyclones Asna and Fengal caused widespread damage along the coasts, while Himalayan states endured snowstorms, flash floods, landslides, and the looming threat of glacial lake outbursts.

The year 2025 has proven to be equally harsh. Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh have experienced unexpected cloud-bursts, slope failures, and swiftly retreating glaciers that continue to destabilise fragile mountain ecosystems. Himachal Pradesh, specifically, faced repeated cloudbursts and flash floods that ravaged communities. At the beginning of August, the Himalayan village of Dharali was ravaged by a devastating flood, believed to have been caused by a glacial lake outburst.

Just weeks later, a sudden cloudburst in Kishtwar, Jammu and Kashmir, unleashed torrents of water that devastated houses, livelihoods, and lives.

These calamities are no longer isolated shocks but part of a systemic crisis. They are driven by a changing climate, reckless development in vulnerable areas, and most significantly, the degradation of natural buffers. Among the strongest of these natural buffers are forests — living systems that regulate rainfall, stabilise slopes, store carbon, and shield vulnerable communities from the worst impacts of climate extremes.

Forests: Nature's Climate Regulators

Forests are not merely scenic landscapes; they function as dynamic, self-supporting ecosystems that regulate climate and risks. They capture rainwater and

slow its runoff, reducing flood peaks. Their root structures stabilise soils and slopes, reducing the risk of landslides. Coastal mangroves absorb the energy of storm surges, while in arid areas, shelterbelts protect farmlands from dust storms. In cities, tree cover lowers surface temperatures and reduces flash flooding by absorbing rainwater.

The India State of Forest Report 2023 reveals that forests and tree cover now extend over 25.17 per cent of the country's geographical area — 827,357 square kilometres — marking a modest but significant increase from 2021. The estimated total carbon stock in the nation's forests is 7,285.5 million tonnes. The carbon stock of the country has risen by 81.5 million tonnes in comparison to the previous assessment. Regarding status on achievement of target under Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) related to carbon sequestration, the current assessment shows that India's carbon stock has reached 30.43 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent; which indicates that as compared to the base year of 2005, India has already reached 2.29 billion tonnes of additional carbon sink as against the target of 2.5 to 3.0 billion tonnes by 2030.

Forestry Throughout the Disaster Cycle

Forests play a clear role throughout the entire disaster management cycle. During the prevention and mitigation phase, forests serve as buffers by managing water flow, minimising erosion, and reinforcing terrain stability. Coastal plantations protect inland regions from cyclonic winds and tidal waves, whereas inland forests lessen the intensity of droughts and sandstorms.

Preparedness also benefits from forestry. In Uttarakhand, forest watchtowers linked to satellite telemetry have been integrated into wildfire early warn-

ing systems, enabling quicker responses and timely evacuation. Forest departments regularly provide training to communities in fire management, enhancing their capacity to deal with disaster risks.

When disaster strikes, forests become a critical lifeline. Bamboo and wood serve as materials for temporary shelters, fodder supports livestock, and non-timber products offer food and medicine when supply chains fail. Forests also speed up recovery. Following Cyclone Fani, the restoration of mangroves in Odisha improved coastal defence while also rejuvenating livelihoods via fisheries and activities related to forests. In Bundelkhand, reforestation of watersheds enhanced groundwater recharge, turning drought-stricken villages into more resilient agricultural communities. In the Himalayas, focused reforestation has secured slopes and revived essential water regulation services.

Perspectives from India and Other Regions

India's forest programs illustrate how effectively focused actions can mitigate hazard risks. The restoration of mangroves in Odisha has shielded against cyclones. In the Kendrapara district of the state, villages shielded by mangroves suffered far less damage during the 1999 super cyclone and Cyclone Phailin (2013) than areas where mangroves had vanished. Uttarakhand's reforestation efforts in delicate catchments have minimised erosion and decreased flooding. In Rajasthan, establishing shelterbelts of resilient local species has safeguarded agricultural areas from desert winds and enhanced local microclimates.

In Himachal Pradesh's Shiwalik hills, afforestation and watershed programs have reduced soil erosion and landslides, protecting slopes and water resources. In cities like Delhi and Hyderabad,



urban forests and green belts have lowered temperatures by 2-3°C and reduced flood risks.

These lessons resonate globally. Japan has historically preserved coastal forests as a form of green infrastructure to reduce the effects of tsunamis. Chile incorporates forestry into its climate and disaster strategies. These instances emphasise a significant reality: forests represent more than biodiversity; they embody survival and resilience.

A Centre of Excellence in Forestry

To effectively realise the potential of forestry in enhancing resilience, India should pursue well-planned and forward-looking measures. At the core of this transformation lies the vision to

establish a Centre of Excellence in Forestry for Climate and Disaster Resilience (CEF-CDR) at the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy — on the lines of the Centre for Disaster Management at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie — positioning it as a leading centre for forestry-based knowledge, innovation, and leadership in resilience building.

Designed as a centre for knowledge, innovation, and application, its mission would be: "to utilise forestry as a primary defence against climate change and disasters, integrating science, technology, and local wisdom."

This centre could promote specialised training, facilitate ap-

plied research, encourage technology adoption, and foster international partnerships — making sure forestry stays integral to India's resilience framework. This must be complemented by better incorporation of forestry into national and state climate and disaster resilience plans, regarding forests as essential infrastructure for resilience rather than an afterthought. Requiring Disaster Impact Assessments in addition to Environmental Impact Assessments for all significant projects will enhance the protection of vital forests from immediate economic compromises.

The capacity of institutions also needs to be enhanced.

The Cost-Benefit Advantage

The economic argument for forestry is as strong as the environmental one. Strategies for disaster risk reduction based on ecosystems provide benefits that far exceed their expenses. The contrast between natural and artificial defences is educational. Constructing seawalls along a coastline is highly costly, whereas rehabilitating mangroves provides similar or superior protection at a reduced price, along with additional advantages for fisheries, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration. Thus, investing in forests, therefore, is both a climate and financial strategy.

From Silent Guardians to Strategic Shields

India today faces a dual challenge: accelerating climate change and escalating disaster risks. Forests, known for their capacity to cool the environment, stabilise slopes, shield coasts, reduce floods, and support livelihoods, represent some of the nation's most valuable yet under-utilised resources.

To harness their full potential, India needs to alter its perception and management of forests. They should no longer be viewed merely as passive biodiversity reserves but as proactive, strategic shields-green infrastructure vital to national resilience. Accomplishing this necessitates courageous policies, more robust institutions, scientific innovations, and community involvement. It requires the incorporation of environmental protections at each phase of development planning and disaster response.

The way is evident. By treating forests as vital resources and investing in them with the seriousness they deserve, India can turn its "silent guardians" into active frontline defences — securing lives, livelihoods, and sustainable growth in an unpredictable climate. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

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Sri Lankan court grants bail to ex-president Wickremesinghe in graft case, next hearing in Oct

COLOMBO, Aug 26: A Sri Lankan court on Tuesday granted bail to former president Ranil Wickremesinghe in a case relating to alleged misuse of state funds.

Colombo Fort Magistrate Nilupuli Lankapura ordered that the 76-year-old leader be released on bail with three sureties of LKR 5 million each.

Wickremesinghe joined the proceedings virtually from the Intensive Care Unit of the Colombo National Hospital, where he is undergoing treatment.

His lawyers cited deteriorating health conditions, seeking his release on bail, while state attorneys opposed the plea and argued that he should remain in remand custody until the trial concludes.

The case will be taken up again at the end of October, the court

said.

President's Counsel Thilak Marapana, Anuja Premaratne, Upul Jayasuriya and Ali Sabry appeared on behalf of Wickremesinghe, while Additional Solicitor General Dileepa Peiris represented the Attorney General.

Submitting Wickremesinghe's medical reports, Premaratne told the court that three of the four main arteries of the 75-year-old former president's heart were blocked, his heart tissues had suffered necrosis, and he was also battling a lung infection along with long-standing diabetes.

A cardiac specialist briefed the court in detail on his health condition.

"By mere appearance, one cannot notice that such serious medical



ical conditions exist," Premaratne said. The court proceedings took place amid a heavy security cordon

around the Fort Magistrate's Court. Hundreds of opposition supporters gathered outside to protest Wickremesinghe's arrest.

According to the Daily Mirror news portal, a policeman on duty near the Fort Magistrate's Court sustained injuries after being hit by a bottle thrown by a protester. Eyewitnesses said the bottle was aimed at a YouTuber but struck the policeman when the latter ducked for cover.

Wickremesinghe, who served as President from July 2022 to September 2024, was arrested on Friday last week after over five hours of questioning by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

He became the first Sri Lankan head of state to be arrested in the country's post-independence history. The former president was

taken to the main Magazine Remand prison close to midnight on Friday after the Colombo Fort magistrate's court remanded him till August 26. Initially admitted to the prison hospital, Wickremesinghe was later transferred to the National Hospital ICU after his health deteriorated due to dehydration.

Wickremesinghe has been accused of misusing LKR 16.6 million of state funds to finance a private visit to the UK in 2023 to attend a university convocation of his wife Maithree.

He has denied the charge, insisting the invitation was extended to him in his official capacity as President.

The CID has also recorded statements from some of his aides in connection with the case. (PTT)

Tropical storm leaves 3 dead in Vietnam, brings heavy rain to parts of Southeast Asia

HANOI, Aug 26: Heavy rain fell Tuesday in parts of Southeast Asia after a tropical storm made landfall in Vietnam, causing at least three deaths, damage to homes and flooding in the capital and coastal areas.

State television network VTV said the remnants of Typhoon Kajiki were moving over Laos on Tuesday. Heavy rain also was forecast in Thailand and people were told to be vigilant about possible flooding into Wednesday.

Three people died, including a 90-year-old man whose house collapsed in the rain and a man who was electrocuted Friday while preparing his home for the storm, while 13 people were injured and thousands of houses were damaged in the country's central region, VTV reported.

The storm reportedly caused electricity outages in Nghe An province beginning Monday night.

In Hanoi on Tuesday, people tried to move motorbikes through deep water as cars and buses slowly moved along flooded streets.

"It's flooding everywhere because it has been raining so much. I'm stuck here and can't get to work," said Nguyen Thu Quynh, an office worker who pushed her motorcycle out of a street flooded with knee-deep water.

Prior to the storm's landfall Monday afternoon, Vietnam's government planned to evacuate nearly 600,000 people in Thanh Hoa, Quang Tri, Hue and Danang provinces, where more than 152,000 homes were in high-risk areas. More than 16,500 soldiers and 107,000 paramilitary personnel were assisting with evacuations or were on standby for search and rescue, VTV reported.

Two airports in Thanh Hoa and Quang Tri provinces remained closed Tuesday after flights were halted Monday.

The national weather agency said Kajiki made landfall Monday afternoon in central Vietnam with maximum sustained winds of 117 kph (73 mph). The torrential rain triggered flash flood and landslide alerts. It hit during high tides that caused coastal flooding in Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces.

Kajiki earlier brought winds and rain to China's southern Hainan Island.

In Thailand, the Meteorological Department warned of heavy rain nationwide Tuesday. Residents in foothills and low-lying areas near waterways were warned about possible flash floods and landslides.

Scientists published a 2024 study warning seas warmed by climate change will result in Southeast Asia's cyclones forming closer to land, strengthening faster and lasting longer and raising risks for cities. (AP)

Australia accuses Iran of organising antisemitic attacks, expels ambassador

MELBOURNE, Aug 26: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese accused Iran of organising two antisemitic attacks in Australia and said the country was cutting off diplomatic relations with Tehran in response on Tuesday.

The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation concluded the Iranian government had directed arson attacks on the Lewis Continental Kitchen, a kosher food company, in Sydney in October last year and on the Addas Israel synagogue in Melbourne in December last year, Albanese said.

Iran's government had no immediate reaction.

Australian intelligence says Iran was behind arson attacks

There has been a steep rise in antisemitic incidents in Sydney and Melbourne since the Israel-Hamas war began in 2023.

"ASIO has now gathered enough credible intelligence to reach a deeply disturbing conclusion," Albanese told reporters. "The Iranian government directed at least two of these attacks. Iran has sought to disguise its involvement but ASIO assesses it was behind the attacks."

"These were extraordinary and dangerous acts of aggression or orchestrated by a foreign nation on Australian soil," he said. "They were attempts to undermine social cohesion and sow discord in our community. It is totally unacceptable."

Australia breaks off diplomatic relations and warns citizens in Iran

Shortly before the announcement, the Australian government told Iran's Ambassador to Australia Ahmad Sadeghi that he will be expelled. It also withdrew Australian diplomats posted in Iran to a third country, Albanese said.

An alert to Australians in Iran noted the embassy's closure and urged them to "strongly consider leaving as soon as possible, if it is safe to do so."

"Foreigners in Iran, including Australians and dual Australian-Iranian nationals, are at a high risk of arbitrary detention or arrest," the warning read.

Australia updated its warning to travellers to its highest level: "Do not travel" to Iran.

Iran has a long history of detaining Westerners or those with ties abroad to use as bargaining chips in negotiations.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong said that Canberra would keep some diplomatic lines open to Tehran to advance Australia's interests. She added that it was the first time Australia has expelled an ambassador since World War II.

Albanese aims to declare

Iran's Revolutionary Guard a terrorist organisation

Albanese said that Australia will legislate to list Iran's Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organisation.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard has been accused of carrying out attacks abroad over the decades of its existence, though it broadly denies any involvement. The Guard's Quds, or Jerusalem, Force is its expeditionary arm and is accused by Western nations of using local militants and criminals in the past to target dissidents and Israelis abroad.

A spokesperson for the Executive Council of Australian Jewry welcomed the terrorist designation for the Revolutionary Guard, adding in a statement that the group was "outraged" that a foreign actor was behind the crimes.

"Foremost, these were attacks that deliberately targeted Jewish Australians, destroyed a sacred house of worship, caused millions of dollars of damage, and terrified our community," the statement said.

