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NEW KHADI OF NEW INDIA

Khadi artisans have seen a remarkable 275% increase in their remuneration over the last 11 years

KHADI FOR NATION

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VOCAL FOR LOCAL

Dr Hazarika symbol of India's cultural consciousness: Guv

Bhupen Hazarika's year-long birth centenary celebrations begin • Diphu joins celebrations

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI/DIPHU, Sept 8: The state's cultural heartland came alive on Monday as Assam paid tribute to legendary singer and Bharat Ratna awardee Dr Bhupen Hazarika on his 100th birth anniversary.

The grand inauguration of year-long celebrations was held at the Bhupen Hazarika Samannay Tirtha in Guwahati, where thousands gathered alongside dignitaries to honour the maestro whose music and message continue to resonate across generations.

Governor Laxman Prasad Acharya, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, state Congress president Gourav Gogoi, and several other leaders joined students, music lovers, office workers and ordinary citizens in paying homage at the memorial near Gauhati University, where Dr Hazarika was cremated in 2011.

Cultural programmes, floral trib-



utes and performances filled the day with heartfelt remembrance.

The Governor hailed Dr Hazarika as "the soul of Assam and a symbol of India's cultural consciousness," adding that the centenary celebrations are "not merely an event of remembrance, but a festival of inspiration aimed at igniting the imagination of generations to come."

Chief Minister Sarma announced that the state government, in collaboration with other states including Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Delhi, will organise events throughout the year.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in an article published across state newspapers, described Hazarika's legacy as one that "extends far be-

yond music as his works embodied emotions that transcended melody."

The Prime Minister will participate in a special tribute event in Assam on September 13, where a commemorative ₹100 coin in Hazarika's honour will be unveiled.

A biography of the maestro, written by Sahitya Akademi award-winning author Anuradha Sarma Pujari, will be translated into all major Indian languages and distributed to libraries nationwide.

The celebrations will conclude in New Delhi on September 8, 2026, with President Droupadi Murmu expected to attend the closing ceremony.

The day also saw cultural programmes by the Bhupen Hazarika Cultural Trust and Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra Society, including the hoisting of the Trust's flag by 100 prominent personalities led by nonagenarian Satriya dancer (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam going to see major change: AICC

Three Assam ex-MLAs including Dr Man Singh Rongpi join Congress

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Three former MLAs of Assam joined the Congress on Monday as the party expressed confidence that the state is going to witness a "major change" in the assembly elections in 2026.

Three former MLAs -- Satyabrata Kalita, Binanda Kumar Saikia and Dr Man Singh Rongpi -- joined the Congress in the presence of Assam Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi, AICC general secretary in-charge of the state, Bhanwar Jitendra Singh, and AICC general secretary, organisation, K C Venugopal, here at the Indira Bhawan.

"Influenced by the ideology of the Congress Party, three former MLAs, Satyabrata Kalita, Binanda Kumar Saikia, and Dr Man Singh Rongpi, have joined the Indian National Congress. It's a very good beginning for the Assam PCC. ...It's a clear sign of change in Assam's politics," Venugopal said. "I'm confident that Assam is going to witness a major change in the next assembly elections in 2026," he said.

Venugopal alleged that the BJP is misusing power and playing



with people's sentiments.

"People are fed up with the current government in Assam. They want change."

That's why senior, experienced leaders want to join the Congress. This is a good beginning. On behalf of the Congress party, I welcome these three leaders to our party," he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Gogoi said the government of Himanta Biswa Sarma in Assam is not a government of the people.

"The truth is that today the entire Assam has become Himanta ji's private firm. Instead of serving the people, the government is serving Himanta ji's family. Therefore, those who truly want to do public service are (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Prohibitory orders enforced in Kokrajhar ahead of BTC polls

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Sept 8: Prohibitory orders have been enforced across Kokrajhar district by District Magistrate Masanda M Pertin in view of the forthcoming Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Election 2025.

The orders have been issued under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 to ensure peace, security, and the smooth conduct of the elections.

As per the order, carrying licensed arms is banned throughout the district until the completion of the electoral process.

Exemptions are provided only to police personnel, army and paramilitary forces on election duty, and sportsmen affiliated with the National Rifle Association of India participating in recognised sporting events, subject to production of valid documents.

The District Magistrate's directive also prohibits unauthorised public meetings, rallies, and processions.

The use of vehicles for electioneering, human rallies without prior approval, organising fairs or melas without permission, use of loud-speakers without clearance, carrying weapons or explosives, and torchlight processions have also been restricted.

The orders will remain in force until further notice. Executive Magistrates, police officials, and security (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

VP polls: Battle between South stalwarts today

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: The stage is set for a direct contest between ruling NDA nominee C P Radhakrishnan and joint opposition candidate B Sudershan Reddy for Tuesday's vice-presidential election, with the BJP-led alliance having a clear edge in the poll necessitated due to the sudden resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Members of both Houses of Parliament will cast their votes in the Parliament House between 10 AM and 5 PM on Tuesday. Counting votes will begin at 6 PM, and the results will be announced late evening.

Members of Parliament are not bound by party whips to vote in the vice presidential election, which takes place under a secret ballot system.

The BJP-led NDA and the Congress-led opposition grouping held separate meetings with their respective MPs on poll eve to sensitise them about the election process and also held mock polls.

The MPs will be handed out ballot papers containing the names of the two contesting candidates and will have to mark their preference by writing the figure '1' opposite the name of the candidate of their

choice.

"The figures may be marked in the international form of Indian numerals or in the Roman form or in the form used in any Indian language but shall not be indicated in words," the rules of the vice presidential election state.

The electoral college for the vice presidential election comprises a total of 788 members - 245 from the Rajya Sabha and 543 from the Lok Sabha. The 12 nominated members of the Rajya Sabha are also eligible to vote in the election.

The present strength of the electoral college is 781 as six seats are vacant in the Rajya Sabha and one in the Lok Sabha. This puts the majority mark at 391. The NDA has 425 MPs, while the opposition camp has the backing of 324.

Among the political parties that are not part of the ruling or the opposition camps, the YSRCP, with 11 members in Parliament, has decided to support the NDA nominee, while the BRS and the BJD have decided to abstain from voting in the election.

While Radhakrishnan is a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) veteran from Tamil Nadu and the Governor of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

18 Bangladeshi infiltrators sent back from Assam

GUWAHATI, Sept 8: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday that 18 Bangladeshi infiltrators have been sent back.

He asserted that steps are being taken to ensure that illegal immigrants don't return to the state.

"I've read the comments in my previous posts on these pushbacks where people have suggested a lot of things. Be assured, we are doing everything in protocol to ensure that these infiltrators don't come back again in Assam," Sarma said in a post on X.

"18 of them PUSHED BACK last night," he added, though he did not specify from which district the infiltrators were sent back.

Sarma, who has been regularly sharing on social media details of illegal Bangladeshis being pushed back, had posted on September 3 that 13 infiltrators had been sent back.

"While some deal with Kangaroos, we have to deal with... Anyway, our vigil remains strong as we have PUSHED BACK another 13 illegal infiltrators, who were apprehended in Barpeta, back to Bangladesh," Sarma had said in a post on X. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'BARD OF BRAHMAPUTRA' Bhupen Hazarika Museum to be completed in one year: CM

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 8: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that a museum dedicated to fulfilling the dreams of legendary singer and cultural icon Dr Bhupen Hazarika will be completed within a year at the Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra in Guwahati.

Speaking on the occasion of the inauguration of Dr Hazarika's birth centenary celebrations at the Dr Bhupen Hazarika Samannay Tirtha in Jalukbari, the chief minister said the museum will play a crucial role in preserving the Bard of the Brahmaputra's songs, creative works, and contributions to Assamese culture and society.

"The museum will be a centre to safeguard Dr Hazarika's legacy and project his ideals on both national and global platforms," Sarma remarked.

The Chief Minister highlighted that the state government is organising a series of centenary events throughout the year, with participation from dignitaries including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of India.



"This museum is a vital part of our efforts to honour the profound influence Dr Hazarika had on generations. It will inspire future generations to uphold the Assamese identity and cultural heritage," he added.

Sarma also invited public suggestions on how the centenary celebrations can best reflect Dr Hazarika's thoughts and philosophy.

He urged people across the state to actively participate in preserving and promoting the values he stood

for. The announcement was made in the presence of Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, Cultural Affairs Minister Bimal Borah, education minister Ranaj Pegu, and other dignitaries, as well as members of Dr Hazarika's family.

The museum's construction is expected to be completed within a year and is envisioned as a centre of research, education, and cultural preservation, ensuring that Dr Hazarika's contributions remain evergreen for generations to come.

From Assam to India: Celebrating the timeless voice of Bhupen Da Hazarika one of the most extraordinary voices India has ever known: PM

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday paid rich tributes to music maestro Bhupen Hazarika on his 99th birth anniversary, and said he was one of the most extraordinary voices India has ever known.

In a post, Modi shared an article he wrote on the Bharat Ratna winner, who was born in Assam, noting that the year marks the beginning of his birth centenary celebrations.

It is an occasion to revisit his monumental contributions to Indian artistic expression and public consciousness, he added.

He said, "What Bhupen Da gave us extends far beyond music. His works embodied emotions that transcended melody. More than just a voice, he was the heartbeat



of the people. Generations have grown up listening to his songs, each word resonating with themes of kindness, social justice, unity and deep-rooted belonging."

Modi said his music flowed like

a timeless river, crossing borders and cultures, carrying with it the spirit of humanity.

Hazarika travelled the globe, rubbed shoulders with the who's who across all spectrums of soci-

ety, but remained deeply connected to his roots in Assam, he said. Modi said he always carried the spirit of Assam's indigenous identity and the ethos of its people.

Music was only one part of his personality, he said, adding that Hazarika was as much an intellectual at heart. It was also this desire to learn that made him excel at Cotton College, Banaras Hindu University and took him to the United States, where he interacted with leading academics, thinkers and musicians of those times, he said.

He recalled that Hazarika met Paul Robeson, the legendary artist and civil rights leader.

Robeson's song "O! Man River" became the inspiration for Bhupen Da's (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NFR to run special steam, diesel trains to cater to festive rush



GUWAHATI, Sept 8: The North-east Frontier Railway (NFR) will operate four pairs of Special Steam and Diesel Rides and four Special Diesel Joyrides train services under its Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) to cater to the festive rush and winter season.

These trains will start operating from September 19, an NFR statement said here on Monday.

The DHR, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, witnesses footfall of thousands of local as well as foreign tourists during the peak season. The operation of these special services

will add to their experience of enjoying the beauty of the hills, it said.

The Darjeeling-Kurseong Festive Special Steam Ride will operate every Saturday from September 20 to November one. The corresponding down train will run every Sunday from September 21 to November two.

The Sunset Special Steam Ride on the Kurseong-Mahanadi-Kurseong route will ply every Saturday between September 20 and November one.

The Sunrise Special Steam Ride on the same route will operate every Sunday from September 21 to November two.

Another train, a 'Tea, Timber Special Diesel Ride' on the Silguri Jn-Rangtong-Siliguri Jn will run every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from September 19 to November two. Four Special Diesel Joyrides will also (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Full benefits of GST rate cuts must be passed on to consumers, says Piyush Goyal

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday asked the industry to pass on the full benefit of GST rate cuts to consumers, thereby increasing the demand of domestic products and strengthen the foundation of India's economy.

"The GST rate cuts, along with simplification, will boost domestic demand, small and large enterprises will get access to more opportunities, new avenues for employment will be generated, earnings will rise, which will lead to higher spending," Goyal said, adding that this will create a virtuous cycle of growth to take the country ahead.

No power in the world will be able to stop India's emergence as a global superpower, the commerce and industry minister said at an EEPIC India event here.

Goyal stated the importance of equitable economic benefits, and highlighted that advantages of goods and services (GST) rate cuts must be fully passed on to consumers, ensuring that growth reaches every citizen and strengthens the foundation of India's economy.

The minister said when India works together as a united family, supporting each other across sectors, inclusive growth will naturally follow. He expressed confidence that the country can become a global role model for sustainable and inclusive development.

The minister expressed confidence that India's economy, which currently has a size of about USD 4 trillion, will become the third largest globally in the next 2-2.5 years and by 2047, it will become an economy of at least



USD 30 trillion. The minister said with GST rate cuts and simplification, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a boost to domestic demand. He noted that new opportunities for employees and increases in income will follow. He further said when infrastructure spending and consumer demand grow on strong base of the economic system, no power in the world can stop India from becoming a world power.

Goyal said under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi, India has transformed from a fragile five economies to one of the top five economies. He noted that India has been the fastest-growing economy for the last four years. In the last quarter, the country achieved 7.8 per cent GDP growth, which he described as a world record.

"Therefore, we must all accept the call to action of Atmanirbhar Bharat which is in front of us," he said. "No matter how much instability

arises in the global situation... India's confidence is so strong today we do not get scared or bow to any challenge," asserted the minister.

He added that the country has the strength to overcome any crisis, emphasising that businesses should focus on Swadeshi products, as this will not only help India's growth but also strengthen the country's financial security.

He said the country's 1.4 billion people, businesses and trade should focus on Made in India products. Businesses that are import dependent can look into products that can be procured and made in India, he suggested.

Goyal highlighted that India's strength relies on trade and the MSME sector, which form the backbone of the country's businesses.

Referring to EEPIC's journey, he pointed out that in 1955, exports were at USD 10 million, while today they stand at USD 116 billion. With time, he said, the engineering sector will grow further with bigger goals and greater strength.

The minister said he has full confidence that India, with the motto of "Zero Defect, Zero Effect," will grow bigger. He underlined the need to ensure that good quality products are made in India and sold across the world.

He added that the world today considers India a trusted partner, and it is important to maintain that status.

He also stated that India is a nation conscious of sustainability. As a responsible global citizen, India is mindful of Mother Nature, and with its NDC commitments under COP21 in Paris, India has ranked in the top three for consecutive years in global sustainability efforts. (PTI)

PCBL Chemical eyes ₹ 16,000cr revenue, five-fold PAT growth by 2030

KOLKATA, Sept 8: India's largest carbon black producer, PCBL Chemical Ltd, on Monday said it was planning to add 50 per cent capacity across all product lines over the next five years, and eyeing a five-fold growth in profit.

The company was planning brownfield expansion in Tamil Nadu, a greenfield project in Andhra Pradesh, and speciality black capacity augmentation, according to its 2030 vision document.

"Battery chemicals will be a key growth engine as we build an integrated ecosystem through nano silicon, acetylene black and super-conductive grades," the company informed investors.

In FY'25, PCBL's revenue stood at ₹ 8,404 crore with EBITDA of ₹ 1,384 crore.

It is targeting ₹ 16,000 crore revenue by FY'30, with speciality chemicals contributing 45 per cent to the topline.

The RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group company said it is also investing in next-generation chemistries, including super-conductive carbons, green chelates and biodegradable polymers, alongside a nano-silicon pilot plant that is slated for commissioning by FY'27.

The company noted that its export volumes have grown threefold over the last decade, with a presence in 70 countries. It has nine manufacturing units, four R&D centres, and a strong customer base in tyres, automotive, batteries, home care, oil and gas, and water solutions.

The company said it is also banking on sustainability initiatives, with 122 mw of cogeneration capacity supplying surplus green power to the grid, and offsetting 2.65 lakh tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

Backed by favourable industry tailwinds in speciality chemicals, batteries and rubber blacks, PCBL said its strategy combines capacity expansion, innovation, and digitalisation to deliver long-term value to shareholders. (PTI)

NAME CORRECTION

I, GAYATRI HIRA, date of birth 19-02-1995, W/O-Bhaskar Jyoti Bordoloi, R/O-Vill-Medhigao, P.O.-Charaibahi, P.S.-Mikribheta, Dist-Morigaon, Assam, have corrected my name from GAYATRI HIRA BORDOLOI to GAYATRI HIRA through Executive Magistrate at Morigaon on 04/09/2025. GAYATRI HIRA and GAYATRI HIRA BORDOLOI is the same and one person.

NAME CORRECTION

I, Nizam Uddin, S/O-Abu Bakkar, Vill- Marjong Pather, P.O-Choudhury Bazar, PS- Murajhar, Dist- Hojai (Assam), do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that My Grand Father actual and correct name is Nisar Ali But in the land record bearing periodic Patta No. 45 of Marjong Pather KISSAM under Kapashbari Mauza, Circle doboka, Dist - Hojai (Assam), his name has been recorded as JUBED (nickname) instead of his actual and correct name Nisar Ali. Nisar Ali And Jubed are the same and single person.

Stock markets end higher in-line with firm global trends amid hopes of US Fed rate cut

MUMBAI, Sept 8: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed with gains in a volatile session on Monday, powered by buying in auto and consumer discretionary shares and a firm trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex edged higher by 76.54 points or 0.09 per cent to settle at 80,787.30 despite profit-booking by investors in the last hour of the session.

The barometer opened higher and later jumped 460.62 points or 0.57 per cent to a high of 81,171.38 as auto, oil and private bank shares advanced. However, selling in IT and FMCG shares trimmed gains at the day-end.

The 50-share NSE Nifty ended marginally higher by 32.15 points or 0.13 per cent at 24,773.15.

Among Sensex firms, Tata Motors rose the most by 3.97 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra jumped by 3.96 per cent. Maruti, Adani Ports, Bajaj Finance and UltraTech Cement were also among the gainers.

However, Trent declined 3.81 per cent. Asian Paints, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, L&T, TCS, Power Grid and Sun Pharma were also among the laggards.

"The domestic market failed to sustain its early gains as a late-session sell-off reflected the prevailing 'buy-on-dips, sell-on-rallies' strategy, highlighting investor caution. Auto and ancillary stocks continued to rally on expectations of demand recovery following GST rate cuts, while IT remained weak amid global uncertainties.

"Globally, sentiment improved after soft US jobs data raised hopes of a Fed rate cut in September," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Among BSE sectoral indices, auto jumped 3.12 per cent. Consumer discretionary (1.13 per cent), services (0.85 per cent), telecommunication (0.71 per cent), realty (0.44 per cent), capital goods (0.37 per cent),

metal (0.36 per cent) and commodities (0.33 per cent) also advanced.

BSE Focused IT declined 0.91 per cent, followed by IT dropped 0.80 per cent, tech (0.71 per cent), consumer durables (0.71 per cent) and FMCG (0.34 per cent).

As many as 2,286 stocks advanced while 1,940 declined and 181 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"Markets started the week on a positive note and ended with modest gains amid mixed cues. After opening firm above the 24,800 mark, the Nifty gradually moved higher through the day; however, sharp profit-taking in the final hour trimmed the gains. Investor sentiment was supported by the GST rate cut tailwinds and dovish signals from the US Federal Reserve, which bolstered rate-cut hopes after weak US jobs data," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled in positive territory. Markets in Europe were trading higher. US markets ended lower on Friday.

The August non-farm payrolls report showed the American economy added just 22,000 jobs, while the unemployment rate rose to 4.3 per cent from 4.2 per cent. This soft labour data has strengthened hopes of a rate cut by the US Fed.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹1,304.91 crore on Friday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth ₹1,821.23 crore, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 1.88 per cent to USD 66.73 a barrel.

On Friday, the Sensex ended lower by 7.25 points or 0.01 per cent at 80,710.76. The Nifty eked out gains of 6.70 points or 0.03 per cent to 24,741. (PTI)

Govt working on comprehensive package to support exporters hit by US tariffs: FM

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: The government is working on a comprehensive package to support Indian exporters impacted by a steep 50 per cent tariff imposed by the US, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, asserting a multi-departmental engagement is underway to assess the impact on Indian shipments.

In an interview with PTI, Sitharaman said various industries are sharing the impact with the concerned departments or ministries as the second part (25 per cent) of the tariff kicked in from August 27. "So, we are getting their inputs...something is being worked out to do some hand-holding for those exporters who have been affected by the US tariff of 50 per cent," she said.

"Till the time we get that assessment, how can we assume how much the impact is? So every respective ministry is speaking to their stakeholders and asking for an assessment

of 'Kitne Tak Apke Upar Iska Asar Padega' (how much will be the impact). We will have to see," she said.

The tariffs - among the highest in the world - include a 25 per cent penalty for buying crude oil from Russia. On August 7, the Trump administration enforced a 25 per cent tariff on Indian goods, citing India's persistent oil imports from Russia and long-standing trade barriers.

The sectors which are impacted due to high import duties include labour-intensive segments such as textiles/clothing, gems and jewellery, shrimp, leather and footwear, animal products, chemicals, and electrical and mechanical machinery. Sectors such as pharma, energy products and electronic goods are out of the ambit of these sweeping duties. The US accounted for about 20 per cent of India's USD 437.42 billion worth of goods exports in 2024-25.

The US has been the largest

trading partner of India since 2021-22. In 2024-25, the bilateral trade in goods stood at USD 131.8 billion (USD 86.5 billion exports and USD 45.3 billion imports).

Calling the landmark GST overhaul a 'people's reform', Sitharaman said that rationalisation of tax rates for a wide swath of products will benefit every family, boost consumption, and bolster the economy.

The finance minister said she will personally monitor passing on of goods and services tax (GST) rate cuts in the form of price reduction, even as some of the industries have already announced price moderation.

Within days of the decision, from car makers to public sector insurance companies and shoe and apparel brands have already announced significant price cuts, and the rest are likely to follow suit by the time new GST rates are implemented, she said.

Nearly 400 products - from soaps to cars, shampoos to tractors and air conditioners - will cost less when the rejig of the GST is effective from the first day of Navaratri on September 22. Premium paid on individual health and life insurance will be tax-free. A third slab of 40 per cent tax has been earmarked for a small list of sin goods and ultra-luxury items.

"This is a reform which touches the lives of all 140 crore people. There is no individual in this country who is untouched by GST. The poorest of the poor also have something small that they buy, touched by GST," she said. Starting September 22, the GST slab structure will change - 5 per cent for common use goods and 18 per cent for everything else. The existing slab of 12 per cent and 28 per cent rates has been done away with.

In the revamped GST structure, most daily food and grocery items will fall under the 5 per cent GST slab, with bread, milk and paneer attracting no tax at all.

Sitharaman said the reform - the single biggest since the 2017 roll-out of the one-nation, one tax regime - has been carried out with a focus on the common man. Every tax on daily-use items has gone through a rigorous review, and in most cases, the rates have come down drastically. (PTI)

CIL mulls setting up data centres in decommissioned mines to boost digital infra, sustainability

KOLKATA, Sept 8: Coal India Limited (CIL) was evaluating the potential of establishing data centres in its decommissioned mines, leveraging existing infrastructure to meet the country's growing demand for digital capacity while advancing sustainable development. The state-owned miner had already taken steps for a comprehensive feasibility study by consultants, officials told PTI.

The exercise will include a conceptual study of setting up data centres in India with a special focus on their viability within decommissioned CIL mines.

The study will cover site assessments, preparation of a comparison matrix for evaluating identified locations, and a Preliminary Feasibility Report (PFR) for the most suitable site. Four sites across CIL subsidiaries - Umrer (WCL), Saraipali in Korba (SECL), Himgir Rampur near Jharsuguda (MCL), and Nigahi (NCL) - have been shortlisted.

"The scope of work involved a detailed analysis of the data centre industry in India and globally, classification of models such as hyperscale, colocation and edge facilities, and key demand drivers including digi-

tisation, artificial intelligence, IoT, 5G rollout and cloud adoption," a source said.

It will also assess demand forecasts, sectoral and regional trends, competitive landscape, customer segments, policy environment, regulatory compliance, and entry barriers such as power, cooling and connectivity. The study will also map opportunities for repurposing brownfield sites like mines, integrating renewable energy use, and expanding into Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities. At the same time, it will evaluate challenges unique to mine-based data centres, including geotechnical constraints, connectivity gaps, environmental issues, operational safety and cost uncertainties. CIL noted that the initiative aims to align its diversification with India's Digital India and Make in India missions, while optimally utilising redundant mining assets for high-value infrastructure creation. The final report is expected within the third quarter of FY26.

The state owned miner was adopting multiple repurposing strategies including closed coal mines repurposed into eco-parks, mine tourism sites and recreation centres. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Dr Hazarika symbol

Jatin Goswami. Musical performances by indigenous groups and lighting of lamps at the Hazarika museum were part of the events. The All Assam Students' Union organised tributes across the state, while the state government launched new music classes in Adarsha Vidyalayas and announced subsidies for Assamese films.

Hazarika's son, Tez Hazarika, along with his family from the United States, attended the celebrations. "His music carried the hopes, struggles, and dreams of our people, becoming a movement in itself," said state Congress president Gogoi. While the grand commemorations in Guwahati set the tone for the year-long celebrations, other parts of the state joined in paying tribute.

In Diphu town, the Diphu Club and Bangali Sahitya Sabha organised a community event where local artistes and residents offered floral tributes, recited speeches and performed songs of the maestro.

Diphu Club president Robin Goswami remarked that although the celebrations were modest, they reflected the community's deep respect for Hazarika's legacy. Born on September 8, 1926, in Sadiya, Tinsukia district, Dr Bhupen Hazarika's compositions, such as "Bistimo Parore," "Dil Hoom Hoom Kare," and "Manuhe Manuhor Babe," voiced the struggles and aspirations of ordinary people while celebrating Assam's cultural pride. As the state marks his birth centenary, the celebrations are a reminder of the enduring power of his music to inspire unity, compassion and resilience. (With Inputs from PTI)

Assam going to see

leaving the BJP and joining the Congress," he said. "We are very proud that today three former MLAs are joining the Congress party. I welcome Satyabrata Kalita ji, Binanda Kumar Saikia ji, and Dr. Manas Singh Rongpi ji to the Congress family," Gogoi said. (PTI)

Prohibitory orders enforced

forces engaged in election duty are exempt from these restrictions. District Magistrate Pertin said the preventive measures have been taken to avoid any untoward incidents, maintain public tranquillity, and ensure the peaceful and fair conduct of the BTC Election 2025 in Kokrajhar district.

18 Bangladeshi infiltrators

Sribhumi, Cachar, Dhubri, and South Salmara-Mankachar districts share 267.5 km of international border with Bangladesh. Assam Police has launched a statewide crackdown on illegal immigrants, particularly Bangladeshi nationals, residing without valid documents. Over 450 alleged infiltrators have been deported in recent months. (PTI)

VP polls: Battle between

Maharashtra, Reddy is a former Supreme Court judge who hails from Telangana and is known for key judgments, including the one declaring Salwa Judum, a group of trained tribal youth deployed as special police officers to take on Naxalites, as illegal and unconstitutional.

The issue of Reddy's Salwa Judum judgement spiced up the otherwise staid campaign for the vice presidential election with Home Minister Amit Shah claiming that the 2011 verdict was a setback to the efforts to fight Maoism in Chhattisgarh. The vice-presidential poll has been described by the opposition as an ideological battle, even as the numbers are stacked in favour of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

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

Radhakrishnan (67) served as a two-term member of the Lok Sabha from Coimbatore during the tenure of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and later went on to lead the saffron party in Tamil Nadu.

Reddy (79), who retired from the apex court in July 2011, is a veteran jurist known for several landmark judgments criticising the then Union government for showing slackness in probing black-money cases.

As an apex court judge, Reddy ordered the formation of a special investigation team to take all steps for bringing back unaccounted monies unlawfully kept in bank accounts abroad. Retrieving black money deposited in foreign banks was a key electoral plank of the BJP ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha election.

In a fervent appeal to MPs ahead of the vice presidential polls, Reddy on Sunday exhorted them not to let party loyalty guide their choice and asserted that by voting for him, they would be ensuring that the Rajya Sabha stands as a true temple of democracy. In a video message, Reddy told the MPs that this is not just a vote to elect their Vice-President but is a vote for the spirit of India itself.

Since the filing of nomination papers on August 20, Radhakrishnan has met MPs from all the states in groups and sought their support in the election, while Reddy has toured different states and met leaders of opposition parties. Reddy's meeting with RJD founder Lalu Prasad came under attack from the BJP which questioned the opposition candidate for meeting a person convicted in a scam.

The Congress-led INDIA bloc is projecting Reddy as a consistent and courageous champion of social, economic and political justice. Reddy has had a long and eminent legal career, including as a judge of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, the chief justice of the Gauhati High Court and a judge of the Supreme Court. He also led the committee that undertook the caste survey in Telangana. (PTI)

NFR to run special

operate daily between September 20 and January 1. These trains will run between Darjeeling and Ghum stations, and will run with a composition of three first class coaches. The services of the Darjeeling-Ghum-Darjeeling Morning Diesel Joyride train will continue from September 20.

The details of stoppages and timings of these trains are available at the IRCTC website and have also been notified on social media platforms of NFR, the statement said. (PTI)

Hazarika one of the

iconic composition 'Bistimo Parore.' The much-admired former American First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, awarded him a Gold Medal for his performances of Indian folk music, he said.

Modi said, "Bhupen Da had the option of remaining in the US, but he returned to India and immersed himself in music. From radio to theatre, films to educational documentaries, he was well-versed in each of these media. Wherever he went, he emphasised supporting young talent."

His works combined lyrical flair and also gave social messages, touching upon justice for the poor, rural development, strength of common citizens, to name a few, he noted. His works also became a powerful lens to view modernity. A lot of people, especially from the socially backward classes like him, derived strength and hope from his music, Modi said.

"The spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' found powerful expression in Bhupen Hazarika's life journey. His works transcended linguistic and regional boundaries to unite people across the country. He composed for films in Assamese, Bengali and Hindi," he said. He added, "He made Assam visible and audible to the rest of India. It is no exaggeration to say that he helped shape the cultural identity of modern Assam, both for those within the state and for the Assamese diaspora across the globe."

Noting that he was elected as an independent MLA from Naubhoicha constituency in Assam in 1967, Modi said he never became a career politician but his passion for serving others was highly impactful.

He said people and the Indian government recognised his enormous contributions over the years, and Hazarika was conferred with several awards, including Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, Dadasaheb Phalke Award and more.

Modi said, "In 2019, it was an honour for me personally and for the NDA government that the Bharat Ratna was conferred upon him during our tenure. People from across the world, especially those from Assam and the Northeast, expressed joy that this honour was conferred upon him."

This honour celebrated the principles that Hazarika held dear to his heart - that music, when grounded in truth, can transcend all barriers, he said.

Modi said when Hazarika passed away in 2011, lakhs of people attended his funeral. Every eye was moist that time. Even in death, like in his illustrious life, he brought people together, he said.

He said, "It was thus fitting that he was cremated at the Jalukbari hillock overlooking the Brahmaputra, the very river that had been the lifeline of his music, metaphors and memories. It is gladdening that the Assam Government has supported the work of the Bhupen Hazarika Cultural Trust, which is working to popularise his life journey among youngsters."

Hazarika's life teaches us the power of empathy, of listening to people and of staying rooted, he said.

"His music teaches us to be compassionate and courageous. It asks us to remember our rivers, our labourers, our tea workers, our Nari Shakti and our Yuva Shakti. It encourages us to believe in unity in diversity," Modi said. He added, "It is only fitting that one of India's most significant infrastructure projects, the bridge connecting Dhola and Sadiya, bears the name of Bhupen Hazarika. Just as his songs connected hearts across regions, this bridge connects lands and people." (PTI)

Governor Acharya and CM Sarma pay homage

State observes 100th birth anniv of Dr Bhupen Hazarika

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 8: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya along with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, paid floral tributes to Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika on the occasion of his birth centenary at the Dr Bhupen Hazarika Samanay Tirtha here on Monday. The ceremony marked the inauguration of the year-long centenary celebrations dedicated to honoring the life and legacy of the Bard of Brahmaputra.

In his address, the Governor described Dr Hazarika as "The soul of Assam and a symbol of India's cultural consciousness. The centenary celebration is not merely an event of remembrance, but a festival of inspiration, aimed at igniting the imagination of generations to come. This is a celebration of the soul of Assam a tribute to a man whose voice echoed not only across our state but throughout the nation and the world."

Acknowledging the State government's initiative to commemorate the centenary year, the Governor appreciated Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his team for their efforts in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Assam and bringing them to the fore before the younger generation.

Reflecting on Assam's rich legacy, the Governor highlighted the contributions of historical and literary figures such as Lachit Borpuhian, Veer Chilarai, Dr Banikanta Kakati, Ambikagiri Raichoudhury, Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Anandaram Baruah etc, all of whom laid the foundation for Assam's identity and intellectual spirit. In that proud tradition, he said, Dr Bhupen Hazarika emerged as a "precious gem", who through his music, infused a new cultural awareness across India.

Quoting iconic songs like "Manuhe Manuhor Babe," "Moi Eti Zazabor," and "Dil Hoom Hoom Kore," the Governor emphasized how Dr. Hazarika's music resonated with people from all walks of life articulating the struggles of workers, the hopes of the common man, and the shared humanity that binds all. "Dr Hazarika didn't merely sing, he stirred the conscience of a nation. His music was a rallying cry against injustice and a bridge connecting communities, cultures, and generations," the Governor said.

The Governor also reiterated the lines of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who expressed happiness and pride to be the Member of Parliament from the place where Bhupen Hazarika received his education. Dr Hazarika's contribution during the Bangladesh Liberation War, his promotion of peace and unity in neighboring countries like Nepal and Bhutan, and his international recognition underscore his status as a global artiste and cultural ambassador. The conferment of the Bharat Ratna upon him, the Governor stated, is recognition of a life dedicated to the uplift of society through art and music.

"Dr Bhupen Hazarika was not just a cultural icon; he was a humanist, a visionary, and a voice for the voiceless," said the Governor. "Let us carry forward his message that art is not just for admiration, but a tool for transformation." The Governor urged everybody to take inspiration from Dr Hazarika's life and work towards building a just, equitable, and compassionate society rooted in India's rich cultural heritage. "Let us pledge to preserve and cherish our cultural legacy and ensure that voices like Dr Bhupen Hazarika's continue to guide and inspire us in the years to come," Acharya stated.

Minister Cultural Affairs Bimal Bora, Education Minister Ranaj Pegu, Public Health Engineering Minister Jayanta Malla Barua, MLA West Guwahati Ramendra Narayan Kalita, Mayor Guwahati Municipal Corporation Mrigen Sarania, Additional Chief Secretary, Cultural Affairs B. Kalyan Chakravarty, family members of Dr Bhupen Hazarika Tez Hazarika, Samar Hazarika, former MP Queen Oja along with a host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

On this occasion, at a different programme held at Raj Bhavan, floral tributes were also paid to Dr Bhupen Hazarika by all officers and staff of Raj Bhavan.

Our Jorhat correspondent adds: Cultural rallies, chorus, songs and competitions marked the start of the year-long centenary birth anniversary celebrations of Sudhakanta Dr Bhupen Hazarika, in Jorhat district on Monday. A series of activities were also organised by the Jorhat district administration in association with the Cultural Affairs department, Dr Bhupen Hazarika International Foundation and Jorhat Theatre.

The highlight of the programme was the huge cultural rally taken out from the Jorhat Stadium across the town showcasing diverse cultural scenario of the State and the contributions of the legend.

The rally, which was flagged off by Jorhat Dis-



trict Commissioner Jay Shivani and Pranita Baruah, president, Dr Bhupen Hazarika Foundation, was participated by people from all walks of life. Artists and musicians atop on open trucks having portraits and cutouts of the maestro singing songs of him (Bhupen Hazarika) was part of the rally.

A Bhupendra Sangeet competition amongst students of colleges and universities was also organized as part of the celebrations at the auditorium of the Jorhat Science Centre and Planetarium. A cultural event was organized at the Jorhat Theatre Hall in the evening.

Earlier in the morning floral tributes were paid at the statue of the cultural maestro near the Bhogdoi bridge on the AT Road here by Jorhat DC and several others. Shivani also offered floral tributes in front of the Hazarika's portrait at the DC office complex.

Meanwhile, more than 100 singers comprising students, women and professional singers rendered the famous song, Manuhe Manuhor Baabe, Jodiu okonu nabhabhe of Sudhakanta at an event organised by the Jorhat district unit of AASU at the open air stage inside the premises of the Central office of Asam Sahitya Sabha. Noted singer Prasenjit Lahon also sang a few songs of the legend.

Our Dhubri correspondent adds: On the momentous occasion of the 100th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, Dhubri's Government Boys Higher Secondary School, established in 1879, celebrated a unique and cherished connection to the legendary artist, proudly showcasing a preserved admission register that bears the name of the "Bard of Brahmaputra," revealing a brief but significant chapter of Dr Bhupen Hazarika's early life.

According to Azad Hussain, the academic in-charge of the school, the 146-year-old institution holds a treasured record of Dr Hazarika's time as a student. The register shows that he was admitted on May 6, 1932, and was a student for three months and nine days, leaving on August 15, 1932. This small detail places Dr Hazarika, for a short period, within the walls of this historic school, adding to the rich tapestry of his journey.

The centenary celebration was a heartfelt tribute to the cultural icon. The event began with the soulful melodies of Dr Hazarika's songs, performed by the school's teachers, evoking the deep emotion and lyrical genius that defined his work. The cultural program that followed was designed to provide a glimpse into the spirit of his music and his profound connection to the land and people of Assam.

The celebration not only honored Dr Hazarika's immense contributions to music, literature, and cinema but also highlighted the historical significance of the Dhubri Government Boys Higher Secondary School. For a brief period, the same classrooms and corridors echoed with the footsteps of a young boy who would one day become a global ambassador of Assamese culture.

As the school community came together to remember the legend, the preserved admission register served as a powerful reminder that Dr. Bhupen Hazarika's legacy is woven into the very fabric of Assam's educational and cultural institutions, from the grand stages he commanded to the quiet classrooms he once inhabited.

Our Margherita correspondent adds: The Birth Centenary of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika was observed with great reverence and enthusiasm in Margherita Co-District through a series of programmes organised under the initiative of the Directorate of Cultural Affairs, Assam and the Co-District Administration, Margherita as

the day-long celebrations reflected the deep admiration of the people of Margherita for the immortal bard whose music, philosophy, and vision continue to inspire generations.

The day began with a solemn floral tribute at the Office of the Co-District Commissioner, Margherita, where Rahul Doley Co-District Commissioner, along with officials and staff of the civil administration, paid homage to the legendary son of Assam.

Speaking on the occasion, Margherita Co-District Commissioner Rahul Doley underlined Dr Bhupen Hazarika's unparalleled role in strengthening Assamese identity, promoting unity and harmony, and carrying the voice of the common people to the global stage. Floral tributes were also offered across all government offices.

As part of the celebrations, the Block Elementary Education Officer (BEEO), Margherita Co-District, organised Singing Competitions, Quiz Contests and Essay Writing Competitions at Town High School, Margherita.

Students from various schools enthusiastically participated, and the patriotic song "Asom Amar Rupahi" composed by Dr Hazarika reverberated in morning assemblies across schools, filling the atmosphere with his timeless spirit of cultural pride and brotherhood.

A panel discussion and seminar was also organised at Margherita College in collaboration with the Co-District Administration. Eminent speaker Prabin Rajkhowa delivered an inspiring lecture on the life, works, and enduring legacy of Dr Hazarika, emphasising his role as a cultural ambassador of Assam and a messenger of humanity and justice as the event drew active participation from academicians, students, and faculty members, making it both intellectually enriching and deeply moving.

In the evening, a vibrant Cultural Programme and reminiscence session titled "Antaranga Alap" was organised at Jaya Nagar, Margherita by the Office of the Co-District Commissioner in association with Hudhakantha Smriti Suraksha Mancha, as a part of the celebration and the event featured soulful performances and heartfelt reflections on Dr Hazarika's life and works, drawing enthusiastic participation from dignitaries, cultural workers, students, and the public at large.

The centenary celebrations in Margherita Co-District was a heartfelt tribute to Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, the people's poet, the cultural icon, and the eternal voice of humanity as his songs of love, courage, unity, and justice will forever remain a guiding light for generations to come.

Our Mangaldai correspondent adds: The Darrang district administration joined the statewide celebration of music maestro Dr Bhupen Hazarika's birth centenary with a series of heartfelt events. District Commissioner Parag Kumar Kakaty inaugurated the commemoration by offering floral tributes at Dr Hazarika's life-size statue in Bhupen Hazarika Park, situated along the Bega River, where the legendary artist spent his childhood.

As part of the celebrations, officials and staff of the District Commissioner's office unveiled a handwritten wall magazine at the DC's office. The magazine was launched by senior journalist Bhargab Kumar Das of The Sentinel in the presence of District Commissioner Kakaty, Additional District Commissioner Dhruba Jyoti Das, litterateur Dr Amarendra Narayan Deb, industrialist Mukul Deka, and office staff.

A well-attended meeting, chaired by District Commissioner Kakaty, was held in the DC's office conference hall. During the event, Dr Amarendra



Narayan Deb and Mukul Deka shared cherished memories of Dr Hazarika's deep connection with Darrang district. Journalist Bhargab Kumar Das recounted Dr Hazarika's leadership of the Xur Bahini, a group formed post the turbulent 1983 assembly elections to promote peace and communal harmony in Dimakuchi and Udalguri. He also highlighted Dr Hazarika's role as the chief guest at the state-level Bishnu Prasad Rabha Divas organized by the All Assam Students Union in Udalguri in 1988.

The event, gracefully anchored by renowned artist Pranjal Sarma, concluded with participants uniting to sing Dr Hazarika's iconic song Manuhe Manuhor Babey. The Bhupen Hazarika Smriti Raksha Samiti, the humanitarian organisation Manuhe Manuhor Babey, and Darrang Zila Parishad also joined in commemorating the music maestro's birth centenary with equal fervor.

Our Nagaon correspondent adds: The birth centenary of the world-recognized legendary singer and Bharat Ratna, Dr Bhupen Hazarika, was celebrated with great fervor and enthusiasm across Nagaon district on Monday.

The celebrations were marked by various colorful programmes and events organized in all government and private educational institutions, organisations, and offices.

A special programme was organized at the Amrit Kanan garden, located in the heart of the small town, in collaboration with the Nagaon district administration and Nagaon Municipal Board.

The programme began with the lighting of a lamp and floral tribute to the iconic singer's bust, situated in the garden.

District Commissioner, Debashish Sarma, paid tribute to Dr Bhupen Hazarika's contributions to Assamese national life through his songs. He called upon everyone to take steps to promote and disseminate the singer's immortal creations globally.

As part of the birth centenary celebrations, 15 prominent and emerging artists from Nagaon district participated in a painting competition based on Dr Bhupen Hazarika's song "Manuhe Manuhor Babey." The artists created stunning paintings, which were showcased during the event.

The programme was attended by several dignitaries, including Nagaon Police Superintendent Swapnil Deka, Additional District Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, Department heads, Municipal Board members, and officials, along with a large gathering of local people.

The event was a fitting tribute to the legendary singer's legacy, and it highlighted the impact of his music on the people of Nagaon and beyond.

Similarly, Nagaon GNDG Commerce College paid rich tributes to Dr Bhupen Hazarika, the legendary music maestro and Bharat Ratna awardee, on the occasion of his 100th birth anniversary today. To commemorate the day, the Departments of ML, English, and Mathematics & Statistics jointly organised a panel discussion to honour the life and works of the beloved 'Sudhakantha'. The programme began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp and floral tributes to Dr Bhupen Hazarika by the Principal, invited guests, faculty members, and students. This was followed by a chorus performance of "Axom Amar Rupahi," sung collectively by the Principal, teachers, and students. The Principal, in his inaugural address, lauded Dr Bhupen Hazarika's immense contributions to the cultural heritage of Assam and highlighted his role as a voice of humanity and social change. The panel discussion featured noted artist Anup Baruah and teacher as well as well-known singer of Assam, Riturani Mousumi of Nagaon district as resource persons. Both speakers re-

flected on the achievements of Dr Hazarika and shared insights into how his music not only enriched Assamese culture but also inspired social awakening. The programme was anchored by Bhupesh Tumang, Assistant Professor, Department of Assamese. On this occasion, the College Campus Bulletin VIBGYOR, Volume 7, Issue 1, was formally inaugurated by the resource persons of the programme. Sunita Budhia, an alurina of the college, was also present at the event and was felicitated by the Principal. The Programme was finally concluded with the Bhupen Hazarika famous song "Manuhe Manuhor Babey" sung by all including both the resource person, teachers and Non-teaching members of the college family.

Our Hojai correspondent adds: People from all the communities paid floral tribute, lighted earthen lamps in front of the bust of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, at a day long grand tribute ceremony organised by Ankur Sangha on the occasion of Birth Centenary year of Music Maestro Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, jointly with Hojai Sahitya Sabha, Assam Sanskritik Mahasabha, Hojai, Hojai Zilla Assam Abriti & Sanskritik Parishad, Hojai District Senior Citizens' Association at Sudhakant Dr Bhupen Hazarika Sanskritik Manch, Ankur Sangha premises in Bishnupally in Hojai on Sunday.

At the very outset, in the presence of Hojai MLA Ramkrishna Ghosh, who was present as the guest of honor, the office bearers of this five organizations hoisted the flag of their respective organizations. After this, MLA Ramkrishna Ghosh lit up the lamp in front of the bust of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika and everyone present paid their respects by offering flowers in front of the bust of music legend. During this, the local women's group sang Bhupen music.

While addressing the tribute meeting through a poem of Dr Bhupen Hazarika, local MLA Ramkrishna Ghosh said that Bhupen Da is our ideal. He said, "Bhupen Da always taught us the lessons of humanity and advocated working for deprived ones of the society."

This was followed by an open meeting where, District Commissioner Bidyut Bikash Bhagwati graced the occasion as the chief guest. District Commissioner while addressing the gathering said transcending the boundaries of country and region, Dr Bhupen Hazarika was able to establish Assamese identity on the global cultural map and introduced the world to the music and culture of the land. It was his dream to build a greater Assamese society based on the humanitarian values and we all must strive hard to realise his dreams following his ideals of universal brotherhood.

Notably, in the meeting two noted vocalists Aftab Ahmed and Makum Singh were honoured for their enormous contributions. They were honoured with Seleng, Japi, certificate of appreciation, memento. During the meeting Pankaj Sharma, Kalpana Devi Goswami, Anup Kumar Barthakur, Padmakant Bora, Lakhi Prasad Sharma, Krishna Kumar Sharma, Dr. Samsul Haque, Sarveshwar Pathak, Vinod Bihari Singh, Dayal Chandra Karo, Sureen Barkati, Aradhana Sharma, Bipul Chandra Sharma, Ramesh Mundra, Mridul Saikia and many other eminent personalities were present in the tribute ceremony. After this, under the aegis of Assam Abriti and Sanskritik Parishad, Hojai District Committee, hundreds of Abatikars collectively recited the poem 'Mrityu Jina Gaan' of Kavya Sindhu Dr Amara Jyoti Choudhary Dev and paid tribute to Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika. The entire programme was anchored by Bhaskar Bora. In the evening, 100 earthen lamps were lighted in front of the bust of Sudhakant.

65th Annual general meet of Rongkhang Lamps Ltd held

HT Correspondent

DONGKAMUKAM, Sept 8: Rongkhang Lamps Ltd, Ghilani West Karbi Anglong, held its 65th Annual General Meet (AGM) at its lamps premises under chairmanship of Mongol Bey, Chairman Rongkhang Lamps.

Secretary of the Lamps, Dilip Teron, read out the trading profit of ₹ 37219.48 for the year 2024-25. He also placed the proposed budget expected for the year 2025-26 of ₹ 6960.42 only.

Dongkamukam Municipal Board, Vice Chairman, Harmon Bey attended as chief guest along with observer Chesong Engti, Jr. Inspector and Hridayananda Baishya, Sr. Inspector from Hamren and shareholders.

The chief guest in his speech asked for full support and cooperation from shareholders for the survival of the Lamps. He said construction of godown is needed for the Lamps. He also informed of getting ₹ 3 crores loan from NABARD for construction of the godown in Rongkhang Lamps.

Youth leader arrested, released on bail in Diphu

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 8: Litsong Rongphar, a youth leader, was arrested from his residence at Phelangpi Pator Arong, Kheroni by Howraghat and Kheroni police and brought to Diphu police station.

Though arrested in the morning, he was released on bail from Diphu District Court in the evening after the police failed to submit any concrete evidence.

Rongphar has been vocal in demanding eviction drives in the Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) areas in Kheroni, West Karbi Anglong, and other locations including Uttorbil and Rongkut under Howraghat police station, as well as Horilal Basti and Matipung in Diphu town to check illegal settlers.

His group organised several protests and dharnas pressing for eviction drives in these areas.

The most recent demonstration was held last Saturday when Rongphar and his group staged a sit-in in front of Don Bosco HS School at Rongkhang, demanding immediate action.

Unconfirmed sources said that a group from Uttorbil and Howraghat filed an FIR against him, alleging that disturbances were created in their area in the name of checking illegal settlers.

Based on the FIR, a case was registered at Howraghat police station (Case No. 20/25 under Sections 61(2), 351(3), 113(5), 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita). This morning, Howraghat and Kheroni police arrested Rongphar from his residence and brought him to Diphu police station before taking him to Diphu District Court.

In the afternoon, the district sessions court granted him bail after hearing oral submissions from his counsel.

According to his advocate, only two of the sections were relevant to the case. At Diphu police station before being taken to court, Rongphar said that he was arrested because he was advocating for the protection of indigenous land.

SPIC MACAY to host classical music workshop in Dibrugarh Schools

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Sept 8: SPIC MACAY Dibrugarh Chapter will organize a Classical Music Workshop Demonstration series from 9th September to 11th September, 2025 in select schools of Dibrugarh; such as Shiksha Valley, Don Bosco, Little Flower HS School, Gyan Vigyan Academy and Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya.

The sessions will feature Rihom Sarkar, an acclaimed Indian Classical guitarist from Kolkata, known for blending Hindustani classical music with the Spanish guitar. He is a gold medalist in Sangeet Bhaskar and has performed extensively in the USA, Canada, Germany, Bhutan, and Singapore. His creative work includes fusion music and chakra-based meditative compositions. He is also an experienced educator, conducting workshops and teaching Indian classical music globally. He will be accompanied by Santanu Ranjan Barthakur, a reputed Tabla artist from Dibrugarh, trained under Dr Dilip Ranjan Barthakur.

Dhubri's 'Off Campus Education' inaugurates new free education centre

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, Sept 8: Marking its third foundation day, 'Off Campus Education' inaugurated a new Free Education Centre 2.0 on Monday in a collaborative effort with Satsang Kendra, situated in Ward No-1, the new center aims to provide free education to underprivileged and economically disadvantaged children in Dhubri.

The inauguration ceremony was a testament to the community's commitment to education, with a number of respected citizens and educators in attendance. Retired principal Dr Dhruba Chakraborty and retired vice principal Dr. Brojendra Kanta Samraha, both from BN College, Dhubri, jointly inaugurated the new facility.

They were joined by retired teacher Pratul Chakraborty, Assistant Professor Banashree Banerjee, Satsang Kendra In-charge Dipak Sarkar, and all the dedicated teaching staff of the Off Campus Education centre. The opening of the new center will not only expand the reach of Off Campus Education but also serves as a beacon of



hope for a brighter future for the children of Dhubri.