Since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war, Israel has arrested several people on charges they had been paid or encouraged by Iran to carry out vandalism and monitor potential targets there. The move against Iran came a week after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu branded Albanese a "weak politician who had betrayed Israel" by recognising a Palestinian state.

Netanyahu's extraordinary public rebuke on social media came after an Aug 11 announcement by Albanese that his government's recognition of a Palestinian state will be formalised at the United Nations General Assembly in September. The announcement was followed by tit-for-tat cancellations of visas for Australian and Israeli officials.

Australia says Iran helped escalate antisemitic incidents

Neither ASIO director-general Mike Burgess nor Albanese explained what evidence there was of Iranian involvement.

Burgess said no Iranian diplomats in Australia were involved. "This was directed by the IRGC through a series of overseas cut-out facilitators to coordinators that found their way to tasking Australians," Burgess said.

While antisemitic incidents increased in Australia after the Israel-Hamas war began on Oct 7, 2023, Iran was responsible for a transition in October last year when the violence more directly targeted people, businesses and place of worship," Burgess said.

"Iran started the first of those," Burgess said. (AP)

Australian police hunt for gunman who killed 2 officers, shot another in rural town

WELLINGTON (NEW ZEALAND), Aug 26: Two police officers were killed and another seriously wounded in a shooting Tuesday at a property in a rural part of Australia. The gunman remained at large as police scoured a vast remote area.

The shooting occurred in midmorning when 10 armed police officers tried to execute a search warrant at a property in Porepunkah, a town of just over 1,000 people in Victoria state 320 kilometres northeast of Melbourne.

The suspect killed a 59-year-old detective and a 35-year-old senior constable, Victoria's Chief Commissioner of Police Mike Bush told reporters at a news conference in the nearby city of Wangaratta.

The officers "were met by the offender and they were murdered in cold blood," Bush said. The man fled alone, on foot and heavily armed into surrounding forest where hundreds of officers were still searching for him, the police chief said.

Bush would not divulge what the warrant related to and wouldn't confirm the man's name or believed motivations. Officers were also seeking the man's wife and two children, whose whereabouts were unknown.

Ukraine counts on India's contribution to ending war with Russia: Zelenskyy

KYIV, Aug 26: President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his greetings on Ukraine's Independence Day, saying Kyiv was relying on "India's contribution" to end the war with Russia.

Zelenskyy, in a social media post, said Ukraine appreciates India's dedication to "peace and dialogue".

"Now, as the entire world strives to end this horrible war with dignity and lasting peace, we count on India's contribution," Zelenskyy said.

"Every decision that strengthens diplomacy leads to better security not only in Europe, but also in the Indo-Pacific and beyond," he added.

On August 16, Prime Minister Modi wished the people of Ukraine a future marked by peace and progress as he thanked Zelenskyy for his Independence Day wishes.

Wishing India on its Independence Day on August 15, Zelenskyy said he hoped New Delhi would contribute to efforts aimed at ending the war with Russia.

Modi said on X, "Thank you President Zelenskyy for your warm greetings. I deeply value the joint commitment to forging even closer ties between India and Ukraine. We earnestly wish our friends in Ukraine a future marked by peace, progress and prosperity."

Zelenskyy on Tuesday posted a letter he received from Prime Minister Modi on August 24 which thanked the Ukrainian president for his "thoughtful message" and "kind wishes" on India's Independence Day.

Recalling his visit to Kyiv in August last year, Modi said he looked forward to strengthening "our mutually beneficial cooperation". (PTT)

Imran Khan seeks registration of case against Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz for denying him 'basic facilities' in jail

LAHORE, Aug 26: Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan has filed an application with police seeking registration of a case against Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and senior government officers for denying him "basic facilities" in jail.

The 72-year-old cricketer-turned-politician has been behind bars since August 2023 after he was booked in multiple cases. Currently, he is in the Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi.

In his application against Maryam and eight other jail officers, Khan wrote to the police chief of Rawalpindi that he is being denied even basic facilities at the jail at their behest.

"On the instructions of the Punjab



chief minister, even his basic rights as a prisoner are being violated. There is no light in the cell, and my family members are also being denied visitation rights," Khan said.

He also accused police officers - Zainab and Aizaz - stationed at the outpost of Adiala Jail, of harassing his family members. He demanded

registration of an FIR against Maryam and eight others for denying him basic facilities in jail.

Earlier in a post on social media, Khan said while confined to a solitary confinement cell in prison, he is fighting for the true freedom of his nation, and he will continue to stand firm until he frees his people from the chains of slavery.

"I have yet again been placed under complete isolation. Meetings with my family and lawyers have been suspended. In order to keep me entirely cut off from the outside world and unaware of current affairs, every source of information, whether television or newspapers, has been completely blocked," he said. (PTT)

Protesters in Israel demand release of hostages as Gaza strikes kill 16, hospitals say

LOD (ISRAEL), Aug 26: Protesters in Israel on Tuesday torched tires, blocked highways and clamoured for a ceasefire that would free hostages still in Gaza, as Israeli leaders pressed ahead with plans for an offensive which they argue is needed to crush Hamas.

The disruption came as Palestinians in Gaza braced for the expanded offensive against a backdrop of displacement, destruction and parts of the territory plunging into famine.

It also came a day after deadly strikes against Gaza's main hospital killed 20 people including medics and journalists, among them Mariam Dagga, a journalist who worked for The Associated Press.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to hold a security cabinet meeting later Tuesday, but it's unclear if he will discuss ceasefire efforts. He has said that Israel will launch an expanded offensive in Gaza City while simultaneously pursuing a ceasefire, though Israel has yet to send a negotiating team to discuss a proposal on the table.

Netanyahu has said the offensive is the best way to weaken Hamas and return hostages, but hostage families and their supporters have pushed back.

"Go back to the negotiation table. There's a good deal on the table. It's something we can work with,"

said Ruby Chen, the father of 21-year-old Itay Chen, a dual Israeli-American citizen whose body is being held in Gaza. "We could get a deal done to bring all the hostages back."

Hamas captured 251 hostages on Oct 7, 2023. The vast majority have been released during ceasefires. Israel has only rescued eight hostages alive. Fifty hostages remain in Gaza, and around 20 of them are believed by Israel to still be living.

Responding to a call from Israel's Hostages and Missing Families Forum for a "National Day of Struggle," protesters waved banners that read "Hostage Deal Now".

The relatives of hostages said they hope steady pressure can push Netanyahu and his security cabinet to commit to ceasefire talks. But far-right members of his coalition have repeatedly threatened to bolt if Israel agrees to a truce and have dismissed the protesters' demands.

"We could have ended the war a year ago and brought all the hostages and soldiers home. We could have saved hostages and soldiers, but the prime minister chose, again and again, to sacrifice civilians for the sake of his rule," said Einav Zangauker, whose 25-year-old son Matan was abducted from one of Israel's hardest hit kibbutzim on Oct 7. (PTT)

Trump fires Fed Governor Lisa Cook, opening new front in fight for control over central bank

WASHINGTON, Aug 26: US President Donald Trump fired Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook late Monday, a sharp escalation in his battle to exert greater control over what has long been considered an institution independent from day-to-day politics.

Trump said in a letter posted on his Truth Social platform that he is firing Cook because of allegations that she committed mortgage fraud. Bill Pulte, a Trump appointee to the agency that regulates mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, made the accusations last week.

Pulte alleged that Cook had claimed two primary residences -- in Ann Arbor, Michigan and Atlanta -- in 2021 to get better mortgage terms. Mortgage rates are often higher on second homes or those purchased to rent. The announcement came days after Cook said she wouldn't leave her post despite Trump previously calling for her to resign. The Fed's board has seven members, meaning Trump's move could have deep economic and political ramifications.

Trump said in announcing the move that he had the constitutional authority to remove Cook, but doing so will raise questions about control of the Fed as an independent entity. The firing is likely to touch off a legal battle and Cook could be allowed to remain in her seat while the case plays out. Cook would have to fight the legal battle herself, as the injured party, rather than the Fed. (AP)

Nearly 2 lakh people evacuated across Pak's Punjab amid rising water levels in eastern rivers

LAHORE, Aug 26: Nearly two lakh people were evacuated from flood-prone areas to safer places across Pakistan's Punjab province till Tuesday as authorities issued warnings and alerts regarding rising water levels in almost all eastern rivers.

"Indus, Chenab, Ravi and Sutlej rivers are experiencing low to high flooding owing to torrential monsoon rains in the catchment areas, and more rain is expected over the next 48 hours," Punjab Emergency Services Rescue 1122 spokesperson Farooq Ahmad said in a statement. He said the evacuation operation is being conducted in Kasur, Okara, Pakpattan, Bahawalnagar, Vehari, and Narowal, with 25,000 people relocated to temporary residences from these flood-hit areas.

A senior official of Punjab Emergency Services told PTI on Tuesday that nearly 200,000 people have been evacuated from Kasur, Okara, Pakpattan, Bahawalnagar, Vehari, Layyah, Bhakkar and Narowal.



"Over 175,000 people left their houses on their own, while 25,000 people, who were stuck in flood-hit areas, have been rescued through boats by the government rescue agencies," the official said.

Hundreds of houses have been damaged by the floods, Ahmad added.

"A high alert has been issued in Kasur,

Okara, Pakpattan, Bahawalnagar, Vehari and Narowal in light of a flood alert by India," he said.

According to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), there has been a high flood alert in Punjab because of heavy rains.

"There is a risk of high to very high flooding in the Chenab, Ravi and Sutlej rivers, whereas urban flooding is also expected in the Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Gujranwala divisions," it said.

It added that a high-level flooding warning has been issued at the Harike location of the Sutlej River.

"However, there is a low flood situation at Kalabagh and Chashma in the Indus River, while the water flow is at a normal level at Tarbela and Taunsa. There is a high flood situation at Ganda Singh Wala in the Sutlej River and a medium flood at Sulemanki. There is a medium flood situation at Marala

and Khanki on the Chenab River," the PDMA said. On Sunday, India communicated flood warnings to Pakistan through diplomatic channels on "humanitarian grounds". It was the first known official contact between India and Pakistan since a four-day conflict between the two sides in May.

A day after the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, India took a series of punitive measures against Pakistan that included putting the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 in "abeyance". Usually, flood alerts are shared through the Indus Water Commission.

An alert by the Punjab PDMA on Monday reported "high flood level" in the Sutlej River.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) also issued a flood warning for the Chenab River and Ravi River on Monday. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has warned of heavy rains across most parts of Pakistan until August 30. (PTT)

BJP state chief calls for preservation of indigenous traditions Pre-Solung festival celebrated in Leparada with cultural fervor

HT Correspondent

BASAR, Aug 26: Arunachal Pradesh BJP State President Kaling Moyong on Tuesday stressed the need to preserve and promote indigenous culture and traditions, describing them as the true identity of the people.

He was addressing a large public gathering at the general ground in Basar, Leparada district, where the Pre-Solung Gi:Di festival was celebrated with great enthusiasm.

“Our tradition is our culture and our culture is our identity. We must protect, preserve, and promote them with collective responsibility,” Moyong said in his address as chief guest.

He added that it was encouraging to see people embracing traditional attire and cultural performances during the festival.

“Parents and teachers must educate the younger generation, who are our future, to remain connected to our roots. If we do not take this responsibility seriously, we risk losing our culture and identity,” he cautioned.

The BJP state president further called for collective efforts to safeguard indigenous festivals, rituals, games, and sports.

He pointed out that such cultural practices form the backbone of community identity and unity.

Speaking to the media, Moyong highlighted various initiatives of the state government to support indigenous traditions.

He said several Gurukuls were



being set up for different tribes to promote their heritage, while the Department of Indigenous Affairs had also undertaken initiatives to revive forgotten freedom fighters and honour their contributions.

“It is our duty to protect and promote the ethos of traditional values and cultural heritage of the state,” he added. While wishing the people on the occasion, Moyong expressed happiness that the Solung festival—one of the major festivals of the Adi tribe—was celebrated in such a grand manner for the first time in Leparada district, which is predominantly inhabited by the Galo community.

He said the celebration would help foster better understanding

and bring the Adi and Galo tribes closer together, building on the spirit of the recent Adi-Galo summit for peace, harmony, and progress.

Leparada Deputy Commissioner Himani Meena, in her address, extended greetings to the people and said festivals play a vital role in spreading messages of peace, harmony, and development among various tribes.

The event was also attended by Basar local MLA Nyibi Jini Dirchi, MLA Mutchu Mithi, Tojir Kadu, Oken Tayeng, and Ninong Ering. Leparada Central Solung Gi:Di Celebration Committee (CSGCC-2025) President Kanom Pertin, Secretary D Tojo Basar, and

Galo Welfare Society (GWS) President Dr Toli Basar also addressed the gathering.

The celebration witnessed colourful cultural performances, with around 47 cultural troupes from different parts of Leparada and Lower Dibang Valley districts participating in the extravaganza.

Traditional dances, songs, and rituals reflecting the rich heritage of the Adi and Galo tribes were showcased, enthralled the audience. The Pre-Solung celebration concluded on a note of communal harmony, cultural pride, and unity, with participants reaffirming their commitment to safeguard the indigenous values of Arunachal Pradesh for future generations.

Arunachal scripting new growth story with focus on industry, startups: Khandu

ITANAGAR, Aug 26: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Tuesday asserted that the state is scripting a “bold new growth story” driven by innovation, investment, and entrepreneurship.

In a post on X, the chief minister highlighted a series of transformative initiatives undertaken by his government to position Arunachal Pradesh as an emerging hub for industry and startups.

Khandu said that the newly launched Industrial Development & Investment Policy 2025 will serve as the cornerstone of this journey, aimed at attracting large-scale investments and creating a conducive business environment.

He said that projects worth Rs 809 crore are already in the pipeline, spanning food processing, steel, and bamboo-based industries.

The state is also banking on robust industrial infrastructure. With 15 industrial estates, one growth centre, and one integrated development centre spread across more than 736 acres, Arunachal Pradesh is setting up the framework to support diverse enterprises, Khandu said.

This effort is further reflected in the rise of 21,982 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) across the state, particularly in food, textiles, and hospitality sectors, he added.



The chief minister said that the Arunachal Pradesh Innovation & Investment Park is nurturing 50 startups annually, with a major focus area being the startup ecosystem.

“Between 2021 and 2024, 106 startups were incubated, and the year 2025 alone has seen an overwhelming 512 applications, testimony to the growing entrepreneurial spirit of the youth,” he added.

Khandu also underlined the government’s commitment to empowering youth and women entrepreneurs.

Through the Deen Dayal Upad-

hyaya Swavalamban Yojana (DDUSY), more than Rs 488 crore has been invested in 2,648 entrepreneurs across sectors, he said.

The chief minister announced that over 25,000 jobs and self-employment opportunities are expected to be created in the next five years under the SEE Trinity framework (Skill, Employment, and Entrepreneurship).

“With focused policies, massive investments, and a vibrant startup culture, Arunachal Pradesh is no longer on the fringes of economic growth. We are scripting a bold new chapter of prosperity,” Khandu added. (PTI)

Tawang schools showcase rich cultural heritage at District-Level Kala Utsav 2025

HT Correspondent

TAWANG, Aug 26: The vibrant traditions and heritage of Tawang district came alive recently as the Education Department organised the District-Level Kala Utsav 2025 at the Government Town Secondary School Auditorium.

According to an official statement, the day-long cultural festival brought together students from across the district, offering a platform to showcase folk songs, dances, skits, and dramas rooted in Monpa traditions.

A total of 13 Higher Secondary and Secondary Schools, ranging from Jemeithang to Jang, took part in the competition.

Their performances focused on local dialects, marriage customs, folk practices, and traditional crafts using wood, bamboo, clay, and paper.

The statement said the festival served as an opportunity to highlight both tangible and intangible aspects of Tawang’s cultural legacy.

In his welcome address, Dondup, District Programme Coordinator (ISSE), reminded participants of the objective of Kala Utsav, which has been celebrated nationally since 2015, and stressed the importance of youth involvement in safeguarding age-old traditions.

The programme was attended by District Deputy Director of School Education (DDSE) Hridar Phuntsok as the Chief Guest.

In his remarks, he commended the participants for their creativity and dedication, urging students to continue developing their skills in tradi-

tional arts and handicrafts.

He praised the role of teachers in preparing the students and noted that the winners from Tawang would now represent the district at the state level, acting as cultural ambassadors.

Phuntsok further encouraged schools to promote more cultural activities alongside academics in order to foster a balanced education.

The judging panel included Sonam Tsering, District Art and Cultural Officer, well-known Monpa singer and music composer Sonam, and the District Information and Public Relations Officer (DIPRO), Tawang.

According to the official results, Government Town Secondary School, Tawang, secured the first position with a skit showcasing the Monpa way of life, including paper making, weaving, Thangka painting, bamboo craft, and traditional attire stitching.

The second place went to Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Kangteng, for a skit on Monpa pottery, while Kyidphel Secondary School took the third spot with a demonstration of the traditional water-run prayer wheel known as Dungyur Mani. The cultural showcase concluded with a celebration of the district’s diversity, reaffirming the community’s commitment to preserving its heritage for future generations.

The Education Department said the event not only recognised the artistic talent of school children but also emphasised the need for integrating cultural preservation with modern education.

Urban Affairs Minister Balo Raja joins virtual meet on Swachhata Hi Seva 2025 rollout

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 26: Arunachal Pradesh Urban Affairs Minister Balo Raja on Tuesday joined a high-level virtual meeting chaired by Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar to discuss the rollout of Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS) 2025, the annual flagship campaign promoting cleanliness and sanitation in urban areas.

According to an official statement, Urban Affairs Commissioner Vivek Pandey and senior officers of Urban Local

Bodies (ULBs) also participated in the meeting. During the deliberations, the operational guidelines for Swachh Shehar Jodi were formally released, marking a key step in the Centre’s drive to strengthen urban sanitation and waste management. Officials described the guidelines as a roadmap for cities to adopt best practices and build stronger collaboration between urban local bodies and citizens in achieving cleanliness goals.

The Swachhata Hi Seva 2025 campaign will be launched on September 17 and

will culminate on October 2, to be observed as Swachhata Hi Diwas. This year’s programme will broadly focus on three major elements. The first is the transformation of Cleanliness Target Units, which will include identification and time-bound beautification of blackspots to reclaim public spaces.

The second is the Safai Mitra Suraksha Shivirs, under which single-window camps will be organised to provide preventive health check-ups and welfare support to sanitation workers.

The third is the Safai Mitra Suraksha Shivirs, under which single-window camps will be organised to provide preventive health check-ups and welfare support to sanitation workers.

“Arunachal Pradesh holds great potential, and through this initiative, we aim to drive sustainable growth, improve quality of life, and support India’s vision of a gas-based economy,” he added.

Rath said the establishment of the gas distribution will be a significant step for OIL to realise its vision of bringing clean and reliable energy to the region.

“OIL has a long-standing legacy of hydrocarbon production in the state and with the commissioning of the Kumchai-Kusijan gas pipeline last year, we successfully reinforced our role as an anchor in advancing the Centre’s hydrocarbon vision for the North-east,” he added. (PTI)

Arunachal to get city gas distribution network BPCL, OIL sign agreement to set up JV



ITANAGAR, Aug 26: Arunachal Pradesh is set to get a city gas distribution network with Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) and Oil India Ltd (OIL) signing an agreement on Tuesday to set up a joint venture company to implement the project.

As a part of the project, Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) stations will be set up and Piped Natural Gas (PNG) will be supplied to households, commercial units, and industries in the state, a statement

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF S.E./ Addl. C. E. WORKS,

KAAC:::SECRETARIAT

D I P H U-782460

No. KAAC/S.E.-W-49 (Pt)/2025-26/218

Did. 13/08/2025.

SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender affixing non refundable KAAC court fee stamp (receipt) Rs. 10.00 (Rupees Ten) only eventually to be drawn up in form are hereby invited from KAAC registered contractor/reputed firms of works department and will be received by the undersigned up to 4 P.M. on 29/08/2025 and will be opened on the same date, place and the hours in presence of the tenderer or their authorized agent if any.

If the day of the opening of tender happens to be a holiday/non-working days, the tender will be opened in the next day. The undersigned has the right to accept, reject any tender without any assigning reason thereof and will not be bound to accept the lowest tender quoted rate...

SL No.	Name of Works	Tender Amount (Rs)	A/A Amount (Rs)	Earnest money	Time allowed for completion
1	Construction of Road from DSC Road Deiher Teron Village to Langkhang Adong Village, Langlokso under Korkanthi Constituency.	Rs.94,00,000.00	Rs.94,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC 1% General 2%	90 days

Detail N IT documents and name of works amounts may be obtained from Office of the SE/ Addl. C.E.(Works), KAAC, Diphu during working hours on payment of Rs.1000/-

Terms & Condition

N.B

- The rate to be quoted as % (Percent) above/below/as per schedule rate for building/sanitary/ works for all division under CPWD-2020-21.
- Earnest money should be deposited in favour of the undersigned in the form of call deposit/bank draft & should be attached with the tender without which no tender will be accepted.
- The Contractor shall repair/re-Construction if the works executed failed due inferior quality of works, The KAAC Authority will take legal action if the contractor refuse to repair/re- construction the woks.
- The work must be carried on as directed by the E.E (W), KAAC Diphu Authority...
- The following up to date documents should be enclosed with the tender.
 - Professional Tax Clearance Certificate.
 - Sale Tax Clearance Certificate/GST.
 - Council Registration.
 - Call Deposit.
 - Council receipt
 - Caste Certificate.
 - Pan Card/Adhaar Card
 - Account number
 - Payment will be made subject to availabilities of fund
 - The undersigned is not bound to accept the lowest quoted rate.

Sd/-

S. E./Adal. C. E. (Works)

Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council

DIPHU

Did. 13/08/2025.

Memo. No. KAAC/S.E.-W-49 (Pt)/2025-26/218

India expects condemnation of cross-border terrorism by upcoming SCO summit in China

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: India on Tuesday said it expects the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to strongly condemn cross-border terrorism at its annual summit in the Chinese city of Tianjin next week, comments that came ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to China.

Modi will begin a four-day visit to Japan and China from August 29 to September 1.

In the first leg of his trip, he will travel to Tokyo to hold the annual India-Japan summit with Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba. The two prime ministers will also meet outside Tokyo as well.

After concluding his trip to Japan, Modi will visit Tianjin to participate in the SCO summit on August 31 and September 1.

At a joint media briefing with

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, Secretary (West) in the external affairs ministry, Tanmaya Lal, said New Delhi is working with other SCO member nations and partners to ensure strong condemnation of terrorism in the summit declaration.

"The SCO was established with the primary goal of countering three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism, which continue to remain a challenge," he said.

Lal said the security of the region remains a priority for the SCO members and recalled a joint statement on countering radicalisation, extremism and terrorism that was adopted during India's presidency of the grouping in 2023.

"In the past, there have been strong condemnations of terrorism, including cross-border terrorism,

in the statements that have been finalised, including the joint statement that I referred to, which was finalised during our presidency of the summit," he said.

"As far as the declaration at this (upcoming) summit is concerned, that is under finalisation -- the text. We are working with other members and partners to see that there should be a reiteration of the strong condemnation of terrorism, including cross-border terrorism. But the text is under finalisation," he said. Lal's comments came in response to a question on how the SCO will deal with the threat of terrorism.

India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, targeting terrorist infrastructure in territories controlled by Pakistan in response to the Pahalgam terror attack. The



strikes triggered four days of intense clashes that ended on May 10. Modi is expected to hold a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the margins of the SCO summit.

To a question on whether the

prime minister will hold a bilateral meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Misri said Modi's engagements are still being finalised.

On Modi's visit to Japan on Aug 29 and 30, he said it will open

fresh avenues of cooperation, and reaffirm the shared commitment to peace, prosperity and stability in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

It will be Modi's first standalone visit to Japan in nearly seven years. "One of the features of the annual summit between India and Japan is an engagement between the two leaders outside the capital and on this occasion as well, the programme includes a visit outside Tokyo, which is again going to be something to look forward to for the two leaders," Misri said.

The foreign secretary said Modi's Japan visit will be fully dedicated to the bilateral agenda.

It will be Modi's eighth visit to Japan since he took office in 2014.

"India and Japan are two countries that share values, trust and

strategic outlook on several issues. They are two of Asia's leading democracies and amongst the top five world economies," Misri said.

The foreign secretary said India-Japan relations have expanded steadily in scope and ambition over the last decade.

The summit will give both the prime ministers the opportunity to do an in-depth review of these ties, take stock of progress in the last few years across multiple domains, and of course, as is usual, exchange views on regional and global issues of importance, he said.

"This will also be an opportunity to launch several new initiatives in order to build greater resilience in the relationship, and to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges," Misri said. (PTI)

Five killed, 14 injured in landslide on route to Vaishno Devi shrine

JAMMU, Aug 26: Relentless heavy rain led to a landslide on the route to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine atop the Trikuta hill on Tuesday afternoon, killing at least five people and injuring 14, officials said. Several people were feared trapped.

The pilgrimage to the famed shrine in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district was suspended when the mountainside literally gave way and stones, boulders and rocks came hurtling down around 3 pm, catching people unawares.

Rescue operations are underway near the Inderprastha Bhojnalya at Adhkwari, officials said. The landslide struck at a point about halfway along the winding 12-km trek from Katra to the hilltop shrine.

There are two routes up to the shrine -- while the yatra had been suspended on the Himkoti trek route since morning, it was going on the old route till 1.30 pm when authorities decided to suspend it till further orders in view of the torrential rain.

"In an unfortunate incident of landslide at Adhkwari, 5 people have lost their lives and 14 others have been injured. Rescue operations underway," the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board said in a post on X. Kiran, from Mohali in Punjab, was among those caught in the hail of stones, trees and boulders. "I was coming down the hill after performing darshan when people started shouting. I saw stones falling down. I rushed to safety but was injured," Kiran told reporters from a hospital bed in Katra. "We were a group of five out of which three are injured," added another girl, traumatised by her narrow escape." (PTI)

'Modi govt most constitutionally immoral in India's history': Sibal

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: The Modi government is "weaponising" laws to target the opposition and is the most "constitutionally immoral" in India's history, Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal alleged on Tuesday as he slammed the bills proposing the removal of prime minister, chief ministers and ministers if they are under arrest for 30 consecutive days on serious charges.

Sibal also claimed that the bills had been brought as the BJP knows that the "tide has turned" in Bihar and it wants to divert the attention of the people to other issues.

"You can fool some people sometimes but you cannot fool all the people all the time," Sibal said at a press conference here.

Referring to Shah's recent reported remarks on the bill, Sibal said the minister talked of constitutional morality but that "constitutional morality has nothing to do with their own morality" and has everything to do with the morality of the opposition. Sibal said no minister in the BJP governments at the Centre and in states had been arrested, while probe agencies had targeted opposition leaders one after another.

The Independent Rajya Sabha MP went on to list the ministers in various non-NDA state governments who had been arrested and later got bail, with their trial still continuing. (PTI)

Navy's role not only limited to guarding seas, but also providing economic security: Rajnath Singh

'The Indian Navy not only guards coastal areas, but also keeps peace and prosperity in the Indian ocean region'

VISAKHAPATNAM, Aug 26: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said the geo-strategic situation in the region to the west of the country has the ability to directly influence India's economic development and flagged the role of the Navy as not just limited to protecting the seas but also acting as a major pillar of economic security.

Navy's such role assumes significance as India's energy requirements such as oil and natural gas depend on the security of the region. Indirectly referring to the US, he said one country has F-35 (fifth-generation fighter jet) flying in the air while the Indian Navy made "F-35 warship", INS Udaygiri, sails on the sea with "Made in India" technology. INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri, both modern stealth frigates, were commissioned by the Indian Navy on Tuesday and Singh participated in the ceremony here.