Paramjit Roy, the Chief Executive Officer of Off Campus Education, shared the humble beginnings of the initiative. "Three years ago, seven of my friends and I started our first Free Education Centre to help children from slum areas," Roy recalled. He expressed his immense satisfaction and hope in the growth of the organisation.

"Today, I am happy to share that more than 50 teachers in this town have joined me in this educational endeavor, a sign of hope for a better society," he stated. The event was further highlighted by the presence and support of senior journalist Pronabashish Roy, social worker Shimul Sarkar, and Sanjib Kumar Kundu, who all emphasized the critical role of such initiatives in building a more equitable society.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Beware the fury of a patient man.
—John Dryden

Trouble in KCR family

Is the Bharat Rashtira Samiti 'family drama' nothing but sibling rivalry and power politics? Also shades of patriarchy and the son getting to keep the cake while taking a bite of it, too. The daughter is angry to the point of boiling over and this is what is happening, as BRS founder K. Chandrasekhar Rao is getting to realise as he presides over this party play of several desperate acts? So, Kavitha is out of the "family party". Doesn't Kavitha know it takes a lot to set up a political dynasty and politics of dynasties have been the flavour of Indian politics? KCR knew he had a nice thing going till the Congress took the winds out of the BRS sail. Insiders say KCR had a "soft corner" for Kavitha but was firm that "son" comes first in politics. Apparently, Kavitha accepted this homily till as long as she was a Member of Parliament and KTR stuck in home turf. Then came the 2019 general elections and Kavitha lost! Kavitha's political apperant upended and she felt impinged and constricted. The feeling worsened when it got clear that KCR was the old patriarch and his preference for son overrode the soft corner for daughter. Kavitha's suspension and exit from BRS is a "complex web of palace intrigue and the ingrained patriarchal attitude that daughters can inherit property but not politics" is how one Telangana political analyst put it. But trouble within the family was brewing. And BRS is one family. Not like one family is a single family of parents and children.

The BRS family is father, son and daughter. The weakest link breaks and the family goes underwater. They are calling it sibling rivalry. Far from that. This is hardcore politics and power-play between Kavitha and her brother KT Rama Rao (KTR) with KCR placing his considerable weight behind KTR. Kavitha is stewing, angry, simmering and boiling over, forcing KCR to tip over, take unprecedented action. His soft corner for Kavitha has become a hard ledge. The family drama has taken a hard turn. That KCR has entrusted his politics to KTR is the only certainty so far. The arrangement stands disrupted. The party started with the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh. KCR founded the Telangana Rashtira Samiti. TRS came to power. KCR became Chief Minister. A political dynasty was born.

Things went really south and Kavitha's relationship with KCR deteriorated when she was named in the Delhi excise scam. Arrested and jailed, Kavitha became an embarrassment for KCR and the family. She found herself isolated within the family. It was like the end of days for Kavitha. All her determination to make a comeback with a bang... Kavitha was planning tours and protests. KTR is the target. But this is not sibling rivalry. Sibling rivalry is adorable. Some parents even encourage sibling rivalry. It gives them delight. This is family politics. This is for control of a political dynasty. This is about taking over a political party. It is happening in the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) in Tamil Nadu where father and son are at war. BRS will survive but is the KCR/BSR dynasty in an existential danger?

Why people choose Harmful Habits

Despite widespread awareness of the harmful effects of substances like cigarettes, alcohol, gutkha, and drugs, many people continue to use them, often with devastating consequences for their health, relationships, and society. The question of why individuals knowingly engage in such destructive behaviors is complex, rooted in a combination of psychological, social, physiological, and cultural factors. Understanding these reasons requires a deep exploration of human behavior, societal influences, and the powerful grip of addiction, as well as a reflection on how these substances are perceived and managed in modern life. This article delves into the multifaceted reasons behind the persistent use of these harmful substances and explores potential pathways to address this pervasive issue.

Cigarettes, alcohol, gutkha, and drugs are known to cause severe health problems. Cigarettes contain nicotine, tar, and thousands of toxic chemicals that contribute to lung cancer, heart disease, chronic respiratory issues, and oral health problems. The smoke not only harms the user but also affects those around them through secondhand exposure, often referred to as passive smoking. Alcohol, when consumed excessively, damages the liver, leading to conditions like cirrhosis and fatty liver disease. It also impairs the digestive system, increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases, and disrupts mental health, causing issues like anxiety and depression. Prolonged alcohol use can erode memory, cognitive function, and emotional stability, leaving individuals vulnerable to a host of psychological challenges.

Gutkha, a form of chewing tobacco commonly used in South Asia, is equally dangerous. It contains a mix of areca nut, slaked lime, and tobacco, along with harmful chemicals that cause oral cancer, gum disease, tooth decay, and digestive disorders. The nicotine in gutkha makes it highly addictive, trapping users in a cycle of dependency. Drugs, including substances like heroin, cocaine, cannabis, and synthetic compounds, wreak havoc on the brain and nervous system. They alter brain chemistry, impair decision-making, and can lead to severe mental health disorders, including psychosis. Drug addiction often isolates individuals from their

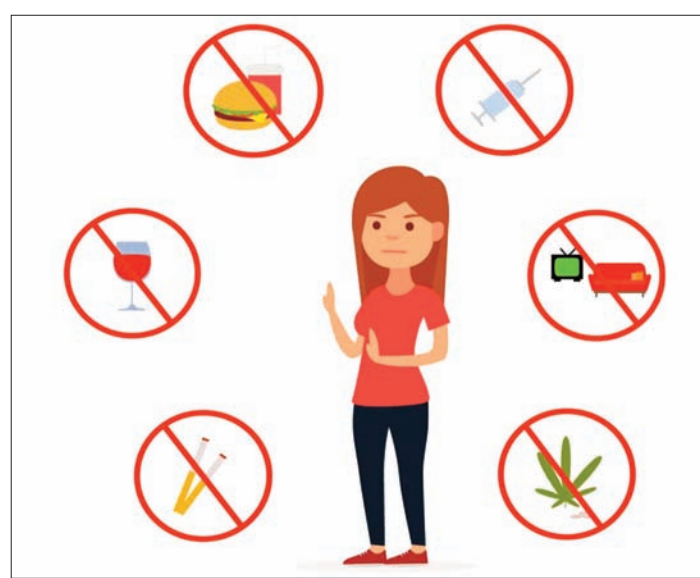
families and communities, pushing them toward criminal behavior or financial ruin in their pursuit of the next dose. Despite these well-documented dangers, which are widely communicated through public health campaigns, media, and education, millions of people continue to use these substances. The reasons are varied and deeply intertwined.

One of the primary drivers of this behavior is the need to cope with stress and emotional distress. Modern life is fraught with pressures, from demanding work environments to financial instability, family conflicts, and societal expectations. Many individuals turn to cigarettes, alcohol, gutkha, or drugs as a temporary escape from these challenges. These substances offer a fleeting sense of relief or euphoria, creating an illusion of control over one's emotions. For instance, nicotine in cigarettes and gutkha stimulates the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure, providing a quick but short-lived sense of calm. Alcohol, similarly, acts as a depressant, slowing down the nervous system and creating a feeling of relaxation. Drugs, depending on their type, can induce intense euphoria or sedation, offering an escape from reality. However, this relief is temporary, and the underlying issues remain unresolved, often worsening due to

the physical and psychological toll of these substances. Over time, users become

trapped in a cycle where they rely on these substances to manage stress, unaware that the substances themselves are exacerbating their problems.

Social influences play a significant role in the initiation and continuation of these habits. Peer pressure, particularly among young people, is a powerful force. Friends, colleagues, or social groups can normalize the use of cigarettes, alcohol, gutkha, or drugs, making them seem like an acceptable or even desirable part of social interactions. In many cultures, alcohol is associated with celebrations, social gatherings, and rituals, creating a perception that drinking is integral to socializing. Similarly, gutkha is deeply embedded in certain communities, where chewing it is seen as a cultural or social norm, often offered as a gesture of hospitality. Cigarettes, in some circles, are viewed as a symbol of sophistication or rebellion, a



perception reinforced by decades of media portrayals. Drugs, too, are sometimes glamorized in popular culture, with movies, music, and social media depicting their use as a form of adventure or self-expression. Young people, eager to fit in or emulate their idols, may experiment with these substances, unaware of the slippery slope to addiction.

Addiction itself is a critical factor in why people continue using these substances despite knowing their harms. Nicotine, found in cigarettes and gutkha, is one of the most addictive substances known, rapidly creating physical and psychological dependence. Once addicted, users experience withdrawal symptoms like irritability, anxiety, and cravings when they try to quit, making cessation incredibly challenging. Alcohol and drugs, particularly opioids and stimulants, also alter brain chemistry, creating a dependency that overrides rational decision-making.

The brain's reward system becomes hijacked, prioritizing the substance over basic needs like food, sleep, or relationships. This explains why even those who desperately want to quit often find themselves unable to break free without significant support. The addictive nature of these substances creates a vicious cycle where users need more to achieve the same effect, leading to increased consumption and greater harm.

Lack of awareness or misinformation also contributes to the problem. While many people are broadly aware of the dangers, some underestimate the risks, believing that moderate use or occasional indul-

gence is harmless. For example, some individuals think that chewing gutkha occasionally or drinking socially poses no significant threat. Others may believe they are immune to addiction or that their bodies can handle the effects. This is particularly true in regions where gutkha is inexpensive and widely available, leading to its casual use without fully understanding its long-term consequences. Similarly, drugs are sometimes viewed as a one-time experiment, with users unaware of how quickly dependency can develop. Misleading information, such as the notion that certain drugs are "safe" or that alcohol in moderation is always harmless, further perpetuates these habits.

Media and advertising, despite restrictions in many countries, continue to influence behavior. While direct advertisements for cigarettes and gutkha are often banned, subtle promotions in movies, TV shows, and social media platforms create an allure around these substances. Alcohol brands, for instance, sponsor events or feature prominently in popular culture, associating drinking with success, glamour, or relaxation. Drugs are sometimes portrayed as a pathway to creativity or rebellion, particularly in music and film, influencing impressionable audiences. These portrayals can override public health messages, making these substances appear desirable despite their known risks.

Cultural and economic factors also play a role. In some communities, gutkha and alcohol are deeply ingrained in traditions, making their use seem unavoidable. Gutkha, being affordable and accessible, is

particularly prevalent in rural and low-income areas, where it is seen as a cheap way to cope with stress or fatigue. Alcohol, in certain social settings, is viewed as a marker of status or festivity. Economic accessibility and cultural acceptance make it harder for individuals to resist these substances, even when they are aware of the consequences.

Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach. Public awareness campaigns must be intensified, focusing not only on the health risks but also on debunking myths and addressing cultural norms. Schools and community organizations should educate young people about the dangers of these substances before peer pressure takes hold. Mental health support is crucial, as many turn to these substances to cope with stress or trauma. Providing accessible counseling, stress management programs, and alternative activities like sports or creative pursuits can offer healthier outlets. Support from family and friends is vital in helping individuals break free from addiction, as emotional encouragement can make a significant difference.

Government intervention is also essential. Stricter regulations on the sale and marketing of cigarettes, alcohol, gutkha, and drugs, coupled with higher taxes, can reduce accessibility. Public smoking bans, restrictions on alcohol sales, and crackdowns on illegal drug trafficking can further deter use. Rehabilitation programs and addiction treatment centers must be made widely available, offering professional support to those struggling to quit. These centers should provide medical care, counseling, and long-term follow-up to ensure sustained recovery.

The persistent use of cigarettes, alcohol, gutkha, and drugs despite their known harms reflects a complex interplay of human psychology, societal pressures, and biological addiction. While the allure of these substances is strong, it is not insurmountable. Through education, support, and systemic change, individuals can be empowered to make healthier choices, and society can move toward a future where the grip of these harmful substances is significantly weakened. A collective effort, combining individual resolve, community support, and policy action, is essential to create a healthier, more resilient society free from the destructive pull of these substances.

India prepares for first-ever digital census in 2027: A landmark in nation-building

By: Chafikhur Rahman

In 2027, India will witness a historic transformation in its governance journey: the first-ever 100% Digital Census. For the first time since the exercise began more than a century ago, every detail of the Indian population will be captured, processed, and analysed digitally, marking a significant leap forward in the nation's data management, planning, and development process. This Digital Census is expected to revolutionize how India perceives itself, manages its diversity, and shapes its future policies.

The Concept of Indian Census: A Historical Perspective: The Census of India is one of the world's largest and most complex administrative exercises. Conducted once every ten years, it provides the official count of the population along with details such as age, sex, literacy, occupation, religion, housing, migration, and other socio-economic indicators.

The first synchronous census in India was conducted in 1881 under British rule, and since then, it has been held uninterrupted every decade. The last Census was due in 2021 but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, creating a rare gap in the timeline. The upcoming 2027 Census will therefore be the 16th Census of India, and for the first time, it will be entirely digital.

The Census has always been much more than just a headcount. It forms the backbone of policy-making, governance, welfare schemes, and development planning. In a vast and diverse nation like India, the Census is not only about numbers but also about understanding people, communities, and their needs.

Why the 2027 Census is Historic: The Digital Leap: The Census of 2027 will break away from the traditional paper-based, door-to-door enumeration system. Instead, it will employ digital tools such as mobile apps, secure online data portals, cloud storage, and artificial intelligence to collect, process, and analyse data.

Enumerators will be equipped with smartphones to record responses in real-time, eliminating paper schedules and reducing manual errors. Citizens may also get the option to self-enumerate online, much like e-filing taxes or applying for digital services.

This shift has been called the "most ambitious administrative digitization project in India's history." With over 1.4 billion people to count, the digital exercise will be larger than any similar effort globally.

Importance of Census in the Present Context: The importance of the Census cannot be overstated, especially in the current socio-economic and political landscape:

1. Policy and Planning: From deciding the

allocation of parliamentary seats to the distribution of funds to states, Census data guides critical decisions.

2. Targeted Welfare: Schemes such as housing, healthcare, education, and food security require precise beneficiary data. A digital Census can ensure accuracy and inclusiveness, preventing leakages and duplication.

3. Urbanization and Infrastructure: As India urbanizes rapidly, Census data will help in planning smart cities, transport, sanitation, and sustainable housing.

4. Social Equity: The Census sheds light on marginalized groups, enabling corrective policies for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities, and economically weaker sections.

5. National Security and Migration: With rising global migration and climate-related displacements, Census data becomes crucial for managing resources, security, and border planning.

In the present context of digital India, AI-driven governance, and the need for real-time data, the 2027 Digital Census is not just timely but essential.

The Promise of Digital Census: A 100% digital Census will bring multiple advantages:

1. Efficiency and Speed: Processing will be faster, reducing the time taken to release Census results from years to perhaps months.

2. Accuracy: Digital inputs reduce human errors in data collection and compilation.

3. Transparency: Digital audit trails will improve accountability and trust in the system.

4. Cost-Effectiveness: Savings on printing, logistics, and manual processing will offset the cost of digital infrastructure.

5. Real-Time Monitoring: Supervisors can track enumerators live, ensuring coverage and reducing duplication.

6. Environmental Benefits: By eliminating paper schedules, India will save millions of sheets of paper, aligning with sustainability goals.

Role of Artificial Intelligence in Digital Census: One of the most ground-breaking features of the 2027 Census will be the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI tools can play multiple roles:

1. Data Cleaning and Validation: AI can detect duplicate entries, inconsistencies, or missing data in real-time.

2. Natural Language Processing (NLP): Enumerators and citizens may respond in local languages. AI can translate and standardize data instantly.

3. Predictive Analytics: AI can forecast population growth, urbanization patterns, and social needs, helping the government anticipate future challenges.

4. Pattern Recognition: AI can detect demographic trends such as migration hotspots, fertility rates, or aging populations.

5. Integration with Other Databases: Linking Census data with Aadhaar, health registries, and economic surveys can create a comprehensive socio-economic profile of India.

This AI-enabled Census will not only collect data but also interpret and analyse it intelligently, enabling evidence-based policymaking.

Challenges Ahead: While the Digital Census offers immense opportunities, it also comes with challenges:

1. Digital Divide: Ensuring coverage of remote areas and populations with limited digital literacy.

2. Cybersecurity: Protecting sensitive personal data from breaches or misuse.

3. Trust and Transparency: Convincing citizens that their information will be used responsibly and securely.

4. Training of Enumerators: Over 30 lakh enumerators need to be digitally trained.

5. Infrastructure Readiness: Reliable internet connectivity in rural and remote areas is essential.

Addressing these challenges will require robust planning, legal safeguards, and a strong technological backbone.

Global Perspective - Learning from Others: Several countries have already experimented with digital or mixed-mode censuses. For instance:

Estonia conducts an e-Census where citizens log in securely with digital IDs.

Australia offers online self-enumeration. Canada combines traditional and digital methods.

India's 2027 Census will, however, be unique in its scale and diversity. Conducting a digital census for a population larger than the combined populations of Europe and the Americas will be a monumental achievement.

Looking Ahead: A Census for New India: The Digital Census of 2027 is more than just an exercise in data collection—it is a symbol of India's transformation into a digitally empowered society. It embodies the vision of "Digital India" and aligns with global goals of sustainable, inclusive development.

As India stands on the cusp of becoming the world's most populous country, a precise, reliable, and intelligent Census is vital for shaping the next decade of growth. The Census will ensure that every citizen counts and every citizen is counted—digitally, securely, and fairly.

In the words of former Census Commissioner C. Chandramouli, "A nation that counts its people counts on its people." The 2027 Digital Census will ensure that this counting is faster, smarter, and future-ready.

Nature's Wrath and Human Survival

By: Lalit Garg

Nature, in its generosity, is as abundant as it is ruthless in its retaliation. As long as humanity lives in harmony with it, nature bestows life as a blessing—in the form of water, forests, and land. But the moment mankind, driven by selfish ambitions and the blind race of so-called modern development, begins to neglect nature, the same benevolent force turns into an agent of destruction. The floods, deluges, and erratic weather patterns sweeping across India today are not merely natural disasters; they are the direct consequences of our follies. It is no longer enough to attribute this ferocity to mere coincidence or "the anger of nature." These calamities are directly linked to climate change, reckless deforestation, and an unregulated model of development. The Himalayan ecosystem is acutely fragile, yet policymakers have attempted to reshape mountain development on the model of the plains. Giant hotels, haphazard roads, dams, mining, and rampant construction have destabilized the delicate mountain terrain. When forests are felled, rainwater no longer seeps into the soil but rushes down in torrents, triggering floods and landslides. The result is devastation—crops submerged, homes destroyed, lives lost, and economic losses spreading a shadow of despair across vast regions.

Today's floods and deluge are not just an overflow of water; they are a mirror reflecting our mistakes. They are nature's retaliation, a stern warning that if we do not wake up now, the future will be even more catastrophic. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Nature provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed." This is the stark truth. If we fail to restore balance, such apocalyptic scenes will only grow more frequent. But if we see this warning as an opportunity, nature—like a mother—will once again embrace and sustain us. Water, the giver of life, when it bursts its bounds, reveals its deadly face. This year's torrential monsoon rains and cloudbursts have once again proved this reality. Normally, water sustains life, but when it becomes unrestrained and violent, it sweeps away homes, fields, roads, bridges, temples, mosques, and human lives alike. Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, and the

northeastern hill states are reeling under such fury. Sudden cloudbursts, collapsing glaciers, landslides, and rivers swollen beyond control are creating scenes of horror.

Deforestation has not only reduced the land's water absorption capacity but also disrupted local climatic cycles. Global warming has accelerated glacial melting in the Himalayas, bringing sudden and extreme rainfall. This explains why cloudbursts have multiplied several times over in recent years. Mountain settlements, once living in harmony with nature, are now paying the price of human intervention. The root problem lies in how we define development. We have equated it with concrete and machinery, ignoring ecological balance and environmental sensitivity. As a result, when disaster strikes, our warning systems fail, and administrative measures fall short. Even the Himachal Pradesh government has admitted before the Supreme Court that existing measures have been inadequate—an acknowledgment of how grave the crisis has become. India's rivers, once revered as the very source of life, have now turned into messengers of death.

The Ganga, Yamuna, Brahmaputra, Narmada, and Godavari once nurtured civilizations along their banks, but today they overflow in rage. The reasons are man-made: indiscriminate dams, encroachments, reduced to polluted drains, and settlements crowding their floodplains. Every year, on average, floods claim 1,600 lives in India, affect nearly 7.5 million people, destroy crops, kill livestock, and cause economic damage worth billions. In 2023 alone, floods in Uttarakhand, Himachal, and Delhi inflicted losses exceeding ₹60,000 crore.

Weather patterns have completely shifted over the past decades. The monsoon, once predictable from June to September, is now erratic. Sometimes, months' worth of rain falls within 24 hours; at other times, prolonged droughts prevail. The 2013 Kedarnath tragedy exposed the perils of reckless construction in fragile zones.

In 2023, Delhi witnessed the Yamuna breach a 45-year record—showing how unprepared cities are in the face of climate change and unplanned urbanization. Every corner of the country tells a similar story. In Uttarakhand and Himachal, hills are collapsing and landslides are wiping out villages. In

Bihar and Assam, floods annually displace millions. Even modern metropolises like Delhi and Mumbai come to a standstill with waterlogging. In Rajasthan, a desert state, torrential rains and floods are emerging as new threats. Roads turn into rivers, bridges are washed away, and farmlands disappear under water. This devastation is not just destruction—it is proof of our ignorance. Nature keeps signaling that balance is the key to life, yet we have crossed its boundaries. We have carved tunnels and roads deep into fragile mountains, cleared forests for concrete jungles, and forced rivers into artificial channels. When cloudbursts occur and rivers rage, it is not just a natural disaster—it is nature's revenge.

The question, then, is how to respond. Relief and compensation alone cannot be the answer. What is needed are long-term, decisive measures. We must preserve forests, restore rivers to their natural courses, prioritize greenery and drainage in urban planning, adopt restraint in mountain development, and most importantly, build public awareness so people understand that protecting the environment is synonymous with protecting life. We must stop treating disasters as merely "natural" and start recognizing them as "man-made" and the outcome of flawed governance. This means solutions must go beyond temporary relief to encompass long-term strategy. Policies must integrate expert opinion, scientific research, and the lived wisdom of local communities—crafted with sensitivity to mountains and ecosystems.

The rising frequency of natural calamities is a stark warning; unless we embrace sustainable development, the future will be far more terrifying. Strengthening early warning systems, enhancing coordination among Himalayan states, making disaster management swift and effective, and above all, safeguarding forests and natural resources—these are today's most urgent imperatives. Despite being the world's fourth-largest economy, India cannot afford the colossal human and economic losses inflicted by natural disasters. This year's floods and cloudbursts are not just tragedies—they are a clear message: the cost of disturbing nature's balance may be nothing less than human survival itself. Reimagining our development policies through the lens of ecology is the only path forward to avert this looming crisis.

Artificial intelligence and its role in modern education

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) has ushered in a new era of innovation across industries, but its impact on education stands out as both profound and transformative. From personalized learning experiences to automating administrative tasks, AI is reshaping how knowledge is imparted, acquired, and assessed. As classrooms evolve into dynamic, technology-driven environments, AI's integration into education is not merely a trend but a fundamental shift that promises to redefine teaching and learning for generations. This analysis explores the multifaceted role of AI in modern education, examining its benefits, challenges, and the ethical considerations that accompany its adoption, while reflecting on its potential to bridge gaps and democratize access to quality education.

At its core, AI in education leverages algorithms, machine learning, and data analytics to enhance the teaching-learning process. One of its most significant contributions is personalized learning, which addresses the diverse needs of students in ways traditional methods cannot. In conventional classrooms, teachers often grapple with the challenge of catering to students with varying abilities, learning paces, and interests within a limited time frame. AI-powered platforms, such as adaptive learning systems, analyze student performance in real time, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and learning preferences. These systems then tailor content, pace, and difficulty to suit individual needs, ensuring that each student progresses optimally. For instance, platforms like Smart Sparrow or DreamBox use AI to adjust math or reading exercises dynamically, offering hints or alternative approaches when a student struggles. This personalization fosters engagement, reduces frustration, and empowers students to take ownership of their learning journey.

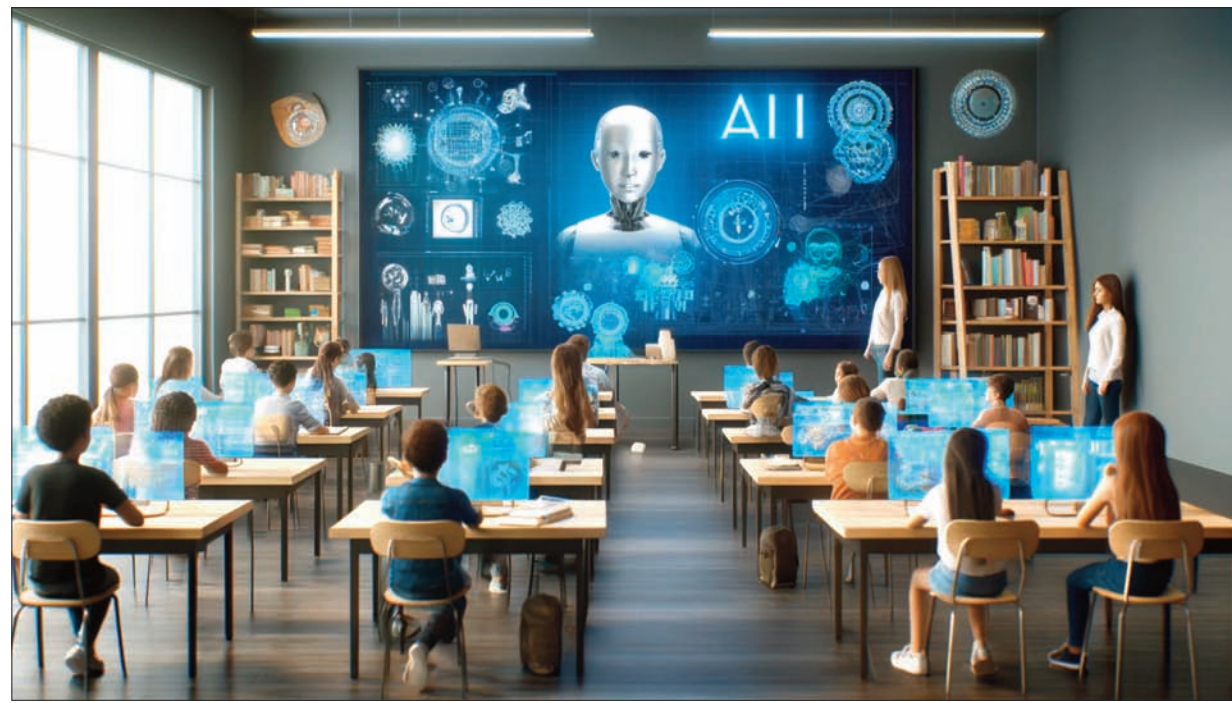
Beyond individualization, AI enhances accessibility, making education more inclusive. Students with disabilities, those in remote areas, or those facing socioeconomic barriers benefit immensely from AI-driven tools. Text-to-speech and speech-to-text technologies, powered by AI, assist visually or hearing-impaired learners, while translation tools break down language barriers for non-native speakers. Virtual tutors, available 24/7, provide support to students who lack access to quality teachers or tutoring services. For example, AI chatbots like Duolingo's language-learning assistant or Google's Socratic app offer instant feedback and guidance, enabling students to

learn at their convenience. In regions with teacher shortages or underfunded schools, such tools act as force multipliers, ensuring that learning continues despite systemic limitations.

AI's role extends beyond the classroom to streamline administrative and operational tasks, allowing educators to focus on teaching. Grading, attendance tracking, and scheduling are time-consuming tasks that AI can automate with precision. Automated grading systems, such as those used in online learning platforms like Coursera, evaluate assignments and provide detailed feedback, saving teachers hours of manual work. Similarly, AI-driven analytics help schools monitor attendance patterns, predict dropout risks, and identify students needing intervention. By reducing administrative burdens, AI enables educators to dedicate more time to fostering critical thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence—skills that remain uniquely human.

The integration of AI also transforms how educators approach pedagogy. Data-driven insights allow teachers to refine their methods based on real-time feedback. For instance, learning management systems like Canvas or Blackboard use AI to track student engagement, highlighting which lessons resonate and which need adjustment. This data empowers teachers to experiment with innovative teaching strategies, such as flipped classrooms or project-based learning, with greater confidence. Moreover, AI facilitates the creation of immersive learning experiences through virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). These technologies, powered by AI, simulate real-world scenarios—think medical students practicing surgeries in a virtual environment or history students exploring ancient civilizations through AR—making abstract concepts tangible and engaging.

However, the rise of AI in education is not without challenges. One pressing concern is the digital divide, which threatens to exacerbate existing inequalities. While AI tools hold immense potential, their effectiveness depends on access to devices, reliable internet, and digital literacy—resources that remain scarce in many parts of the world. Low-income schools and rural areas often lack the infrastructure to implement AI-driven solutions, risking a wider gap between privileged and underprivileged students. Addressing this requires concerted efforts from governments, private sectors, and educational institutions to ensure equitable access to technology. Ethical considerations also loom large. AI systems rely on vast amounts of data to function effectively, raising concerns about privacy and secu-



reity. Student data, including performance metrics, behavioral patterns, and personal information, must be safeguarded against breaches or misuse. In 2023, incidents of data leaks in educational platforms underscored the need for robust cybersecurity measures and transparent data policies. Additionally, the algorithms powering AI tools are not immune to bias. If not carefully designed, these systems can perpetuate stereotypes or unfairly disadvantage certain groups. For example, an AI-based admissions tool used by some universities was criticized for favoring candidates from specific demographics, highlighting the importance of regular audits and diverse development teams to mitigate bias.

Another challenge is the potential for over-reliance on AI, which could undermine the human element of education. Teaching is as much an art as a science, rooted in empathy, intuition, and interpersonal connection. While AI can enhance efficiency and personalization, it cannot replicate the mentorship, inspiration, or emotional support that teachers provide. Over-emphasizing AI risks reducing education to a transactional process, where students are treated as data points rather than individuals with unique aspirations. Striking a balance between technology and human interaction is crucial to preserving the holistic nature of education.

The role of teachers in an AI-driven landscape also warrants scrutiny. Rather than replacing educators, AI should empower them as facilitators of learning. Professional development programs are

essential to equip teachers with the skills to integrate AI tools effectively. Unfortunately, many educators report feeling unprepared to navigate this technological shift, citing a lack of training or institutional support. Schools must invest in upskilling teachers, fostering a culture of lifelong learning to ensure they remain at the forefront of educational innovation.

AI's impact on assessment and evaluation is another area of transformation. Traditional standardized tests often fail to capture a student's full range of abilities, focusing heavily on memorization rather than critical thinking or creativity. AI-driven assessments, such as competency-based evaluations, offer a more nuanced approach. These systems analyze a student's problem-solving process, not just the final answer, providing deeper insights into their cognitive abilities. For instance, AI tools used in coding education, like Code.org, assess a student's logic and creativity through their programming projects, offering a more holistic measure of skill. However, the shift toward AI-based assessments raises questions about fairness and standardization, as different platforms may use varying criteria, complicating comparisons across institutions.

The global perspective on AI in education reveals both opportunities and disparities. In developed nations, AI is often integrated into classrooms with robust infrastructure, enabling experiments with cutting-edge tools like AI-driven tutoring systems or VR labs. In contrast, developing countries face hurdles in adopting these

technologies due to limited resources. Yet, innovative solutions are emerging. In India, for example, AI-powered apps like BYJU'S have democratized access to quality education by offering affordable, mobile-based learning to millions of students. Similarly, initiatives like UNESCO's AI in Education framework aim to guide policymakers in leveraging AI to achieve sustainable development goals, particularly in underserved regions.

Looking ahead, AI's role in education will likely expand, driven by advancements in natural language processing, predictive analytics, and generative AI. Imagine a future where AI creates hyper-personalized curricula for every student, blending academic learning with life skills tailored to their career aspirations. Virtual AI mentors could guide students through complex subjects, while predictive models identify at-risk students early, enabling timely interventions. However, this vision must be tempered with caution. The rapid pace of AI adoption demands proactive governance to address ethical, privacy, and equity concerns. Policymakers must collaborate with educators, technologists, and communities to create frameworks that prioritize student well-being and inclusivity.

The societal implications of AI in education extend beyond the classroom. As AI automates routine tasks and reshapes industries, the skills required for the workforce are evolving. Education systems must prepare students for a future where adaptability, critical thinking, and

digital fluency are paramount. AI can support this by fostering interdisciplinary learning, where students tackle real-world problems using data analysis, coding, and creative thinking. For instance, AI-driven platforms like IBM's SkillsBuild integrate technical training with soft skills, preparing learners for careers in a tech-driven economy. By aligning education with workforce needs, AI can bridge the gap between academia and industry, ensuring students are equipped to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Critics argue that AI's integration risks commodifying education, turning it into a product optimized for efficiency rather than a transformative experience. This perspective underscores the need to preserve education's humanistic roots, where curiosity, creativity, and ethical reasoning are nurtured. AI should serve as a tool to augment, not replace, the teacher-student relationship. Collaborative models, where AI handles data-driven tasks and teachers focus on mentorship, offer a balanced approach. For example, hybrid classrooms that combine AI-driven content delivery with teacher-led discussions have shown promising results in engaging students while fostering critical thinking.

The transformative potential of AI in education is undeniable, but its success hinges on thoughtful implementation. Stakeholders must address the digital divide, invest in teacher training, and establish ethical guidelines to ensure AI serves as a force for good. By harnessing AI's capabilities while preserving the human essence of education, we can create a future where learning is personalized, inclusive, and empowering. As we stand at this crossroads, the choices we make will determine whether AI becomes a catalyst for equitable education or a divider that widens existing gaps. The responsibility lies with us to shape a future where technology and humanity converge to unlock the full potential of every learner.

In conclusion, AI is not a panacea but a powerful ally in reimagining education. Its ability to personalize learning, enhance accessibility, and streamline operations offers unprecedented opportunities to elevate the educational experience. Yet, its challenges—equity, ethics, and the risk of dehumanization—demand vigilance. By embracing AI with a commitment to inclusivity and human-centered values, we can forge an educational landscape that empowers students, supports teachers, and prepares society for the complexities of the 21st century. The journey has just begun, and the path forward requires collaboration, innovation, and a steadfast focus on the transformative power of education.

Pitru Paksha: Paying the debt of life to our ancestors

By: Dipak Kurmi

In the tapestry of Indian civilization, the relationship between the living and the departed has always been sacred, intimate, and enduring. Unlike many modern cultures that see death as a definitive severance, India has for millennia nurtured the belief that life continues across realms, that the living and the departed remain bound by invisible threads of duty, memory, reverence, and gratitude. This ancient ethos finds its most profound expression in the observance of Pitru Paksha, the fortnight dedicated to honoring our ancestors through Shraadh and Tarpan.

The Karma of Inheritance

It is often said that if we are comfortably placed in our present lives, we are not standing on our own merit alone but are reaping the unseen blessings of our ancestors' good karma. Our forebears sowed seeds of virtue, sacrifice, and toil, and the fruits ripen in our generation. Just as a banyan tree provides shade long after its planter is gone, the moral capital of those before us continues to shelter us. Indian thought has always stressed that the web of destiny is collective, and our prosperity is not just ours but a continuation of what our lineage has invested. To acknowledge this debt is the essence of Shraaddha—the reverence we show when we perform rites for our Pitrs.

A Time Set Aside for Ancestors

Indian culture sets aside distinct periods for almost every significant act—festivals, fasts, harvests, pilgrimages. Just as Janmashtami, Diwali, and Navratri fall on fixed lunar dates, so too does the observance of gratitude to ancestors. The fortnight of Pitru Paksha in 2025 begins on Poonrmasi, 7 September, with the first Shraadh falling on Pratipada, 8 September. This ritual calendar is no accident but the fruit of deep cosmological belief. The day of a person's passing in the lunar month determines the exact tithi on which their Shraadh can be observed by their progeny in perpetuity. In this way, the calendar preserves memory across generations, ensuring that no soul is forgotten.

The Rare Gift of Human Birth

Parents are our first gods, for they gift us the rare jewel of human birth. Hindu philosophy emphasizes that birth in the human form is an extraordinary privilege, for it alone allows us to accumulate merit and move toward liberation. Yet every child enters the world carrying the chain of past-life karma, visible only in destiny's unfolding. In this delicate balance between free will and inherited karma, prayers by one's progeny hold great significance. It is believed that when descendants perform Shraadh, their invocations can still guide the departed soul toward peace. Thus, Shraadh is more than ritual; it is continuity of compassion across realms.

A Day in Pitru Lok

An evocative metaphor sustains this observance: one day in Pitru Lok, the realm of the ancestors, equals a full year on Earth. During this period, the Pitrs descend once in their day—which means once in our year—to partake in the offerings of their descendants. The fortnight of Shraadh is thus a cosmic appointment. The designated days are when the departed are permitted to return, receive food, and bless their

lineage. To miss it is to leave them hungry in spirit; to observe it with reverence is to nourish bonds that death cannot sever.

The Simplicity of Tarpan

One does not need elaborate rituals to fulfill this duty. The simplest act of Shraadh Tarpan involves filling a pot of water with milk, black sesame seeds, barley, and rice, adding kusha grass and flowers, and offering it with devotion while facing south—the direction associated with Yama, the deity of death. The water, ideally poured at the roots of a Tulsi plant, a Peepal tree, or on the grass, must not be wasted. This simple act, when done with reverence and the name of the departed, becomes potent. For in spiritual matters, it is not grandeur but Shraaddha—sincere faith—that sanctifies.

The observance is inclusive of all beings. During Shraadh, food is offered to cows, crows, and dogs, creatures considered messengers of the Pitrs. Even such symbolic acts acknowledge the interconnectedness of life, reminding us that nature, too, is part of the family of existence.

Repaying the Debt of Life

Hindu philosophy teaches that every human being is born with three debts: to the gods (Deva-rinn), to the sages (Rishi-rinn), and to the ancestors (Pitri-rinn). The first we repay through worship, the second through pursuit of knowledge, and the third through Shraadh and moral living. No one can truly repay the immeasurable sacrifices of parents and forebears, yet Shraadh is prescribed for three generations upward—parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.

For those who cannot observe individual tithis, the last day of Pitru Paksha, known as Sarva Pitri Amavasya, offers a universal opportunity. Falling on 21 September 2025, this day allows descendants to honor all ancestors, known and unknown. Tradition holds that souls who are forgotten, for whom no one performs rites, remain grieving in the cosmos. But if even one stranger prays for them, they are released to continue their journey. In this sense, Shraadh is not just personal but profoundly humanitarian, extending compassion to the forsaken dead.

Arpan and Tarpan

The distinction between Arpan and Tarpan is both subtle and profound. What we offer to God is Arpan; what we offer to our ancestors is Tarpan. One signifies surrender to the divine, the other repayment of debt. Pitru Paksha reminds us that life flows both upwards to the divine and backwards to the lineage. This is why certain auspicious beginnings are avoided in this period. Weddings, new ventures, mundan ceremonies, and festive purchases are postponed, for this time belongs solely to memory, gratitude, and continuity with the past.

Respect in Life, Not Just After

Yet no ritual can compensate for neglect in life. Performing Shraadh for departed parents has little meaning if they were disrespected while alive. An incident narrated recently from an old age home in Chandigarh captures this poignantly. A man recognized an elderly lady from a prominent family and was shocked to see her abandoned there by her son, who publicly paraded as a philanthropist. Enraged, he urged her to expose him. But the mother, with infinite love, pleaded: "Don't tell anyone. If you do, my son's respect will be lost." Such is the

boundless heart of a mother—giving, forgiving, protective even in the face of betrayal. The question that lingers is sharp: how authentic can Shraadh be if Shraaddha—reverence and empathy—were missing during the parents' lifetime?

Parent as Pay-Rent

Shri Sathya Sai Baba once gave a luminous interpretation of the word "parent." He said it means pay-rent. After parents pass away, we inherit their property, jewels, and wealth. But what rent do we pay them in return? The rent, he explained, consists of Respect, Empathy, Niceness, and Time. This rent cannot be deferred until after death. It must be paid while they are alive. Moreover, siblings too are carriers of parental flesh and blood; maintaining harmony with them continues the lineage of love, pleasing the departed souls as surely as rituals do.

Ecology in Ritual

The genius of Indian tradition lies in how rituals often entwine ecological wisdom. Brahmins advise placing kheer under a Peepal or Banyan tree during Shraadh. Crows, eating the kheer along with the fruits of these trees, spread the seeds wherever they fly. Thus, Shraadh became a vehicle for ecological continuity. The Peepal, which releases oxygen even at night, and the Banyan, rich in medicinal properties, were propagated through an ingenious ritual economy. Here, gratitude to ancestors coincided with gratitude to nature, affirming the interconnectedness of lineage and ecology.

Shraaddha Beyond Human Life

President Droupadi Murmu recently shared a childhood memory that illuminates the true spirit of Shraaddha. She recalled watching her father bring dried wood from the forest to light their hearth. Before chopping it, he would bow, offer respect, and ask forgiveness from the dead wood. Puzzled, the young Murmu asked him why. He replied: "All their life, these trees gave us air, flowers, fruit, shade. Now they are old, and even as firewood they serve us. I seek forgiveness for burning them, because we have no other choice." In this simple gesture lay the essence of reverence—for parents, for trees, for all forms of life that sustain us. True Shraaddha, then, is not confined to ritual alone; it is a posture of humility before all that nurtures us.

The Living Legacy

Pitru Paksha teaches us that life is not linear but cyclical, that we are part of a continuum stretching backward into the past and forward into the unborn. The fortnight of Shraadh is less about mourning and more about remembrance, gratitude, and responsibility. It reminds us that paying rent to our parents and ancestors is not about property or possessions, but about living with empathy, respect, and harmony.

The ultimate question that emerges is not whether we have observed Shraadh with proper ritual, but whether we have lived Shraaddha—with parents, siblings, nature, and all beings. For in the end, the truest offering to the Pitrs is not water and sesame alone, but the conduct of their descendants—our compassion, our humility, and our reverence. When we uphold these values, the debt of life may never be fully repaid, but it will at least be honored with dignity. (the writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

BRS Supremo KCR IS presiding over the decline of his party in Telangana

By: Kalyani Shankar

Why do political families believe they can hold onto power indefinitely? This is common in many one-man or one-woman parties, where leaders often engage in nepotism by appointing relatives to positions of authority. For example, the late Mulayam Singh Yadav, leader of the Samajwadi Party, had over 20 family members active in politics at one time. However, these families frequently face power struggles as the leader's influence declines.

This is precisely what is unfolding in Telangana, where the Bharat Rashtra Samithi chief and former Telangana Chief Minister, K. Chandrabab Naidu, has suspended his daughter, K. Kavitha, for engaging in anti-party activities, though he had encouraged her earlier. Kavitha was also ambitious. A power tussle is looming large between KCR's daughter and son, K.T. Rama Rao.

By directly naming her cousins Harish Rao and Santosh Kumar, she has even challenged the party's contention that the indictments against KCR and Harish Rao by the Commission were politically motivated. Kavitha's allegations could help BRS's opponents and open the door for political shifts.

Soon after her suspension, Kavitha quit the party and her membership in the Legislative Assembly. She is considering launching her own political organisation. This move could significantly alter the state's political landscape, but only if she succeeds.

This story reflects key themes in the regional politics of South and North India. Succession issues have long troubled regional parties, with a traditional preference for sons over daughters as political heirs.

Political rivalries abound, including V.N. Janaki versus J. Jayalalithaa, N. Chandrababu Naidu versus Lakshmi Parvathi, MK Stalin versus MK Alagiri, Udeshwar versus Raj Thackeray, and now Kavitha versus K.T. Rama Rao.

The family feud within the BRS has intensified into a political drama as KCR's health and influence decline. His charisma failed to sway voters in the 2023 elections, resulting in a loss of power for his party. In the 2004 Lok Sabha polls, BRS got zero.

Kavitha, recently released on bail after being jailed for a multi-crore liquor case, has now targeted her father's confidants. She has been struggling to remain relevant politically.

KCR had a grand dream of becoming the Prime Minister, making his daughter Kavitha a Central Minister, and his son K.T. Rama Rao the Chief Minister of Telangana. But they remained a dream because KCR was a minor player in the overall national politics.

The blow to BRS came when it lost power in 2023. As it happens to many regional parties, the BRS, which finished third in the 2023 polls, got demoralised. Following a total defeat in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, KCR has withdrawn from public life, making occasional public appearances. Most of his time is now spent at his farmhouse. Thus came a gap which needs to be filled by a capable political heir. KCR himself had depended on his son KTR as his political heir.

Kavitha has been openly critical of her party, writing a six-page letter to her father about KCR's recent lack of energy. She condemned his silver jubilee speech for neglecting important issues and lacking



speaking skills. Kavitha alleged that her cousins have a "tacit understanding" with Congress to harm her father's image and warned they might face similar consequences. Interestingly, Kavitha, KTR, and Harish Rao are all seeking the party presidency.

Kavitha's revolt occurred at a critical moment since the Central Bureau of Investigation is set to investigate alleged issues with the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project, which the BRS has hailed as the jewel of Telangana.

Kavitha claimed, "The CBI inquiry against KCR is due solely to the corruption of Harish Rao and Santosh Kumar." The family feud intensified after Chief Minister Revanth Reddy decided to hand over the Kaleshwaram project irregularities to the Central Bureau of Investigation. Reddy accused the then Chief Minister, KCR, and his Irrigation Minister, Harish Rao, of corruption. Kavitha has decided to confront her cousins, Harish Rao and Santosh Rao, regarding the irregularities in Kaleshwaram. The power struggle has intensified following KCR's deterioration in health.

Kavitha criticised senior party members as the Telangana High Court granted KCR interim protection. Meanwhile, KCR's nephew, Harish Rao, received interim relief from actions related to the Ghose Commission report, which alleged KCR's involvement in the KJIS barrage planning and execution. The ugly drama concluding with Kavitha's expulsion and her exit.

What does the future hold for the BRS? The party is already in decline, and Kavitha's actions could further damage its standing. KTR has collaborated with his father, but it's uncertain whether he can keep the party united. Its future remains uncertain, raising serious concerns about its stability.

More than a decade after the formation of Telangana, the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), which spearheaded the Telangana movement, is on the roads. The absence of significant achievements to rally the public has led to the lack of the same level of regional sentiment that once earned it a strong electoral mandate. The BRS faces potential existential challenges. The possibility of BRS members joining either the Congress or the BJP could significantly impact the political landscape. (IPA Service)

Indonesian leader fires ministers of finance

JAKARTA (INDONESIA), Sept 8: Indonesia's president announced a Cabinet reshuffle Monday, replacing key economic and security ministers after deadly protests erupted across the country over lawmakers' perks.

The Cabinet shake-up comes as public dissatisfaction rose with President Prabowo Subianto's administration and the parliament's perceived insensitivity over economic hardships. Five ministers lost their jobs, including Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati, a widely respected technocrat and former managing director of the World Bank, and Budi Gunawan, the coordinating minister for politics and security.

Subianto chose Indonesian economist Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa, chairman of the Deposit Insurance Corporation, to replace Indrawati. Violent protests that left seven people dead had gripped Southeast Asia's largest economy, home to more than 280 million people, after reports that all 580 members of the House of Representatives receive a monthly housing allowance of 50 million rupiah (USD 3,075), in addition to their salaries. The allowance, which was introduced last year, is nearly 10 times the minimum wage in Jakarta.

Critics argue that the perk isn't only excessive, but also insensitive at a time when most people are grappling with a soaring cost of living, taxes and rising unemployment. (AP)

Sri Lanka opposes international action on human rights

COLOMBO, Sept 8: Sri Lanka on Monday opposed international intervention on its human rights situation at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva, asserting that such actions undermine ongoing domestic efforts to ensure justice and reconciliation.

The 60th regular session of the UNHRC, session, which opened in Geneva on Monday, will review reports and oral updates on several countries, including Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Sudan, Palestine, and Syria.

"Sri Lanka observes that external initiatives will only serve as hindrances to the ongoing national efforts and serve to polarise the population," the foreign ministry said in a statement here.

Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath is scheduled to respond to a report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, published in August, following the UN rights chief Volker Turk's visit to Sri Lanka in late June.

Herath is expected to call on the Council to provide the "space required" to implement "transformative reforms" outlined in the OHCHR report, the ministry said.

In his report, the UN rights chief urged Sri Lanka to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which establishes the ICC's jurisdiction over grave crimes of international concern, including genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

The report also urged the island nation to apply a moratorium on the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), repeal or amend laws that curtail freedom of expression, such as the Online Safety Act, issue public instructions to the security forces that all extrajudicial methods are banned, and order an end to surveillance of individuals, among other things. (PTI)

China's export growth slows in August as US tariffs and trade tensions bite

President Donald Trump has imposed 30% in additional tariffs

BEIJING, Sept 8: China's exports grew last month but at a slower pace than in recent months, the country's customs agency said Monday.

Exports reached \$321.8 billion in August, a 4.4% increase compared to the same month last year. That was down from a 7.2% jump in July. Meanwhile, imports totalled \$219.5 billion, a 1.8% rise.

China's large trade surplus has become a contentious issue with major trading partners including the US and the European Union. Low-priced Chinese imports are a boon for consumers but can lead to job cuts in manufacturing.

In the first eight months of the year, China's exported \$785.3 billion more in goods than it imported from other countries, the monthly customs data showed.

President Donald Trump has imposed 30% in additional tariffs on imports from China since taking office early this year. He backed



down from even higher tariffs after China retaliated with import taxes of its own. The two countries are in talks to try to reach a trade agreement.

The tariffs from both sides and the possibility they could be raised again are having an impact on two-way trade. Chinese exports to the U.S. plunged 33% in August to \$47.3 billion, while its imports

from the U.S. dropped 16% to \$13.4 billion.

Exports to the EU rose 10.4% to \$46.8 billion, while imports from the 27-member bloc edged down slightly to \$22.8 billion.

Overall, China's exports grew at the slowest pace since the January-February period, when they rose just 2.3%. The first two months of the year are reported together to

smooth out distortions from the long Lunar New Year break.

China's exports of rare earths rose on a monthly basis to \$55 million in August, up from \$41 million in July, but down 25.6% compared to the same month last year.

Rare earth magnets, which can withstand high heat, are vital to many products including washing machines, cars and fighter jets.

China dominates the global market for processing rare earths, and a clampdown on their export in April temporarily halted production at some factories in Europe and the US and raised fears of shutdowns at others.