On the Pahalgam terror attack in which Indian tourists were killed, the Defence minister said the country gave an effective and precise response through 'Operation Sindoor,' a cross-border military offensive targeting terror havens in Pakistan.

After commissioning the two multi-mission stealth frigates, here at the Eastern Naval Command, Singh said India never believes in aggressive expansionism and that the whole world knows that it never attacked any country first.

However, when there is an attack on its security, India knows how to respond.



"The geo-strategic situation here (western region) is such that it also has the ability to directly influence our economic development. Our energy requirements, oil, natural gas, all depend on the security of this region to a great extent. Therefore, the role of the Navy is not only limited to the protection of the sea, but it is also a major pillar of our national economic security," Singh said. He said the power playing going on in the Indian Ocean "frequently alerts us." Here interests of several countries clash. And due to this, there is a need for India to strengthen its maritime preparedness.

"India has always given the message of peace to the world. India never wages war from its side. History shows it. If anyone poses a challenge to the country's peace and security then we know to give a befitting reply and will continue to do so," he asserted.

He further said that it took almost 50 years to make the Navy's

Warship Design Bureau 100 ships and hoped that in the coming 25 years, the number would double.

On the two new frigates, Rajnath Singh said the commissioning of INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri will significantly enhance Indian Navy's strength, reach and resilience.

"Commissioning of INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri is a dream come true towards Atmanirbhar Bharat. I can say with confidence that both these warships will prove to be a milestone in the country's security," he said.

The two warships are modern and very important systems, he said, adding, that he is confident that they will prove to be a game-changer in very complex and risky operations in the sea.

These warships will not only strengthen the security system, but will also naturally strengthen humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions.

"I believe that their commission-

ing in the Indian Navy is a step that will strengthen our neighborhood first and mutual and holistic advancement for security and growth for all in the region," Singh said.

The commissioning of Himgiri and Udaygiri would not only show the capability of the Indian Navy, but it is also a clear message that India is fully capable of protecting its maritime borders and is ready to react immediately in any situation, the minister said.

The Indian Navy not only guards coastal areas, but also keeps peace and prosperity in the Indian ocean region, he added.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the defence sector has been given priority. Hi-tech equipment which only few countries used to possess earlier, India is now designing and manufacturing them, Singh said.

According to him, INS Tamal would be the last foreign-built ship to be inducted in the Indian Navy.

He said the country's armed forces were being strengthened through a futuristic vision.

On the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, Rajnath Singh said terrorists killed innocent people after asking their religion.

The attack on our innocent people was a challenge for us, but India gave an effective and precise response through 'Operation Sindoor', he said.

India carried out 'Operation Sindoor' to root out terror infrastructure. "I want to say that the Operation Sindoor is not over, it is only on pause," the Defence minister said. (PTI)

It is diversionary tactic as questions being asked about PM's degree: AAP

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: The Aam Aadmi Party on Tuesday claimed that the Enforcement Directorate raids against Saurabh Bharadwaj were an attempt to divert attention from questions being raised about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's degree and asserted that the case against the party's Delhi unit chief was "false".

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said his party would not be intimidated by this "misuse" of central investigation agencies by the Modi government.

The Enforcement Directorate carried out searches on the premises of former minister Bharadwaj and some private contractors as part of a money laundering probe linked to an alleged scam in health infrastructure projects during the previous AAP government in Delhi, official sources said.

At least 13 locations in the National Capital Region are being searched under the Prevention of Money

Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

AAP leaders claimed Bharadwaj was not even a minister when the decisions on hospital construction were taken.

No party has been targeted the way the AAP is being targeted today, Kejriwal said in a post on X.

"AAP is being targeted because it has been the strongest voice against the Modi government's wrong policies and corrupt practices. The Modi government wants to silence our voice, but that will never happen," the former chief minister said.

"AAP will not be intimidated by these raids of the BJP," he added. Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann linked the raid to the ongoing national debate on PM Narendra Modi's academic credentials.

"The ED raid on Saurabh Bharadwaj on Tuesday was carried out because, since Monday, the entire country has been discussing whether Modi ji's degree is fake. This raid was staged to divert attention. (PTI)



NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Stressing that most government orders and decisions are already placed in the public domain on official websites, Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Tuesday suggested that efforts be made to filter out avoidable or repetitive RTI applications while strengthening norms for efficient redressal.

Addressing an event here, he underlined the enormous push given by the government over the last decade to foster transparency, accountability and public disclosure of information for citizen-centric governance.

Singh said that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dictum of "maximum governance, minimum government", transformational changes were introduced to enhance credibility, disposal rates and transparency through technology-driven options.

He praised the Central Information Commission (CIC) and State Information Commissions for achieving almost 100 per cent disposal of RTI cases, even during the COVID-19 lockdown when sittings were conducted remotely to ensure uninterrupted functioning.

"This speaks volumes of the kind of tools that are now available and effectively used to strengthen transparency," said Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel.

The minister stressed that most government orders and decisions are already placed in the public domain on official websites, reducing the need for repetitive Right to Information (RTI) queries. He suggested that efforts must be made to filter out avoidable or repetitive applications, while strengthening norms and SOPs for efficient redressal, according to a Personnel Ministry statement.

Singh also spoke about the innovative 'Human Desk' experiment introduced to enhance satisfaction levels.

"Disposal is important, but so is the citizen's happiness index. After every RTI disposal, a personal call for counselling or feedback ensures that applicants feel heard and engaged," he said, while addressing the inaugural session of the 15th Annual General Body Meeting of National Federation of Information Commissions in India (NFICI) at the CIC here.

Singh also released the latest edition of the RTI Journal and unveiled an e-journal on the website of the NFICI. The meeting was attended by the Chief Information Commissioner, Heralal Samariya, State Chief Information Commissioners and Information Commissioners from across the country.

Highlighting some of the landmark reforms undertaken by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) since 2014, the minister recalled the abolition of over 1,600 obsolete rules, starting with the practice of getting documents attested by gazetted officers.

"This reform sent out a message that this government trusts the youth of this country, who comprise 70 per cent of the population," he said.

Similarly, the abolition of interviews for government recruitment was a bold step to eliminate subjectivity and favoritism and nepotism, making the process more objective, transparent, and merit-based, Singh said, adding that "this decision, though initially questioned, ultimately strengthened public trust and credibility in governance".

He also appreciated the NFICI for emerging as a platform for coordination, mutual consultation and sharing of best practices among Information Commissions.

Singh urged Information Commissioners to be more forthcoming with suggestions during their tenure, so that their insights can be implemented in real time. (PTI)

Lancet study draws attention to rising C-section deliveries, calls for regulation in private healthcare

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Seeing a rise in caesarean deliveries in India -- from 8.5 per cent in 2005 to 21.5 per cent in 2021 -- which is well above WHO-recommended levels, researchers are calling for policy measures, including more regulation in private healthcare, in an analysis published in The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia journal.

Delivering a baby via a caesarean section (C-section) involves making a surgical cut in the mother's abdomen and uterus.

The researchers, including those from the Institute of Public Health Bengaluru and Christian Medical College in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, said that while a medically indicated C-section is vital to preventing maternal and newborn mortality, rates of caesarean deliveries exceeding 10 per cent in the population are not linked with reduced mortality -- as noted by the World Health Organization.

An unjustified caesarean delivery is related to longer hospital stays and higher healthcare costs, with babies born through the procedure known to be at an increased risk of asthma, obesity, type 1 diabetes and allergies, among other health problems.

The team reviewed 75 previously published studies -- mostly from India, followed by Bangladesh and Pakistan -- and examined factors in the countries' health systems contributing to caesarean procedures in the population.

The authors said that an avoidable caesarean de-



livery can be financially stressful for families across South Asia, where a substantial fraction of deliveries occur in the private sector.

For example, out-of-pocket expenditures for a C-section in India will cost around Rs 43,000 in private hospitals, and around Rs 8,500 in public ones, suggesting that avoidable caesarean deliveries unnecessarily burden the healthcare system and families, they said.

Limited regulation and insurance coverage were among other factors associated with increased C-section

tion rates.

Decision-making at the healthcare provider's level was influenced by financial incentives, medico-legal concerns and scheduling convenience, the researchers said.

Mother's education, socioeconomic status and age, and family preferences were found to be individual and community-level factors driving an upward trend in caesarean deliveries.

Caesarean deliveries in Bangladesh are estimated to have increased from 18 per cent in 2011 to 45 per cent in 2022, while those in Pakistan rose to 20 per cent in 2018 from about three per cent in 1990. Data from national surveys were analysed for arriving at the figures.

The authors said that caesarean deliveries are being resorted to at nearly double the rates since 2000, with one in every five births involving the surgical procedure.

C-section rates in Asia rose from 4.4 per cent in 1990 to 19.5 per cent in 2014, with south Asia reflecting similar upward trends seen across the continent, they said.

"The review highlights the need for coordinated policy responses across levels, including payment reforms, regulatory oversight, and improved antenatal counselling, to ensure (C-section) use aligns with clinical need rather than socio-economic or institutional pressures," the authors wrote. (PTI)

OFFICE OF THE LOKAYUKTA, ASSAM

HOUSE NO.15, SHAKTIGARH, PATH BYE LANE 2,
G.S. ROAD, BHANGAGARH, GUWAHATI-781005
(OPPOSITE SOHAM EMPORIUM) NEAR CENTRAL BANK

The functions of the Lokayukta and Upa-Lokayukta, Assam, are to investigate cases of allegations and grievances against Ministers, Members of Legislative Assembly (excluding the Chief Minister, Speaker and Dy. Speaker Member of Higher and Subordinate Judiciary, Chairman and Members of APSC) and other elected functionaries of the Panchayat, Municipal Boards, Town Committees, Municipal Corporations, Govt. Companies, Autonomous District and Regional Councils, registered Co-operative Societies and their officers and employees and the officers of the State Government as defined in the Assam Lokayukta and Upa-Lokayuktas Act, 1985. It is for the awareness of the general public of the state of Assam that a complaint under section 9 of the said Act may be made to the Lokayukta, Assam as per the prescribed format.

Detailed information is available in the website www.assamlokayukta.gov.in. Aggrieved persons may contact the Secretary-cum-Registrar, Office of the Lokayukta for details (Email: assamlokayukta@gmail.com or lookayukta@assam.gov.in).

Sd/-

Secretary-cum-Registrar
Office of the Lokayukta, Assam

DIPR/D/HLT/134/27-Aug-25

Report claiming 'Manipur strife orchestrated' serves to deepen divide, prolong mistrust: Ex-CM

IMPHAL, Aug 26: Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh alleged that a report of Delhi-based non-profit organisation PUCL claiming that the ethnic violence in the northeastern state was "orchestrated and not spontaneous" serves only to deepen the divide, prolong mistrust and may even promote misunderstanding.

Singh was the chief minister of Manipur when ethnic violence, which has claimed over 260 lives and rendered thousands homeless so far, erupted between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kukis in May 2023. BJP's Rajya Sabha MP Leishemba Sanjaoba said that "more than 3,000 FIRs" will be lodged against PUCL for its claim.

Their reactions came after Imphal-based human rights organisation Human Rights International Freedom (HRIF) threatened to take legal measures against the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)



for its claim. PUCL's 694-page report, authored under the chairmanship of former Supreme Court judge Justice Kurian Joseph, alleged that "the violence was not spontaneous but orchestrated".

HRIF, in a letter to the editor of the PUCL, alleged that its report ti-

pled 'Independent people's tribunal on the ongoing ethnic conflict in Manipur' is "not only blatantly one-sided but is also replete with unverified facts, misinformation, and a clear bias in favour of the Kuki community, while deliberately omitting and distorting the

narrative, facts and suffering of Meitei community".

HRIF also said the report "contains unverified and inflammatory allegations... without providing any credible evidence" and that "the language and selective reporting have the potential to exacerbate tensions and promote enmity between different groups and disturb the fragile peace process in the state".

Singh said, "Well done HRIF for taking the lead. I believe many right-minded organisations are preparing to follow with legal actions against a biased and divisive organisation like the PUCL for attempting to divide Manipur through its obnoxious report."

"At a time when Manipur needs healing, reconciliation and unity, such publications serve only to deepen the divide and prolong mistrust, and it may even promote misunderstanding," Singh added. (PTI)

Situation in Bangladesh altering regional dynamics, says Meghalaya CM



SHILLONG, Aug 26: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Tuesday said the situation in neighbouring Bangladesh has changed in recent years, altering the dynamics in the region.

Sangma also said that sporadic "militant-like" activities are surfacing in the state.

"We have to realise and remember that the situation across the border in Bangladesh is not the same as it was. I don't want to go into too much detail because it's a matter of National Security, but all I can say is that different activities and different things across the border are also emerging, which are changing the dynamics of the overall situation," Sangma said.

He told reporters here that militant activities in the state tend to fluctuate like "a graph going up and down", often resembling the operations of small-time dacoit groups rather than organised outfits.

"Many times, what initially

looks like a militant group turns out to be just dacoits or thieves," he said.

The chief minister said that Director General of Police Idashisha Nongrang earlier attempted to convey this situation, but only part of the statement was reported, leading to speculations.

The DGP recently said the police are verifying all inputs and keeping a close watch on reports of new recruitment attempts by militants, though concrete evidence of regrouping is yet to emerge.

"The reality is, intel keeps coming in every day. We verify them before reaching conclusions. The situation is critical mainly because of developments in Bangladesh, and we are monitoring them closely," Sangma said.

The chief minister's remarks came days after Leader of Opposition Mukul Sangma, during a meeting of the State Security Commission, raised concerns over militants attempting to regroup. (PTI)

Nagaland to rationalise non-performing Anganwadi centres

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, Aug 26: Nagaland's social welfare department on Tuesday said it would rationalise non-performing anganwadi centres in the state.