The issue became a focal point of a round of US-China trade talks in London in June. China agreed to approve more export permits for rare earths in return for the US lifting curbs on the sale of chip design software and jet engines to China. (AP)

14 killed as youths clash with police over social media ban in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Sept 8: At least 14 people were killed and dozens injured on Monday as violent protests by youths rocked the Nepalese capital and certain other areas over the government's decision to ban social media sites, prompting authorities to deploy the army in Kathmandu to control the situation.

Thousands of youths, including school students, under the banner of Gen Z, converged in front of the Parliament in the heart of Kathmandu and shouted anti-government slogans demanding immediate revocation of the ban.

The Nepalese media put the death toll at 14. However, there is no official word on number of casualties yet.

The demonstration turned violent when some protesters entered the Parliament complex, prompting police to resort to baton charges, tear gas shells and rubber bullets to disperse the crowd, eyewitnesses said.

Citing hospital reports, the Himalayan Times newspaper reported that 14 people were killed in the protest in Kathmandu. The deceased include six at Trauma Centre, three at Civil Hospital, three at Everest Hospital, one at Kathmandu Medical College (KMC), and one at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, the paper said.

The death toll from the ongoing Gen-Z protests has reached 14, news portal Khabarhub reported, citing sources at the Ministry of Health and Population.

The Kantipur newspaper, quoting doctors at the hospitals in Kathmandu, also reported that 14 people were killed in the violence.

A Nepal Police spokesperson said that 42 people, including two security personnel, were injured and are currently undergoing treatment in the Civil Hospital of Kathmandu.

However, the Himalayan Times newspaper said that the number of injured remains uncertain due to the large volume of cases. It added that hospitals, including Civil Hospital and Trauma Centre, are struggling to accommodate patients and have begun referring them to other facilities.

The Army has been deployed to control the situation, military officials said. Following the violence, the local administration imposed a curfew in several parts

of the capital. The protest has spread to other cities also.

The Kathmandu District Administration issued a prohibitory order from 12:30 pm to 10:00 pm Monday in areas surrounding the Parliament building to curb the unrest.

"No movement of people, demonstration, meeting, gathering or sit-in will be allowed in the restricted zone," Chief District Officer Chhabi Lal Rijal said in a notice.

The local administration later extended the restrictive order to various areas surrounding Rastrapati Bhawan, the Vice-President's residence and the Prime Minister's Office.

The government on Thursday banned 26 social media sites, including Facebook, WhatsApp, X, Instagram and YouTube, for failing to register with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology within the given deadline.

Although the government has clarified its stance that the social media sites were banned to bring them under regulation. But the general perception among the masses is that this will lead to an attack on free speech, and it may lead to censorship.

Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli on Sunday said that his government would "always oppose anomalies and arrogance, and would never accept any act that undermines the nation".

The prime minister said the party is not against social media, "but what cannot be accepted is those doing business in Nepal, making money, and yet not complying with the law."

Referring to the criticism over the move, he called protesters and agitators voices "puppets who only oppose for the sake of opposing".

Dozens of journalists demonstrated at Maitighar Mandala in the heart of Kathmandu on Sunday, protesting the government's decision to ban 26 social media platforms.

Separately, the Computer Association of Nepal (CAN) in a statement said that shutting down important platforms like Facebook, X, and YouTube all at once can have a serious impact on education, business, communication, and the daily lives of ordinary citizens. (PTI)

Shooting attack at Jerusalem bus stop kills 6



JERUSALEM, Sept 8: Palestinian attackers opened fire at a bus stop at a busy intersection in north Jerusalem on Monday, killing six people and injuring another 12, according to Israeli police, emergency rescue services and local hospitals.

Police said the attackers shot people waiting at a bus stop.

An Israeli soldier and a civilian

who were at the scene shot and killed the attackers, police said.

The war in Gaza has sparked a surge of violence in both the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Israel. Palestinian militants have attacked and killed Israelis in Israel and the West Bank, while there has also been a rise in settler violence against Palestinians.

Monday's shooting took place at

a major intersection at the northern entrance to Jerusalem, on a road that leads to Jewish settlements located in east Jerusalem.

Footage of the attack showed dozens of people fleeing from a bus stop at the busy intersection during the morning rush hour. A bus, its windshield riddled with bullets, idled at a bus stop, with belongings scattered across the street.

Paramedics who responded to the scene said the area was chaotic and covered in broken glass, with people wounded and lying unconscious on the road and a sidewalk near the bus stop.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived at the scene some two hours after the shooting. Netanyahu was supposed to be in court on Monday for his on-going corruption trial, which was delayed due to the security situation. He warned that Israel is "fighting a war on multiple fronts," including Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel.

Netanyahu also praised the soldier who killed the attacker, who

was from a newly-formed unit for ultra-Orthodox soldiers.

Hundreds of security forces arrived at the scene to search for additional attackers or explosives that could have been planted around the area. The Israeli military said it is encircling Palestinian villages on the outskirts of the nearby West Bank city of Ramallah as it steps up defence in response to the attack.

Hamas hailed the attack without claiming responsibility, calling it a "natural response to the occupation's crimes against our people."

Monday's shooting was the deadliest attack since a mass shooting in October 2024, when two Palestinians from the West Bank opened fire inside a light rail train in Tel Aviv, killing seven people and leaving many others wounded. Hamas' military wing claimed responsibility for that attack. Data from the UN's humanitarian office says at least 49 Israelis were killed by Palestinians in Israel or the West Bank between the start of the war and July 2025. (AP)

Nepal's ruling party urges India and China to withdraw Lipulekh trade agreement



KATHMANDU, Sept 8: Nepal's ruling CPN-UML has expressed reservations over an agreement between India and China to resume border trade through Lipulekh pass, urging both countries to withdraw from the arrangement.

India and China last month agreed to resume border trade through Lipulekh pass and two other trading points.

Nepal claims Lipulekh as its own territory, a claim that India has categorically rejected as "neither justified nor based on historical facts and evidence."

The party has urged the Nepal government to resolve the issue through high-level diplomatic initiatives and reiterated Nepal's rights over the region east of the Kali River, including Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh, party sources said.

It was included in a 28-point contemporary proposal passed at the second national convention of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli-led CPN-UML held from September 5-7 at Godavari Municipality of Lalitpur district.

The party urged both countries to withdraw the Lipulekh trade agreement, they said.

The proposal mentioned Prime Minister and UML Chairman Oli's disagreement over the Lipulekh trade route agreement during his recent China visit, noting that this stance elevated Nepal's international standing.

It also cited bilateral and multi-

lateral engagements during the trip that enhanced the country's image abroad.

The convention also emphasised that the seven-point agreement between UML and Nepali Congress, under Chair Oli's leadership, has established political stability.

In 2020, Nepal triggered a border row by issuing a political map that showed Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh as part of the country. India had strongly trashed the claims.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal recently said that India's position has been consistent and clear. "Border trade between India and China through Lipulekh pass had commenced in 1954 and has been going on for decades," he added.

Jaiswal said the trade had been disrupted in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other developments, and both sides have now agreed to resume it. (PTI)

Bangladesh police arrest Liberation War veteran, critic of Yunus-led interim govt

DHAKA/NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Bangladesh police on Monday said they arrested 1971 Liberation War veteran and former bureaucrat Abu Alam Shahid Khan, a prominent critic of Muhammad Yunus's interim government, amid a series of detentions of dissenting voices since the ouster of Sheikh Hasina's regime.

"He (Khan) has been arrested by Dhaka Metropolitan Police's detective branch in a case lodged with the Shahbagh police station," police said in a statement, without specifying the charges or disclosing the time and place of the arrest.

However, the statement said that five others were also arrested in the same drive for participating in "flash marches", impromptu street protests frequently staged by activists of the now-disbanded Awami League of deposed prime minister Hasina.

Police said they were arrested on charges of attempting to carry out

acts of sabotage and defying public order.

Khan, a retired secretary in the Bangladesh government, had in recent months been criticising the interim government on social media platforms.

He is the fourth prominent critic of the interim government to be arrested in recent weeks.

On August 7, Yunus' staunch critic and former Rangpur University vice-chancellor Professor Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah was taken into custody. On August 27, Dhaka University law professor Hafizur Rahman Curzon and journalist Manjurul Alam Panna were detained under the country's stringent Anti-Terrorism Act, along with several Liberation War veterans, including former minister Latif Siddiqui. That arrest followed violent disruptions at a veterans' discussion organised by the newly-formed platform Moncho 71 at the Dhaka Reporters Unity audi-

torium. A mob stormed the event, branding the participants "accomplices of Hasina's fascist regime" and accusing them of conspiring against the student-led "July Uprising" that toppled the Awami League government last year. Police, who intervened ostensibly to rescue the participants, later charged them under the anti-terror law, a move widely criticised as punishing victims instead of perpetrators. Siddiqui, 87, a former minister in Hasina's cabinet who was expelled from the Awami League over a decade ago, remains in custody along with other veterans in their late 70s. Khan, who was also a participant and had narrowly escaped the attack that time, had told PTI that no Awami League leader was present at the event. Bangladesh has been witnessing political volatility since last year's July Uprising, when weeks of student protests forced Hasina to resign after more than 15 years in power. (PTI)

Global shares rise after Japan's prime minister announces plan to resign



TOKYO, Sept 8: Global shares mostly rose with Japan's benchmark jumping higher in Monday morning trading, despite the looming political uncertainty after Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba announced last night that he plans to resign.

France's CAC 40 edged up nearly 0.2 per cent in early trading to 7,688.69, while Germany's DAX rose 0.6 per cent to 23,742.28. Britain's FTSE 100 added 0.2 per cent to 9,224.85. US shares were set to drift higher with Dow futures up 0.2 per cent at 45,530.00.

S&P 500 futures rose 0.2 per cent to 6,504.50. Analysts said Ishiba's announcement was expected for some time and welcomed it as moving things forward, although uncertainty remains as the ruling Liberal Democratic Party will need to hold an election to choose a new leader. Ishiba will remain prime minister until his successor is chosen and approved by parliament.

"Markets may react short-term to the temporary uncertainty of lame-duck leadership, but this may resolve once a new leader is chosen. Meanwhile, the LDP's position as a minority leading party is unlikely to change anytime soon, and as such compromise will be the name of the policy-making game," said Naomi Fink, chief global strategist at Amova Asset Management.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 1.5 per cent to finish at 43,643.81. South Korea's Kospi gained 0.5 per cent to 3,219.59. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 lost 0.2 per cent to 8,849.60.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng edged up 0.9 per cent to 25,633.91, while the Shanghai Composite rose 0.4 per cent to 3,826.84.

Also Monday, Japan's Cabinet Office said the economy expanded at a stronger rate in the fis-

cal first quarter than previously estimated, at a seasonally adjusted 2.2 per cent annualised rate, better than the earlier 1.0 per cent rate as solid consumer spending and inventories lifted growth more than previously thought.

Japanese auto stocks rallied after the US finalised a trade deal with Japan. Tariffs on Japanese autos surged to 15 per cent from the initial 2.5 per cent, considerably lower than the 27.5 per cent initially discussed.

Toyota stock gained 0.3 per cent, while Nissan stock rose 2.4 per cent. Subaru issues added 1.3 per cent, while Mitsubishi Motors edged up 1.2 per cent.

"The Bank of Japan remained in focus as strong wage data increased expectations for a potential rate hike later this year," said Bas Kooijman at DHF Capital SA, noting that wages were rising.

In energy trading, benchmark US crude added USD 1.06 to USD 62.93 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, rose USD 1.14 to USD 66.64 a barrel.

In currency trading, the US dollar edged up to 147.70 Japanese yen from 147.39 yen. The euro cost USD 1.1733, inching up from USD 1.1723. (AP)

SpaceX and EchoStar will enter into a long-term commercial agreement Musk's SpaceX spends USD 17 billion to acquire spectrum licenses from EchoStar



HAWTHORNE (US), Sept 8: Elon Musk's SpaceX has reached a deal worth about USD 17 billion with EchoStar for spectrum licenses that it will use to beef

up its Starlink satellite network.

The deal for EchoStar's AWS-4 and H-block spectrum licenses includes up to USD 8.5 billion in cash and up to USD 8.5 billion in SpaceX stock. SpaceX will make approximately USD 2 billion in cash interest payments on EchoStar debt through November 2027.

SpaceX and EchoStar will enter into a long-term commercial agreement which will allow EchoStar's Boost Mobile subscribers to access SpaceX's next generation Starlink Direct to Cell service.

Last month AT&T said that it will spend USD 23 billion to acquire wireless spectrum licenses from EchoStar, a significant expansion of its low- and mid-band coverage networks.

EchoStar said that it anticipates that the AT&T deal and the SpaceX transaction will resolve recent inquiries from the Federal Communications Commission about the rollout of 5G technology in the US.

EchoStar said Monday that it will use the transaction's proceeds partly to pay down debt. Current operations of Dish TV, Sling and Hughes will not be impacted by the deal, the company said. (AP)

Arunachal pays tributes to Bhupen Hazarika on birth centenary

From folk-inspired melodies that celebrated tribal heritage to evocative ballads that carried messages of unity

ITANAGAR, Sept 8: Arunachal Pradesh on Monday paid tributes to legendary singer Bhupen Hazarika on his 100th birth anniversary, remembering the musical doyen whose melodies continue to inspire unity, peace and cultural pride across the Northeast.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu, recalling Hazarika's enduring influence, said the maestro's songs carried the power to connect hearts beyond boundaries.

"Remembering the Legendary Bharat Ratna Bhupen Hazarika Ji on his birth anniversary. Your songs beautifully bridged the hearts of Northeast India and the rest of the world. In Arunachal, your melodies continue to resonate, inspiring peace, unity, and cultural pride. May your timeless legacy keep connecting generations," Khandu wrote in a post on X.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also paid homage, describing



Hazarika as an eternal cultural icon. "On his 100th Birth Anniversary, I

pay my deepest tribute to the legendary singer 'Bard of Brahmaputra'

and 'Sudhakantha' Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika. His century of legacy continues to inspire us with his powerful voice, timeless songs, and universal message of love, unity, and humanity." Mein said in a social media post.

Hazarika's music is not just art; it is a bridge that connects cultures and generations forever, Mein added.

Hazarika was born on September 8, 1926, in Sadiya, a small village near the present-day Arunachal Pradesh's Lower Dibang Valley region.

Arunachal Pradesh will commemorate the birth centenary of the Bharat Ratna awardee with a state-level programme at Roing in Lower Dibang Valley district on September 26, as part of the nationwide celebrations of the legendary musician's legacy.

Hazarika shares a deep association with Bolung village in Arunachal Pradesh, which is widely regarded as his birthplace.

To honour the legendary musician

and his enduring contributions to the region, the state government in 2018 unveiled the 'Statue of Brotherhood' at Bolung.

Hazarika's association with Arunachal Pradesh spanned decades, as he composed and sang several memorable songs in praise of the state's scenic beauty, rich tribal traditions and its people's indomitable spirit. His compositions often echoed themes of brotherhood, resilience and cultural harmony, making him a household name across villages.

Hazarika's work in the northeastern state was not confined to music alone. He actively engaged with the state's art, cinema and cultural movements, lending his voice and creative vision to projects that showcased the unique identity of the frontier state.

From folk-inspired melodies that celebrated tribal heritage to evocative ballads that carried messages of unity, his songs became cultural markers that continue to bind generations. (PTI)

PAHALGAM ATTACK

CM hands over ₹ 50 lakh ex gratia to widow of IAF corporal

ITANAGAR, Sept 8: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu handed over ex gratia of ₹ 50 lakh to Charo Kamhwa, the widow of Corporal Tage Hailyang, who was killed in the Pahalgam terror attack. Khandu, who arrived in Ziro in Lower Subansiri district on Sunday evening for the 'Cabinet Aapke Dwar' programme, handed over the compensation amount in recognition of the Air Force officer's bravery.

Corporal Hailyang, who hailed from Tajang village in Lower Subansiri district, was among the 26 victims of the terror attack in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir on April 22 this year.

"He (Corporal Hailyang) selflessly guided tourists to safety, demonstrating courage and dedication beyond measure," Khandu wrote in a social media post.

"We remember his courage and offer our heartfelt respect to his wife, father, and entire family, who have borne this immense loss with dignity and strength," he added. State Agriculture Minister Gabriel D Wangsu, Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta and senior district officials were present at the event. (PTI)

APBB team conducts extensive survey for State Biodiversity Park in capital complex



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 8: The Arunachal Pradesh State Biodiversity Board (APBB), under the leadership of Chairman Hawa Bagang, has undertaken an extensive preliminary survey and trekking exercise aimed at identifying potential sites for the establishment of a State Biodiversity Park within the capital complex.

The initiative is being seen as a significant step toward enhancing conservation efforts and promoting ecological awareness in the state.

According to an official statement issued by the Board, the survey team was composed of senior forest officers and experts from various fields, along with local community representatives.

The team included Chairman Hawa Bagang, Director of the State Forest Research Institute (SFRI) cum Member Secretary of APBB H B. Abo, IFS, Senior Scientist R K Taj, Forest Geneticist Dr G Murtem, Orchidologist Dr Ona Apang, Regional Officer Dr Bameng Yakang, and several other forest officials.

The survey also saw the participation of Panchayat leaders, including former Autonomous District Council Member (ASM), General Purpose Committee (GPC) members, General Purpose Member (GPM), and Gram Bura (GBs) from Batt village.

The survey focused on the Bedi Bedha area near Batt village, where the terrain and ecological diversity make it a promising location for the proposed biodiversity park.

The team conducted biodiversity trekking to assess the flora and fauna, geographical conditions, and other environmental parameters that would sup-

port the development of the park.

The exercise was aimed at identifying the ecological potential of the site while ensuring minimal disruption to the local environment and community.

During the survey, the APBB statement revealed that the senior members of the Batt village community expressed their willingness to support the project by donating approximately 400 hectares of land free of cost for the establishment of the park.

This gesture, officials said, reflects the growing awareness and collective responsibility among local communities for conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable development.

The statement further mentioned that the detailed survey, mapping, and environmental impact assessment will be carried out once a formal agreement is reached with Panchayat leaders, GBs, and other senior members of the village.

The Board has emphasized that the project will be executed in close consultation with local stakeholders, ensuring that their views and concerns are taken into account throughout the planning and implementation process.

Since assuming office, Chairman Hawa Bagang has been actively involved in strengthening the state's conservation efforts. He has been touring various forest areas and biodiversity hotspots across Arunachal Pradesh, inspecting potential sites, and engaging with local communities and conservationists. In recent weeks, he visited the Orchid Garden at Bhalukpong, the VVK Chessa nursery, and the Biological Park, among other sites, to assess conservation opportunities and promote awareness about the importance of biodiversity preservation.

Moreover, Chairman Bagang has held multiple meetings with stakeholders from different sectors, including officers from the Environment and Forest Department, scientists, members of Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs), and forest conservation activists.

These interactions have allowed the Board to formulate a comprehensive approach toward biodiversity management that integrates scientific expertise with community participation.

The proposed Biodiversity Park is expected to serve multiple purposes.

It will act as a center for conservation, research, and environmental education, providing opportunities for scientists, students, and the public to study and appreciate the region's rich biodiversity.

It will also create avenues for sustainable eco-tourism, promote awareness about climate change and environmental protection, and contribute to the socio-economic development of surrounding communities.

The APBB has reiterated its commitment to work collaboratively with government departments, local communities, and experts to ensure that the park becomes a model for sustainable development and biodiversity conservation.

The Board's efforts reflect Arunachal Pradesh's long-standing commitment to preserving its unique natural heritage while fostering harmony between people and nature.

The next phase of the project will include detailed surveys, consultations, and formal agreements, with the Board seeking active participation from local stakeholders at every step.

The initiative is being widely wel-

APYC condemns restraint on social activist Bhanu Tatak, demands justice

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 8: The Arunachal Pradesh Youth Congress (APYC) has strongly condemned the government's high-handed approach in preventing social activist Bhanu Tatak from attending a three-month short course at Dublin City University.

In an official statement, APYC alleged that the action was taken in retaliation to Tatak's leadership in protests against the proposed 11,500 MW Siang Dam Project (SUMP).

The statement criticised the authorities for not providing prior notice before immigration officials stopped her at Delhi airport based on a complaint filed by the Itanagar Police.

Calling the move a fabricated case intended to silence dissent, the statement described it as an arbitrary and condemnable act of political high-handedness.

It further stressed that any major project like the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project should be executed only after obtaining consent from affected communities.

The APYC stated that attempts to curb dissent will not succeed in a democratic country where individual rights must be protected.

The organisation expressed solidarity with Bhanu Tatak and demanded that justice be provided to her at the earliest.



'Frontier Highway' will unlock new opportunities in business, tourism: Arunachal CM

ITANAGAR, Sept 8: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday reviewed the progress of the ambitious 'Frontier Highway', which he said would unlock new opportunities in business, tourism and security.

The 'Frontier Highway', officially christened as National Highway-913, is a proposed 1,748-km corridor.

"The Frontier Highway along Arunachal's border with Tibet is set to be a game-changer," Khandu said in a post on X, after a meeting with officials of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways at Ziro in Lower Subansiri district.

"This strategic road will unlock new opportunities in business, tourism and security while strengthening our border," he said.

Designed as a vital strategic link, the highway is expected to improve connectivity in remote districts, boost local economies, promote tourism, and enhance India's border infrastructure, officials said.

Khandu, along with Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein and cabinet colleagues, also laid foundation stones for a series of development projects at the district secretariat, they said.

The projects include the upgradation of township roads, construction of a new circuit house at Ziro, an artificial grass turf in Hapoli, a multi-purpose convention hall at Abotani Club, a multi-layer parking zone, and residential quarters for government officers and staff.

The chief minister also inaugurated the new office building of the superintending engineer of Subansiri Basin, under the Hydro Power Development Department. (PTI)

CM Pema Khandu and others mourn passing of former minister Taba Tedir's mother

HT Correspondent

NAHARILAGUN, Sept 8: Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, and several political and social organisations expressed deep sorrow and extended condolences following the passing of Taba Yaja, mother of former Education Minister Taba Tedir.

She passed away on Sunday morning at a private hospital in Naharlagun.

Born in 1935, Taba Yaja lived a life marked by dignity, compassion, and kindness.

Her passing has left a void among family members, friends, and the community, as people remember her as a source of wisdom and love.

In an official condolence message, chief minister Pema Khandu said, "I am deeply pained to learn about the demise of Smt. Taba Yaja Ji, revered mother of former Minister Shri Taba Tedir. In this hour of profound sorrow, I extend my heartfelt condolences to Shri Taba Tedir Ji and the entire bereaved family. May the departed soul attain Sadgati, and may Lord bless the family with strength and courage to bear this immense loss."

Deputy chief minister Chowna Mein also paid tribute, stating, "I am deeply saddened to hear about the passing away of Smt. Taba Yaja, mother of former Minister Taba Tedir. I pay my sincere condolences to the grieving family in the event of this irreparable loss. May the departed soul rest in eternal peace and may the Almighty grant strength, comfort, and resilience to the family in this difficult time."

The Tebw Lappa Welfare Society (TLWS) joined in mourning, describing her as a guiding light for the community.

The TLWS condolence message read, "With deep sorrow, the TLWS mourns the passing away of our beloved Late Taba Tati Tebw (Retd PI) of Yazali in Keyi Panyor District. In this moment of grief, we extend our heartfelt condolences to Taba Tedir, former Minister and Chairman of Arunachal Pradesh Energy Development Agency (APEDA), and the entire bereaved family. May her noble soul rest in eternal peace, and may the Almighty grant strength and solace to the family to bear this irreparable loss."

The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), Arunachal Pradesh, and its affiliated unions also paid their respects.

Their message stated, "She was the mother of Shri Taba Tedir, Former Education Minister, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, and Chairman, APEDA. She passed away on September 7, 2025, at a private hospital in Naharlagun at around 2:40 am. We pray to the Almighty God (Ane Donyi) for her departed soul to rest in peace and for the strengthening of the bereaved family members during this time of sorrow."

Leaders, social organisations, and well-wishers across the state have expressed their heartfelt sympathies, praying for the departed soul to attain Sadgati and for divine strength to support the bereaved family.

The collective grief underscores the deep respect and affection Smt. Taba Yaja inspired throughout her life.

Arunachal Cabinet approves Bill to streamline urban growth, clears key rules

ITANAGAR, Sept 8: The Arunachal Pradesh Cabinet on Monday approved a Bill that seeks to provide a legal framework for town planning schemes, marking a major step towards streamlining urban growth and development in the state, according to an official statement.

The decision comes in the backdrop of rapid urbanisation in the state, with 47 notified urban centres requiring structured planning interventions to curb haphazard growth.

The draft Arunachal Pradesh Urban and Country Planning (Amendment) Bill, to be tabled in the forthcoming Assembly session, will provide a legal framework for town planning schemes and land pooling, and enable the state to access Rs 100 crore in capital incentives during the current financial year under the scheme for special assistance to the states for capital investment 2025-26.

The Cabinet meeting held at Ziro in Lower Subansiri district, chaired by Chief Minister Pema Khandu, observed that the initiative aligns with the state government's long-term vision for sustainable urbanisation while addressing challenges

posed by geography and accessibility, the statement said.

The proposed amendments will further facilitate organised urban growth by introducing new planning schemes, transferring development rights, and empowering local bodies to implement master plans in line with national and constitutional provisions, including the 74th Amendment Act.

Recognising urgent needs in public safety, the cabinet sanctioned four new fire stations at Mebo (East Siang), Kimin (Papum Pare), Deomali (Tirap) and Lungla (Tawang), along with the creation of 68 posts to provide adequate manpower.

The move aims to strengthen emergency response capacity across vulnerable regions.