In a notification on Tuesday, the department said the decision to rationalise the anganwadi centres has been taken in view of persistently low enrolment and under-performance in several of these centres across the state, as reflected in data from the Poshan Tracker app, which has been integrated with the Facial Recognition System.

The department also said it has decided to undertake a comprehensive performance assessment of all anganwadi centres across the state.

Based on the findings, the underperforming centres will be rationalised and relocated to uncovered areas that meet the prescribed eligibility criteria.

It requested the community leaders and local authorities to extend full cooperation during the assessment process and further support the Aadhaar enrolment/ updation process to ensure that the anganwadi services reach all eligible and deserving beneficiaries.

3 militants arrested in Manipur, arms and ammunition seized

IMPHAL, Aug 26: Three militants belonging to three proscribed outfits have been arrested by security forces in Imphal East and West districts of Manipur, police said on Tuesday. An active cadre of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (PWG) was arrested from Taotthong Khunou area in Imphal West district on Sunday.

The insurgent, identified as Oinam Somenchandra Singh (41), was involved in extortion from shops and the general public. A pistol with a magazine was seized from his possession, a police statement said.

A militant belonging to the proscribed People's Liberation Army was arrested from Hukap Makha Leikai in Imphal East district on Sunday. He was identified as Phanjoubam Ramanada Singh (23), it said. An active cadre of KCP(MFL) was arrested from Takhel in Imphal East district on Monday.

Meanwhile, security forces seized a cache of arms and ammunition and explosives from Singtom village in Kakching district on Monday. The seized weapons include an INSAS rifle, a bolt-action rifle, two 51mm mortars, two country-made carbines, one .32 pistol, seven IEDs, 56 cartridges of various calibres, two tear smoke grenades and other items. (PTI)

Three arrested for beating woman in Tripura

AGARTALA, Aug 26: Three persons were arrested for allegedly beating up a woman for having an alleged extramarital affair in Tripura's Gomati district, police said on Tuesday.

A video clip of three women beating up another woman and shaving her head for having an alleged extramarital affair went viral on social media on Sunday.

Police have lodged an FIR. The incident happened in Bhangarpar area of the district on Friday, and the video clip of the incident became viral on Sunday. On Monday, police arrested the three accused women, an officer said.

"We have arrested three women for beating up another woman. A specific case was lodged against the accused persons. An investigation is on", Superintendent of Police (SP), Gomati district, Kiran Kumar told reporters on Tuesday. (PTI)

Two women arrested after police seize large consignment of drugs

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Aug 26: In a late-night anti-narcotics operation, Tripura Police of Sonamura police station recovered a large consignment of illegal drugs from the Sonapur area under Sepahijala district.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided the residence of one Farid Mia, where they seized 1,669 Yaba tablets worth around Rs 2.5 lakh in the illegal market.

The raid was carried out at the house of Mia's son, Monir Hossain, who managed to flee after spotting the police approaching.

A case has been registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act at Sonamura Police Station.

Police sources indicated that more arrests are likely in connection with the case.

Continuing the crackdown, Sonamura police arrested two women this morning for their alleged involvement in drug trafficking.

Significantly, both women are wives of Monir Hossain, whose residence was raided the previous night. The arrested women have been identified as Peyara Khatun (47) and Shahina Akter (37).

"Both are residents of Kalapania and lived in the same house", said the OC.

According to Officer-in-Charge Tapas Das, crucial information was extracted during their interrogation, which may lead to further arrests of drug traffickers in the area.

Police said intensified operations against narcotics trade in Sonamura and adjoining regions will continue.

Mizoram saw new investments worth ₹ 16,800 cr in last four fiscals: Report

Apart from these, investments were made in various ongoing and completed projects, it added

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Mizoram has witnessed investments of nearly ₹ 16,800 crore in various new projects during the last four fiscals, according to a latest report by MSME Export Promotion Council.

The report, titled 'Investment, Development & Growth in Progressive Mizoram', highlighted that the Northeastern state is registering robust economic growth and has seen notable expansion across its sectors.

"It has attracted an investment in the new projects between 2021-22 and 2024-25 of ₹ 16,720 crore," MSME Export Promotion Council (MSME EPC) said. In 2021-22, the state saw new investments of ₹ 2,587 crore, followed by ₹ 126 crore in 2022-23, ₹ 41 crore in 2023-24 and ₹ 1,397 crore in 2024-25, it said.

Apart from these, investments were made in various ongoing and completed projects, it added.

"It is expected that these projects have generated direct employment opportunities for 30,000-35,000 people and 20,000 indirect jobs," MSME EPC said.

While projects worth ₹ 1,918 crore were completed between 2021-22 and 2024-25, projects



worth ₹ 1,21,385 crore are under various stages of implementation, it said.

"Completion of these projects will generate jobs for over 50,000 people. The services sector has been a significant contributor to the extent of 45-46 per cent of the gross state value added (GSVA)," it said.

MSME EPC Chairman DS Rawat said the sector witnessed improvement and its GSVA share rose from 25 per cent to 34 per cent, while agriculture and aligned sectors declined from 25 per cent to about 20 per cent.

"The state's economy is growing consistently, ranging from 13 to 15 per cent. The MSME sector in the state is poised for a significant upward trajectory," he said.

The report said there is a huge untapped potential in the tourism sector in the state.

"To tap into its potential, the state should promote eco-adventure packages, wildlife safaris and trekking circuits, highlight festival tourism, accelerate village tourism, enhance infrastructure and explore cross-border tourism," it said. (PTI)

Seats at Agartala medical college will be increased, super speciality courses introduced: Manik Saha

AGARTALA, Aug 26: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Tuesday said his government was working to increase the number of seats at the Agartala Govt Medical College (AGMC) and introduce super speciality courses.

Addressing a programme during which appointment letters were handed to newly-recruited medical officers, Saha said steps have also been taken to recruit specialist doctors in government hospitals.

"We are in the process of adding 100 more MBBS seats in AGMC. We have received an indication to go ahead with the plan. We are also planning to introduce super speciality medical courses at AGMC. We are in touch with the National Medical Council (NMC) to materialise the plan," he said.

"We are receiving wishlists from MLAs to get specialist doctors in their areas, but there is a shortage of specialist doctors in the state. We sought to fill vacancies for 180 specialist doctors, but got only 45. The government will again recruit

specialist doctors with more doctors having cleared MD and MS courses by that time," he said.

At present, there are 100 seats in MBBS and 89 seats for post-graduate courses at the AGMC.

Saha said the government has already taken steps to recruit technical and paramedical personnel to boost the healthcare facilities in the state.

He also sought to put to rest the ongoing controversy over the recruitment of those candidates for General Duty Medical Officers (GDMOs) who scored 14, 18 and 21 in the examination conducted by the Tripura Public Service Commission (TPSC).

"These are grade marks, which have no value when it comes to judging the quality of a medical officer. A student who completed an MBBS course had to take a tough entrance test like NEET after ensuring a good performance in the class 12 board exams. The NMC has already provided them with a degree. Therefore, the allegation of a very poor mark has nothing to do with medical practice," he said. (PTI)



Meghalaya PSC reforms panel recommends tighter safeguards in recruitment process

SHILLONG, Aug 26: The Meghalaya Cabinet on Tuesday reviewed the report of the state PSC reforms committee, which recommended stronger safeguards in recruitment, including strict confidentiality of question papers and installation of CCTV cameras during interviews to ensure greater transparency. The report also proposed publication of candidate-to-vacancy ratios and release of answer keys, Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said. The report recommended short, medium and long-term reforms to make the Meghalaya Public Service Commission (MPSC) more efficient and accountable.

Short-term measures include formation of multiple interview boards, clear interview protocols, conflict-of-interest reviews, declaration of assets by the chairman and members, preparation of an annual calendar of activities, and public disclosure of interview marks and candidate scores.

It also proposed a grievance cell, maintaining unchanged roll numbers during recruitment and addressing corruption issues under the Meghalaya Lokayukta Act, 2014.

Medium and long-term steps suggested are shifting to computer-based tests, strengthening MPSC cells in Jowai and Tura towns, combining examinations with similar qualifications to avoid delays, and continuing the use of optional papers in major competitive exams. (PTI)

Govt school teachers launch agitation in Nagaland

KOHIAMA, Aug 26: Academic activities in 133 government high schools across Nagaland were disrupted on Tuesday as the Nagaland RMSA Teachers Association (NRMSTA) 2016 batch launched its phase-wise indefinite agitation over long-pending service benefits.

The agitation began with a pen-down strike after the expiry of the teachers' ultimatum to the state government on August 13.

The association said the protest was necessitated by the government's "continued silence" despite court verdicts in its favour.

"Our members are attending the respective school but are not carrying out any pen and paper works," NRMSTA-2016 president Imitemjen told PTI here. (PTI)

₹ 44.02 cr released as first installment of XV FC grants for rural local bodies in Mizoram, Tripura

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Aug 26: The Union Government has released the first installment of the Fifteenth Finance Commission (XV FC) Untied Grants for Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) in Mizoram and Tripura for the financial year 2025-26.

According to official reports, Mizoram has received ₹ 14.27 crore for 827 eligible Village Councils as part of the 2023-24 grants.

Meanwhile, Tripura has been allocated ₹ 29.75 crore covering 606 eligible Gram Panchayats, 35 Block Panchayats, 8 Zilla Parishads, 587 Village Committees, and 40 Block Advisory Committees under the first installment of the 2025-26 Untied Grants.

"Government of India, through the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Ministry of Jal Shakti, recommends release of XV FC Grants to states for Rural Local Bodies (RLBs)/Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). These grants are released in two installments every financial year," an official statement said.

The Untied Grants are to be utilized by



RLBs/PRIs to address location-specific developmental needs under the 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution, excluding salaries and establishment costs.

In contrast, the Tied Grants are earmarked for basic services, specifically maintenance of sanitation and ODF status, including household waste manage-

ment, treatment of human excreta, and fecal sludge management.

Ensuring supply of drinking water, rainwater harvesting, and water recycling initiatives.

This allocation is aimed at strengthening grassroots governance and ensuring sustainable development across rural areas of both states.

Coordinating committee on Manipur integrity

IMPHAL, Aug 26: The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) has strongly rejected the recently released Independent People's Tribunal (IPT) report of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), alleging that it is "biased, misleading and politically engineered" one to vilify the Meitei community while legitimising separatist agendas of Chin-Kuki armed groups.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, COCOMI said the 694-page report, prepared under the chairmanship of former Supreme Court judge Justice Kurian Joseph, was "deliberately structured to appease separatist aspirations" and contained selective omissions and fabrications.

COCOMI alleged that the report misrepresented the Meitei Scheduled Tribe (ST) demand, spread false narratives on the outbreak of violence, and presented a one-sided portrayal of victims. It also accused the tribunal of ignoring the role of Kuki-Chin armed groups despite public admissions by their leaders, while repeatedly naming Meitei groups such as Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun.

COCOMI further criticised the report for omitting key incidents, including the May 3 Torbung-Kangvai clashes "where



Meitei homes" were allegedly first torched, the "Jakuradhop massacre" in Jiribam, and cases of enforced disappearances. It said the tribunal endorsed "separatist narratives," justified poppy cultivation, and made "false historical claims" that demonised the Meitei community.

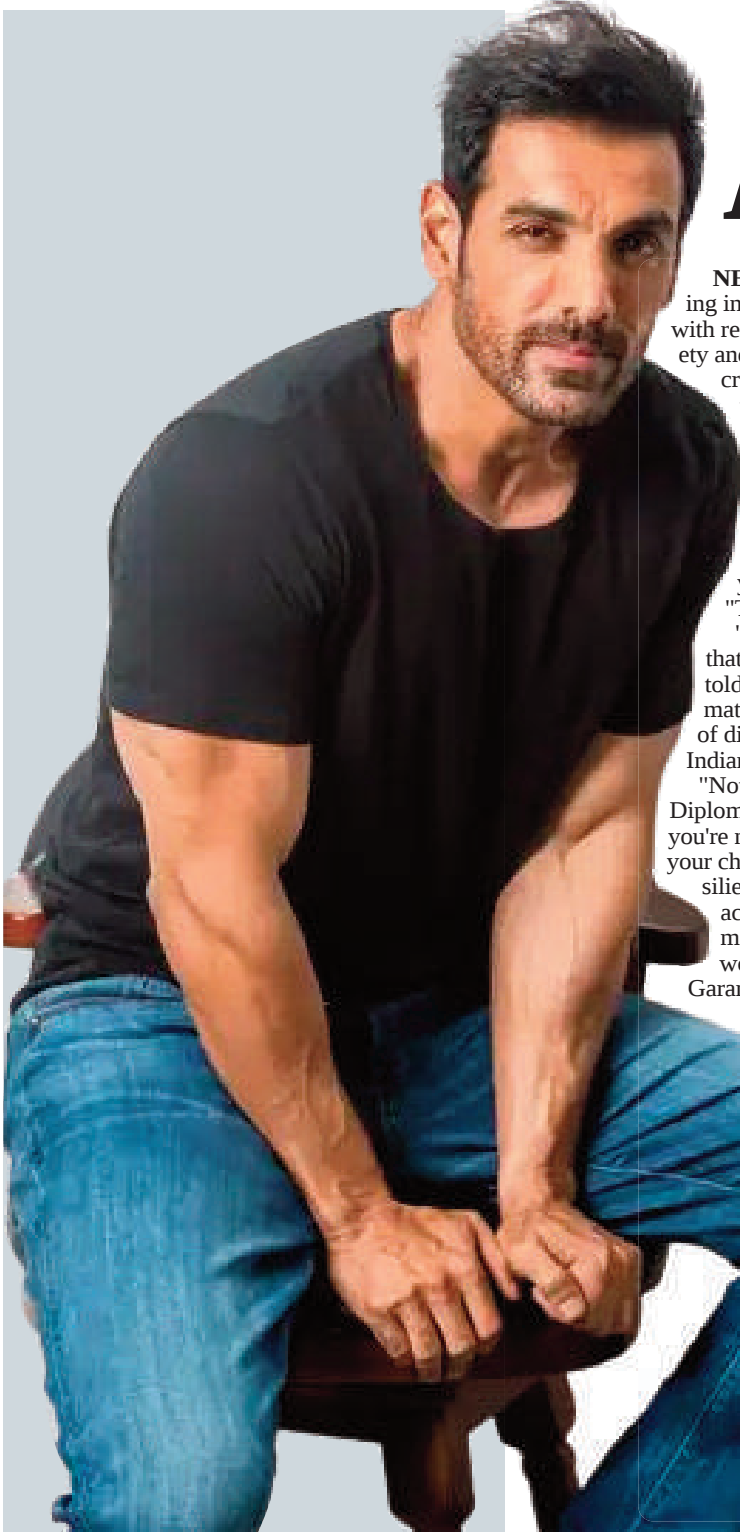
Announcing its next steps, COCOMI said it will conduct a public review of the report to expose its "falseness and omissions" and pursue legal action against PUCL and tribunal members for "defamatory and unfounded statements."