In another significant decision, the Cabinet approved the Arunachal Pradesh Municipal Property Tax Management Rule, 2025.

The rule will be implemented in all municipal areas in the first phase, with the government underlining that property tax collection will boost the fiscal autonomy of urban local bodies (ULBs) and make them financially self-reliant, an initiative being promoted as "Atmanirbhar Municipality." (PTI)

'Arunachal Pradesh underway to make Arunachal synonymous with Kiwi, just as Tea is to Assam' Arunachal CM launches Kiwi Mission, calls it 'farming revolution'

ITANAGAR, Sept 8: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu launched Kiwi Mission 2025-2035, an ambitious 10-year programme aimed at making the frontier state synonymous with Kiwi cultivation in the way Assam is associated with tea, officials said.

He formally launched the programme at Ziro in Lower Subansiri district on Sunday in the presence of Agriculture Minister Gabriel D Wangsu, and other cabinet colleagues and MLAs.

Speaking at the programme, Khandu described the initiative as a bold step to empower farmers and position the state as a hub of high-quality organic produce.

The CM called the Kiwi Mission a "farming revolution that will redefine Arunachal Pradesh's role in India's agricultural map".

"Arunachal Pradesh is underway with a bold vision to make our land synonymous with Kiwi, just as Tea is to Assam," Khandu said in a post on X.

"The mission is about empowering our farmers, embracing sustainable practices, and putting Arunachal on the global map for high-quality organic produce," he added.

Under the programme, model Kiwi orchards will be established in 13 districts, with the fertile Ziro Valley identified as the heart of this "farming revolution," he said.

The state government is focusing on sci-



entific practices, training and support systems to ensure that growers are not only able to expand cultivation but also meet international quality standards.

Khandu said the mission builds on the state's natural advantage of a temperate cli-

mate, high-altitude valleys and fertile soils, which are ideal for Kiwi cultivation.

After interacting with Kiwi growers from several districts, he said in another post, "Their insights and experiences are driving our efforts to promote sustainable farming,

innovation, and farmer welfare in Arunachal Pradesh."

The launch also featured the 'harvest of the month' initiative, which celebrates outstanding farmers who exemplify innovation and sustainability.

Two farmers were honoured at the event, including Netan Dorjee Thungon of West Kameng who expanded his apple orchard from 300 to 1,200 plants, producing 20 metric tonnes annually and earning Rs 12 lakh with support from government schemes and sustainable practices.

Nani Sha of Papum Pare cultivated 2,800 avocado plants across 5.5 hectares, and from his first harvest earned Rs 4 lakh, focusing on premium varieties such as Hass and Ettinger.

"The 'harvest of the month' initiative highlights the dedication, innovation, and resilience of our farmers, driving sustainable agriculture and inspiring communities across Arunachal Pradesh," the chief minister said.

Officials said the mission would also focus on organic certification, post-harvest management and export promotion to establish Arunachal Pradesh's Kiwi as a global brand.

With growing domestic and international demand for exotic fruits, the government believes the crop could become the state's signature produce. (PTI)

'Reddy showed his sympathy with naxalites', says BJP

Reddy talking of saving country's soul and meeting Lalu Yadav is hypocrisy in extreme: BJP

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: The BJP on Monday slammed joint opposition's vice presidential candidate B Sudershan Reddy for meeting RJD president Lalu Prasad Yadav in his campaign, claiming that reaching out to a leader convicted in corruption cases has exposed his hypocrisy.

This is hypocrisy in extreme, BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad told reporters, as he took a jibe at Reddy, a former Supreme Court judge, for seeking votes for saving the soul of India and making other "big talks".

Reddy talks of saving the soul of India and is meeting someone not only convicted in fodder scam but also facing more corruption charges, including offering jobs in the railways in lieu of bribe, Prasad said.

"What kind of a retired Supreme Court judge you are. Lalu Prasad Yadav is not even a voter in the election. Please do not talk of saving soul...This is hypocrisy in extreme. We condemn his conduct," he said.

The former law minister was also critical of several retired judges who had defended the opposition vice presidential candidate against Home Minister Amit Shah's criticism of Reddy for his judgement as a member of Supreme Court double bench which had disbanded Salwa Judum, a civil militia which worked with police in fighting Maoists.

The BJP has been saying it showed his



sympathy with naxalites.

Prasad questioned their "silence", alleging that Reddy has acted below the dignity expected of a retired judge by meeting Yadav, whose party RJD has backed his candidature.

In his press conference, the BJP leader also criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi as a casual politician for his reported personal trip abroad currently when he should have visited flood-hit states like Karnataka and Punjab.

Gandhi must be thinking that let him take

a break after some work, he said.

"Rahul Gandhi, let me remind you there is no break in public life. If you are a leader, you have to be available for people's cause," Prasad said.

His reference to Gandhi came as he targeted Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge for allegedly shrugging off the pain of a farmer who lost crops in his four-acre farms in Kalaburgi, the traditional political constituency of Kharge, due to heavy rains.

Prasad noted that Kharge told him that he himself had suffered damaged in his 40-acre

farm. What kind of arrogance is this, Prasad asked, noting that the farmer wanted to convey his pain as the Congress is in power in Karnataka and the region was Kharge's former constituency.

The Congress, he said, makes claims about being with farmers. Everything Rahul Gandhi has said in support of farmers should be released, he added.

The BJP leader also slammed the Congress government in Himachal Pradesh for withdrawing an order for the hike in salary of government employees, which he said was issued by the previous dispensation headed by his party, due to the state's poor finances.

This is the "khatakhata model" of the Congress as it deceives and cheats people for votes, he alleged.

While the governance model of the BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is visible in the expected fall in the prices of different products following the GST rate cut while ensuring a high growth rate, the Congress is unable to handle governance wherever it is in power, he added.

Prasad showed a Congress poster displayed in his Lok Sabha constituency Patna Sahib in Bihar, saying it promises Rs 28 lakh to people. He accused Gandhi of trying to make a fool of people in the poll-bound state. (PTI)

Global trade challenges need to be turned into opportunities: President

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: President Droupadi Murmu on Monday said India should leverage its exceptional capabilities to turn the challenges of global trade into new opportunities.

Addressing the platinum jubilee of the Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC), she pointed out that India's engineering export destinations have changed significantly over the last seven decades.

EEPC should continue this process of change and keep working to make India's economy stronger with the spirit of 'Nation First', said the President.

She said "the challenges of global trade need to be turned into opportunities by utilising the exceptional capabilities available in our country".

She observed that high-quality engineering services and products at low cost are a great strength of India. The President observed that in the last 10 years, India's engineering exports have increased from USD 70 billion to more than USD 115 billion.

Murmu said this growth in exports seems even more impressive when "we consider that there have been many challenges in the field of international trade during the last decade."

The President said EEPC acted as a bridge between the international market and Indian producers. She urged EEPC to continuously expand India's role in the global value chain. Murmu said that due to the changes taking place in the world trade order and international economic order, EEPC's role has become more important.

Being an important stakeholder in the economic sector, EEPC should act with greater determination, she stressed.

"Global Capability Centres of the world's biggest companies are in India. Stakeholders like EEPC should move forward with the idea of making India a Global Innovation Centre by providing proper incentives and an ecosystem," Murmu said, adding innovation economies are the most competitive and prosperous in the world.

She urged all stakeholders of EEPC to pledge to make India a leading innovation economy by providing an enabling ecosystem to the talent and energy available in the country. (PTI)

Oppn MPs meet to display unity on eve of vice presidential election



NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Leaders of several opposition parties on Monday held a meeting in Parliament complex in a show of unity on the eve of the vice presidential election.

Top leaders of the Congress, Samajwadi Party, DMK, TMC, RJD, JMM, Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP (SP), CPI and CPI-M met in the central hall of Samvidhan Sadan (Old Parliament Building) and were briefed about the election process on Tuesday in which members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are eligible to vote.

While SP leader Ram Gopal Yadav welcomed all those present, Congress leader and chief whip of the Congress in Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh informed the MPs about the procedure for voting.

The vice-presidential poll has been described by the opposition as an ideological battle, even as the numbers are stacked in favour of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

Sources said the Opposition MPs were told to ensure their vote is not wasted, as some votes were declared invalid last time. The MPs also participated in a mock poll for Tuesday's election to enable MPs to experience the voting process.

Members of Parliament are not bound by party whips to vote in the vice presidential election, which takes place under a secret ballot system.

The MPs will be handed out ballot papers containing the names of the two contesting candidates and will have to mark their preference by writing the figure '1' opposite

the name of the candidate of their choice.

Among the leaders who attended the meeting in Samvidhan Sadan were Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress Parliamentary Party leader Sonia Gandhi, NCP (SP) leader Sharad Pawar and DMK leader T R Baalu.

Meanwhile, the NDA also held a meeting of their MPs to brief them on the election process. The members also participated in a mock poll.

Odisha's principal opposition party, Biju Janata Dal (BJD), announced that its MPs will abstain from voting in the vice presidential elections.

The party, headed by former chief minister Naveen Patnaik, said it took the decision as part of its policy of "maintaining an equal distance" from both the BJP-led NDA and Congress-led INDIA bloc at the national level.

On Sunday, AIMIM decided to support the opposition candidate in the election.

Ruling NDA nominee C P Radhakrishnan and joint opposition candidate B Sudershan Reddy are pitted against each other in a direct contest for the vice-presidential election.

The BJP-led alliance has a clear edge in the poll necessitated by the sudden resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar on July 21.

Members of both Houses of Parliament will cast their votes in the Parliament House between 10 AM and 5 PM on Tuesday. Counting of votes will begin at 6 PM, and the results will be announced late in the evening. (PTI)

BJD to abstain from vice presidential polls

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Monday said it will abstain from voting in the vice presidential polls, and asserted that the party remains "equidistant" from both the NDA and the INDIA bloc. BJD leader Sasmit Patra also said his party's priority is the "four-and-a-half crore people of Odisha".

"(Following) discussions by our honourable party president, Mr Naveen Patnaik with the party's senior leaders, Political Affairs Committee and MPs, the Biju Janata Dal has decided to abstain from the vice presidential elections tomorrow," Patra said.

"The BJD remains equidistant from both the NDA and INDIA alliances. We are focused on the development and welfare of Odisha and four-and-a-half crore people of Odisha," he said.

The vice presidential election, a direct contest between ruling NDA nominee C P Radhakrishnan and joint opposition candidate B Sudershan Reddy, will take place in Parliament House, where members of both Houses of Parliament will cast their votes between 10:00 am and 5:00 pm on Tuesday. (PTI)

Two terrorists killed, 3 soldiers injured in encounter in J&K's Kulgam

SRINAGAR, Sept 8: Two unidentified terrorists were killed and three soldiers injured in an encounter in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday, officials said here. Security forces launched a search operation in the Gudar forest area of Kulgam following information about the presence of terrorists there, the official said. They said the search operation turned into an encounter after the terrorists opened fire at the positions of the security forces. "Based on specific intelligence input by JKP, joint search operation was launched by #IndianArmy, @JmuKmrPolice & @crpf_srinagar in Gudar forest of #Kulgam," Srinagar-based Chinara Corps of the Army said in a post on X. (PTI)

Planned misadventure being insensitively pushed through: Sonia slams govt on Nicobar project

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Terming the Great Nicobar infrastructure project a "planned misadventure", Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Monday said it poses an existential danger to the island's indigenous tribal communities and is being insensitively pushed through, making a "mockery of all legal and deliberative processes".

The collective conscience cannot, and must not, stay silent when the very survival of the Shompen and Nicobarese tribes is at stake, Gandhi said in an article published in 'The Hindu'.

"Our commitment to future generations cannot permit this large-scale destruction of a most unique ecosystem. We must raise our voice against this travesty of justice and this betrayal of our national values," she said in her article titled 'The making of an ecological disaster in the Nicobar'. Hitting out at the Modi government, the former Congress president said there has been no shortage of "half-baked and ill-conceived policymaking" in the last 11 years.

"The latest in this series of planned misadventures is the Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project. The totally misplaced Rs 72,000 crore expenditure poses an existential danger to the island's indigenous tribal communities, threatens one of the world's most unique flora and fauna ecosystems and is highly susceptible to natural disasters," she said.

"Nevertheless, it is being insensitively pushed through, making a mockery of all legal and deliberative processes," Gandhi said.

She pointed out that the Great Nicobar Island is home to two indigenous communities, the Nicobarese tribe and the Shompen tribe, a particularly vulnerable tribal group.

"The ancestral villages of the Nicobarese tribals fall in the project's proposed land area. The Nicobarese were forced to evacuate their villages during the Indian



Ocean tsunami of 2004. This project will now permanently displace this community, ending its dream of returning to its ancestral villages," she said.

"The Shompen face an even greater threat. The Island's Shompen Policy, notified by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, specifically requires the authorities to prioritise the tribe's welfare and 'integrity' when considering 'large-scale development proposals'."

"Instead, the project denotifies a significant part of the Shompen tribal reserve, destroys the forest ecosystems where the Shompen live, and will cause a large-scale influx of people and tourists on the island," she argued.

Ultimately, the Shompen will find themselves cut off from their ancestral lands and unable to sustain their social and economic existence, Gandhi said.

Yet, the government is stubbornly adamant and shockingly insistent, she added.

Gandhi alleged that the constitutional and statutory bodies set up to preserve tribal rights have been sidestepped throughout this process.

"As in Article 338-A of the Constitution, the Government should have consulted the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. It has failed to do so."

"The Government should have consulted the Tribal Council of Great Nicobar and Little Nicobar

asserted.

"Ecologically, this project is nothing short of an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe. The project will require the cutting down of trees on an estimated 15% of the island's land, decimating a nationally and globally unique rainforest ecosystem," she pointed out.

The Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change estimates that 8.5 lakh trees may be cut, Gandhi said.

"This is a depressing figure, but it may also be a gross underestimate - independent estimates have suggested that 32 lakh trees to 58 lakh trees may eventually be cut," she said.

The government's solution to this indiscriminate tree felling is that of "compensatory afforestation", a rather poor substitute for the loss of natural, old-growth forests, she opined.

"Despite abundant evidence confirming the same, which includes a National Green Tribunal order, the Government has contrived ways to manipulate this truth through a high-powered committee (HPC). The report of this HPC and the ground-truthing exercise it conducted to reclassify the port site out of CRZ 1A has not been made public," she said.

Gandhi further argued that from a wildlife standpoint too, the project raises serious concerns.

"Primatologists have written to the Government expressing grave concerns about the project's impact on the Nicobar long-tailed macaque. These concerns have been ignored," she said.

The biodiversity assessments for the projects have come under questioning for critical methodological flaws, Gandhi said.

"The assessment of sea turtle nesting sites was conducted in the off-season for nesting. Drones were employed to gauge the project's impact on dugongs, but these drones have limited capacity and can only assess shallow areas," she said. (PTI)

Human skeletal remains found during spot inspection in Dharmasthala case

MANGALURU (KARNATAKA), Sept 8: The SIT probing the alleged case of multiple rapes, murders, and burials in Dharmasthala recovered human skeletal remains during a spot inspection at Bangale Gudde on September 6, police said on Monday.

The discovery was made in the presence of a relative of the victim, a 17-year-old college student, police added.

The student was allegedly raped and murdered on October 9, 2012—a case that remains unresolved more than a decade later.

Despite a CBI probe and Supreme Court intervention, the real perpetrators have never been identified.

Police sources said the relative exhumed a human skull from the site on instructions from activist Girish Mattannavar, who had earlier obtained information from complainant C N Chinniah, based on whose complaint SIT was formed.

The SIT later confirmed that at least two sets of skeletal remains were recovered during the exercise.

"During the spot mahazar (spot inspection) at Bangale Gudde, the SIT recovered skeletal remains of at least two individuals. This is a shocking development for the investigation team," a senior police source said. Officials suspect more remains may be buried at the desolate site.

The recovered bones have been sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) for analysis. Investigators are probing why Chinniah, despite being aware of the site, did not disclose it earlier.

Police added that the relative acted under Mattannavar's direction and recorded the exhumation on video. He has not been taken into custody but is likely to be questioned further.

"We will investigate how the person came to know of this location and why it was kept hidden for so long," a police official said.

"The FSL report will be crucial in establishing the identity of the deceased and the circumstances of their death." (PTI)

Tiger reserve: SC orders status quo in Goa's Mhadei-Kotigaon area

Tiger protects the forest and the forest guards the tiger: SC

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: The Supreme Court on Monday ordered status quo in Goa's Mhadei-Kotigaon area which was identified by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) as a reserve for the big cats.

A bench of Chief Justice of India B R Gavai and Justices K Vinod Chandran and Atul S Chandurkar asked a central empowered committee to hear stakeholders in the matter and decide the issue in six weeks.

The bench ordered no projects or development to be undertaken in the meantime.

The top court had earlier agreed to hear a plea filed by the Goa government and others challenging the Bombay High Court order to the state to notify Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary and its surrounding areas as a tiger reserve within three months.

It sought responses from the



NTCA and others on the petition.

Spread over 208 square kilometer, the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the northeastern part of the state, adjoining Karnataka.

The high court's judgement came on a plea filed by NGO Goa Foundation which sought direction to the state government to notify tiger reserves of the state as requested by the NTCA.

Quoting "Mahabharata", the

high court said, "If there is no forest, then the tiger gets killed; if there is no tiger, then the forest gets destroyed. Hence, the tiger protects the forest and the forest guards the tiger!"

The high court had directed the state government to take necessary steps to prepare a tiger conservation plan as contemplated by the Wildlife Protection Act, and to forward the same to the NTCA within three months

from notifying Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary and other areas as a tiger reserve."

The NTCA was, as a result, directed to give full assistance to the state government for completing the process following which it would "expeditiously process" the state's tiger conservation plan.

The high court also directed the state government to set up anti-poaching camps at strategic locations with forest guards, watchers, etc., in the wildlife sanctuary and national parks in the state.

"This exercise must be completed within six months," it added.

The high court also asked the state government and the forest department to take steps to ensure no encroachments took place in the protected forest areas such as wildlife sanctuaries and national parks pending notification of the tiger reserve and in future. (PTI)

Centre slammed over SoO Failures by Okram Ibobi Manipur Govt accused of partisanship

IMPHAL, Sept 8: Former Chief Minister of Manipur and Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Okram Ibobi has accused Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla of reducing Raj Bhavan to a "partisan platform" by holding a meeting exclusively with BJP legislators.

"The Governor's selective meeting is a shocking display of partisanship. If the discussion was really about the violence, why were opposition MLAs left out? Raj Bhavan must remain above politics," Ibobi said at a press briefing today in Imphal.

The Leader of the Opposition warned that such exclusionary politics deepens the trust deficit at a time when Manipur is still reeling from over a year of bloodshed and displacement.

Ibobi also hit out at the Centre and the state government for what he called their mishandling of the Suspension of Operation (SoO) agreement signed with Kuki militant groups. He claimed that successive BJP-led governments ignored repeated violations of the ground rules.



"Even after the former state government passed resolutions for abrogation of SoO for two militant groups, the Centre failed to act. That left local communities exposed while militants op-

erated freely," he alleged.

On Modi's much-anticipated September 13 visit, Ibobi was blunt. He said, "The Prime Minister seems to believe he can pacify Manipur with a cursory 2-3 hours' visit. But the people cannot tolerate gestures without action."

He added that Manipur appears to be treated as an afterthought in the Prime Minister's itinerary, with more priority given to Mizoram and Assam. "This is not a mission, it looks like a tour," he remarked.

The press conference was attended by AICC CWC member Gaikhangam, MLAs Lokeshwar and Surjakumar, former MLA Loken, and other senior Congress leaders.

Concluding his remarks, Ibobi said the Governor's selective meeting and the Centre's failure on the SoO pact together have eroded public faith in institutions. "Ignoring elected representatives and failing to enforce agreements that protect our citizens undermines the credibility of both Raj Bhavan and the Central government," he said. (NNN)

Meghalaya govt to study reservation policy report before implementing it: Cabinet spokesperson

SHILLONG, Sept 8: The Meghalaya government on Monday said it would take a decision on the recommendations of the Expert Committee on the State Reservation Policy after thoroughly examining the voluminous report.

Cabinet Minister Paul Lyngdoh told reporters that the cabinet had taken cognisance of the committee's findings during its meeting. "The cabinet took cognisance of the report and has decided to study it. It is a voluminous report running into several thousands of pages. After due diligence, we should be able to come up with a decision on the various recommendations," he said.

The committee was constituted by the state government in May 2023, following growing demands for a review of the reservation policy, which has been in place since 1972.

Several pressure groups, particularly from Khasi and Jaintia Hills, had argued that the current formula disproportionately benefits one



community.

The committee was tasked with examining the policy, consulting stakeholders, and suggesting changes while keeping constitutional and legal frameworks in view.

The demand had intensified after Voice of the People Party (VPP) chief Ardent Basaiamwot staged a fast-unto-death in May 2023, pressing for a review of the

formula.

He called off his protest after a fast of over 200 hours on June 1, when the government assured it would set up the expert panel.

The report, submitted in June this year, contains a mix of proposals, some suggesting status quo and others introducing new aspects, including economic considerations.

"We have just received the report. We will need some time before we come up with a decision," Lyngdoh said.

He added that the government has the option to accept or reject the recommendations, but will ensure a balanced approach.

"We have always been balanced, and we will continue to be so. Recommendations are just suggestions, but the decision is finally that of the state government," he asserted.

The minister stressed that the government will not rush into any decision as the issues have "wide-ranging ramifications". (PTI)

Nagaland govt moving forward to impart more tech edu to youth: Zeliang

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Sept 8: Nagaland deputy chief minister TR Zeliang on Monday said the state government is moving forward step by step to impart more technical education to the younger generation.

Chairing the monthly meeting of the Peren District Planning & Development Board (DPDB) in Peren DC's conference hall, the government has appointed and placed well-qualified lecturers in every educational institution in the state, including at the polytechnic in Peren.

Zeliang urged the youth of Peren to grasp technical knowl-

edge through ITIs and polytechnics.

He also said the government is moving forward to sensitise people in various developmental works.

He asked Peren DC Hiazu Meru to organise sensitisation programmes for the civil society organisations under Peren district, including Tening and Nsong circle.

Zeliang said Peren's new district headquarters is Nagaland's first master plan, demarcated for a model township, especially for construction of offices and quarters. He said this policy will be

strictly implemented in the district.

The DC told the meeting that he has apprised the internet service providers and the department concerned to provide better internet facilities and road connectivity in and around the offices for smooth functioning of government offices in the district headquarters.

Regarding land allotment in the district headquarters, the DC said many departments have been allotted land to construct their offices. Meru assured to organise a seminar to impart technical education to the community in the district.

Meghalaya Deputy Speaker resigns, fuels talks of cabinet reshuffle

SHILLONG, Sept 8: Meghalaya Deputy Speaker Timothy D Shira resigned from his post on Monday following a late-night call from Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma, triggering speculation of a cabinet reshuffle.

Assembly Speaker Thomas Sangma confirmed receiving the resignation of Shira, a veteran NPP legislator from Resubelpara in North Garo Hills, and said it had been accepted.

"The chief minister requested me to resign. As a loyal party man, I did so," Shira told reporters here.

An emergency meeting of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) later decided that the election for the new deputy speaker would be held on the last day of the upcoming session.

The sudden development has fuelled talks of a cabinet rejig, especially amid demands for representation of the North Garo Hills in the ministry.

On speculations of a reshuffle, Shira said, "Nothing has been communicated to me in this regard." (PTI)

Tripura govt spent ₹ 834.45cr for providing social welfare pensions to 3.90L people: CM

AGARTALA, Sept 8: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday said his government has spent ₹ 834.45 crore on providing different social welfare pensions to 3.90 lakh persons in the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Addressing a programme, Saha said his government is committed to the welfare of all sections of people.

"The state government has allocated ₹ 7,000 crore for capital expenditure in the current fiscal year's budget. If we don't spend to develop infrastructure, the state will not grow at the expected rate," he said.

"We have spent ₹ 834.45 crore to provide different social welfare pensions to 3.90 lakh people in 2024-25, at the rate of ₹ 2,000 per person," he added.

Saha said the BJP government has increased the social pensions from ₹ 1,000 to ₹ 2,000 per month.

He said that in line with PM Narendra Modi's dream of a developed nation, his government has formulated a roadmap for building a developed Tripura by 2047.

"Tripura is the fifth state in the country and the first in the Northeast to have such a roadmap," he said.

The CM said various initiatives have been taken for the welfare of children, women and weaker sections of people.

"Altogether 11,130 mobile phones will be given to the ICDS and Anganwadi workers for 'poshan' or nutrition tracking apps," he said.

At the programme, the CM unveiled 19 development projects, including Anganwadi centres. (PTI)

Nagaland RMSA-2016 teachers launch protest demanding 'equal pay for equal work'

KOHIMA, Sept 8: Over 350 teachers under the banner of the Nagaland RMSA Teachers' Association (NRMSATA)-2016 on Monday launched an indefinite sit-in outside the Directorate of School Education in Kohima, urging the state government to resolve their demands without delay.

NRMSATA-2016 spokesperson Renbemo L. Patton said the agitation was triggered by the state government's alleged inaction in implementing a long-pending Supreme Court ruling concerning the service benefits and rightful dues of the teachers.

Patton said despite multiple attempts through peaceful and democratic channels, their concerns have remained unaddressed, compelling them to take this non-violent and lawful step.

This is the second phase of their agitation, following the pen-down strike launched on August 25. (PTI)

Naga youth no longer driven by promises of sovereignty, they aspire for development: Ex-CM SC Jamir

KOHIMA, Sept 8: Former Nagaland CM SC Jamir on Monday said the youth of the state are no longer driven by abstract ideological promises of sovereignty or distant visions of a separate Naga state, but instead, they are pragmatic and aspiring for peace, development, and meaningful integration into India's growth story.

Jamir made the statement at the Military-Civil Fusion Seminar organised by the Headquarters Inspector General of Assam Rifles (North) at Kohima Garrison.

Jamir, 94, could not physically attend the seminar, and his speech was read out by an Assam Rifles officer.

He highlighted the urgent need to recognise and respond to the changing aspirations of the younger generation, who are determined to shed the ideological baggage of the past and focus on practical solutions for prosperity and stability.

He asserted that the future of Nagaland depends on political statesmanship, meaningful governance reforms, and a strengthened partnership between civil and military institutions to create an environment where the people can thrive. (PTI)

6 militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, Sept 8: Six militants belonging to different proscribed outfits have been arrested in Tengnoupal and Thoubal districts of Manipur, police said on Monday.

Four insurgents belonging to the People's Liberation Army, United National Liberation Front (K) and Kangleipak Communist Party (MFL) were arrested at Chongjang in Tengnoupal district on Sunday, a police statement said.

Two active cadres of KCP (Apunba), both residents of Lilong Chajing Mamang Leikai in Thoubal district, were arrested from the locality of their residence the same day. They were involved in extortion and recruitment of youths into their proscribed organisation, it added. (PTI)

Congress should stop playing politics, inciting people over Manipur crisis: Shiv Sena

IMPHAL, Sept 8: Accusing the Congress of playing politics over the ethnic conflict in Manipur, the Shiv Sena's state unit on Monday asked the party not to "incite the public" over the likely visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Shiv Sena state unit president Dr M Tombi Singh's accusation came a day after senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh claimed that "such a rushed trip" by Modi is an "insult" to the state's people who have waited for him for 29 "long and agonising" months.

"The Prime Minister is visiting for the first time since the 2022 assembly elections. There have been a lot of discussions about him not visiting the state during the ethnic conflict. Shiv Sena warmly welcomes him even though it would be for a short duration," Singh told reporters.

Modi is likely to visit Manipur on September 13, which will be his first tour to the state since ethnic violence broke out between Meiteis and Kukis in May 2023.

"We appeal for a proper rehabilitation for internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the PM during his visit. We cannot remain in conflict

always. Earlier, there have been Kuki Naga clashes which gradually came to an end. There should be no politics on Modi's visit to the state," the Shiv Sena leader said.

Singh said his party condemns Ramesh's remarks on the visit of Modi and views it as political incitement of public emotions.

"He should give suggestions instead of provoking the people. We know very well that Congress has not done anything to ease the hardships of the people as well as to bring normalcy. They should stop inciting the people and not play politics over the Manipur crisis," Singh said.

Sharing a media report on X which claimed that the PM would be in Manipur for about three hours, Ramesh on Sunday said, "What does he hope to accomplish by such a rushed trip? This is actually an insult to the people of the state who have waited for him for 29 long and agonising months."

Shiv Sena has extended support to the erstwhile N Biren Singh-led BJP government following the 2022 Manipur assembly elections. The party, however, has no MLA in the state. (PTI)

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM DIRECTORATE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS ASSAM:: GUWAHATI-01

ASSAM AWARD OF PENSION TO ARTISTES AND SPECIAL PENSION TO THE FAMILIES

Artiste/Family pension along with Barxik Silpi Sanman (One time Financial Assistance) of the Govt. of Assam will be offered to person having outstanding contribution in the field of Art & Culture in the State and Special Family Pension will also be offered to indigent families of Artistes who had made spectacular contributions in the State's cultural sphere and have unfortunately passed away.

Applicants can apply through online mode from **10th September, 2025 (10:00 AM onwards)** for consideration under the Assam Award of Pension to Artistes and Special Pension to their Families Rules, 1987 as amended.

Online forms for application will be available in the websites-
<https://www.silpisanmanassam.com/>
<https://directorculture.assam.gov.in/>

Last date of submission of online application forms: 10th October, 2025 till 12:00 AM IST.

Online application process must be completed before last date of form submission, after which the weblink will be disabled.

For Divyang and Bed-ridden Artistes, the Cultural Development Officers or the Junior Assistants of Cultural Centres under Directorate of Cultural Affairs from their respective districts will visit the homes of those applicants for applying through online process. The names and contact numbers of the concerned Cultural Development Officers/Junior Assistants will be available in the given weblink.

For any query, applicants may mail us at silpipensiondca@gmail.com or contact us at our Helpdesk numbers of the Directorate - **94011-83996 (10:00 AM to 5:00 PM)**

For any kind of wrong information provided by the applicant, the applicant concerned shall be solely responsible.

sd/-
Director of Cultural Affairs
Assam, Guwahati-01

DIPR /D/HLT/153/9-Sep-25

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POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)		
(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002)		
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Bajaj Finance Limited (BFL), under the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 in exercise of powers conferred upon Sec.13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued under the said Act, I hereby call upon the Borrowers/Co-borrowers mentioned hereunder to repay the amount mentioned in the notice U/s. 13(2) of the said Act within a period of 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.		
The Borrowers/Mortgagors/Guarantors named below having failed to repay the said amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/Mortgagors/ Guarantors and public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on me under Sec.13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The borrowers in particular and public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the said property and any dealing with this property will be subject to the charge of the Bajaj Finance Limited. For the amount mentioned herein below along with interest thereon at contracted rate.		
The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.		
Loan Account No./Name of the Borrower(s)/Mortgagor(s)/Guarantor(s)	Description of Secured Immovable Property	Date of Notice U/s.13(2) and U/s.13(2) Notice Amount and Date of Possession
LAN: P16JPBL7922568 1. AJF Bricks Industry thr. Its Prop. Shahab Uddin, R/o. Joribar Morgaon Assam Nagaon 782127. Contact- 7099691624 Email id-shahab0112uddin@gmail.com. Also at, R/o. Dag No. 467 K Patta 234 Revenue Village Joribar Mouza Bhuragaon Circle Bhuragaon Dist. Morgaon Assam 781127 along with proportionate share in common areas (Area adm 5904 Sq.Ft.) Boundaries: As per legal docs: East- Dulal Hussain; West- Ashar Ali; North- Seller Land; South- Road As per site visit: East- Dulal Hussain; West- Ashar Ali; North- Land of Fazar Ali (Seller Land); South- Road	All the piece and parcel of Dag No. 467 K P Patta 234 Revenue Village Joribar Mouza Bhuragaon Circle Bhuragaon Dist. Morgaon Assam 781127 along with proportionate share in common areas (Area adm 5904 Sq.Ft.) Boundaries: As per legal docs: East- Dulal Hussain; West- Ashar Ali; North- Seller Land; South- Road As per site visit: East- Dulal Hussain; West- Ashar Ali; North- Land of Fazar Ali (Seller Land); South- Road	13.06.2025 Rs. 21,03,559.69/- (Rupees Twenty One Lakhs Three Thousand Five Hundred Fifty Nine and Sixty Nine Paise Only) Possession Date 03.09.2025
LAN: P16JPFB7569079 1. Anwar Enterprise thr its Prop. Anwar Hussain, R/o. C/o. Kamal Uddin. Goraimari Goraimari Morgaon, Goraimari B O 04-Assam 91-India Morgaon Assam 782104. Contact- 7399746412 Email id-anwar7896066@gmail.com. Also at, Dag No. 413 Patta No. 91 Reueve Village Goraimari Bill. Mouza Laharighat Circle Laharighat Dist. Morgaon Assam 782104 2. Taslima Khatun W/o Anwar Hussain, R/o. Vill/Town-Garaymari PS Laharighat Sub-Divn-Morgaon Dist-Morgaon Assam Nagaon 782104. Contact- 7399746412 Email id-anwar7896066@gmail.com 3. Anwar Hussain S/o Kamal Uddin, R/o. Garaimari Morgaon Assam 782104 Contact- 7399746412 Email id-anwar7896066@gmail.com	All the piece and parcel of Dag No. 413 Patta No. 91 Reueve Village Goraimari Bill. Mouza Laharighat Circle Laharighat Dist. Morgaon Assam 782104 along with proportionate share in common areas (Area adm. 11520 Sq.Ft.) Boundaries: As per legal docs: East- Israfili; West- Ubaidur Rahman; North- Purchaser Land; South- Road As per site visit: East- Israfili; West- Ubaidur Rahman; North- Anwar Hussain; South- Road	12.06.2025 Rs. 20,91,593.69/- (Rupees Twenty Lakhs Ninety One Thousand Five Hundred Ninety Three and Sixty Nine Paise Only) Possession Date 03.09.2025
Place : Assam Date : 09.09.2025		Sd/- Authorised Officer M/s Bajaj Finance Limited

Tripura begins 100-day cancer screening programme

AGARTALA, Sept 8: The National Health Mission (NHM) in Tripura has launched a 100-day special screening programme to identify cancer at an early stage across the state, an official release said on Monday. The drive will focus on the detection of ovarian, breast and oral cancers, as the prevalence of these forms is relatively high both in the country and the state.

"A special training of trainers (ToT) programme was held at Pragna Bhavan on September 2. Experts from Johns Hopkins Program for International Education in Gynecology and Obstetrics (Jhpiego), an NGO, trainers and delegates remained present in the programme. During the training programme, special emphasis was given on capacity building, the statement added.

Doctors, nursing officers, community health officers, ANMs and ASHA workers will receive training under the initiative.

"The objective of ToT is to provide a pool of skilled master trainers who will impart training to health workers engaged in sub-centres and primary health centres," the release said, adding that these master trainers will also train district-level ASHA workers in cancer screening and identification. (PTI)

Dream for any actor to work with Amitabh Bachchan: Chhaya Kadam on Jhund co-star



SHIMLA, Sept 8: Actor Chhaya Kadam, known for her roles in films such as "Laapata Ladies", "Madgaon Express" and "All We Imagine As Light", says it was a dream to work with mega star Amitabh Bachchan in the film "Jhund".

Directed by Nagraj Manjule of "Fandry" and "Sairat" fame, the 2022 movie featured Kadam as Bachchan's screen wife.

"It's a dream for any actor to work with superstar Amitabh Bachchan and the take away (learning) is discipline and punctuality. The offer to portray his wife in the film came as a surprise," Kadam, who was the celebrity guest at the opening day of the 11th International Film festival of Shimla, said.

The actor, who comes from Marathi theatre and has won several awards including the Filmfare, is also known for her impactful performances in films such as "Nude" and "Sister mid-night".

The actor said Bachchan's persona is of a dedicated and disciplined artist.

"People from our villages come to Mumbai just to see Amitabh Bachchan's house," she said recalling how Bachchan once called in advance to inform crew members that he was going to be late for shoot by 10 minutes. Kadam praised OTT platforms for opening new avenues for actors, script writers and others working in the film industry and the intermingling of talents from different industries. She said film festivals provide a platform for showcasing a variety of films and motivate young talents in small towns by giving them exposure.

"As per my experience, I feel that people from small places see big dreams and fulfill them and my message to the young people eyeing films is to work on yourself and remember that theatre is the foundation of acting", she said. (PTI)

IT WAS NEVER JUST A FILM, IT'S A FEELING: URMILA MATONDKAR ON 30 YEARS OF 'RANGEELA'



NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Bollywood star Urmila Matondkar penned a heartfelt note on social media on Monday as she celebrated 30 years of her film "Rangeela".

Matondkar shared a video of herself on Instagram, which featured her dancing on the track "Rangeela Re" from the film.

Released on September 8, 1995, the film was directed by Ram Gopal Varma and also starred Aamir Khan alongside Matondkar.

The 51-year-old actor said "Rangeela" isn't just a film but a "grand celebration of life" for her.

"It was never just a film. It was, and still is, a feeling... Woven with intense joy, hope, dreams, ambition, beauty, zest, affection, admiration, love and desire, struggle and triumph, sacrifice, and above all, a grand celebration of life," her post began.

"Every scene brings back an instant, childlike smile, carrying us into a world of innocence and wonder. Each song is not merely music, but a celebration of the Navrasa—the nine emotions of Indian literature and poetry...An innocent girl walks onto the silver screen and, with her charm and purity, captures hearts taking the audience on a timeless journey of beauty, poetry, life, and love," she added.

She concluded, "Thirty years ago today, 'Rangeela' became each one of yours!! And I am sure, even today, it has the power to transport you back to that very first moment—when you laughed, cheered, and fell in love with its magic. Thank you for letting me be a part of your lives, for embracing me with so much love, and for putting me in a place that only a few can even dare to dream of... yet fewer are ever blessed to Your appreciation, your accolades!! Your love have been the greatest blessings of my journey. thank you."

"Rangeela" revolved around Matondkar's character Mili dreaming of becoming a famous actor. However, things take a turn when Raj Kamal, a noted actor, and Munna, her childhood friend, both fall in love with her.

Noted music composer A R Rahman composed the music for the film. (PTI)

Fashion icon Giorgio Armani's impact, legacy will be felt for decades to come

MONTREAL, Sept 8: Despite the hyperbolic and fleeting tendencies of the fashion industry, few designers have had the impact of Giorgio Armani, who has died in Milan at the age of 91.

The new look and attitude the designer offered 50 years ago is today largely taken for granted and, at first glance, seems rather unassuming. But from the outset, Armani's focus and determination were to provide his customers with an easier way of dressing that was at once practical, sophisticated and thoughtful, yet unpretentious, powerful and subtle.

His suits required little effort on the part of the wearer, whose individuality and identity were meant to shine rather than being overwhelmed by his clothes. His approach to tailoring coincided with the growing awareness of health and fitness in the 1970s and 1980s.

Armani's body-conscious approach soon garnered attention in Hollywood, and he was asked to provide the wardrobe for Richard Gere in the now cult-classic 1980 film American Gigolo.

Born in 1934 in the small northern Italian town of Piacenza, Armani was originally destined to be a country family doctor. Before founding his own fashion

house in 1975, relatively late in life, at the age of 41, Armani began in the fashion industry as a window dresser for the Milanese department store La Rinascente.

In 1961, he was hired by stylist and businessman Nino Cerruti to work in the Cerruti family's textile factory. This new and fertile environment proved seminal to Armani's future in textile development and would determine his own aesthetic formula.

While working at Cerruti, designing for the firm's Hita men'swear collection, Armani proverbially and literally took the stuffing out of traditional Italian tailoring, offering men a modern attitude and a novel, less rigid way of moving and living in their jackets and suits.

Quickly, and throughout his 50-year career, the now iconic multi-purpose Armani jacket provided men and women alike with armour as much as comfort and support for the body underneath. Encouraged by his romantic and business partner Sergio Galeotti, an architect who remained Armani's business partner until his untimely death in 1984, Armani officially founded his own fashion house in July 1975. (PTI)

'Baaghi 4', headlined by Tiger Shroff, earns over ₹ 30 crore at box office

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Tiger Shroff and Sanjay Dutt-starrer "Baaghi 4" has collected Rs 37.14 crore nett at the domestic box office during its opening weekend, the makers said on Monday.

Also starring Miss Universe 2021 Harnaaz Sandhu and Punjabi star Sonam Bajwa, the film released in theatres on September 5. Directed by A Harsha, the film is the fourth installment of the "Baaghi" franchise.

It is produced by Sajid Nadiadwala under his production banner Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment.

"The makers shared the box office number on the X handle, featuring the film's poster. 'Day 3 = ₹37.14 Cr. Thank you for a blockbuster weekend and for showering us with so much love. Watch 'Baaghi 4' in your nearest cinemas! Book your tickets now,' read the caption." "Baaghi 4" opened with ₹ 13.20 crore nett at the domestic box office and went on to earn ₹ 11.34 crore and ₹ 12.60 crore on the following days, respectively.

The 'Baaghi' franchise started with 2016's 'Baaghi', followed by 'Baaghi 2' in 2018 and 'Baaghi 3' in 2020.

The first and third installments featured Shraddha Kapoor as the female lead. Disha Patani starred in the second film of the franchise. 'Baaghi 4' features Shroff as Ronny, a man who, after surviving an attempted suicide by train, descends into chaos as reality blurs. Actors Shreyas Talpade and Saurabh Sachdeva also star in pivotal roles." (PTI)

Not many scripts that bring together India and Papua New Guinea: Ritabhari Chakraborty on 'Papa Buka'

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Bengali actor Ritabhari Chakraborty is elated to be part of "Papa Buka", which is Papua New Guinea's first ever submission to the Oscars in the best international feature film category.

Directed by "Trees Under the Sun" fame Bijukumar Damodaran, the film is co-produced by Pa Ranjith via Neelam Productions alongwith Noelene Taula Wunum, Akshay Kumar Parija and Prakash Bare.

"Papa Buka" is a Tok Pisin-language film which follows an aging war veteran as he guides two Indian historians as they research about Indian soldiers who served alongside British and Australian forces during World War II. Chakraborty plays the role of Romila Chatterjee, a historian whose quest for history has a personal connection. "There's not many scripts in the world that can bring India

and Papua New Guinea together. These two countries are geographically so apart yet united by their history which was formed due to the war (World War II) that shook the world," Chakraborty told PTI in an interview. "As an actor working on films for so many years, it is a dream come true. We all want our films to be seen by the Academy. I have been working predominantly in Bengali films for a while and I don't even remember the last Bengali film which made it to Oscars," the actor added.

Chakraborty, a former history student at Jadavpur University, said she was intrigued by her character.

"I have been a history student in Jadavpur University so I had some insight on what a historian is like and what their lives are like since I have read so many books written by them. My character in this film is called Romila and it is not a

coincidence because one of the most famous historians from our country is named Romila Thapar. We wanted to reference her, even though my character is not based on her," she said. She found it interesting that while the film focuses on themes of war and violence, it barely depicts the gruesome events on screen. Her character Romila travels to the island to find out the truth of what happened to her grandfather, who never returned after serving during the Second World War.

"The nuances of building a story around our origin is the work of a historian and that is something we incorporated while also making Romila her own person. Her grandfather never came from the war, her mother never got closure so she had her own history to explore. We find out what happened to her grandfather and her exploration of history ultimately becomes a personal journey,"

Chakraborty said.

The actor, who reunited with the three-time National Award-winning director after their 2018 film "Painting Life", said it was challenging to shoot in a foreign land due to language differences. "Most of the film is in Tok Pisin which is the local language, the crew was Malayali and I am Bengali. I had most of my dialogues in Hindi but working with a crew whose language I didn't know on a film whose language is foreign was challenging," she said. "She praised director Biju as someone who is well-informed about the issues he is tackling in his movies. He is always about the craft, he makes his own cinema, which is not to please anyone. He had his vision. All I could do was get on board with the captain and trust him. He has the kind of sensitivity one needs to have when making films like this one," she said. (PTI)



Carlos Alcaraz beats rival Jannik Sinner at the US Open for a 6th Slam title and the No 1 ranking

NEW YORK, Sept 8: So maybe the first U.S. Open final between young, elite rivals Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner wasn't as long, riveting and dramatic as their matchup to decide the championship at the French Open. Perhaps it wasn't as seemingly meaningful and plot-driven as their showdown for the Wimbledon trophy.

Still, what the No. 2-seeded Alcaraz's 6-2, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 victory over No. 1 Sinner on Sunday did do was significant. Alcaraz reasserted his superiority over the defending champion, wrestled away the top spot in the ATP rankings and left tennis fans eager for whenever their next clash will come.

They are the first two men in the sport's history to face each other in three consecutive Grand Slam finals within a single season. "I'm seeing you more than my family," Alcaraz joked during the trophy ceremony, eliciting a grin from Sinner. "It's great to share the court, to share the locker rooms, everything."



This 2-hour, 42-minute win gave Alcaraz, a 22-year-old from Spain, leads over Sinner, a 24-year-old from Italy, of 10-5 in their head-to-head series, 6-4 in total Grand Slam trophies, and 2-1 in U.S. Open championships.

"I give lots of credit to him, because he handled the situation better than I did," said Sinner, who lamented that his own play was too predictable. "He raised his level when he had to."

The match's start was delayed for about a half-hour while thousands of fans were stuck outside Arthur Ashe Stadium going through extra security because President Donald Trump sat in a sponsor's suite.

Under a closed roof because of rain earlier in the day, Alcaraz was stronger, faster, more well-equipped for the occasion.

"You were better than me," Sinner said. "I tried my best today. I couldn't do more."

Alcaraz finished with twice as many winners, 42-21, and his coach,

2003 French Open champ Juan Carlos Ferrero, called the performance "perfect." Alcaraz's view of that assessment? "He's right. I think I played perfect. ... If I want to beat Jannik, I have to play perfect."

This hard-court matchup followed Alcaraz's victory over Sinner across 5 1/2 hours after erasing a trio of match points on the red clay at Roland-Garros in June, and Sinner's victory over two-time reigning champ Alcaraz on the grass at the All England Club in July.

"The things ... I did well in London," Sinner said, "he did better today."

Alcaraz took a week off after Wimbledon and then immediately got to work, spending 15 days with Ferrero focusing on one thing and one thing only: beating Sinner.

"I studied that match," Alcaraz said. During his defeat at Wimbledon, Alcaraz was caught by a camera telling his team in Spanish: "From the back of the court, he's much better than me." (AP)

Curtain Raiser: Asia Cup is India's tournament to lose

DUBAI, Sept 8: Overwhelming favourites will be an understatement to define the Suryakumar Yadav-led India given the gulf between them and the seven other nations, including a mercurial Pakistan, when the battle for continental supremacy unfolds at the Asia Cup T20 tournament on Tuesday.

The action will begin with Afghanistan taking on Hong Kong in Abu Dhabi, but all eyes will be on Dubai, where a star-studded Indian team will be aiming to crush United Arab Emirates in its opener on Wednesday.

In a tournament that has often served as a dress rehearsal for the T20 World Cup, the Asia Cup this time comes with a sense of inevitability.

The weight of expectations is on the Indian team, not merely because of its pedigree but also because the balance of power has tilted decisively in its favour.

India, for all their internal debates and external expectations, look like the one side that has clarity of purpose. And clarity, in high-pressure tournaments, often counts for more than raw talent.

If one takes into account leadership, and sheer depth of talent, then this is India's tournament to lose. Such has been the confidence that chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar and head coach Gautam Gambhir didn't for once entertain the idea of picking a 17-member squad allowed by the Asian Cricket Council.

Instead, they picked 15 like they do for ICC events even if it meant keeping out players like Shreyas Iyer and Yashasvi Jaiswal.

Winning the continental showpiece for the ninth time (seven in ODI format and one in T20 format in 2016) would neither earn Suryakumar or head coach Gautam Gambhir any extra credit.

But anything short of trophy would invite a deluge of criticism given that the T20 World Cup is set to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka in four and half months' time. Suryakumar and his colleagues have around 20 games (if they reach Asia Cup final) before the global event starts. Getting the core combination right would be a major goal for the side.

India is such a powerhouse that at this point BCCI has the ability to field three national T20 teams of equal strength.

Suryakumar has been a phenomenal skipper so far with an astounding 80 per cent win record but now the leadership group will have vice-captain Shubman Gill, who is expected to take charge from the Mumbaier in due course of time. How the T20 skipper and Test skipper align and sing from the same hymn sheet will certainly be watched with a lot of interest.

The manner in which Indian batters reinvented the grammar of T20 batting, largely due to IPL exposure, has been difficult to match for teams like Pakistan and Sri Lanka, who were on even keel till a decade and half back.

The broader storyline of the Asia Cup is therefore less about who can win it and more about who can stop India. Their depth dwarfs Pakistan's transitional experiment and Sri Lanka's rebuilt side. Salman Ali Agha's Pakistan team bears a young and fresh look.

The dropping of Babar Azam and Muhammad Rizwan is PCB's clearest admission yet that reputations cannot hold a team hostage. But their success will largely depend more on how Shaheen Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf, and Hasan Ali bowl against a flamboyant Indian batting line-up. (PTI)

Arshdeep's rhythm, Bumrah's continuity key for India at Asia Cup: Arun

DUBAI, Sept 8: Arshdeep Singh's ability to regain "match rhythm" quickly and Jasprit Bumrah's capacity to play continuously without rest will define India's Asia Cup campaign, feels former national bowling coach Bharat Arun.

Arun said Arshdeep, despite extensive bowling in England, is still short on competitive overs. He did play a Duleep Trophy game for North Zone though. India begin their Asia Cup campaign on Wednesday against the UAE.

"Arshdeep, we all know what he is capable of doing. He must have bowled a lot in England, but he is definitely short of match practice. The rhythm really comes from playing matches no matter how much you bowl in the net and practice sessions," Arun told PTI during an exclusive interview.

"I think it is important to bowl in matches. It's a big challenge for Arshdeep. How quickly he gets back his match rhythm would be very, very important. It can be in a jiffy or it can take him a couple of matches to get into rhythm," added the coach, who had two fairly successful stints as India's bowling coach between 2014 and 2021.

On Bumrah, Arun was emphatic that six T20 matches across three weeks should not trouble him.

"I would love to see Jasprit play. But I think it is his call. I think he should be able to play all the matches. But the real call must be taken by Jasprit. I don't think he would need rest looking at the format of this tournament."

"So, if he is bowling, it is also a question of continuing the good rhythm that he gets throughout the tournament, which would augur very well for him," Arun said.

Arun, who has worked closely with Harshit Rana at Kolkata Knight Riders, vouched for the pacer's potential but stressed on consistency.

"Harshit has been very impressive in T20 cricket. He is a very talented bowler in the sense that he can really bowl well-disguised slower balls. He has got a pretty good yorker and he can move the new ball around."