It also vowed to mobilise civil society, intellectuals and legal experts to safeguard Manipur's unity and integrity.

"The PUCL-IPT report has no legitimacy and no credibility. It does not serve the cause of peace, justice or reconciliation. Instead, it emboldens narco-terrorist groups and weakens national security," the statement read.

COCOMI concluded that Manipur does not need "propaganda masquerading as human rights" but rather "truth, fairness and collective resolve to restore peace, integrity and unity." (NNN)

SOME FILMS WITHOUT NUANCE OR CRAFT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HYPER POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT, SAYS JOHN ABRAHAM



NEW DELHI, Aug 26: We are living in a hyper political environment with religion conclusively dividing society and some films "without nuance or craft" are taking advantage of that to bring in the numbers, says a tough talking John Abraham.

Films can be patriotic in a restrained and responsible way without being jingoistic, adds the actor, who has done a series of geopolitical thrillers in recent years and was last seen in ZEE5's "Tehran".

"There are films that are patriotic that make a lot of sense," Abraham told PTI, citing his film "The Diplomat", which saw the actor in the role of diplomat J P Singh who rescued an Indian woman from Pakistan.

"Not because I have done it, but The Diplomat is one of those films where you're not jingoistic, you're not beating your chest. But you are patriotic in a resilient, silent, and restrained way," the actor said. Beginning his journey in movies with the 2003 film Jism and working through comedies such as Garam Masala and Dostana, the actor has moved on to films on politics and diplomacy with Madras Cafe, Parmanu, and The Diplomat.

"Please understand and remember my words, I think we are living in a hyper political environment where religion is dividing us very conclusively, which is not the most conducive environment to

live in," he said.

"Some films are taking advantage of that and bringing in the numbers. That's really unfortunate to see because when you see certain films, you see there is no nuance or craft there, but you see that there are tropes. And it is a scary sight to see today," John told PTI in an interview.

According to John, propaganda films will continue to be made as moviemaking is a creative space where you are allowed to make the kind of films you want to.

He turned producer with Vicky Donor in 2012 and his recent releases have mostly focused on stories inspired by real incidents, be it Madras Cafe, set during the Sri Lankan civil war and Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, or Parmanu, a film about the 1998 nuclear bomb test explosions in Pokhran.

"My responsibility is making films that are very balanced... Our audiences will stay on for way longer than the films that just want to take advantage of a situation. That is important to know," he said.

As far as making money is concerned, one can do that through commercial and fun films like Pathaan, according to the actor who played the antagonist in the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer.

"They can make you money. You don't necessarily need to take advantage of a system to make money. That's a personal choice you have to make. I have made the choice that I would not take advantage of that though I am very equipped to do so. But I won't do that because that's not where I come from. That's not my fabric," he said.

"That's not the way I've been brought up. I've been brought up as a person who needs to be a responsible citizen of this country, who needs to say responsible things. Now, am I right all the time? Definitely not. I could make mistakes, but I would want to be more right than wrong," he added.

John said he loves playing the occasional bad guy whether in Dhoom or most recently in Pathaan. (PTI)

SHREYAS TALPADE CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF 'IQBAL': THIS IS WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Actor Shreyas Talpade on Tuesday marked the 20th anniversary of his movie "Iqbal", saying the cricket drama made a huge impact on his career.

"Iqbal", directed by filmmaker Nagesh Kukunoor, was Talpade's breakout movie and featured the actor as Iqbal Saeed Khan, an aspiring deaf and mute cricketer who dreams of playing for the Indian national team.

The 49-year-old actor shared throw-back pictures from the movie on his Instagram handle. "This is where it all began! Thank you for being the biggest support in my career and making an im-

pact in my life," Talpade captioned the photos. "Iqbal" also featured Shweta Basu Prasad as Iqbal's sister Khadija and Naseeruddin Shah as his mentor Mohit Mishra as well as late actor Girish Karnad. Post "Iqbal", Talpade featured in films such as "Dor", "Om Shanti Om", "Welcome to Sajjanpur", "Golmaal" franchise, "Housefull 2" and "Kaun Pravin Tambe?" and most recently "Housefull 5". He will next feature in "Welcome to the Jungle", co-starring Akshay Kumar, Jacqueline Fernandez, Suniel Shetty, Arshad Warsi, Raveena Tandon, Lara Dutta, and Johnny Lever. (PTI)

Francis Ford Coppola's 'The Godfather' trilogy to return to Indian theatres in 4K restoration

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: American cinema icon Francis Ford Coppola's "The Godfather" trilogy will return to cinema halls across India in a 4K restored version, PVR INOX announced on Tuesday.

The landmark films -- "The Godfather" (1972), "The Godfather Part II" (1974) and "The Godfather Part III" (1990) — will be re-released in select theatres, starting with the first instalment on September 12, followed by the two sequels on October 17 and November 14, respectively.

Adapted from Mario Puzo's bestselling novel, the trilogy is widely regarded as a cornerstone of global cinema. It introduces the powerful Italian-American mafia family led by Don Vito Corleone (Marlon Brando) and then traces the transformation of his youngest son, Michael (Al Pacino), from a reluctant outsider into a ruthless mafia boss. The trilogy, which explores themes of power, loyalty, family, corruption, morality, and the

cost of ambition, redefined gangster films and has had a lasting cultural impact on cinema worldwide. In a statement, Niharika Bijli, Lead Strategist, PVR INOX Ltd, said "The Godfather" trilogy remains the gold standard of cinematic storytelling - a masterclass in performance, direction, and narrative depth. "At PVR INOX, our constant endeavour is to curate the finest cinematic experiences, and there is no greater honour than bringing this legendary saga back to our cinemas.

"Loved by generations across the globe, it has inspired countless filmmakers and cinephiles. For the first time in India, audiences will experience these iconic films on the big screen in close succession. For the younger generation, it is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to discover the brilliance of The Godfather on the big screen. For those who've loved it for decades, it's a homecoming," Bijli said. (PTI)

Rebellious, blunt, but pure gold: Armaan Malik on brother Amaal's entry in 'Bigg Boss 19'

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Singer Armaan Malik on Tuesday sent his best wishes to brother Amaal on his participation in "Bigg Boss" and said people will get to witness his real side where he is rebellious, blunt but also someone with a heart of gold. Amaal is among the 16 contestants taking part in the

19th season of "Bigg Boss", hosted by Bollywood star Salman Khan.

In a post on X, Armaan expressed hope that his brother would emerge victorious.

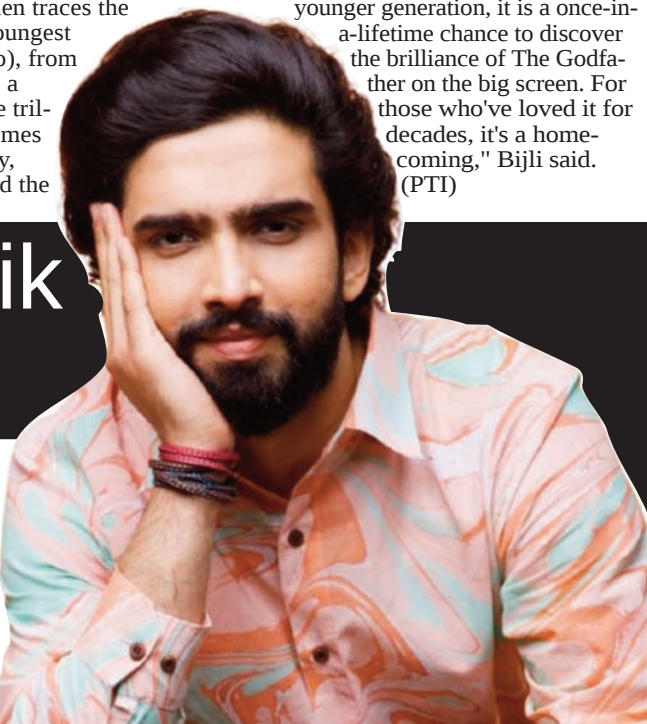
"My brother Amaal has always been someone who follows his own mind and has his own way of doing things. He is

rebellious, he is blunt, but his heart is pure gold. I know everyone watching the show will get to see that and witness the real him (snoring included) Wishing him all the love and luck, ab Big Boss gaya hi to jeet ke hi aana @AmaalMallik," he wrote. In another post, Armaan replied to a user who asked his

reaction to Amaal joining "Bigg Boss". "Obviously was never for it, but ab Amaal bhai sahab ko kaun samjhaye. Anyway, boarding school samajhke kuch masti karke aajaye wapas. (Who can make Amaal bhai understand? Anyway, let him treat it like boarding school, have some fun, and come back)," he wrote.

Earlier this year, Armaan Malik had opened up about his battle with clinical depression and the emotional and financial difficulties he faced.

In March 2025, he shared a social media post revealing his struggles, which included distancing himself from his family. (PTI)



Alia Bhatt requests online content of her Mumbai house to be removed

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Calling the dissemination of videos and pictures of her new Mumbai house an "invasion of privacy and a serious security issue", actor Alia Bhatt on Tuesday requested media to take such images down immediately and asked her fans to not reshare them.

Bhatt's Instagram post comes days after the visuals of her and husband Ranbir Kapoor's Bandra home, which seems to be taken from a neighbour's balcony, started circulating online.

"I understand that in a city like Mumbai, space is limited - sometimes the view from your window is another person's home... But that does not give anyone the right to film private residences and push those videos online. A video of our home - still under construction - has been recorded and circulated by multiple publications, without our knowledge or consent," Alia wrote. "This is a clear invasion of privacy and a serious security issue. Filming or photographing someone's personal space without permission is not 'content'. - it's a violation. It should never be normalised... Think about it: would you tolerate videos of the inside of your home being shared publicly, without you knowing? None of us would," she added. She also requested media outlets to take down all the related content.

"So here's a humble but firm request - if you come across content online, please don't forward it or share it further. And to our friends in the media who have carried these images and videos: I urge you to take them down immediately. Thank you."

Bhatt will next feature alongside husband Ranbir Kapoor and Vicky Kaushal in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's directorial "Love & War". The film is currently in the production stage. (PTI)



Got cancer diagnosis right in middle of 'Full Plate' post production, says Tannishtha Chatterjee

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Actor Tannishtha Chatterjee, who recently revealed her stage 4 oligometastatic cancer diagnosis, says she finished her film "Full Plate" while going through a difficult phase in her personal life.

The actor is happy that the movie, which she wrote and directed, will now have its world premiere at the Busan International Film Festival.

The 43-year-old on Tuesday thanked fans for their wishes in an Instagram post.

"So overwhelmed by all the love and good wishes I have received over the past two days. It's easy to feel like the world is all doom and gloom, but thank you for making me feel that it's not and that humanity still exists. I don't want this to sound like an award acceptance, speech. So please forgive me if it does sound so.

"In the middle of a really difficult personal journey, I somehow also managed to finish my film 'Full Plate'

which I wrote and directed. I got diagnosed right in the middle of the post production earlier this year. Despite everything I am so happy to share that Full Plate will have its world Premier at the Busan International film Festival 2025," the actor wrote.

Chatterjee also shared the poster of the film and said it could only be possible through "pure grit and total commitment" of the team who stood strong through her health crisis and incredibly difficult conditions under which the movie was made.

She also praised the cast and crew of the film including Kirti Kulhari, Ashutosh Goswami, Indraneil Sengupta and Monica Dogra for their help.

Chatterjee has worked in movies across industries including "Parched", "Brick Lane", Bret Lee starrer "UnIndi-an", "Angry Indian Goddesses", "Doctor Rakhmabai" and "Anna Karenina". She last appeared in the Paresh Rawal starrer "The Storyteller". (PTI)



2-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova and Caroline Garcia head to retirement after US Open losses

NEW YORK, Aug 26: Petra Kvitova looked to her right as she sat down in the U.S. Open's main interview room for her final post-match news conference as a professional tennis player, and the two-time Wimbledon champion saw what she was hoping for.

"Tissues are here. Very good," Kvitova said. "I'll try to be brave."

While speaking to reporters following a 6-1, 6-0 loss to Diane Perry in the first round at Flushing Meadows, the last tournament for Kvitova before retirement, the 35-year-old left-hander was in a good mood, smiling or laughing at some of her own answers.

The tears she shed on court right after the 52-minute defeat were no longer flowing.

Kvitova, who said she came down with a case of COVID-19 a few weeks ago and considered pulling out of the U.S. Open, hadn't expected to be so emotional on Monday.



"But since I woke up this morning, I felt it. I felt it would be not good. I couldn't eat. I was really nervous. But in different way, I would say, I couldn't move. I couldn't swing, I couldn't do anything," she explained.

"It was really difficult. I never (had experienced) ... knowing I'm playing my last match, most probably."

After it ended when she sent a backhand return wide, Kvitova began crying. She went over to the stands for a hug and a kiss from her husband, Jiri Vanek, who is also her coach. They became parents in July 2024, when their son, Petr, was born, and Kvitova returned to the tour this season after a 17-month break.

She announced earlier this year that she would stop playing after the U.S. Open. So had another tour veteran, 31-year-old Caroline Garcia of France, who also headed to retirement Monday after losing 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 to

Kamilla Rakhimova.

"Obviously you can always achieve more, and I was dreaming of achieving more," said Garcia, a 2022 semifinalist in New York. "But I'm very happy and (at) peace with my decision to move forward with my life and close the chapter of being a tennis player."

Kvitova won Grand Slam titles at Wimbledon in 2011, defeating Maria Sharapova in the final, and 2014, with a victory over Eugenie Bouchard. She also was the runner-up to Naomi Osaka at the 2019 Australian Open and was ranked as high as No. 2.

In December 2016, she was stabbed at her home by a knife-wielding intruder. Kvitova needed hours of surgery to repair nerves and tendons in her racket-holding left hand.

Kvitova returned to competition less than six months later at the French Open, where she won her first match back. (AP)

13th Assam University Inter-College Football Tournament kicks off

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 26: The 13th Assam University Inter-College Football Tournament kicked off here at Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) stadium on Monday (August 25). The tournament is organised by Assam University (AU) Sports Board and hosted by Assam University, Diphu Campus AUDC. The five-day tournament will end with the final match to be played on August 29 here.

All together 11 colleges have participated in the tournament, and they are Rukasen College, Bakuli; Langhin College, Langhin; Don Bosco Junior College, Diphu; Bokajan College, Bokajan; Diphu Govt. College, Diphu; Eastern Karbi Anglong College, Sariahan; Haflong Govt. College, Haflong; Rangsa College, Dongkamukam; Thongnokbe College, Dokmoka, AUDC and Assam University, Silchar Campus.

Yesterday (August 25) a colourful inaugural function was organised here at KASA stadium, with participation from 11 participating colleges, including officials from AU Sports Board, teaching and non teaching staff of AUDC and invited dignitaries.

Pokhila Engtipi, a gold medalist in Asia Pacific Masters Games and in other international Masters Games events graced the occasion as the chief guest and inaugurated the tournament.

In her inaugural speech mentioned her inclination to sports even from childhood as she used to participate in school events. She also mentioned her success in Masters Games events from running in local grounds to participating in international events. By participating in various international events the Masters Games got recognised. The KAAC in recognition of her achievement appointed her as Forester-I in the Forest department, he noted.

Engtipi also said sports have changed a lot. Now through sports one can develop one's own career. She took the example of Lovlina Borgohain, the Indian boxer and sprinter Hima Das, who were from Assam, and has now made their career through sports.

Engtipi also laid stress on the need of giving time for games and sports to keep the body healthy. "A child may be brilliant in studies, but if his/her health is weak then it becomes a stumbling block for his/her progress. So in order to become successful one should maintain good health," she advised.

Earlier, Dr. M. Tineshowri Devi, Director cum Chairperson of the Sports Board, AU, Silchar, in her inaugural speech said the very purpose of organizing the inter-college football tournament is to foster physical fitness, mental wellbeing, social development and character building through games and sports. At least 30 talented players from different colleges will be selected from this tournament to represent Assam University to participate in the East Zone Inter-University tournament to be held very soon in Kolkata, she told. The inaugural ceremony ended with the releasing of balloons and pigeons. The inaugural match was played between AUDC and Don Bosco Junior college, where the former defeated the latter by 2-0. While in the first match played in the morning between Langhin College and Rukasen College, the former won the match.

Venus Williams' pain-free return to Grand Slam tennis means more to her than a US Open loss

NEW YORK, Aug 26: That Venus Williams lost her first Grand Slam match in two years — and what she says will be her last match of 2025 — didn't really matter.

Certainly not to the thousands of supportive spectators in the Arthur Ashe Stadium seats who roared for her best shots and, in a way, for everything her career means to them, before sending her off the court with a standing ovation after a 6-3, 2-6, 6-1 defeat against 11th-seeded Karolina Muchova at the U.S. Open.

The result also sure seemed beside the point to Williams herself, at 45 the oldest singles player at Flushing Meadows since 1981. She smiled and laughed and joked through her postmatch news conference — until, that is, a reporter asked something that made her think back to all of the injury and illness issues she dealt with for years. "Oh, what did I prove to myself?" Williams began, repeating part of the question. "I think for me, getting back on the court was about giving myself a chance to play more healthy. When you play unhealthy, it's in your mind. It's not just how you feel. You get stuck in your mind too. So it was nice to be free."

As she spoke those last few words, Williams bowed her head and closed her eyes, which welled with tears. After several seconds of silence, the tournament moderator ended the Q-and-A session and Williams rose from her seat at the front of the room.

This was just the fourth singles match of a comeback that began in July after 16 months off the tennis tour, time marked by pain from uterine fibroids she had surgery for last year. "My team and I, we worked as hard and as fast as we could. We literally took no days off. I haven't gone to dinner. I haven't seen friends. I haven't done anything except train for three months as hard as I could," Williams said. "From each match that I didn't win, then I tried to go back and learn from that and then get better."

She hasn't won a match at the U.S. Open in singles since 2019, when she got to the second round. Since then, Williams exited in the first round in 2020, 2022 and 2023, and missed the tournament in 2021 and 2024.

Being back in the arena meant so much to her — and to those watching. "I don't think I've ever had a crowd that much on my side," said Williams, who appreciated the backing and yells of "Let's go, Venus!" that came from the stands even as she dropped 11 of the night's first 13 points. "I knew going into this match that people in this stadium, people in the United States, people around the world, were really rooting for me, and that felt great."

This event holds a special place in her career. Her first Grand Slam final came at the 1997 U.S. Open, when she was 17. She won two of her seven major championships there, in 2000 and 2001.

And it was at the U.S. Open more than a decade ago that Williams withdrew before she was supposed to play in the second round, revealing she had been diagnosed with Sjögren's syndrome, an energy-sapping auto-immune disease that can cause joint pain.

Some thought she might leave tennis because of that, but she remained a leading figure — on and off the court. "She's such a legend of our sport," 2023 French Open runner-up Muchova said, calling it an honor "to share a court with her."

Muchova, a 29-year-old from the Czech Republic, made it to the semifinals in New York in both 2023 — when she lost to eventual champion Coco Gauff in a match interrupted by a climate protest — and 2024. So perhaps it wasn't surprising that Williams started slowly. But with her fiancé, Andrea Preti, leaping out of his seat after many points, Williams got back into the match, smacking vintage serves at up to 114 mph and finishing with just one fewer winner than Muchova. (PTI)

42nd Sonitpur District Weightlifting Championship concludes in Tezpur

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Aug 26: The 42nd Sonitpur District Weightlifting Championship, organised by the Sonitpur District Weightlifting Association under the sports wing of the Asoniya Club, Tezpur concluded successfully on Sunday at the Asoniya Club premises.

The programme began with the flag hoisting jointly by the presidents of the District Body building Association and the District Weightlifting Association, Pankaj Kumar Bora and Hiranya Bhuyan. The competition was formally inaugurated by Sonitpur District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das.

Inaugurating the competition District Commissioner Das lauded the Asoniya Club for hosting such a significant sporting event in its centenary year. District Sports Officer Panjal Dishingia attended as a distinguished guest.



In the youth category, the title of Best Lifter went to Pranjal Baruah of Physique Gym in the men's section and Prangana Nath of Herculean Gym in the women's section.

In the junior division, the honours went to Nitul Pradhan

(men's, Physique Gym) and Bristirekha Hazarika (women's). The senior category Best Lifters were Sahabul Hasan (men's, SMB Gym) and Mayuri Bora (women's). In the boys' under-13 category, Tapan Das, Arnab Kakoty, and Kishanu Kashyap se-

Australian Open champion Madison Keys loses in US Open 1st round to Renata Zarazua

NEW YORK, Aug 26: Pretty much from the get-go at the U.S. Open, Madison Keys could tell she wasn't hitting the ball well or feeling very much at all like the self-confident player who claimed her first Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in January. After 89 unforced errors, including 14 double-faults, the No. 6-seeded Keys was gone from Flushing Meadows in the first round with a 6-7 (10), 7-6 (3), 7-5 loss to 82nd-ranked Renata Zarazua of Mexico. "For the first time in a while ... my nerves really got the better of me, and it kind of became a little bit paralyzing," said Keys, the runner-up in New York to good friend Sloane Stephens in 2017 and a semifinalist in 2018 and 2023. "I felt like I was just slow. I wasn't seeing things the way that I wanted to, which I feel like resulted in a lot of bad decisions and lazy footwork."

Her first U.S. Open with the status of major champion — thanks to defeating No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka in the final at Melbourne Park — was over just as it began. "You always kind of feel first-round jitters and, as the day is getting closer, feeling a little bit more and more nervous," said Keys, who played with her left thigh heavily taped. "But I feel like, for whatever reason, today I just couldn't separate myself from ... feeling like winning matters just way too much."

She made so many mistakes off the spin-laden shots coming her way that Zarazua needed to produce just eight winners to earn the biggest victory of her career. Zarazua lost in the first or second round of all eight of her previous Slam appearances. Yet somehow, it was Zarazua who managed to deal with any nervousness better, even though she was competing in cavernous Arthur Ashe Stadium for the first time and had only had a chance to hit there once a couple of days prior.

The 5-foot-3 Zarazua came into the day with a 0-6 record against op-

ponents ranked in the top 10.

"I'm a little bit small in height, so coming in here, it was like: Oh, my God. This is huge," Zarazua said about the largest stadium in tennis, which holds nearly 24,000 spectators. When the match ended with Keys missing a forehand, Zarazua smiled as wide as possible, held her racket atop her head, then placed a hand over her face.

This one certainly was memorable, in part because it did not come easily and lasted 3 hours, 10 minutes. Zarazua trailed by a set — after frittering away five chances to take the opener — and 3-0 in the second. Quite a daunting deficit. But she never went away. "Kudos to her for making me play a lot of balls today," Keys said. "I mean, she's a tricky player."

While Keys was one of 25 American players in the women's singles draw, the 27-year-old Zarazua is Mexico's lone entrant in the bracket. She moved to San Antonio as a teen,

and is now based in Florida.

"In Mexico, yeah, it's probably not the most famous sport," Zarazua said about tennis, which she picked up after starting out in gymnastics and diving. "I got into tennis," she explained, "just because my brother was playing, and he was like, I think this is a bit safer sport."

What else happened at the US Open on Monday? Brazilian teenager João Fonseca, who turned 19 on Thursday, won his U.S. Open debut, defeating Miomir Kecmanovic 7-6 (3), 7-6 (5), 6-3 in front of a raucous crowd of his countrymen. Another precocious player, 18-year-old Canadian Vicky Mboko, who was seeded 22nd, was eliminated by two-time major champion Barbora Krejickova 6-3, 6-2.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova, who is 35, played her last match before retirement, losing to Diane Parry 6-1, 6-0, and 2022 U.S. (AP)

Smells of weed, roars of airplanes, loud crowds: It's all part of the US Open's chaos

NEW YORK, Aug 26: There are some tennis players, such as Frances Tiafoe or Madison Keys or Ben Shelton, who can't wait for the U.S. Open to come around each year, with its boisterous crowds, its bold-faced names in the stands, its music at changeovers, its buzz. To them, the louder, the better. Start the show and bring the noise.

"I operate well in chaos," said Tiafoe, twice a semifinalist at Flushing Meadows.

Sometimes, it all can get out of control, as happened during a match that ended early Monday. There was a delay of more than five minutes while spectators booed and shouted — egged on by 2021 champion Daniil Medvedev, who was angered by chair umpire Greg Allensworth's ruling after a photographer interrupted play by going on court, of all things.

"They didn't want to stop," Medvedev said about the fans. "So, whatever."

US Open chaos is always there,

even if it doesn't reach Medvedev levels. Not everyone is able to shrug off that sort of mayhem at a Grand Slam tournament famous — some would say infamous — for the over-served fans, airplanes roaring overhead, the Manhattan-Queens commute and the odors of everything from marijuana to food being grilled.

"It's something you really can't train the brain to kind of deal with," 1991-92 champion Monica Seles said. "You just adjust to it."

There also are those, such as 2024 champion Aryna Sabalenka or 2014 champion Marin Cilic or Petra Kvitova, who didn't start out with an affinity for the anarchy — "Really confusing," was Sabalenka's initial impression — but grew to be OK with it.

Some tennis players go from loving the US Open madness to hating it. And there are even some whose opinion shifted the other way, from embracing to despising. "In my 20s, I loved coming



here. There was so much to do. But the older I get, the less I enjoy being here. It's a little bit chaotic. There's always a lot of noise. A lot of smells everywhere. I've visited most of the places in New York; I don't need to go to Central Park for the 1,003rd time," said Adrian Man-

narino, 37, a Frenchman who began his 15th U.S. Open on Sunday by upsetting 29th-seeded Tallon Griekspoor.

"It used to be fun," Mannarino said about the tournament, "but sometimes I'm like, Gosh, I wish I could concentrate a little bit more." The types of scenes at the

US Open do not show up at Wimbledon. The hushes that envelope Wimbledon's Centre Court or the French Open's Court Philippe-Chatrier — which hold nearly 10,000 fewer spectators than 23,859-seat Arthur Ashe Stadium — are harder to come by in New York.

"Wimbledon, for example — it's proper, it's elegant, it's elevated. People are definitely more quiet and respectful, I guess you could say," said Emma Navarro, an American who reached the semifinals at Flushing Meadows last year. "U.S. Open, it feels a bit more casual. Casually rowdy, I guess I would call it."

There is a constant hum at Ashe and other arenas.

That's just fine with Shelton, whose first of two major semifinals came at the 2023 U.S. Open.