"The challenge for him would be to stay very consistent and to get his execution right. His capabilities and his talent is exceptional," he noted.

Arun was confident that Kuldeep Yadav, who could not fit into the playing XI during the Test series in England, would make an impact in the Asia Cup.

"Kuldeep Yadav has grown immensely in stature as a bowler. He is bowling beautifully. And it was unfortunate that he couldn't play in England."

"But I am sure he must have had a lot of overs under his belt. And he is experienced enough. He has got pretty good experience in the T20 format," Arun said.

Arun felt Kuldeep must have also got his rhythm back thanks to a Duleep Trophy stint recently.

"...these 35 overs in the Duleep Trophy must have been great for him to get back his rhythm. But I wouldn't read too much into performance (no wickets). As a coach, I would only like to look at Kuldeep's rhythm."

"I think 35 overs of match bowling is pretty good for him to get back his rhythm. And I am sure the conditions in Dubai would be conducive for Kuldeep. The grounds are big. The wickets also could be favourable. So, I see Kuldeep doing very well in the Asia Cup," he added.

India have three specialists -- Kuldeep, Axar Patel and Varun Chakravarthy -- and Arun said it would be hard to leave any of them out. "Well, Varun has been an exceptional T20 bowler. He is kind of a match-winner. And so is Kuldeep Yadav. And Axar Patel brings in a lot with the bat."

"So, I think Axar would be used more as an all-rounder. And if the wickets are a little conducive, it will be a great idea to play all three spinners. Because each one has got a different variety." They have experience. And they bring a lot to the table...But obviously, the condition of the pitch would matter a lot. Then if it does, then it will be a very, very difficult choice to pick just two of them. Very tempting to play all three," he said. (PTI)

Satwik-Chirag to lead Indian challenge at Hong Kong Super 500

HONG KONG, Sept 8: Fresh from their World Championships bronze medal, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will once again spearhead India's challenge at the Hong Kong Super 500 badminton tournament, beginning here on Tuesday.

The world No. 3 duo, who produced a superlative show in Paris to clinch their second Worlds bronze, have been India's most consistent performers this season with several semifinal finishes on the BWF Tour, including events in India, Malaysia, China and Singapore.

The eighth seeds will open their campaign against Chinese Taipei's Chiu Hsiang Chieh and Wang Chi-Lin. Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu, who showed glimpses of her prime form at the Worlds with a demolition of China's Wang Zhi Yi before falling in the quarter-finals, will look to build on that performance when she faces Denmark's Line Christophersen in



the opener.

US Open champion Ayush Shetty, one of the rising stars this year, has a tough first-round clash against China's Lu Guang Zu.

Former world No. 6 Lakshya Sen, still searching for rhythm after his fourth-place finish at the Paris Olympics, will look to regain confidence when he takes on Wang Tzu

Wei of Chinese Taipei.

The 24-year-old has been plagued by narrow losses and niggles, and suffered a first-round exit at the Worlds against top seed Shi Yu Qi. HS Prannoy, who went down fighting against Denmark's Anders Antonsen in Paris, faces another stiff challenge against Japan's fifth seed Kodai Naraoka in the first

When the punt pays off: Indian hockey reaps rewards for daring to change at Asia Cup

RAJGIR (BIHAR), Sept 8: The gamble of letting go some seasoned campaigners to blood youngsters paid off quite well for the Indian hockey team in a triumphant Asia Cup campaign, setting the stage for some more churning ahead of next year's World Cup and the Asian Games.

Three players from the Paris Olympics bronze medal-winning side -- Shamsher Singh, Gurjant Singh and Nilakanta Sharma -- were dropped in favour of mid-fielder Rajinder Singh and striker Shilane Lakra.

The move turned out to be a masterstroke as both the youngsters, despite managing just a goal each, impressed in the just-concluded tournament in which India defeated Korea in the finals to win the title after eight years and be assured of a World Cup spot.

And going forward one can expect some more reshuffle in India's core group, especially after the FIH

Junior World Cup to be held in Chennai and Madurai from November 28 till December 10.

Keeping the World Cup (to be jointly hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands from August 14 to 30) and the Asian Games (from September 19 in Japan) in view, India are expected to test some promising juniors at the senior level after the Junior World Cup.

Hockey India's chairman of selectors RP Singh has already made it clear that some under-performing seniors will be phased out slowly.

He emphasised that performance and fitness are the only criterion for representing the national team.

"There are a few players who are under the scanner and we will assess their performances after the Asia Cup. We need to see upcoming players while making our team now. At one go if we sent six-seven senior players out of the team, it won't work," Singh said.

"It is the responsibility of the selection committee to ensure the senior players who are not performing are phased out slowly."

India have a packed schedule from October to December, during which they will compete in the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup in Malaysia before embarking on a Test tour of South Africa, and head coach Craig Fulton is expected to test a few juniors in these tournaments.

The Asia Cup crown also came as a soothing balm for the Harmanpreet Singh-led side, especially after its disappointing outing in the continental showpiece, winning it for a fourth time overall here. They last won the trophy in 2017 in Dhaka and their previous two triumphs came in 2003 in Kuala Lumpur and 2007 in Chennai. India might have finished

strong but the start was far from rosy as the hosts had to dig deep to eke out 4-3 and 3-2 wins over China and Korea in the pool stages.

Their campaign gained momentum after a 15-0 thrashing of lowly Kazakhstan. "We did not have the best of starts and the players knew that. We gained momentum after the Kazakhstan match. The players felt more confident after that big win," Fulton had said.

But the 2-2 draw against Korea in the Super 4 stage again gave India a reality check.

However, the hosts lifted their game by a few notches to thrash Malaysia 4-1 and then China 7-0 before the emphatic win over Korea in the final. One heartening aspect of the campaign was the fitness of Indian players. The Indians played seven high-pressure games within a span of 10 days in extremely hot and humid conditions of Rajgir, a testament to their superb fitness levels. (PTI)

Sharath's retirement brought a lull but future of Indian TT looks bright: Dronacharya awardee coach

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: A rich talent pool of players promises a bright future for Indian table tennis despite the recent retirement of stalwart Sharath Kamal, said Dronacharya awardee coach Sandeep Gupta on Monday.

Gupta is currently busy with the conduct of the National Ranking Table Tennis Championship which has returned to Delhi after a long gap of 13 years.

The tournament attracting close to 3000 entries is an indicator of the growing interest in the sport across the length and breadth of India, said Gupta, who is also the childhood coach of star player Manika Batra.

"The future of table tennis is very bright. Earlier, the level set by Sharath Kamal was very high. After that, there was a gap in the talent pool."

"But now, our top players - Manush, Manav, Sathiyar, Harmee, and Ankur Bhattacharya - are very prominent names in In-

dian table tennis," Gupta told PTI at the Thyagaraj Stadium, the venue for the national ranking meet.

He feels it is a big deal for Delhi to host an event of this scale after a long hiatus.

"We are able to host the championship after a gap of 15 years. Our players used to participate outside of the national ranking tournaments, but this is the first time we are hosting it, because of this, close to 3000 players are participating."

"Spectators will get a chance to see their role models-national champions, Olympic participants, Asian Games medallists, and Commonwealth medallists. They will get an opportunity to understand their game, and in turn, improve their own. This is a big achievement in itself."

India regularly win medals at the Commonwealth Games and of late have also brought laurels at the Asian Games, competing with tra-



dional table tennis powerhouses like China and Japan.

However, an Olympic medal in table tennis remains a work in progress.

"As you can see, we have just defeated Japan. So, in the coming time, we were 2-0 up against China (Indian women in the world cham-

pionships). We hope our players will regularly defeat China and Japan in the near future. We just need to continue performing the way we are right now," said Gupta.

At the opening ceremony of the event, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta emphasized her government's commitment to sports, an-

nouncing the highest-ever cash rewards for international medal winners.

Olympic medallists from Delhi will now receive ₹7 crore for gold, ₹5 crore for silver, and ₹3 crore for bronze. For the Commonwealth Games, the rewards will be ₹3 crore, ₹2 crore, and ₹1 crore respectively.

Gupta welcomed the announcement, noting the impact such incentives can have on athletes' motivation and future.

He also highlighted the achievements of Payas Jain, a rising star from Delhi who once held the world number one spot in the U-17 category, as an example of the capital's growing contribution to the national talent pool.

"The pool of players is strong. Our own Payas Jain, a player from Delhi, is performing very well. The depth of talent is impressive, and I am 100% hopeful that these players will bring medals to our country." (PTI)

Analysing games and learning from them fast always key, next target World Cup: Harmanpreet

RAJGIR (BIHAR), Sept 8: Indian men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh said quick analysis and learning from mistakes after every game was key in ending the eight-year title drought at the Asia Cup.

Heading into the Asia Cup on the back of a woeful run, India put up a superlative display, defeating South Korea 4-1 in the final on Sunday, to not only end their barren run at the continental tournament but also seal the berth for next year's World Cup.

"We had been training for this for a while, we have achieved it today...very happy. Our next target is the World Cup now," Harmanpreet said after the win.

"We learn from every match. I always say there is plus and minus after every game. What matters is how you analyse those things and how fast you work on it. As a team we have defended well and the scoring has been great." India had endured a dismal European leg of the FIH Pro League, suffering seven straight defeats, the longest losing

streak in the team's history, while conceding 26 goals in eight games.

But the turnaround at the Asia Cup was remarkable, as the hosts led in only nine goals in seven matches and struck 39 at the other end.

"We have given a tough fight to our opponents in the last few games and that's why our result has been great. Credit goes to the forwards that they were converting opportunities into goals. We want to continue it," Harmanpreet added.

In the final, India were on the ball from the start and looked determined. The co-ordination between the defence, midfield and forward line was a treat to watch as they penetrated the rival circle frequently. Former India captain Viren Rasquinha praised the side's defensive effort in the final against South Korea. "Our attacking play was great today with 4 goals vs Korea in the final. But even better was the team defence. Every player sprinting back to defend the moment we lost the ball." (PTI)

India crush Singapore 12-0 to enter Super 4s in women's Asia Cup



HANGZHOU (CHINA), Sept 8: Navneet Kaur and Mumtaz Khan dazzled with a hat-trick each as India stormed into the Super 4s with a commanding 12-0 victory over Singapore in the women's Asia Cup hockey tournament, here on Monday.

While Navneet (14', 20', 28') and Mumtaz (2', 32', 39') dominated the proceedings, a brace from Neha (11', 38') along with a goal each from Lalremisiami (13'), Uditia (29'), Sharmila (45') and Rutuja Pisal (53') ensured another dominant victory for India.

The world No 10 India, who had earlier thrashed Thailand 11-0 in their tournament-opener, got off to a strong start when they broke the deadlock within the first two minutes. Mumtaz surged forward and unleashed a thunderous reverse stick shot from the top of the circle to open the scoring.

The early pressure kept Singapore on the back foot and although they managed to fend off India's first penalty corner in the eighth minute, Neha doubled the advantage, pouncing on a rebound in the 11th minute to slot it home with a

deft touch.

Just two minutes later, Lalremisiami added another from close range to stretch the lead to 3-0.

Before the first quarter ended, Navneet converted from a penalty corner in the 14th minute to make it 4-0.

While Singapore showed more resistance in the second quarter by holding India at bay for longer periods, Navneet struck again with a powerful effort to make it 5-0 in the 20th minute.

India continued to pile on the pressure by winning a series of

penalty corners and the third of those saw Navneet blasting it past the goalkeeper to complete her hat-trick.

Soon after, Uditia added another from a penalty corner with a composed finish, giving India a commanding 7-0 lead at the half-time hooter.

In the 32nd minute, Lalremisiami set up Mumtaz with a sharp pass to make it 8-0.

Two consecutive penalty corners unfolded for India as Neha stepped up to find the back of the net again in the 38th minute.

A few minutes later, Mumtaz sounded the boards for a third time, marking India's second hat-trick of the match.

At the end of the quarter, India won their 12th penalty corner of the encounter. Neha's fiery strike was saved but Sharmila pounced on the rebound to extend the lead to 11-0.

In the final quarter, India kept up the pressure and Rutuja Pisal etched her name on the scoresheet with a slick deflection in the 53rd minute.

Singapore pushed hard in search of a consolation, but they couldn't find a way through as India remained dominant and closed out the contest with authority.

India will next be in action on September 10, when they take on the second placed team from Pool A in the Super 4s. (PTI)

Gavaskar, Shastri, Sehwag in commentary panel for Asia Cup



NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Indian greats Sunil Gavaskar, Ravi Shastri and Virender Sehwag along with former bowling Bharat Arun will be a part of the Sony Sports network's multi-lingual commentary panel for the Asia Cup T20 tournament starting Tuesday in the UAE.

The 17th edition of the tournament will feature India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, UAE, Oman, and Hong Kong, battling for continental supremacy ahead of the ICC T20 World Cup next year. India will open their campaign on Wednesday against the UAE.

Former India head coach Shas-

tri, Gavaskar, Sanjay Manjrekar, Robin Uthappa, Bazid Khan, Waqar Younis, Wasim Akram, Russel Arnold, and Simon Doull are among the commentators roped in for the world feed of the telecast.

Sehwag, Irfan Pathan, Ajay Jadeja, former India batting coach Abhishek Nayar, and Saba Karim are among the prominent names in the panel of hindi commentators.

"As the Asia Cup returns, Sony Sports Network reimagines cricket broadcasting," Sony's Chief Revenue Officer Rajesh Kaul said.

Bharat Arun will join the likes of WV Raman in the Tamil panel

while the Telugu unit will feature Venkatapathy Raju, and Venu-gopal Rao among others.

"As Team India steps onto the Asia Cup stage under the dynamic leadership of Suryakumar Yadav, we witness a blend of tenacity and experience steering the side. This squad symbolises the future of Indian cricket, diverse, versatile and combative," said Gavaskar in a release issued by the network.

The view was echoed by Shastri.

"With Surya Kumar Yadav leading from the front and Shubman Gill mastering the art of youthful leadership as vice-captain, this Indian squad exemplifies the perfect mix of experience and potential.

"Players like Jasprit Bumrah, Abhishek Sharma, and Hardik Pandya bring international class, while talents like Tilak Varma and Harshit Rana add spark and depth," he said.

"The Asia Cup 2025 will be the crucible where their mettle is tested, and I believe this team, under Surya's calm and aggressive captaincy, will rise to the occasion and set new benchmarks for Indian cricket," he added. (PTI)

Nihang Basketball Club, Diphu lift champion's trophy

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 8: It's a proud moment as the Nihang Basketball Club from Diphu, Karbi Anglong, lifted the champion's trophy of the All India Men's Open Basketball Tournament 2025, defeating Arambai Tengol of Manipur with a score of 108-77 in the final match. The tournament was organised by Arambai Tengol Unit 37 held from August 30 to September 6 at Hao Ground, Ching Mathak, Manipur.

There were 15 teams participating in the tournament. The final match witnessed a thrilling encounter between Diphu Nihang and Arambai Tengol. By the third round, Diphu Nihang had made a commanding lead, ultimately securing 108 points against Arambai Tengol's 77, clinching the championship title. In the prize distribution ceremony, Arambai Tengol, the runners-up, received a cash award of ₹ 50,000, while winners Diphu Nihang were awarded ₹ 1 lakh. The awards were presented by social worker Nangbam Robert.

The tournament was sponsored by Divinti Global Limited (New Delhi), Balaji Autos (Himachal Pradesh), Marsway ECCS Private Limited (New Delhi), K.K. Agro Trade Venture Private Limited (Chhattisgarh), Balaji Solar System (Odisha), Green Leaf Projects (New Delhi), and Looks East Nirman (Manipur). Organizers have expressed gratitude to the sponsors for their support in organising the tournament in a grand manner.

Speaking at the prize distribution ceremony, Robert emphasised on the need of organising such tournaments in the coming days in bridging the young talents of today's youths towards constructive avenues through sports rather than getting into destructive habits. Robert also stated that the tournament not only promoted competitive spirit, but has developed discipline, unity, and friendship among players from Manipur and other states.

The event drew enthusiastic participation and audience support, with players and sports lovers hailing the tournament as a platform that strengthens bonds while promoting basketball as a growing sport in the region.

AIFF invites bids from consulting firms to manage process of awarding commercial rights

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: The All India Football Federation has invited bids from consulting firms to manage the process of awarding its commercial rights and among its major requirements are a minimum annual turnover of ₹ 100 crore in last five years and prior experience of executing at least five such deals.

The AIFF has issued a Request For Quotation (RFQ) in this regard and the last date of submission of bids is September 14.

The federation said the purpose of this RFQ is "to provide the bidder(s) with information that may assist them in the formulation of their proposals".

The bidder must "be in existence and being in operation for at least five (5) years and having prior experience of managing processes" for the award of commercial rights, the AIFF said in the RFQ.

"The Bidder should have an average annual turnover/receipt of a minimum of ₹ 100 Crores (Indian Rupees One Hundred Crores only) for the last five (5) Financial Years.

"The Bidder must have experience in executing at least five (5) similar assignments from at least three (3) distinct clients over the past five (5) years, which clients may be governments, sports federations and/or leagues in India," it said in the RFQ document under the subhead 'eligibility criteria'.

The AIFF also made it clear it will not entertain bids from entities that are blacklisted/debarred by the central or state governments, or by any international or national sports federations.

"The selected bidder shall study the best practices of awarding rights like the commercial rights in football across the world and in consultation with AIFF, determine the optimal basket of rights that will constitute the commercial rights, and the strategy to award such rights to third parties, in a manner most beneficial to AIFF, from an operational and financial perspective."

Among other things, the work of the consulting firms will entail undertaking tasks such as "identifying and engaging with key stakeholders, preparing requisite documentation with detailed terms and conditions, and conducting background research and analysis for the preparation of the relevant documents, as and when required."

During a hearing before the Supreme Court last month, the AIFF and its current commercial partner FSDL (Football Sports Development Limited), which also organises the top-tier Indian Super League, submitted a consensual resolution to conduct an open, competitive and transparent tender (or equivalent process) for selection of a commercial partner to conduct the ISL in line with global best practices.

The AIFF and the FSDL agreed that the process will be concluded by October 15, 2025, thereby providing certainty to clubs, broadcasters, sponsors and other stakeholders.

Subject to the consent of the AFC, the ISL season can thereafter commence in December, they had told the court.

Crisis surfaced in Indian football after FSDL put the 2025-26 ISL season "on hold" on July 11 due to the uncertainty over the renewal of the Master Rights Agreement (MRA) with the national federation, prompting at least three clubs to either pause first-team operations or suspend player and staff salaries. (PTI)



Young pacer Callum Vidler ruled out of Australia A's tour of India

MELBOURNE, Sept 8: Queensland fast bowler Callum Vidler was on Monday ruled out of Australia A's upcoming white-ball tour of India due to a partial stress fracture, adding to the growing list of injured pacers from Down Under.

The 19-year-old joins Test captain Pat Cummins, Lance Morris and Brody Couch on the sidelines, further depleting Australia's fast-bowling stocks ahead of the tour. The series between the A teams of the two countries start on September 30.

Vidler's last appearance in professional cricket was in the Sheffield Shield 2024-25 final against South Australia in March when he picked up five wickets in a losing cause.

"Callum experienced some back pain during training and promptly reported it. Unfortunately, the scans came back confirming a stress fracture so he will spend some time recovering and then start a rehab plan," Queensland general manager of high performance Joe Dawes was quoted as saying in ESPN-cricinfo. "He's naturally very disappointed but accepts that injuries are part of the game. We'll work closely with him to ensure he has the best recovery to get him ready for a return to cricket," Dawes added.

Prior to Vidler's withdrawal, Australia A had also lost Morris and Couch from the red-ball leg of the series against India, starting September 16, to injuries.

Couch had suffered a side strain but is expected to recover in time for the Shield season with Western Australia, while Morris is set to miss cricketing action for a year. (PTI)

Mohammed Siraj nominated for ICC's Player of the Month award for Oval heroics

DUBAI, Sept 8: India pacer Mohammed Siraj was on Monday nominated for ICC's Player of the Month Award for August for his heroics in the fifth and final Test of the England tour, along with New Zealand's Matt Henry and West Indies' Jayden Seales.

In a series marked by injuries to several players from both teams, Siraj stood tall and featured in all five Tests to play a decisive role with 23 wickets, the highest by any bowler in the rubber.

In the series starting in late June and culminating in early August, Siraj bowled 185.3 overs across the five Tests to help a young and inexperienced Indian team to force a 2-2 draw, without any drop in his intensity.

"Mohammed Siraj played just one match in August, but his brilliance in that outing was enough to earn him a nomination. The India right-arm was instrumental in the final Test of the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy series against England at The Oval, where he claimed nine wickets at an average of 21.11," the ICC said on its website.

"With Jasprit Bumrah absent, Siraj led the attack with great determination, bowling more than 46 overs across two innings, after having featured in the previous four Tests in the series as well."

"He took four wickets in the first innings and followed it up with a stellar five-wicket haul in the second. His decisive spell in the final innings bowled India to victory and proved crucial in securing a 2-2 series draw. For his stellar effort, Siraj was named Player of the Match in the south London contest," the governing body added.

New Zealand's Henry was nominated for his stellar show in the



Kiwis' Test series victory in Zimbabwe, in which the right-arm pacer claimed 16 wickets.

Henry took 6/39 and 3/51 in the first Test and 5/40 and 2/16 in the second to help his side record a 2-0 win.

"Matt Henry was the standout performer in New Zealand's 2-0 Test series win over Zimbabwe, claiming 16 wickets across two matches at an astonishing average of 9.12," the ICC said.

Seales, meanwhile, was rewarded for playing a "pivotal role" in West Indies' first ODI series win over Pakistan in 34 years. Seales took 10 wickets in three matches including 6/18 in the final ODI in

which Pakistan were shot out for a mere 92, chasing 295.

"He had a quiet start in the opening ODI, managing only one wicket while conceding 59 as Pakistan cruised to victory. However, Seales bounced back brilliantly in the second match, striking with three wickets in seven overs, including the prized scalps of Babar Azam and Saim Ayub," the ICC said.

"The third ODI saw Seales at his lethal best, dismantling Pakistan's batting with a career-best 6/18 — the third-best figures by a West Indies bowler in ODI history — to seal the series in emphatic fashion," it added. (PTI)

From desk jobs to Asia Cup, Oman's cricket inspiring story

NEW DELHI, Sept 4: From long days at office desks to late evenings on cement pitches, Oman's cricketers have fought a battle few noticed beyond their own dressing room.

That constant hustle now takes them to the Asia Cup, where captain Jatinder Singh and all-rounder Sufyan Mehmood carry not just their team's hopes but also the story of a nation determined to carve its place in world cricket.

"When we started, our primary job was to get a job; cricket was secondary for us," Jatinder told PTI Videos.

"Most boys worked in offices and then managed cricket on the side. But will say now that it's a dream come true to represent Oman in the Asia Cup. Our camp is really excited and looking forward to the tournament", he added.

Jatinder spoke more his early struggles of playing cricket in Oman.

"Initially, we never had turf grounds. We started on cement wickets, then moved to Astro Turfs in 2008, and only

in 2011 got a proper turf ground. There were times I thought, why am I putting in so much without results? But the hunger and passion kept us going," said the skipper.

That harsh reality meant many talented players walked away. But those who stayed on like Jatinder and Sufyan, carried the torch.

Jatinder, 36, has scored 1,704 runs in 36 ODIs with four centuries and a best of 118*, alongside 1,120 T20I runs at a strike rate above 115. Sufyan, 34, has featured in eight ODIs, scoring 107 runs with a top score of 72 and taking six wickets at 24.50.

For Sufyan, the resistance came from home.

"When I joined the national team, my parents told me Oman cricket had no future and I should focus on studies and work. But the self-belief was always there. The hunger to play kept me going. When we made it to the 2016 World Cup, I felt all our hard work had paid off," he said.



In 2015, Oman gained T20I status by defeating Namibia in the World T20 Qualifier, paving the way for their maiden global appearance the following year. In the 2016 World T20, they

stunned Ireland in their opening match before rain spoiled their game against the Netherlands and a defeat to Bangladesh ended their run. That World Cup debut proved to be the

turning point.

"After our 2016 T20 World Cup campaign the journey truly started. Discipline, professionalism, coaching, everything changed. Players started enjoying the game more. Fast forward to 2025, now the team is hungrier than ever," Jatinder said.

Now the challenge is bigger than ever, with Oman drawn alongside India, Pakistan and UAE in group A.

"We want to play fearless cricket. At least we will know where we stand because we hardly get chances against top teams. It is a golden opportunity," Jatinder explained.

For Oman, the highlight of the Asia Cup will be standing across from world champions India. A chance to measure themselves against the very best.

When asked which Indian stars he looks up to, Jatinder was quick to name a few in "Shubman Gill, Surya paaji (Suryakumar Yadav), Abhishek paaji (Abhishek Sharma), — Arshdeep (Singh), Tilak Varma."

For Sufyan, the admiration was for none other than star all rounder Hardik Pandya.

"The way he handles both batting and bowling. But honestly, I'd like to learn from most of the Indian team — how they prepare, how they handle pressure. Every moment with them will be a learning."

Beyond the tournament, Oman cricket is focused on building a sustainable future. With deputy head coach Sulakshan Kulkarni spearheading structured programs in schools, efforts are underway to introduce cricket to a wider pool of young Omanis despite football's dominance.

"Cricket takes time, effort and equipment to popularise, but the work is underway," Jatinder said.

"The academy coaches are visiting schools, teaching the basics, and nurturing talent from a young age. The goal is to create a pipeline of skilled players who can carry Oman cricket forward for years to come." (PTI)