"I guess I find peace in the chaos," he said, "because I feel more comfortable at the quiet tournaments." (AP)

Dewkon Memorial Inter District School Football Tournament begins



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: The opening ceremony of the Dewkon Memorial Inter District School Football Tournament (U-17 Years Boys) 2025-26 was held on Tuesday at Nehru Stadium, Ulubari, here. The programme was graced by the presence of Noba Kumar Basumatary, Dr. Bishnu Ram Nunisa, Sports Organiser, Durjoy Narjary, former national player, Swan Thapa, former national player, along with all the staff of the Direc-

torate of Sports & Youth Welfare, members of the media, and other dignitaries.

On the inaugural day, Dhemaji district emerged victorious against Dhubri district with a 2-0 win, setting the tournament off to an exciting start.

The event, organised by the Department of Sports & Youth Welfare, Government of Assam, marked the beginning of this prestigious tournament showcasing the budding football talent of Assam.

Asian Games on Joshna Chinappa's radar but Olympics 'long way off'

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Veteran player Joshna Chinappa continues to push boundaries despite being on the wrong side of 30s, setting short-term goals with next year's Asian Games firmly on her radar.

The former World No. 10, who turns 39 next month, stands as the last active member of Indian squash's golden generation, following the retirements of Dipika Pallikal and Saurav Ghosal.

"I am just taking one tournament at a time right now and I am going to play a few more PSAs towards the end of this year," Joshna told PTI on the sidelines of a felicitation ceremony organised by HCL and Squash Rackets Federation of India.

"At this stage in my life, I'm taking it a couple of months at a time, seeing whether my body's fit, how it's feeling, things like that, and I'm just very selective with the tournaments that I play now."

With the toll the sport takes on her body, Joshna prefers to focus on immediate, attainable goals. One of them is the Asian Games in Japan next year.

"The Asian Games is definitely there in the back of my mind. But again, it just depends on a few more tournaments, how I do. Maybe I have trials, things like that."

"I am preparing for it. But if it happens, great. If not, that's also okay."

Squash is set to make its Olympic debut at the 2028 Los Angeles Games, but Joshna



isn't looking that far ahead.

"It's (Olympics) honestly a long way off right now for me. And right now I'm just really enjoying playing squash more in the moment and just playing selective tournaments."

When asked what keeps her going after

all these years, she replied simply:

"I love winning medals for India. That's always been my biggest motivation. As long as I feel passionate, as long as I love playing squash and know there's still something left in me, I want to see it through."

Former world no. 10 Joshna underwent knee surgery after the 2023 Asian Games. Since then she has competed in a slew of tournaments including partnering with teenage prodigy Anahat Singh to clinch the women's doubles title at the Asian Championships in June.

Talking about her recovery process she said "It definitely takes a lot more work at this stage in my late 30s to still be competing, playing singles, playing doubles. So yes, the effort to look after my body is a lot more, there is more physio and, just training is a lot more different these days."

"Recovery really depends on the effort I put in. If I have my physio with me, if I stretch properly, all of that, I'm able to recover pretty well."

Reflecting on her training approach post-surgery, she added, "It's really about being smart. When you're younger, your body can take a lot more, you can push harder."

"Now, it's about not overtraining, protecting my legs, and ensuring I'm doing the right strength work, watching my diet, and listening to my body. I just want to get the best out of myself without overdoing it."

The SRFI and HCL group felicitated 26 players who won medals at the Asian Championships and Junior World Championships. The medallists were honoured with commemorative cash awards totalling ₹ 11 lakh. (PTI)

SINQUEFIELD CUP

Praggnanandhaa in joint lead after facile win; Gukesh loses



ST. LOUIS, Aug 26: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa scored a fluent victory over Frenchman Alireza Firouzja to claim the joint lead after the seventh round of the Sinquefield Cup, which is a part of the Grand Chess Tour.

With his second victory coming after a string of draws, Praggnanandhaa joined Fabiano Caruana of United States at the top of the table with 4.5 points on a day when world champion D Gukesh was outplayed by American Wesley So.

With Praggnanandhaa and Caruana in front, Levon Aronian and Wesley So now share the third spot on four points apiece while Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland and Samuel Sevian of United States are jointly holding the fifth spot with a fifty per cent score.

Gukesh and Alireza are next in the standings on three points each and Nodirbek Abdusattorov seems destined to finish last having just 1.5 points.

After a relative lull that failed to provide a single decisive game in the last two rounds, the seventh round provided as many as three decisive games out of a possible five in this 10-player 375000 USD prize money tournament. Apart from Alireza and Gukesh, lady luck continued to desert Nodirbek as he lost his fourth game in the tournament at the hands of Duda.

Praggnanandhaa outclassed Alireza who apparently overrated

his position after the opening.

The Rossolimo against the Sicilian is known to be a potent weapon but Alireza went astray right from the early stages of the middle game.

Praggnanandhaa found the right moves at the right time and seized the initiative by attacking the centre wherein his pair of Bishops had a towering impact on white's centre.

Alireza kept looking for some tactical solutions that never saw the light of the day and ended up blundering in a lost endgame. The game was over in just 27 moves.

Gukesh started with the Berlin defense as black and Wesley decided to push for an advantage by not going for the traditional endgame. The opening favoured Wesley a little as Gukesh gave the Bishop pair and it was a dynamic balance on the board in the early middle game.

Gukesh lost a pawn while trying to create counter play and Wesley was relentless as he also carried out an attack on the king side. Gukesh lost his queen for two minor pieces and it was all over soon.

Results round 7:

Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 3) lost to R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 4.5); Duda Jan-Krzysztof (Pol, 3.5) beat Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 1.5); Wesley So (USA, 4) beat D Gukesh (Ind, 3); Fabiano Caruana (USA, 4.5) drew with Levon Aronian (USA, 4) Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 3.5) drew with Samuel Sevian (USA, 3.5). (PTI)

Sarfraz Khan hits quickfire ton for Mumbai against Haryana in Buchi Babu Tournament

CHENNAI, Aug 26: Sarfraz Khan hit a counter-attacking 111 to bail Mumbai out of trouble against Haryana in their All India Buchi Babu Invitational Tournament contest here on Tuesday.

Mumbai were struggling at 84 for four at one stage on the opening day after deciding to bat when the India batter took control, hammering nine fours and five sixes during his 112-ball knock to resurrect his team's innings.

The right-handed batter, who had scored 138 against TNCA XI earlier in this event, got to his century with a six off his 99th delivery that he faced here at the MRF Pachaiyappa's Ground.

Sarfraz, who made his Test debut against England last year at Rajkot, has been away from the Indian team after the tour of Australia and was not picked for the tour of England.

Earlier, Mumbai had stuttered from 69 for no loss to 84 for four, losing their openers Musheer Khan (30), Divyaansh Saxena (46), Pragnesh Kanpillewar (3) and Suryansh Shedge (1) in quick succession.

Shams Mulani was on 50 not out but Tanush Kotian missed his milestone as he fell for 48, with Mumbai reaching 346 for nine at stumps.

Meanwhile, Rituraj Gaikwad bounced back to score 133 (144 balls, 10x4s, 4x6s), helping Maharashtra to 440 all out against Himachal Pradesh, with Arshin Kulkarni scoring 146 (190 balls, 16x4s, 1x6s). Prince Thakur took 7/144 for Himachal Pradesh. (PTI)

India clinches women's 50m rifle 3-positions team gold at Asian Championships

SHYMKENT (KAZAKHSTAN), Aug 26: Olympian Sift Kaur Samra led from the front as she guided India to the women's 50m Rifle 3-Positions team gold along with stalwart Anjum Moudgil and Ashi Chouksey in the Asian Shooting Championships here on Tuesday.

World record holder Samra fired a superb 589, while Ashi shot 586 and Anjum managed 578 as the trio aggregated 1753 points to clinch the top spot ahead of Japan, which aggregated 1750 and South Korea, that took the bronze with a combined total of 1745.

Samra and Ashi also made it to the individual final as they shot

qualification round placed second and fifth.

But since another Indian, Shriyanka Sadandi, who had topped the qualification round, was competing in the 'Ranking Points Only' (RPO) category, Samra and Ashi entered the individual eight-shooter final as first and fourth.

RPO shooters cannot compete for medals.

Senior pro and two-time Olympian Anjum finished 22nd in a high-class field of 41 shooters.

On Monday, National Games champion Neeru Dhandia enjoyed one of her finest days in the sport en route to winning the women's trap gold medal. (PTI)



Central Delhi Kings sail into DPL play-offs



NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Central Delhi Kings sealed a play-off spot in the Delhi Premier League (DPL) defeating Purani Dilli 6 by 104 runs (DLS method) in a rain-curtailed clash here. Batting first, the Kings set the tone with a powerful batting performance, piling up 197/5 in just 18 overs.

Despite losing wicketkeeper Kaushal

Suman early for 5 (7), opener Yash Dhull — continuing his fine run of form — anchored the innings with a fluent half-century. He combined with Yugal Saini (28 off 20) for a steady 57-run partnership before they were sent back. Skipper Jonty Sidhu (28 off 16) and Aditya Bhandari (17 off 11) kept the scoreboard ticking, but it was Aryan Rana's late blitz that provided the fireworks. Rana's unbeaten 42 off just 14 balls, studded with explosive stroke play, powered the Kings to a formidable total. For Purani Dilli 6, Rajnesh Dadar returned with bowling figures of 3/40 in his four overs.

In reply, Purani Dilli 6 never found their footing against a disciplined Kings attack. Money Grewal and Arun Pundir struck early blows, removing Rushal Saini (0) and Samarth Seth, before skipper Vansh Bedi's cameo of 14 off 6 was cut short by Pundir. At 44/3 in 6 overs, rain interrupted play and the target was revised to 174 in 15 overs. (PTI)

It was an opportunity to return to best version of myself, feeling well: Suryakumar on injury and rehab



NEW DELHI, Aug 26: India's T20 skipper Suryakumar Yadav has opened up about his recent injury setback, which needed surgery and a six-week rehab, saying that the forced break was an opportunity to return to his "best version" ahead of next month's Asia Cup.

The 34-year-old underwent a sports hernia surgery in Munich after being diagnosed with a problem in his lower right abdomen towards the end of the IPL in June. After that, he underwent a rehab at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

He is back to full fitness and will be leading the side in the continental showpiece beginning September 9 in the UAE.

"I'm feeling good right now. It's been five to six weeks. A good process, good routines for last six weeks and fingers crossed, feeling really well," Suryakumar said in a video posted by the BCCI on Tuesday.

"...most important thing during a rehab phase is to have good people around you who will guide you really well and that's what I did from last two-three years whenever I was in rehab. I saw it as an opportunity to come back as the best version of myself."

"If I was here for six weeks, eight weeks or 12 weeks, I could take that one week at a time, prepare myself mentally that way and just use the facility and stay in that moment and move in the right direction."

Recalling the time when he first understood the gravity of his injury, Suryakumar said it was a problem quite similar to the one he had experienced in the past.

"It actually got diagnosed close to the end of IPL. I felt it because I had the similar kind of injury last year as well and that's how I got to know. So a few checklists were there," said Suryakumar, who had an ankle surgery in 2023 and underwent another sports hernia procedure in early 2024.

"I tried those things and then I realised that it's time to go and do a small MRI. When I did it, it was very clear in that. I did it post IPL, went to Germany."

"It went really well how it went last year

and I knew how the recovery is going to be step by step. So I was prepared for everything. So we took one week at a time and we are here and I'm feeling good."

Talking about his structured rehabilitation and the support at CoE, Suryakumar said: "I think the most important thing for me is when you come here at CoE or when I was here at NCA last year as well, they understood how my body reacts to certain situations."

"So all the strength and conditioning coach and the physios, they understood how my body works and accordingly they planned all the workouts. As soon as I used to hit the gym and I came here, they would plan the sessions and that's how we took one week at a time and slowly but steadily we are here." The India skipper also gave a big thumbs up to the facilities at the CoE.

"I think firstly it's very massive. The place is huge. Let me talk about the gym first. I think more than 30-35 people can train here together," he said.

"I actually used most of the equipment here. Some new equipment which are actually very useful from athletes point of view. Not only for a rehab but if someone, any contracted player or a targeted player wants to come here for few weeks, train, use the ground and everything."

"Unbelievable facility and it's the best which I've seen for a really long time." (PTI)



GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM



National Health Mission, Assam

ADVISORY TO PREVENT FOOD POISONING

What is Food Poisoning?

It is an acute condition comprising of symptoms like abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, fever etc. due to consumption of food or drink contaminated with living bacteria or their toxins or inorganic chemical substances including poison delivered from plants like wild mushrooms and sea foods. These conditions may affect vital organs like liver, heart and kidneys which may ultimately lead to organ failure and death.

Causes of food poisoning	
There are two categories of food poisoning	
Bacterial food poisoning due to living bacteria or their toxins or both bacterial multiplication and toxin formation	Non-bacterial type, due to harmful chemicals like pesticides, fertilizers, arsenic, mercury and toxin containing plants like mushrooms and sea foods

How to prevent food poisoning

It can be prevented by practising the 5 Keys to Food Safety

- Choose safe raw or cooked materials- like vegetables, fish, meat
- Keep your hands and utensils clean
- Always keep cooked and raw food separately
- Cook food thoroughly
- Keep food at safe temperature

Do's	Don'ts
- Use clean water for drinking and washing - Keep your hands and utensils clean by washing properly - Rinse properly and repeatedly the materials to be used for 'Prasad', 'Khichri', 'Bhog' etc. on religious occasion - Freezed/preserved food must be well covered and kept in the right temperature	- Do not choose food materials of inferior quality - Do not eat half cooked or stale food - Do not keep/ preserve cooked food which may have been in contact with uncooked food - Do not use soaps, special detergents to remove dirt, contaminants from the surfaces of vegetables

If any symptoms like stomach ache, vomiting, loose motion, headache, fever etc. show up, immediately visit the nearest Health Facility.

Call 104

for any health related queries

Call 108

for Ambulance Services

(NHM/D/2025-26/43)